

Traffic noise increases risk of heart attack

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Clearing up disused installations in mountain areas

The environmental organisation Mountain Wilderness France has presented a comprehensive study commissioned by the French Ministry for Ecology and Sustainable Development on the problems of abandoned installations in mountain areas. The study features a list of instructions on clearing up disused installations. [more on page 2](#)

Kiev Environmental Summit: Mountain region issues

(20.02.2003) The 5th ministerial conference of European environmental ministers on the Environment for Europe process is to take place in Kiev (Ukraine) from 21 to 23 May. Among the issues to be discussed concerning environmental co-operation against the backdrop of EU enlargement will be items such as the Carpathian Convention, the Central Asian Mountain Charter and the Mountain Challenge Statement.

Mountain-sector NGOs and social organisations essentially from countries acceding to the EU and from the Balkans are currently drafting the Mountain Challenge Statement, a joint declaration to be tabled in Kiev. Based on practical experience, requirements and future recommendations the Statement is to present positions on the following issues: the sustainable use of natural resources and water; the sustainable planning of energy, telecommunications, infrastructure and transport; education in the sustainable development of mountain regions and their culture; sustainable development in mountain regions and the economy; and political measures to promote the participation of NGOs. Since 1991 conferences on the Environment for Europe have provided a framework for co-operation within which a joint environmental campaign programme has been agreed. The conferences were set up by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE). Source and information: European Mountain Forum 21.01.2003 <http://www.mtnforum.org/europe/roadtokiev> (en), <http://www.kyiv-2003.info> (en), http://europa.eu.int/comm/environment/enlarg/kiev_en.htm (en/de/fr/it)

Alpine protected areas: Ecology and communications

(13.02.03) The role of alpine protected areas as a crossroads of ecology and communications is the theme of the 4th International Conference of Alpine Protected Areas. It is being held jointly with the general assembly of the Network of Alpine Protected Areas in Berchtesgaden, Germany, from 26 to 29 June.

The Conference is to address three key issues: "ecological continuum and corridors in the Alps", "Natura 2000 – a joint approach in the Alps, in Europe..." and "Communication and Identity in the Alps". Aspects of public relations work and "ecological identity" are to be discussed alongside nature conservation issues. Excursions are scheduled for Saturday and Sunday.

The Conference is aimed at representatives of all alpine protected areas, nature conservation institutions, environmental authorities and ministries, scientific facilities and people working in the management of protected areas. Interested parties from non-alpine protected areas and institutions are also invited.

Programme: <http://www.nationalpark-berchtesgaden.de/html/alparc.html> (de/fr/it/sl), Source and information: Network of Alpine Protected Areas <http://www.alparc.org> (de/fr/it/sl/en)

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Traffic noise increases risk of heart attack, Swiss study shows

(20.02.2003) The Swiss Federal Agency for the Environment, Forests and Landscape (SAEFL) recently published a study on the health repercussions of road traffic. It shows that noise, a stress factor, raises the risk of cardiovascular disease and heart attack. The study was presented on 18 February at an information event of the Transit Initiative in South Tyrol.

The overall health impairment is due mainly not to the rare cases of serious illnesses such as heart attack but to the much more frequent, less severe instances of disturbed sleep and disrupted communication. The level of noise caused by 200 vehicles an hour is already sufficient to increase the risk of cardiovascular disease. As noise abatement walls on sloping sites have hardly any effect, Switzerland is relying increasingly on subsidising soundproofing windows.

Study "Attribution of noise-related health impairment to road traffic": http://www.umwelt-schweiz.ch/buwal/shop/shop.php?action=show_publ&lang=D&id_thema=2&series=SRU&id_schgruppe=0&nr_publ=339 (de/fr/en), Source: Dolomiten 18.02.2003

Clearing up disused installations in mountain areas

(06.02.2003) The environmental organisation Mountain Wilderness France has presented a comprehensive study commissioned by the French Ministry for Ecology and Sustainable Development on the problems of abandoned installations in mountain areas. Entitled "Analysis of the situation in protected areas of French mountain regions and suggestions for action" the study features a list of instructions on clearing up disused installations. Its Appendix contains an inventory of installations that still need to be cleared up.

The clearing-up project initiated by Mountain Wilderness France in 2001 is gathering momentum. In addition to inventories in the French Alps, clearing-up and dismantling operations have also been carried out in the Mercantour and Ecrins National Parks/F, in the Aosta Valley/I and in the Ticino Canton/CH.

Study: <http://perso.wanadoo.fr/mountain.wilderness/instobs/sortieguide.htm> (fr)

Abandoned material from an old installation in the French Alps



© Mountain Wilderness France

"The Water of the Alps – Utilisation Conflicts and Approaches to Solutions"



(20.02.2003) The conference report on water in the Alps has been published in the wake of the 6th National Conference on Alpine Studies held in Switzerland on 07.09.2001 and 27.03.2002. The report contains current research projects on socio-economic issues of water research. By reporting the conference findings it aims to motivate participants to launch interdisciplinary projects and to establish networks. The conference itself was organised by the Inter-Academic Commission on Alpine Studies (ICAS) and the National Committee of the International Human Dimensions Programme on Global Environmental Change (IHDP).

The introductory contributions and abstracts are followed by the findings of the four workshops: Perception and Assessment of Water; Legislation, Ownership and Public Policy; Economy and Consumerism; Decision Processes. The report ends with a presentation of the need for research and a short account of the workshop "Reforms in Swiss Urban Water Management" by the Swiss Federal Institution for Water Supply, Waste-water Treatment and Water Conservation of 06.06.2002. The report is available in German and French, with an abstract in English.

Information: <http://www.alpinestudies.unibe.ch/tagungen/luzern01/luzern0.html> (de), <http://www.ihdp.org> (en)

First root sewage plant in the Grisons Canton



(27.02.2003) The first root-space sewage plant of the Grisons Canton is being built in Suraua/CH, following the unanimous vote of the Suraua town meeting in mid-February. Around a dozen Swiss communities already operate such a facility, and some 300 are reportedly in operation worldwide.

In a root-space or plant-based sewage facility the waste water seeps through reed-rooted ground in which the pollutants are decomposed by microorganisms. The roots provide the necessary oxygen while the sun supplies the energy. Plant-based sewage facilities are therefore an economical and ecological alternative to conventional waste-water treatment plants. Although the building costs are virtually the same in both variants, the operating costs for plant-based sewage installations are lower than conventional sewage plants. Plant-based sewage facilities are ideally suited for purifying domestic waste water, which has low levels of pollutants.

In the case of Suraua four fields of 0.2 hectares each are to be planted with reeds. The plant is expected to cost CHF 1.3 m.

Source: Die Südostschweiz, 20.02.2003, information: <http://www.gruene-nuernberger-land.de/altdorf/klaeranl.htm> (de), <http://wasser-wissen.de/abwasserlexikon/p/pflanzenklaeranlage.htm> (de)

alpMedia wins Alp Web Award 2002

(30.01.03) CIPRA has won the "Alp Web Award 2002" in recognition of its www.alpmedia.net web site. The award acknowledges alpMedia as a web site that focuses on mountain issues and complies with the objectives of the UN's Year of the Mountains 2002. The Award was presented by the *Cervignano del Friuli Giusto Gervasutti* Department of the Italian Alpine Association.

The motto for the Award is "Mountains on the Internet". The contents of the award-winning web sites differ in many ways: information on mountains and their resources, information on projects for sustainable development, presentation of local projects for the sustainable development of mountain regions, and school education programmes. The Award was offered in the categories Web Sites with a Commercial Objective and Web Sites with a Non-commercial Objective.

The award-winning web sites were put forward by Internet users. After a preliminary selection a jury of specialists in communication, marketing, design, art and technology nominated the winners.

Source and information: <http://www.caicervignano.it> (it)



Study on tourism in Italian protected areas

(20.02.2003) A study on tourism in protected areas was presented at the International Tourism Fair (BIT) in Milan/I on 17 February, as part of the conference on "Italian Parks and the Issue of Tourism". The study was conducted by the company Abacus on behalf of the Association of Italian Large-scale Protected Areas.

"The study confirms the ongoing development of the tourist offer in Italian protected areas and an increase in the demand for nature tourism," said Ermete Realacci, president of *Legambiente*, the environmental protection organisation. A survey showed that tourists expressed a need for "more nature, a simple lifestyle, and cultural and culinary traditions in Italy". The study highlighted the potential of environmental tourism, with its considerable business advantage. The potential is underlined by the tourist figures in protected areas (100,000 overnight stays available) and the growth of the European environmental tourism sector, which is three times that of conventional tourism.

Source: <http://www.parks.it> (it), information: http://bit.expocits.it/m_bit2003.htm (it/en)

Italy: Demand for holidays in pristine surroundings is increasing



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Alpine transit a deterrent for the Czech Republic

(30.01.03) After a Czech delegation had seen for itself the consequences of transit traffic in the Inn Valley/A, the Czech government at the end of last year refused to include plans for a transit tunnel under the Jeseníky mountain range in its binding regional planning schedule. It declared that the project would not be of benefit to the general public.

Representatives of the municipalities concerned, ecology initiatives and the Ministry of the Environment consider the tunnel as a threat to the biotope. They are worried that tourism in the region would be directly and lastingly affected by a transit route. In October 2000 members of the Transit Forum and the Austrian Alpine Association had discussed the consequences of noise propagation with the Czech delegation on site in the Inn Valley.

Sources: Written communication by Peter Hasslacher, Austrian Alpine Association 10.01.2003, Olomoucký Kraj No. 7 December 2002

New web site: "Learning about Mountains"

(30.01.03) "Learning about Mountains" is a new online guide for teachers and schoolchildren who want to find out more about mountains. The web site consists of three sections.

The section "Explore the Mountains" addresses eleven topical issues about mountains, using graphics, text and photo material. The heart of the web site is the section entitled "Find Resource", a database filled with mountain-related topics. It is aimed primarily at teachers, and features teaching material to help them prepare lessons, e.g. books, videos, maps and even syllabus suggestions. The database contains information in 16 languages, and covers mountain regions in 31 countries. The third section of the web site is called "Suggest a Resource" and provides an opportunity for feedback. "Learning about Mountains" is a service provided by the Mountain Institute. Although it is targeted mainly at teaching staff, it is also a valuable source of information for anyone interested in mountains.

Source: Mountain Forum 22.01.2003, information: <http://www.mtnforum.org/education/explore.htm> (en)

River Watchers provide information on Austria's rivers



(13.02.03) In the UN's International Year of Freshwater 2003 WWF Austria has launched its River Watch Campaign for the protection of rivers. Throughout the year dedicated citizens are called upon to act as River Watchers and observe changes in the rivers. Vast amounts of information on Austria's running waters can be called up on the Internet and also entered by the River Watchers.

There is more dam building work going on along Austria's waterways than there are efforts to restore the natural state. The aim of the River Watch Campaign is therefore to bring about a decisive turnaround in hydraulic engineering. The information gathered by River Watchers is designed to put a stop to damming and initiate a return to near-natural conditions. At the end of the year a summary statement is to be drawn up on every kilometre of river that has been dammed, every planned change and every re-naturalisation project, and compiled into a "map of areas at risk".

Source and information: <http://www.wwf.at/riverwatch> (de)



Alpine countries focusing increasingly on wellness tourism

(27.02.03) Against the backdrop of growing demand worldwide in the wellness sector the "Alpine Wellness International" specialist group last week agreed on its line of action for the future. At South Tyrol's initiative, South Tyrol, Bavaria, Switzerland and the Austrian federal provinces are to co-operate to maximise the potential of alpine countries in the wellness sector, in particular the spa and beauty packages they offer. There are also plans to extend the project to other countries.

The province of Lower Austria is applying new strategies in health tourism, with plans to combine health and wellness through targeted joint ventures to create a "well-being cluster". Well-being is the link between preventive medicine, the wellness experience and the feeling of well-being itself. In practice it means that theme-related destinations are to be set up, such as a "back region" or a region for "psycho-social health".

In keeping with this trend and in co-operation with nine spa resorts the Austrian Federal Railways ÖBB are offering a Wellness Ticket as of March 1; it includes a reduced train fare, transfer to and from the spa resort, and a discounted day ticket for the spa. A test conducted by Switzerland's *Sonntagszeitung* has shown that while Austrian wellness hotels are better, the Swiss are catching up. It reported that compared with Switzerland Austria had a head's start inasmuch as the government subsidised the building of wellness facilities and that banks had generous loan granting policies.

Sources: South Tyrol Press Office 20.02.2003, Provincial Government of Lower Austria 20.02.2003, ÖBB Press Release 21.02.2003, *Sonntagszeitung* 25.02.2003; information: <http://www.wellnesshotel.com> (de)

Wellness tourism in the Alps: a growing trend



Lower Austria sets out sustainable policy in a "Water Charter"



(30.01.03) As part of the UN's International Year of Freshwater the Federal Province of Lower Austria has drawn up a Water Charter, which was presented on 24 January. The Charter formulates principles for a sustainable water policy which are to act as a guide for everyday work with water resources. It also specifies genuine demands such as full monitoring of the groundwater across the Province, protection against over-use, extension of waste-water treatment, the securing of flood areas, etc.

Source: Provincial Government of Lower Austria 22.01.2003

Italy: Legislation to benefit small municipalities

(30.01.03) The Italian Parliament's legislative chambers last week adopted a Bill aimed at supporting municipalities with fewer than 5,000 inhabitants. There are approx. 5,800 such centres of small municipalities in Italy, with a total population of 10.8 million. Most of these communities are located in mountain regions. The Bill, which has yet to be passed by the Senate, provides for innovations in the administration of the school system, health system, postal service and transport service. It also aims to enhance the cultural offer, renovate and repair the old town centres, and upgrade flood protection measures. The Bill itself is viewed positively not just by the local corporate bodies directly affected but also by the Association of Italian Parks and by *Legambiente*, the Italian environmental protection organisation.

For the text of the Bill (No. 1942) see: <http://www.senato.it> (it)