

Wilderness in Europe

After a generation or two of looking to the USA for examples of wilderness protection, Europe is now recognising the importance of its own wilderness resource and “re-importing” the wilderness ideal - learning from developments in wilderness protection and legislation in other continents, even former colonies. It comes as a surprise to many Europeans - who are long used to living in heavily modified landscapes - that significant wilderness landscapes survive here and that we can find many of the ideals and values of wilderness normally recognised elsewhere in the world, here, within Europe.

Political recognition

In February 2009, the European Parliament passed a resolution on Wilderness in Europe by an overwhelming majority of 538 votes in favour to 19 against. The [resolution](#) “emphasises the importance of protecting Europe's last remaining wilderness areas and developing appropriate guidance to EU Member States ... Specifically it called for:

- the development of a definition of wilderness
- the development of guidelines on wilderness management in the Natura 2000 network
- and a wilderness register that both documents and maps wilderness in Europe

European definition of wilderness

A working definition of European wilderness and wild areas has been developed and agreed.

<http://www.wildeurope.org/images/pdf/a-working-definition-of-european-wilderness-and-wild-areas.pdf>

European Wilderness Register

A [draft register](#) was launched at WILD10 Oct 2013. Produced by Alterra (University of Wageningen), WRi and Pan Parks, a final version will be available later in 2014.

Guidelines on Wilderness in Natura 2000

The European Union has published guidance on the management of terrestrial wilderness and wild areas within the Natura 2000 Network.

<http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/natura2000/wilderness/pdf/WildernessGuidelines.pdf>

Review of Status and Conservation of Wild Land in Europe

A comprehensive overview of wild land in Europe commissioned by the Scottish Government and researched and written by WRi is available and has been widely cited in EU policy documents.

<http://www.wildlandresearch.org/media/files/ReviewOfStatusAndConversationOfWildlandInEurope.pdf>

Network of European wilderness protected areas

The PAN Parks Foundation was founded in 1998 to create a network of European wilderness areas. A demanding process of auditing and verification, enabled the Foundation to certify parks where wilderness and high quality tourism facilities are balanced with environmental protection and sustainable local development and created a network of 12 National Parks in countries from

Finland to Turkey. The PAN Parks organisation no longer exists but its role and the wilderness standards have been taken over by the European Wilderness Society (see below).

European Wilderness Society

EWS www.wilderness-society.org is continuing the work and network started by the PAN Parks Foundation . The European Wilderness Society Quality System sets benchmarks for identifying, designating and promoting and managing European wilderness within the structure of the European Wilderness Preservation System EWPS <http://wilderness-society.org/european-wilderness-quality-standard/http://wilderness-society.org/european-wilderness-quality-standard/http://wilderness-society.org/european-wilderness-quality-standard/>

Wild Europe

The Wild Europe initiative is a European wide partnership of agencies, NGOs, institutions and individuals working at a European level, particularly in the policy arena, to support existing bodies and initiatives but not duplicating their activities. It promotes a coordinated strategy for protection and restoration of wilderness and large wild areas of natural process and habitat, addressing threats and opportunities. <http://www.wildeurope.org/>

Rewilding in Europe –creating a wildland continuum

Several organisations and foundations are working with landowners and more local groups to influence and change land towards something that is more wild. These initiatives include the True Nature Foundation, Rewilding Europe, etc. These projects, could, in time contribute land to the European Wilderness Preservation System. Other organisations are working to bring back lost species and create connecting lands and corridors to facilitate the movement and return of species. This idea of developing a wildland or wilderness continuum , or as is otherwise expressed as a Cores, Corridors and Carnivores model, is shown here in Figure1.

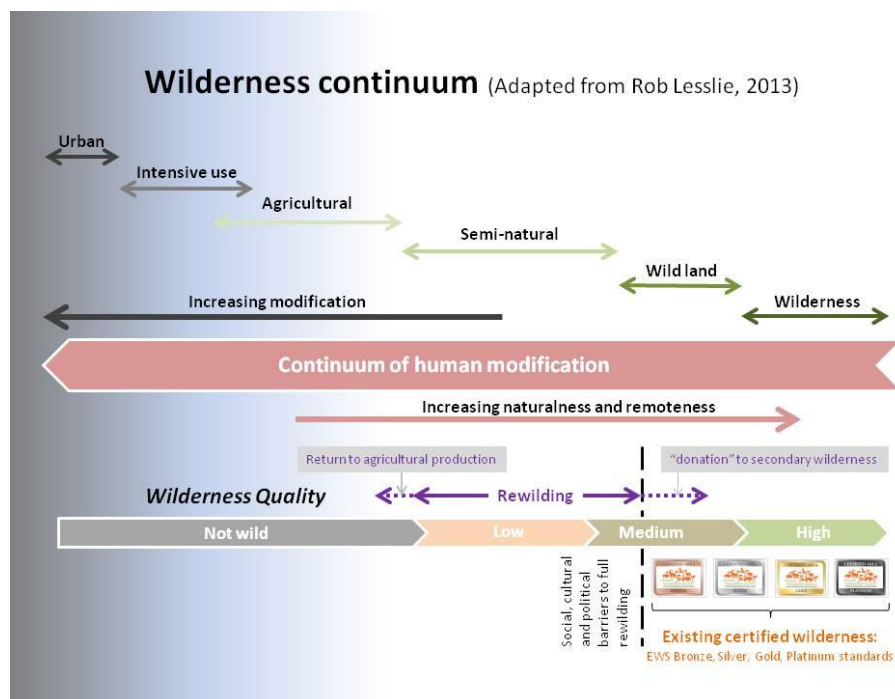


Figure 1. The wilderness continuum