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Biodiversity and motorsport

During the FIM-meetings in Geneva this February a report from Svemo's groundbreaking work with biodiversity was presented. Below is a summary of the project so far, which was requested by many. Please read through the *summary*, *background* and *how do motorsports help?* segments and then you will find out how we possibly can help federations with theoretical and practical education. Please also see info regarding an example-club in Arboga, Sweden, with photos below, on pages 3-6.

Summary

More and more countries/federations seem to have a growing problem with authorities who see motorsport as an "environmental problem", and they every now and then work towards shutting down the tracks. Historically motorsport has often perhaps been seen as a "problem" by authorities. But now there is a solution that really could help out.

New knowledge and scientific research show that motorsport tracks of all kinds may play an important role in preserving and promoting biodiversity due to the variegated activities performed – hence also contribute to all countries national goals on preserved biodiversity. This new awareness can thus secure our sports and the tracks since suddenly our tracks and arenas could be considered as crucial for national conservation purposes.

Background

In most of the industrialised world human impact has altered the conditions for all other living organisms at an ever increasing rate during the last two centuries. This species richness is mainly described as "biodiversity". The biodiversity provides the planet and thus also mankind with a number of so called "ecosystem services" like cleaning air, oxygen production, cleaning water, pollination of crops etc.

Despite the fact that humans and human society cannot survive without this fundamental life support, is the paramount importance of the "ecosystem services" unknown to a large number of people and has often been neglected by the modern society.

There is presently an increasing awareness by decision makers that we have to preserve biodiversity not only for aesthetic, ethic and moral reason, but also for the economy of human society and the future of mankind. To mitigate the human impact a large number of measures around the world have been set in to action and many more have been investigated and discussed and all scientific and political levels.

But so far, these implementations have not halted the decline of the global biodiversity and the loss of essential species, and thus much more needs to be done. Hence more broadminded decision makers are presently more and more urgently looking for new solutions to this growing problem.

How do motorsport tracks help biodiversity?

Recent scientific research has shown in NE Europe that areas kept open for other reason than modern industrial agriculture can maintain and mostly maintains a much higher biodiversity than the modern farmland and also some natural reserves. The same goes for areas where trees are allowed to grow and get old and not are cut frequently by industrial forestry.

One of the best recourses for biodiversity has been found to be ALL kinds of motor tracks. This is due to a number of combined factors like: here the chemical load is much lower, around the actual paths the ground has to be kept open and there is plenty of space for organisms to live and thus biodiversity to prosper. The council of Svemo has taken this remarkable biological information into account in their national environment strategy and decided that the maintaining and also the enhancement of biodiversity on all their tracks should be an important part of the future work.

By doing this Svemo offers a completely new environment- and biodiversity solution for some of the national environment goals, as called for by future orientated decision makers. This will be of great value for a number of issues like the motor tracks become national recourses for preserving biodiversity which will facilitate for Sweden to reach the national and international commitments on biodiversity.

By this concept the motor tracks makes the remarkable shift from an “environmental problem” to a biological asset which environment authorities are pleased to have in their district. Svemo have already several good examples of this in Sweden. There are also a lot of other environment advantages that will result from this shift of perspectives, which can informed about when needed.

Svemo has developed a set of courses on various levels: How to maintain and improve each entire track area; why it should be done in this way; how to communicate with different authorities. Svemo has also, as a central body, successfully initiated a dialogue with both national and regional environment authorities. By doing this Svemo has been able facilitate not only the daily life of the associated clubs, improve their economy by additional environment support contributions and also make it less complicated to get permission for major competitions etc.

Since the problems encountered in Sweden are general for many clubs and societies around the world our knowledge may be of value and useful also in other countries. Svemo is willing to help all sister organisations who are interested in this concept and thus increase the survival of not only endangered tracks but also of endangered species.

Interested further? Please see below how we together with environmental experts and Prof. Nils Ryrholm can assist you.

Education package (in PowerPoint-PDF format)

This is the package with a basic level education on why and how motorsport tracks are important for biodiversity scientifically - with text and informative photos from a number of different tracks of various types. The package will be modified to suit each country’s special conditions regarding general landscape and settings in major regions etc.

This pack also include "General Guidelines" regarding how to in practice to maintain, support and even enhance high biodiversity at a motor track or arena with literally down to earth advices.

The education package + 1 lecture course included (approx three hours going through the basics)

The education package above including a professional lecturer in the course.

The lecturer is teaching by the aid of the education package and answer the eventual questions and also is discussing the local issues with the participants.

Visit to a track

Visit, checking, exchange of ideas and development of a general management plan for a particular track/club - which later can be used as a good example and starting point for more advanced setups.

For further information contact Secretary General Per Westling (per.westling@svemo.se) or environmental coordinator Mikael Norén (mikael.noren@svemo.se).

Example of a track in Svemo's biodiversity project

- Inventory, management plan and monitoring at MX-club MCK Åbågen in Arboga, Sweden

Last year's (2013) visits showed that the implemented measures have already given clear results in only one year.

Below are pictures from recent visits.





*The newly dug pond (below) has been a reproduction site for moor frogs (*Rana arvalis*.) Pictures were taken on June 27th 2013. Professor Nils Ryrholm is seen below.*





Track manager Stefan Deubler, Chairman Håkan Nygren and Nils Ryrholm looking at exposed sand.



Trachusa byssina.



Astata boops.

/ This is compiled by prof. Nils Ryrholm and Mikael Norén (Environmental Coordinator Svemo)