



THE ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITMENT



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RAW MATERIAL EXTRACTION FOR AUSTRIA THE BEST POSSIBLE FORM OF CONSERVATION AND PROTECTION OF NATURE AND SPECIES

JOINT VENTURE FOR THE NATURE - THE BUILDING MATERIALS AND CERAMIC INDUSTRIES AND WWF - RESULTS OF SUCCESSFUL COOPERATION



Minerals are the foundation of our civilisation

The Austrian consumption of minerals such as sand, gravel, natural and crushed stone, which are aggregates, calcium, ornamental stone, loam, clay, marl, slate and industrial minerals is around 12 tonnes per capita per year. There are numerous uses for these raw materials ranging from residential, commercial and industrial building and road construction through agriculture and forest, the health service, electrical industry to the food industry. For example these raw materials are used to produce medicines and pills, plastics, papers, glass, steel, computer components and in the production of inks and paint.

Raw materials extraction - and what next?

The quarrying industry is fully aware of its responsibility and fulfils its duty to serve the needs of the communities. Nature conservation is taken into consideration as a matter of course. Over the last ten years, more than EURO 160 million has therefore been invested in Austria in the sustainable use of abandoned quarries.

Extraction of minerals is a temporary land use

Important ecological niches and new biospheres for threatened species of animals can however often be created in used quarries. Over the last few decades, conditions for the survival of many plants and animals have continuously deteriorated as a result of changes to river courses, the development of previously open spaces, the building of towns and hydroelectric power stations.

For more than four years, the Building Materials and Ceramic Industries have been working in cooperation with WWF - World Wide Fund for Nature - on protection projects on endangered animal species which are on the red list.

As a result of this work, six model projects e.g. for bee-eaters, eagle owls, stone curlews, dragonflies as well as natterjacks and green toads have been set up throughout Austria to improve the animals' biospheres and should result in an increase in their population densities.

New biosphere for endange- red species

The WWF fights for threatened plant and animal species around the world. Anyone wanting to protect nature has to give nature as much free space as possible.

For example, we are now giving rivers more space so that they can return to being architects of the landscape. Areas used to extract raw materials such as rock quarries, sand-, clay- and gravel-pits sometimes offer similar possibilities. They can very quickly become home to fauna and flora which has evolved specially to the conditions of quarries and gravel-pits, enabling these areas to develop into valuable biotopes. Thanks to its joint venture with the Association for Building Materials and Ceramic Industries, the WWF is able to protect endangered species and to create biospheres in quarries as secondary habitats.

Objectives of this joint venture

- To promote the natural development of open spaces in order to create valuable substitute biospheres for various species of plants and animals currently living in a frequently changing environment.

- To reach agreement on shutting down parts of quarries, for example to protect the breeding areas of eagle owls from interference.

- To ensure that breeding seasons are taken into consideration by the quarrying industry.

- Specific actions to protect species (e.g. creating loam and sand clefts as breeding walls for bee-eaters).

- Cultivation actions for opening up areas in which the development of vegetation is already well advanced so that the spaces can be made more attractive for natterjacks and green toads.

- To prepare areas for conservation actions.

„Traces in the sand“ and „The secret of the black pond“

In addition to the 6 projects concentrating on protecting species, the Building Materials and Ceramic Industries has financed the Universum film, „Traces in the sand,“ and the ORF Heute production, „The secret of the black pond,“.

The film „Traces in the sand,“ was made to document the interaction of endangered species and operating quarries. The film was broadcast as part of the series of Uni-

versum films shown on ORF in November 1999.

The quarry companies financed this film to the tune of around Euro 300 000.

It impressively shows how quickly the world of animals and plants „take over“ not only closed but also fully operational sand-, gravel- and claypits and rock quarries and how these new biospheres coming into existence because of the extraction of raw materials.

This successful production followed the ORF Heute feature „The secret of the black pond,“ which uses powerful images to give viewers an understanding of the successful renaturation of abandoned quarrying areas.

School-based learning materials for both productions were devised in conjunction with the WWF for year groups 5 - 9 and were provided free-of-charge to all Austrian primary and groundschools.

More than 2000 teachers have expressed their enthusiasm in the teaching material and used it constructively in biology lessons.

