

## **ACTIVITY OF LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENTS FOR NATURE PROTECTION AS AN ELEMENT OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT POLICY ON AN EXAMPLE OF SELECTED COMMUNES IN POLAND**

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### **Abstract**

The article aims at presenting the issues related to the participation of self – government authorities in activities protecting local natural resources. This type of activity perfectly fits the idea of sustainable development becoming ever more and more popular and being implemented on various management levels also including the local level.

The introduction contains short presentation of the concept of sustainable development considering the role assigned in this context to undertakings intended to protect the environment and nature. Furthermore this paper presents the competences of local self-governments in Poland determined by legal regulations to fulfill their statutory obligation as the nature protection authorities.

Empirical part contains the discussion of the results obtained from research carried out by the author over the last few years in the territory of Lubelskie Voivodship situated in the south – eastern part of Poland. The conclusions have been made particularly on the basis of two questionnaire surveys completed by the commune heads i.e. the persons directing the works of self – governments in the smallest administrative units called communes. The first research was completed in the year 2008 and encompassed 127 respondents (the total number of commune heads acting in our region is equal to 213) and the second was realized in the year 2012 where the sample size was equal to 110 persons. In addition to other issues, the author raised the problem of financing sources for the tasks consolidating the local natural potential and presented a hierarchy of various types of pro-environmental activities depending on how often these activities are taken by the authorities of communes subjected to survey. Another issue is the activity of self – governments in the scope of active conservation protection, mainly in the form of grass-root initiatives towards the creation of the new legally protected objects and areas. Furthermore, the attention has been paid to subject matter preparation of clerical staff required for the issuance of administrative decisions significantly affecting the natural environment condition e.g. giving the permits for felling of trees, permits for implementation of projects issued as a result of assessments of the impact on environment (so called environmental decisions) as well as thorough analysis of natural values and their consideration in development plans and in local area spatial development plans.

The conclusions based on the previous considerations correspond with the author's assumption that generally the local officials demonstrate increasing interest in the protection of local ecosystems. However the scale and manner of their engagement often leaves a lot of room for improvement and may carry certain negative consequences for the directions of social and economic development of individual areas as well as for effectiveness of the local natural resources protection process itself.

**Keywords:** Sustainable development, local self-government, nature protection, commune.