

# alpMedia Newsletter

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## Nature abhors a border

**(5.7.2007) Nature in the Alps should be networked more effectively; to this end, the hindrances that stand in the way of animal migration and the spread of vegetation and plants should be made more permeable. Four alpine-wide network organisations are aiming to create an “ecological continuum” in the Alps. The preliminary project has just been given the go-ahead.**



The Ecological Continuum Project is aiming to ensure that precious habitats in the Alps are broken up less often, for instance by new infrastructure

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Nature in the Alps should be allowed to network more effectively; to this end, the hindrances that stand in the way of animal migration and the spread of vegetation and plants should be made more permeable. Four alpine-wide network organisations are aiming to create an “ecological continuum” in the Alps. The preliminary project has just been given the go-ahead.

Nature does not stop at the boundaries of protected areas or national borders. And, more and more often, man's interventions in nature and the landscape are dissecting habitats and lastingly obstructing the exchange and migration of fauna and flora. This is putting Europe's unique biodiversity in the Alps at risk.

A remedy is now being sought in the form of an ecological integrated network across the entire Alps and beyond. To this end, a large-scale project is being prepared by ALPARC (the Alpine Network of Protected Areas), CIPRA (the International Commission for the Protection of the Alps), ISCAR (the International Scientific Committee on Research in the Alps) and the WWF's Europe Alpine Programme. Initial activities include drawing up a methodology recognised throughout the Alps for establishing an ecological network across the Alps, compiling a catalogue of measures, selecting pilot regions (both in densely populated valley areas and in areas with a particularly high level of biological diversity) for the exemplary implementation of those measures, and identifying all the connections of relevance to an alpine-wide ecological network. Other important elements of the project consist of developing a strategy for involving the authorities and stakeholders (tourism, agriculture and forestry, infrastructure, regional planning and others) as well as drawing up a communication campaign. Within the framework of the Alpine Convention's newly established “ecological network” platform the project partners are working closely with the Alpine states. The Swiss MAVA Foundation for Nature Conservation is financing the preliminary project, which is scheduled to run until the end of 2008.

Source: CIPRA International

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The aim of the SkiSustain research project is to help create efficient and sustainable business models for ski resorts in the face of climate change and socio-economic changes.

## The Alps ideal for generating solar power

(24.5.2007) According to a study by the EU research laboratory for the environment in Ispra/I the profitability ratings for solar power installations in Alpine regions are similar to those of solar installations in southernmost Spain. Solar irradiance in the hills and mountains of Austria for example reaches an intensity of up to 2,000 kilowatt-hours per square metre. Even in price terms solar power in these regions is already on a par with conventional electricity. And yet only around 6,000 homes in Austria are currently equipped with solar power systems. But according to industry estimates, by 2020 one third of the electricity consumption in Austria could be met by solar energy. The EU researchers also believe that there is a great deal of growth potential in solar energy. The share of solar energy in Europe's overall energy demand could rise from its current figure of 2.5% to 6.2% by 2020.

Data on solar irradiance can be obtained for any location throughout Europe on the new EU web site <http://re.jrc.ec.europa.eu/pvgis/apps/radmonth.php?lang=de&map=europe> (de/en/fr/it/sl). The electricity generating potential using photovoltaic systems can be calculated directly.

Source: <http://derstandard.at/?url=/?id=2868040> (de)



"Mediterranean" solar power potential in the Alps.

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## Dust cover speeds up snowmelt

(5.7.2007) A new study reveals that dust blown hundreds of kilometres by the wind from erosion zones or dry regions is capable of speeding up the snowmelt in the mountains of Colorado/USA by around one month. Researchers at the National Snow and Ice Data Center in Boulder were surprised not by the fact that the dust-covered snow cover was found to melt more quickly but by the extent to which this occurred in measurements and simulations.

The darker dust absorbs more heat than the bright, reflecting snow cover, thereby forcing the snowmelt. The more the climate heats up, the less snowfall is expected and the more seldom the dust layers are likely to be covered by snow. This in turn serves to accelerate the whole phenomenon further. In the southwest US in particular the climate is becoming hotter and drier, which further promotes disturbed desert dust. The same mechanism is at work in principle in the Himalayas and the Alps (e.g. with the emission of Sahara dust). The study was published on 23 June in the Geophysical Research Letters (Vol. 34, No. 12): <http://www.agu.org/pubs/crossref/2007/2007GL030284.shtml> (en)

## Pyrenean ski resort to be revived

(6.6.2007) The Municipality of Vielha in the Spanish Pyrenees has given the go-ahead for the construction of more than 500 apartments and 1,700 parking spaces in the ski resort of La Tuca. The resort was forced to shut down in 1989 as the lack of snow meant it was no longer viable. But now the ski resort is to be brought back to life with the new project. The consent of the three small hamlets of Betren, Casarilh und Escunhau, whose territory is affected by the plans, is still required, and citizens' meetings have been scheduled to discuss the project.

The piste area is to comprise 40 hectares, half of which can be covered with artificial snow. Investments are expected to total around €45 m. If everything goes according to the investors' plans, construction work could get underway within the year.

Source and information: La Lettre du CIAPP, May 2007,

[http://www.nevasport.com/reportajes/articulos\\_detalle.php?id\\_articulos=434](http://www.nevasport.com/reportajes/articulos_detalle.php?id_articulos=434) (es)

## International Conference: The Alps beyond Kyoto

(22.6.2007) CIPRA, the International Commission for the Protection of the Alps, is organising an international conference on energy efficiency and renewable energies in the Alpine region from 20 to 22 September. CIPRA firmly believes that the Alps have all the potential to become a model region in climate terms; with a cost-conscious approach to energy and the intelligent use of existing renewable energies (wood, water, sun, wind and geothermal energy) the Alpine regions could easily improve on the CO<sub>2</sub> reduction targets set as part of the Kyoto Protocol.

The Conference is structured in three parts. Firstly, international experts are to speak on each individual source of renewable energy, their significance today in the Alpine region, and their potential. Another focal point consists of policy instruments for reducing energy consumption, for example incentives and legislation in the area of energy-efficient construction and renovation. The final section looks at examples of good practice. The conference venue is St. Vincent in Italy's Aosta Valley, and the conference languages are Italian, French, German and Slovene.

Programme and registration: <http://www.cipra.org> (de/fr/it/sl/en)



The Schiestlhaus, an energy-efficient refuge at over 2000 m above sea level.

© pos architekten

## Is sustainability marketable in the winter-sports industry?

(24.5.2007) The aim of the SkiSustain research project is to help create efficient and sustainable business models for ski resorts in the face of climate change and socio-economic changes. Its researchers are looking at ways of developing sustainability as a marketable product and as unique selling propositions for skiing destinations. One product under consideration is a customer-oriented benchmarking which would serve as a guide to snow-sports enthusiasts when selecting the ski resorts of their choice.

The Project's managers are conducting research into the offers available using interviews with mountain railway and cable-car operators, hoteliers, tourism experts and associations, and then drawing up potential scenarios for ski resorts. They are also researching demand by testing the compiled scenarios among customers, i.e. winter-sports enthusiasts, on [www.save-snow.com](http://www.save-snow.com) (de/fr/en). Each respondent has the possibility of expressing his or her preferences as part of the "Future of Ski Resorts" online survey. Initial results are to be posted on the internet in late autumn, with the complete results of the Project to be published in spring 2008. SkiSustain is a research project of the Environmental Council of the German Skiing Association in co-operation with the German Sport University Cologne and the University of Zurich/CH.



Can sustainability be a criterion when it comes to choosing a ski resort?

© [www.pixelquelle.de](http://www.pixelquelle.de)

## Cervino international mountain film festival

(6.6.2007) The 10<sup>th</sup> edition of the Breuil-Cervinia/Valtournenche international mountain film festival is to be held in Italy's Aosta Valley from 25 to 29 July. The film festival, which is now being held again under its original name *Cervino Cinemountain*, is Europe's highest, given that it takes place at 2000 m above sea level. The 40 films featured at the festival cover the entire spectrum of topics from the environment to sports, culture and history.

The films will be screened in the original language with Italian subtitles. Admission is free. A supporting programme, the Cervino Cinemountain's Week, offers visitors all kinds of sporting activities. Cervino Cinemountain is a member of the International Alliance for Mountain Film, which groups together such illustrious festivals as those in Trento/I, Tegernsee/D, Lugano/CH and Banff in Canada.

Information: <http://www.cervinocinemountain.it> (it/en), <http://www.mountainfilmalliance.org> (en)

## The Alps' longest railway tunnel

(22.6.2007) Last weekend saw the official inauguration ceremony of the Lötschberg base tunnel in Switzerland after a construction period of eight years. At 34.6 km it is the third longest railway tunnel in the world. The new link between the Bernese Oberland and the Valais drastically reduces the journey time. The Lötschberg Tunnel is the first element in the New Railway Link through the Alps, or NRLA, which is designed to put cross-alpine freight traffic onto the railways. The second large structure is the 57 km Gotthard base tunnel, which is expected to be commissioned in 2017. The frequency of freight trains in the new tunnel will be approximately twice as high as before on the Lötschberg mountain line and some 42 passenger trains a day are expected to pass under the mountain, travelling at top speeds of up to 250 km/h.

Last weekend also saw the opening of the Betuwe line in Holland. The new freight link connects the port of Rotterdam/NL with the European long-distance freight network.

Source and information: <http://www.blsalptransit.ch> (de/fr/it/en)



Some 30,000 visitors were present to mark the official opening of the Lötschberg Tunnel.

© BLS Alptransit Lötschberg

## An outgoing airport for the Allgäu

(22.6.2007) In the view of the project's initiators the opening of the Memmingerberg regional airport in the Allgäu/D on 28 June represents the "opportunity of the century". Bavaria subsidised the project to the tune of €7.3 m, with total investments amounting to €20 m. The tourism industry is now looking forward to a sharp rise in the number of holidaymakers from the north of the country. However such hopes are pitted against many critical aspects. Indeed a look at the initial booking figures does raise doubts. Departing passengers account for around 75% of all bookings, with arrivals making up only 25% – and this in one of Germany's most popular holiday destinations. Flight operations are to be handled by the low-cost airline subsidiary Tuifly, part of the Tui Group. Tuifly is aiming to fly from Memmingen to mainly traditional holiday destinations in southern Europe, with only a few connections to German cities. The main region of origin for tourists to the Allgäu, i.e. North Rhine-Westphalia/D, is not on the flight schedule.

Sources and additional information: Süddeutsche Zeitung 4.6.2007, <http://www.allgaeu-walser-express.de> (de), <http://www.flughafeninitiative.de> (de), CIPRA Deutschland



## Miscellaneous

### Workshop series “Getting Knowledge Across – Networking People”: Documentation online

(22.6.2007) CIPRA, the International Commission for the Protection of the Alps, has made available for download the documentation on four workshops of its Future in the Alps Project. The presentations, in German, on the workshops entitled “Allgäu / Tannheimer Tal Nature Park – An Opportunity for the Region?” (16-17.10.06 Bad Hindelang/D) and “Planning, Regulating and Networking in the Region” (25-26.1.07 Admont/A) can now be downloaded. The workshops on “Co-operative Decision-making and Conflict Management in Public Planning and Environment” (22-23.1.07 Budapest) and “The Future of Provision for Elementary Requirements in the Alpine Region” (28.2.-1.3.07 Villach/A) have been published in the form of a conference book in English and German. The documentation on other workshops is to be published shortly.

Download: <http://www.cipra.org/de/zukunft-in-den-alpen/downloads/workshopreihe> (de) and <http://www.cipra.org/en/future-in-the-alps/downloads/workshop-series-disseminating-knowledge-networking-people> (en)

### New publication on freight traffic transiting through the Alpine region

(6.6.2007) A new book entitled “SWOMM – Scientific Workshop on Mountain Mobility and Transport” published as part of the Interreg IIIB project AlpFRail summarises the results of the international workshops SWOMM 2005 and SWOMM 2006. The publication not only gives an overview of the transport and environmental policies of the Alpine countries and the freight transit traffic together with its economic impact on the Alpine region, it also provides plenty of scope for the Reports. There are Reports for instance on the policies for relocating freight from the roads to the railways, the major transit thoroughfares, transport management and the environmental impact of transport.

Information: <https://www.eurac.edu/Press/Publications/Studies/0063664.htm> (en/it/de)

### Car-free holidays – information and offers

(24.5.2007) The homepage of the “Alpine Pearls”, i.e. 21 tourist resorts in the Alps fully committed to the idea of soft mobility, is offering a new service. With the aid of an integrated climate calculator anyone with an interest in the matter can now compare how eco-friendly it is to travel to any of the Alpine Pearls by bus or by train compared with taking the car. All the Pearls offer climate-friendly holidays without cars with full on-site mobility guaranteed; in fact the resorts of Werfenweng/A and Arosa/CH even promise a completely climate neutral holiday.

Information: <http://www.alpine-pearls.com> (de/fr/it/en)

## Agenda

Environment Conference: **A Global Change Research Network in African Mountains**; 23-25.07.2007, Kampala (Uganda); language: en; organisers: UNESCO, MAB, University of the Witwatersrand Johannesburg, Global Mountain Program, MRI. Information: <http://mri.scnatweb.ch/content/view/170/80/> (en)

International Summer School: **Environmental hazards and sustainable development in mountains regions**; 23-29.07.2007, Bend Subcarpathians (Romania); language: en; organisers: Institute of Geography, Romanian Academy.

Information: [http://www.mri.scnatweb.ch/dmddocuments/first\\_circular\\_2007.doc](http://www.mri.scnatweb.ch/dmddocuments/first_circular_2007.doc) (en)

International Workshop: **Glaciers in watershed and global hydrology**; 27-31.08.2007, Obergurgl/Oetztal (Austria); language: en; organisers: International Commission of Snow and Ice Hydrology, IUGG Commission for the Cryospheric Sciences. Information: <http://www.ees.su.se/obergurgl2007> (en)

International Symposium: **Permanent and temporary grassland: plant, environment and economy**; 3-5.09.2007, Gent (Belgium); language: en. Organisers: Belgian Society for Grassland and Forage Crops; Information: <http://www.egf2007.com> (en)

International Conference: **Monitoring the Effectiveness of Nature Conservation**; 3-6.09.2007, Birmensdorf (Switzerland); language: en; organiser: Swiss Federal Research Institute WSL; Information: <http://www.wsl.ch/events07/monitoring/> (en)

## Oh!...

...anyone who now makes it to the top of the world's highest mountain is unlikely to impress. More than 3,000 mountaineers have already stood on Mount Everest, more than 500 this spring alone. To cause a bit of a stir nowadays you have to come up with something a little special. The first leg-amputee has long reached the summit; even the novelty of a first ascent with an artificial heart valve is already passé. Since “the more outlandish, the better” now seems to be the motto, Dutchman Wim Hof recently attempted to reach the top wearing shorts. But with his toes rapidly turning an odd shade of blue, he was forced to turn back at 7,400 m.

Source: <http://www.lemonde.fr/web/article/0,1-0@2-3242,36-921007@51-921103,0.html> (fr)