



28.9.2012

NOTICE TO MEMBERS

Subject: Petition 0251-12 by Anna Stachecka (Polish), on behalf of ‘Grupa Inicjatywna Mieszkańców Gminy Sztutowo’, with four other signatures, on the damage caused by beavers in the town of Sztutowo and its surroundings

1. Summary of petition

The petitioner refers to the serious damage which the beaver population has caused in Poland, and not least in the town of Sztutowo and its surroundings. The petitioner points out that the beavers’ activities, including building tunnels in the sea walls and tearing up sandbags, have contributed to the major flooding of recent years. The petitioner, who is fully aware of the measures which are aimed at maintaining a favourable conservation status for endangered species, also mentions, however, the local population’s economic, social and safety needs, and since her complaints to the Polish authorities have been futile, she is asking the European Parliament to take the necessary measures to provide an opportunity to regulate lawfully the beaver population in the town of Sztutowo and its surroundings.

2. Admissibility

Declared admissible on 26 June 2012. Information requested from Commission under Rule 202(6).

3. Commission reply, received on 28 September 2012

‘The European beaver is a species listed in Annex II of the Habitats Directive (Council Directive 92/43/EEC¹). This means that Poland, as well as all other Member States where the European beaver can be found in its natural habitat, have an obligation to designate sites of Community importance (SCIs) for this species. Moreover, the Polish population of beaver is listed in

¹ OJ L 206, 22.7.1992

Annex V of the directive which means that, if necessary, the Polish authorities are allowed to reduce the population of beavers, as long as it is maintained at a favourable conservation status.

According to information available to the Commission, the Polish authorities are aware of the problems caused by the beaver and they are preparing plans to manage the population in a more strategic way¹. In 2006-2007, a National Species Protection Plan for the European beaver was also developed in Poland as result of the EU funded "Transition Facility" twinning project TFPL2004/016-829.03.03.² This document presents, among others, methods of species population control and mitigation of the damage caused by beavers.

Conclusion

The European beaver is protected by virtue of the Habitats Directive. EU legislation, however, does not prohibit management of the species in such a way as to reconcile the need for its conservation and the economic and safety interests of the local population. Due to the principle of subsidiarity, the regional and national nature protection authorities (the General Directorate of Environmental Protection in Warsaw and the Regional Directorate of Environmental Protection in Gdańsk) are best placed to decide at what level the population is sustainable and, if necessary, to decide the best way to control their numbers.

¹ http://www.gdos.gov.pl/News/view/4441/Metodyka_w_zakresie_inwentaryzacji_bobra.

² http://www.bobry.pl/docs/bobr_beaver.pdf.