

„Mindful also of its responsibility toward future generations, the state shall protect the natural bases of life ...“

Grundgesetz (the German Constitution), Article 20 a

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**GERMAN FEDERAL  
AGENCY FOR NATURE  
CONSERVATION**

**Sustaining natural systems  
for future generations**



# GERMAN FEDERAL AGENCY FOR NATURE CONSERVATION (BfN)

Sustaining natural systems for future generations

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## DELIVERING CONSERVATION FOR A MODERN SOCIETY



The German Federal Agency for Nature Conservation (Bundesamt für Naturschutz, BfN) is the central scientific authority of the German federal government for both national and international nature conservation. The Agency reports to the German Environment Ministry (BMU) and has key enforcement functions that arise under international species conservation agreements, in marine conservation, under the Antarctic Treaty and the German Genetic Engineering Act. In addition, the Agency does scientific research in the fields of nature and landscape conservation.



Prof. Dr. Beate Jessel  
President of the German Federal  
Agency for Nature Conservation  
(BfN)

The Agency's declared purpose is to develop an integrative nature conservation policy. Such a policy unites ecological, economic and social aspects, and mediates between the conservation and use of natural systems. Nature conservation can indeed be a driver of sustainable development, as evidenced today by many practical examples throughout Germany's regions. Such a forward-looking perspective is essential to conserve biological diversity and safeguard physical and cultural life-support systems for present and future generations. The on-going improvement of conservation tools and their dynamic adaptation to social change is inherent to this perspective. Nature conservation must become a firm element in all realms – policy, industry, science and education. This is the kind of conservation work a modern society needs.

## PROVIDING SOLID KNOWLEDGE FOR SOUND DECISIONS

At the end of the day, it is not scientists who decide what happens to nature and thus determine its state, but politicians and administrations. For such a task, good intentions alone are not enough. It takes in-depth knowledge of the complex interconnections among natural systems, and of the impacts, both short-term and long-range, that interventions in the various ecosystems entail. Furthermore, ever new issues are emerging as a result of the growing economic and social importance of nature conservation and environmental protection.

BfN considers it one of its most important tasks to provide this knowledge and advise decision-makers. The Agency thus delivers to the **German Environment Ministry (BMU)** the scientific expertise to underpin decision-making processes, and advises the Ministry on all issues relating to national and international nature conservation.

The Agency further performs this advisory and supporting function at all other levels, and vis-à-vis a broad array of multipliers.



As a specialized agency, BfN delivers comprehensive advice to decision-makers at both federal and regional state level.



Besides its role in supporting federal-level policy, the Agency also works in close cooperation with **Germany's regional state (Land) authorities**. One aim here is to ensure that the concepts and methods developed by the Agency – e.g. for landscape planning, species conservation and site protection – are applied in a uniform and thus widely comparable manner.

BfN values close cooperation with **conservation NGOs**, and strives to develop new **conservation education approaches** in order to create enthusiasm for nature among young people in particular.

Following the guiding vision of sustainable use of natural resources, new fields of activity are emerging in the realm of cooperative approaches involving conservation actors, industry and administrations. This is exemplified by collaboration with **agriculture and forestry, sports and tourism stakeholders** and in the field of **renewable energies**.



The commitment made by many volunteers is crucial to conservation work.

Efforts to integrate conservation concerns within our everyday lives need to take into account the important spheres of sports and leisure activities.



The Agency carries out further important work in relation to **international agreements**. These include the:

- Convention on Biological Diversity
- Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES)
- Natura 2000 European protected area system
- Man and the Biosphere (MAB), a UNESCO programme for the sustainable use of the biosphere



**Further information is available at:** [www.bfn.de](http://www.bfn.de)



Nature knows no boundaries. Official nature conservation agencies need to get involved in international collaboration more than ever.

## PUTTING IDEAS TO THE TEST

Measures devised and designed to conserve wild animal and plant species and their habitats all need to be tested in practice. This yields not only certainty, but also important experience that can be used when carrying out such measures in the future.

To that end, BfN supports and coordinates **large-scale conservation projects** as well as **research and pilot projects**. All of these are carried out in collaboration with external partners. Close contacts maintained with stakeholders and institutions at regional and local levels, and collaboration with project partners in associations, universities and planning consultancies ensures that projects reflect the specific interests of people on site.

And what does this work produce? The projects generate an understanding of the state of nature and of the socio-economic needs of the people living in it. BfN uses these findings to give critical impulses to the theory and practice of nature conservation – now and in the future.



Researching populations of native frogs and toads to define appropriate forms of management.



Nature conservation by marketing hay.



Seal breeding and research station in Friedrichskoog.



Intimate contact with nature in the Multimar Wattforum Tönning, one of the environmental education facilities co-funded by the Agency.

**Large-scale conservation projects** are concerned with the broad-scale preservation of our natural heritage. Site selection is guided by clear criteria: A low degree of human-induced landscape modification, a high degree of national-level relevance, the extent of spatial coverage, the level of threat and, finally, the model character of measures undertaken. Support primarily involves the purchase or long-term lease of sites, compensatory payments for conservation-related restrictions, and measures to manage and develop sites.

Within the context of the German Environment Ministry's Environmental Research Plan, **research and development (R+D) projects** are commissioned in the fields of nature conservation and ecology. The purpose of these projects is to produce the fundamentals for decision-

making by the federal government in the realms of nature conservation and environmental policy.

**Testing and development projects** aim to realize promising conservation ideas and implement important research findings in practice. An aspect of particular importance in these projects is the integration of conservation and use in agricultural and forestry areas, and in waters (including seas and coastal areas), mires and wetlands.

By **supporting associations**, the Agency promotes individual conservation projects carried out by private-sector, non-profit associations. Support is also provided for nature conservation measures focussing on **international cooperation**.

All support programmes require a financial contribution on the part of the applicant.



Surveying insect species to determine the conservation value of habitat types.



Scientific documentation of the effects of different mowing regimes upon insects and amphibians in Brodowin.

## TAKING RESOLUTE ACTION: ENFORCING CONSERVATION AGREEMENTS



BfN is also an **enforcement agency**. This stern-sounding term means quite simply that technical expertise and decision-making powers are combined within one agency. By signing a whole array of international nature conservation agreements, Germany's federal government and the governments of its regional states (Länder) have accepted an obligation to implement these agreements in domestic law and make sure they are enforced in everyday practice. This is where BfN's special expertise comes into play.

The continuing development of European Union law, in particular, presents ever new, important tasks for the Agency.



CITES regulates the import and export of species collected and taken from the wild.

Confiscated by customs:  
Threatened species, decoration  
in dubious taste.



BfN collaborates closely  
with all countries signatory  
to the Convention  
on International Trade in  
Endangered Species of Wild  
Fauna and Flora (CITES).

The survival of many animal and plant species is threatened by their being taken from the wild. The international community responded to this situation as early as 1973 by adopting the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora – CITES. BfN is the German enforcement agency for this convention, granting permits for imports and exports of protected species. In support of this work, BfN develops the scientific bases for decision-making. This also leads to further developments in species conservation law in general.

In the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of the North and Baltic Seas – 12 to 200 sea miles beyond the coastal line – BfN is responsible for selecting and managing NATURA 2000 sites designated under the European Community Habitats Directive and Birds Directive, and is involved in the permitting process for projects.

In the field of agricultural genetic engi-



neering BfN is involved in the procedures for approving the release or placing on the market of genetically modified plants, animals and micro-organisms. Moreover, BfN develops the scientific fundamentals of monitoring, and organizes schemes to monitor the effects of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) on nature and environment. To assess the risks posed by GMOs, it is essential to analyse the interactions between them and other living organisms – and thus all biota.

**For further information on imports and exports of protected animal and plant species:**

Phone +49 (02 28) 8491-13 11

In permitting procedures for offshore wind farms, BfN produces expert evidence on their impacts upon the marine environment.



Releases of genetically modified crop varieties need to be studied carefully.

## MAKING VITAL INFORMATION ACCESSIBLE FOR ALL



BfN views itself as the central service provider for all issues relating to nature conservation. Comprehensive and professional **communications** is thus a vital part of our work.

It is comprehensive: We respond to phone and mail inquiries, produce our own publications, maintain classic archives, and provide modern Internet-based information.

It is professional: Aiming for optimum usability, we document the assembled information systematically, process it and make it accessible for all. These services are available to experts in all fields of nature conservation, and to interested individual citizens. This is the path to take if our communications work is to contribute to realizing our ambitious goal: to establish and promote nature conservation as a key concern throughout society.



International Academy for Nature Conservation (INA) on the Isle of Vilm: Conference centre for national and international nature conservation, meeting place for disseminating knowledge and exchanging experience.

The bedrock of BfN's communications work is the publication of brochures, leaflets and posters on both general and specialized nature conservation topics, as well as continuous **press work**. In addition, BfN organizes exhibitions, events and campaigns to provide information and raise awareness of conservation issues.

BfN runs its own conference centre, the **International Academy for Nature Conservation** on the Isle of Vilm near Rügen. Other institutions can use the centre for their seminars and workshops.



Key information on BfN's work and on all ongoing projects is available at [www.bfn.de](http://www.bfn.de).

BfN has several **publication series** in which it publishes important research findings and project outcomes. The Agency also publishes a monthly scientific journal (“**Natur und Landschaft**”) containing original papers and cutting-edge reports on nature conservation and landscape management.

All of this information is available in concise form at [www.bfn.de](http://www.bfn.de) – BfN's homepage. The site further provides news about all current projects, programmes and events, and links to BfN's various **specialized databases**.

With some 120,000 media units and more than 1,000 technical journals under subscription and archived, BfN's combined **library** at three locations – Bonn, Leipzig and Vilm – is one of Europe's largest nature conservation libraries.

BfN's documentation centre records this literature in a **database** which is continuously updated and now contains more than 100,000 literature references.

#### Further information:

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- Library  
Phone: +49 (02 28) 84 91-33 33

#### Examples of specialized databases provided by BfN



[www.dnl-online.de](http://www.dnl-online.de)

Literature database for nature conservation and landscape management

#### FloraWeb

[www.floraweb.de](http://www.floraweb.de)

Information service maintained by BfN on plant species, plant communities and vegetation

#### NaturSportInfo

[www.natursportinfo.de](http://www.natursportinfo.de)

Nature conservation and outdoor sports information system

#### WISIA

[www.wisia.de](http://www.wisia.de)

Information on the conservation status of species protected under international and national law

#### ZEET

[www.zeet.de](http://www.zeet.de)

Information on individual decisions concerning trade in specimens of wild animal species

## BfN'S HISTORY



**1906** Establishment of the State Agency for Natural Heritage Preservation in Danzig – the start of official nature conservation in Prussia.

**1935** Formation of the Reich Agency for Nature Conservation (later integrated within the Reich Forestry Office)

**1945** Establishment of the Central Office for Nature Conservation (from 1949 on Central Office for Nature Conservation and Landscape Management) in Egestorf.

**1953** Establishment of the Federal

Institute for Nature Conservation and Landscape Management in Bonn.

**1962** Reorganization to form the Federal Centre for Vegetation Ecology, Nature Conservation and Landscape Management (BAVNL). Integration of the Federal Institute for Vegetation Cartography, established in 1950.

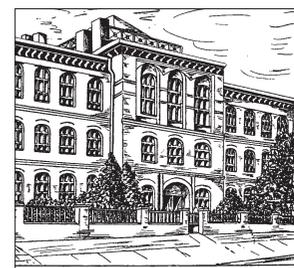
**1976** Renamed Federal Research Centre for Nature Conservation and Landscape Management (BFANL).

**1990/1992** Integration of International Nature Conservation Academy (Isle of Vilm), and Dölzig Section of the GDR's former Institute for Landscape Research and Nature Conservation.

**1993** Foundation of the German Federal Agency for Nature Conservation (BfN). Integration of parts of the Federal Agency for Food and Forestry and part of the Federal Agency for Commerce.

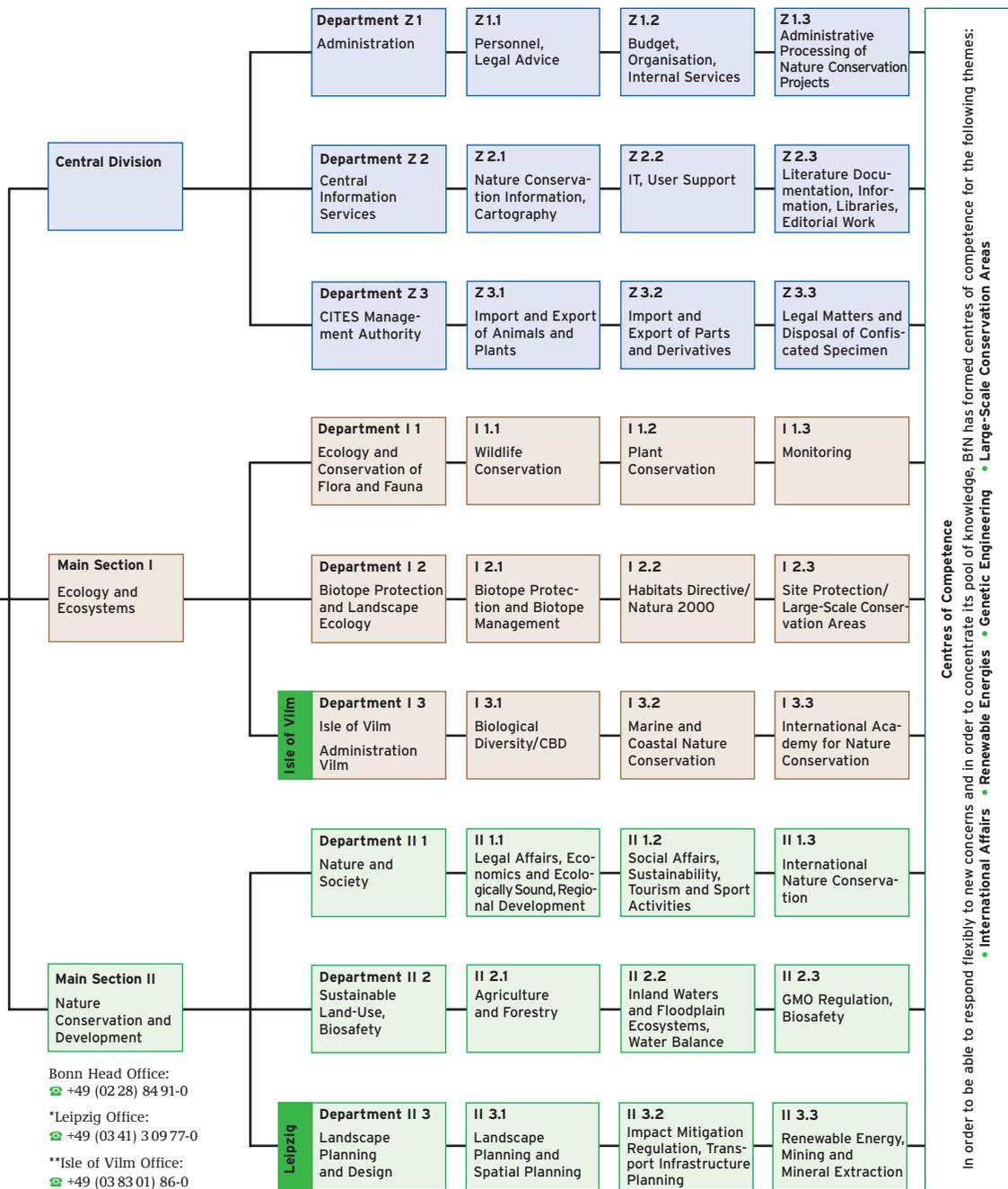
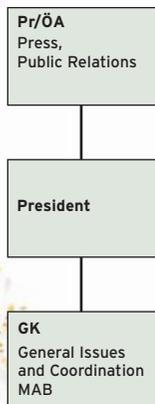
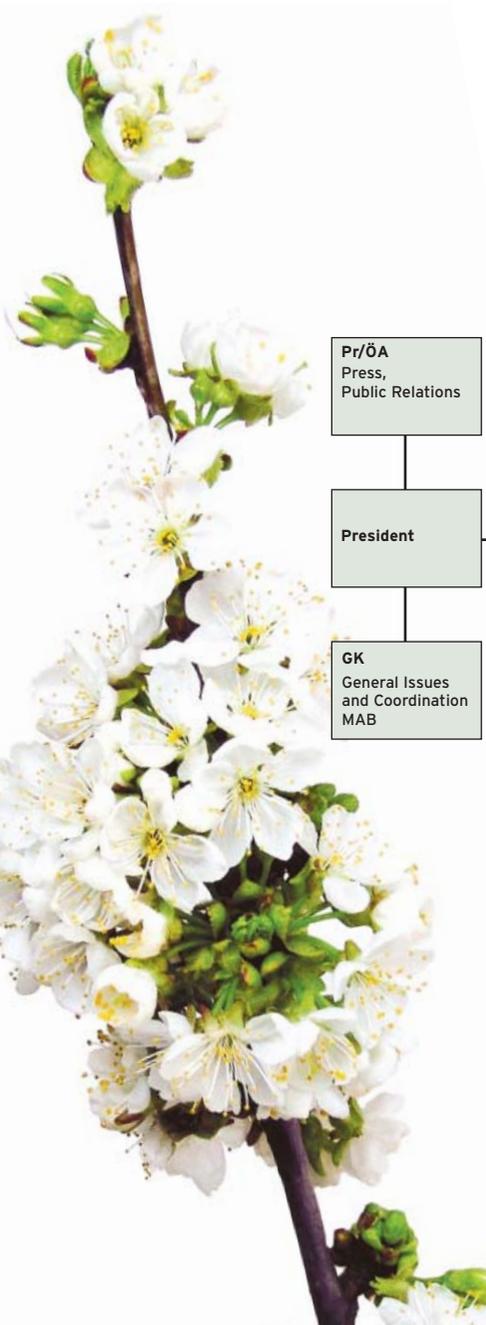
**2006** Jubilee: 100 years of nature conservation as a state responsibility.

Seat of the former Reich Agency for Nature Conservation in Berlin-Schöneberg (1910-1940).



German Nature Conservation Congress in Potsdam, 2004.

# BfN'S STRUCTURE



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Centres of Competence  
 In order to be able to respond flexibly to new concerns and in order to concentrate its pool of knowledge, BfN has formed centres of competence for the following themes:  
 • International Affairs • Renewable Energies • Genetic Engineering • Large-Scale Conservation Areas

# BFN'S OFFICES



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Detailed instructions on how to reach our offices are available from the respective secretariats, or online at: [www.bfn.de](http://www.bfn.de).