

Environmental education

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The role of environmental education in shaping attitudes and ecological behavior

Enclose or develop?

What are the associations with the term *environmental protection*? National park, strict nature reserve, a remote place full of wild plants and not disturbed animals. Not so long ago this was the idea of environmental protection. After all, resigning from development, no entrance and fences keep the protected land in well-being and safety.

In many instances preserving protection, called also static protection, is, in fact, the best solution to preserve environmental values. It should be concerned with natural sites not yet developed by human, ecosystems having a large number of primary features and living as if human did not exist, working the best without human help.

However, some of the nature reserves left alone without human involvement lost their values for which the protection had been established. After 20-30 years they looked differently than in the moment of establishing. Different plants grew, different animals could be found. It was due to the fact that their previous status had been dependent on economy, usually agriculture. By pasturing horses, cattle or sheep and harvesting crops, man did not allow tall plants, shrubs or trees to grow, which created natural sites well-exposed to the sun, fostered the development of plant and animal species adapted to living in such conditions.

That is why such places cannot be enclosed and left on their own. They should be developed in the way they were developed by agriculture during the previous ages. In the places where the farmers cannot afford to keep horses and cattle, people responsible for environmental protection should take care of it. Since 2004 it is possible to receive subsidy for such activities. Environmental protection exercised in this way, realized by means of the development friendly to natural sites and species requiring special protection, is called dynamic protection.

Dynamic protection, i.e., interfering in nature in order to preserve its certain values, which would disappear because of the undergoing processes, can be limited to stabilization - holding undesirable changes. If the changes have already happened, it necessary to restore previous conditions, remove disadvantageous factors (e.g., apply artificial draining) - such an activity is called renaturalisation. The most advanced form of dynamic protection is restructuring (creation) - forming the natural site almost from the beginning, often by removing changes caused by human activity and restoring the ecosystem suitable for local conditions (climate, soil, water system).

We must preserve not only ecosystems which we consider natural or sub-natural. There is an emerging necessity to preserve the natural values of areas constantly utilized by human, i.e., farming areas with woodlots, baulks, ponds. Even now certain traditional cultivated plants and dying plants considered weed until the recent past have to be protected.