
Summary of pollution aspects concerning tourism in lakes of Poland, Latvia and Lithuania



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THE MOST IMPORTANT FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO THE POLLUTION OF LAKES IN GENERAL

The main environmental challenge causing pollution of lakes and its provided ecosystem services value decline is eutrophication in all three countries same as in the Baltic Sea region. Due to eutrophication waters and sediments are rich with biogenic material, organic substances. Consequently, high biological productivity, increase of biomass and oxygen decrease occurs. Reasons And accelerators of eutrophication are similar in all three countries: rapid urbanization, agricultural activities, sewage discharge, deforestation, coastline erosion, storm water runoff.

Hence ecological (decreased biodiversity, ecosystem degradation), social (risks to human health, lack of safe bathing areas) and economic (decreased values of ecosystem services) problems are occurring.

POLLUTION DUE TO TOURISM ACTIVITIES

Pollution due to tourism depends on the purpose how lake is used for recreation, leisure and education what can be components of touristic interest, what in turn depends on lake location, size, management activities. For instance, in Poland lakes chosen for project study are suffering from impurities from yachts (water from yachts kitchens, toilets, gasoline or oil spills, plastic waste brought by tourists).

In Latvian lakes potential sources of tourism associated pollution are recreation activities (bathing, use of SUP boards, catamarans and boats, nearby area use for concerts and other public/private events), while in Lithuanian lakes chosen for project pilot studies pollution from touristic boats is considered as minor (only a few, small touristic boats are operating), most important tourism related pollution flows from coast associated tourism activities, i.e. not properly closed waste bins. There are discussions not only on negative and also positive effects of tourism, i.e. more employment opportunities, tourist income, a rise in living standards, wider choice of activities, better environmental protection in areas with developed tourism.

MEASURES TO MITIGATE POLLUTION IN LAKES DUE TO TOURISTIC ACTIVITIES

There are regulations and laws minimising the emission of sewage into the environment, including lakes. Some regulations, for instance, in Lithuania foreseen environmental requirements for the installation and use of floating devices, their construction and mooring in surface water bodies, still, there are no specific restrictions for garbage or outlets from boats. In Latvia existing tourism law aims to promote the sustainable development of tourism, promote the preservation, rational use and raising of values of the social, economic, cultural environment, cultural and natural heritage and quality landscape throughout Latvia. Although on Latvian lakes there are no regulations to minimize the effect of tourist activity, project partner – Gulbene municipality has stated main tasks to maintain good condition of the lakes in the Environmental review of their territorial planning. Those tasks are to prevent inflow of treated and untreated wastewaters, cultivation of aquaculture; prevent irreversible changes in the landscape of the lake shores, which contributes to the inflow of nutrients into the lakes; use organic farming methods in agricultural lands located close to protection zones of rivers and lakes.

Nevertheless, mitigation can occur also via different social campaigns and actions, i.e. in Poland one such social action addresses tourists on vacation (especially sailors) having special attention to the problem of dumping garbage overboard and illegal dumping sewage from on-board WCs.

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