Elements sustaining the lobby for the restoration of Big Island of Braila, Danube floodplain

Virgil Iordache¹, Florian Bodescu¹ and Mihail Dumitru²

With 4 figures and 3 tables in the text

Abstract: There is not yet a consensus about how to restore the Lower Danube River System (LDRS), and in particular one of its subsystems, the Big Island of Braila (BIB). In this context, the aims of our study were: 1) to identify elements for a cost-benefits analysis of the utilization of BIB, 2) to identify the potential interests of the users, and 3) to provide extra arguments, at detailed level, about the opportunity of performing restoration activities in the Big Island of Braila (BIB). Aims 1 and 2 were approached by mean of desk study (analyses of the existing literature). To reach aim 3 we selected three representative complexes of farms in BIB and identified the types and extent of the activities needed for maintaining the agricultural use of island. The results suggest that the current agricultural use of the BIB is efficient in some parts of the island, but inefficient in the island as a whole. The political preference for the minimal restoration scenario of LDRS, and implicitly the current state of BIB seems to be due to the strong lobbying capacity of the farmers. We identified very large areas in BIB requiring maintenance activities of high complexity and cost. The location of these areas is associated to former channels and lakes, which still preserve part of the reference hydro-geomorphological characteristics. These areas would be most appropriate for restoration, as part of the implementation of a scenario transforming the BIB into a multifunctional farming system, with lakes, forest, and agricultural lands. In the areas located between the dike and the Danube there are still natural and semi-natural ecosystems which could play a favourable recolonization role in case of restoration.

Key words: River system, stakeholders, cost-benefit analyses.

Introduction

Restoring large and complex ecological systems is a difficult, but sine qua non matter in the efforts towards sustainable development (Stanford et al. 1996; Schiemer 1999; Vadineanu et al. 2001, 2003; Iordache 2003a; Anand & Desrochers 2004). Examples of such ecological systems are river basins and

Authors’ addresses: ¹ University of Bucharest, Dept. of Systems Ecology, Spl. Independentei 91–95, 76201 Bucharest 5, Romania; E-mail: virgil@bio.bio.unibuc.ro. ² Research Institute for Soil Science and Agrochemistry, Bd Marasti 61, 71331 Bucharest 1, Romania; E-mail: mdumitru@icpa.ro

0945-3784/05/0155-0677 $ 4.00
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DOI:10.1127/lr/15/2003/677
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