



## Association of the Friends of Hohe Tauern National Park Austria

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### 1. Hohe Tauern – the First National Park in Austria

Austria was not a famous country about National Parks until the 80's. It was 1981, when the first National Park, namely Hohe Tauern NP, was founded. Now there are six NPs. Hohe Tauern NP can be seen in 3 parts, as areas in different provinces, which are large and important protected areas as themselves. In Austria the nature conservation is a duty of different provinces. Those parks, who fulfil the IUCN category II requirements have a contract about park management between the Province and the Republic of Austria.



Figure 1.

Grossglockner mountain.

Photo: Hohe Tauern NP Archive.

Grossglockner (3798m) area is a kind of national landscape area, a national identity icon. Everybody knows it and everybody shall visit there sometimes or many times. In that sense it is a bit like Koli in Finland. The emperor visited there in 1756 and it made it very famous. The mountain guides found the area in 1700s. There exists about 100 old mountain huts, some of them are very remote.

I myself am working and living in the Carinthian part of the Hohe Tauern NP. The park borders reflect strongly the economic needs to use the environment; all the parts, which are important for instance to the electric power production, have been left outside the park borders. The Park area is 1800 km<sup>2</sup>. The Park has a long history of conflicts, because of the diversity in the landownership, where 80 % is private. Park represents high alpine region and 10 % is covered by the glaciers. Park is divided in two zones; the core is in IUCN category II and the outer zone is in category V.

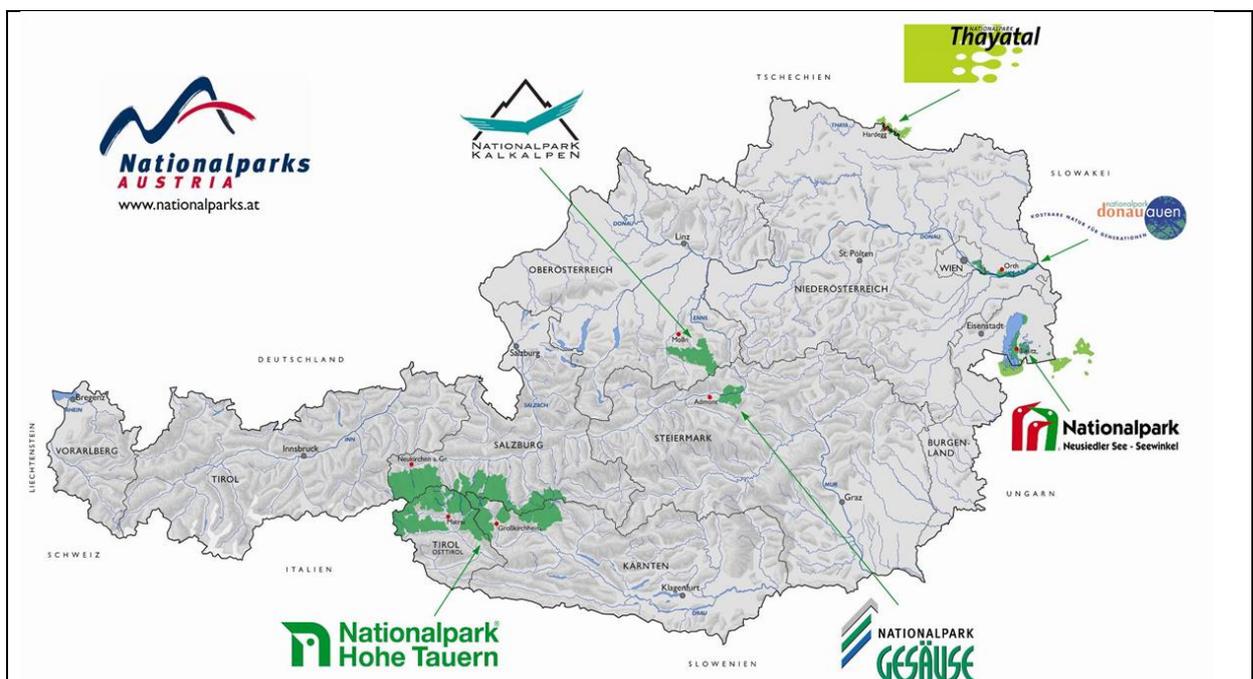


Figure 2. Six Austrian National Parks. Source: [www.nationalparks.at](http://www.nationalparks.at).

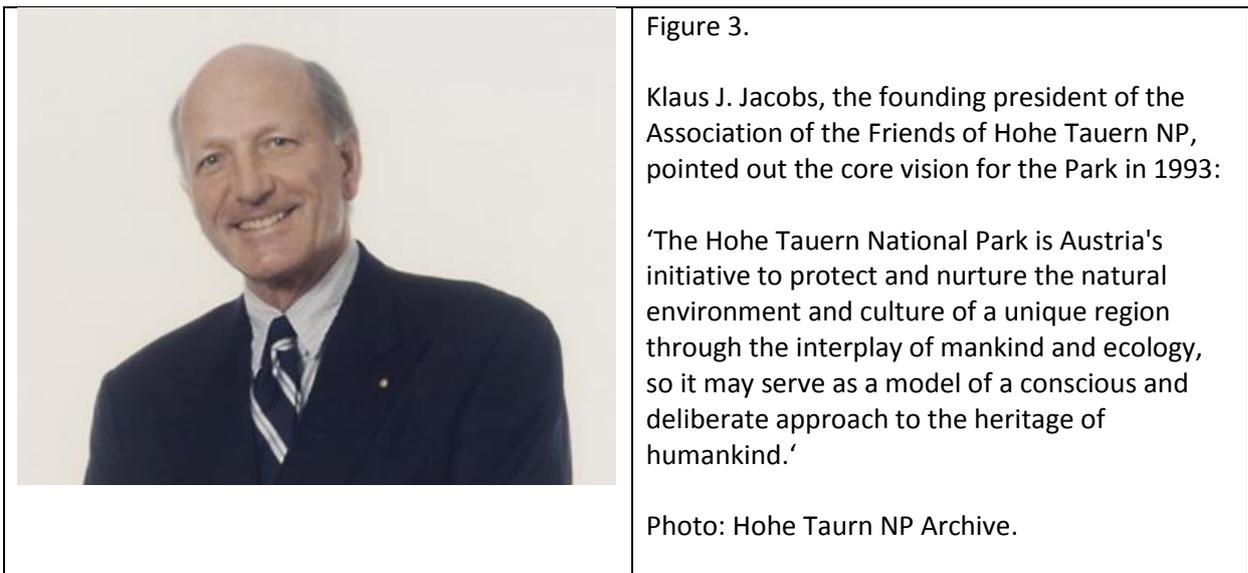
## 2. The Friends Society inside the Park management – an Austrian model for effective development

This is the first time I am giving a presentation about the Friends of Hohe Tauern outside Austria. Normally I am speaking about projects and outcomes, but now about structures and organisations behind success. As a background I shall mention that in early 90s. I organised two study tours, at first to Bavarian forest to meet Hans Bibelriether. Then we travelled to USA Midwest National Parks and saw how the parks and friends organisations were cooperating there.

The Hohe Tauern Friends organisation is the only one in Austria in its type. All the other NPs have tried to create Friends clubs, but they have not had success. The beginning goes back to Mr Klaus J.

Jacobs, best known now maybe about Jacobs coffee brand. He was the owner of Milka Chocolate, but he sold the business and started a Charity.

The process to develop an Austrian national park needed some extra input from outside the official authorities, and the Charity gave a proper tool for that purpose. This made it possible to big companies and enterprises to join as donators or supporters to the process and help creating a new kind of national park. In the beginning Klaus Jacobs Charity donated €720 000 as seed money for the benefit and initialisation of the NP. He always wanted that at least half of this money shall be kept in the account of the Friends or paid back, and that is what has happened all the time.



Mr Klaus J. Jacobs founded the “Verein” or the Association of the Friends of Hohe Tauern NP. The organisation had since the very beginning a special function; it is the only structure in the NP organisation, which is not referring to the provincial authorities and budgets. It’s main purpose is to promote and finance the projects, which reflect the aims of the National Park law. From the very beginning one thing has been fundamental; The Friends of Hohe Tauern NP is not here a NGO, which acts outside the park organisation. The Friends of Hohe Tauern is co-opted inside the managing organisation and it acts in the highest coordinating bod, the Park Council, in the organisation structure of the Park.

- Purpose: The purpose of the Association, the activities of which are **not-for-profit**, is to **promote environmental and nature conservation**, along with **scientific research**, **environmental education**, and the protection and preservation of **cultural assets**.
- Aim: To **promote and finance projects** in such areas as ecology, nature conservation, scientific research, environmental education, the protection and preservation of cultural assets, in conjunction with the development of the Hohe Tauern National Park in each and every instance.
- Orientation towards the **National Park as a whole** (rather than individual federal provinces).

In the organisation, the park director and the executive director of the Friends can be and today really is a one person, like myself. This is according the accepted mandates of regional and national authorities. The Friends are co-opted in the Park Council, so Friends are really there, where the plans and decisions are made. It is the official funding part of the Hohe Tauern NP. It is not another NGO working against or pro the park. It is orientated towards the park goals dividing the park objectives.

Klaus Jacobs asked me in the very beginning, if I could take this double role, which I accepted after getting clear acceptances from the provincial and republic authorities and politicians. This organisation proved to be very successful, it saved resources and made many processes like information management and project development more functional.

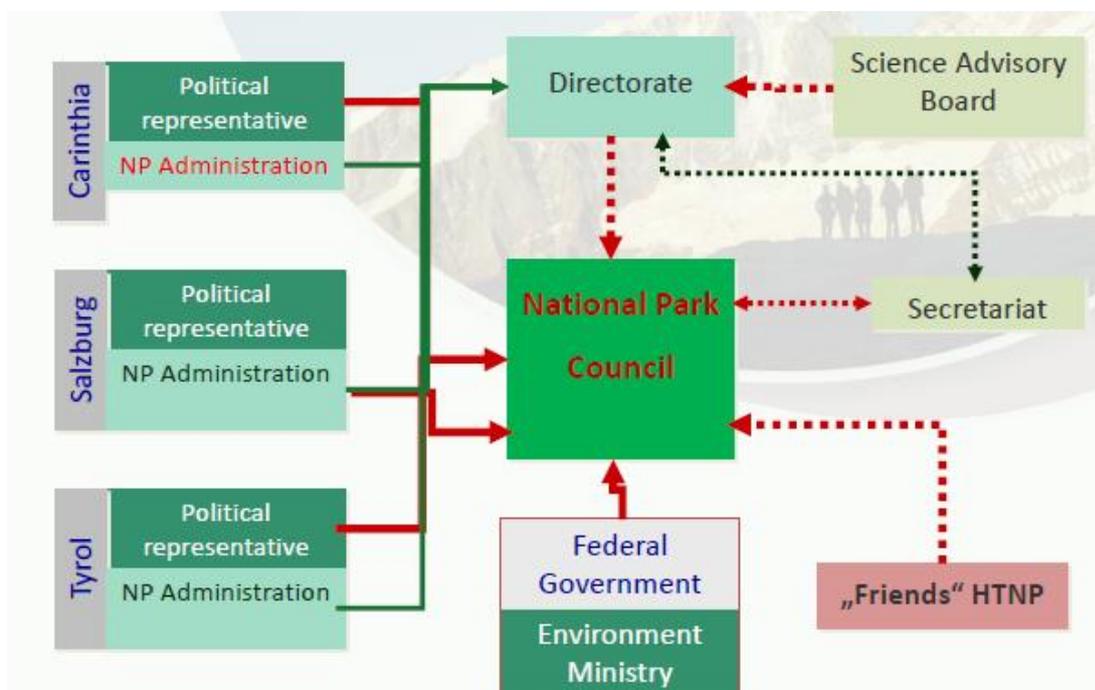


Figure 4. The Organisation of the Hohe Tauern NP Administration – Friends have position in the NP Council as a co-opted member.

Our managers live and work separately in long distances. They and our many authorities and partners on national level meet annually. It has been very complicated to bring them together in once a year meeting, which normally takes place in Vienna. We did not like that but we had to except it. It was clear that it takes five hours to come to the Park from Vienna, so Vienna was an easy compromise. But we developed the meeting model and now we once a year try to bring the Partners out to the park for half a day Assembly meeting and one day outdoor excursion with all the park managers. These partners and enterprises, they are willing to donate money for projects but they are not willing to pay of administration. And it is very difficult to keep administration low. That is why there is only me and one half time secretary doing the work for the Friends. So we invite the Partners once a year to the Park and show, what we are doing and what are the outcomes.

In the General Assembly meetings we invite also interesting persons to give a presentation about important state of art matters, persons like ministers, scientists etc. Sometimes we even have the President of Republic in the meeting. The new model for Assembly meetings has been a real success. The meeting is always either the last week in June or the first week in July. This is the time the partners may come and they do not care if the weather is good or bad. They can take it on the summertime.



Figure 5.  
The General Assembly has one meeting annually. The official meeting is organised in Vienna  
Photo: Hohe Tauern NP Archive.



Figure 6.  
We have developed also one meeting for important Partners. That meeting is held in the Park including also a field excursion. This has been a success for the important networking between park managers and the external administrators and partners.

What we have learnt:

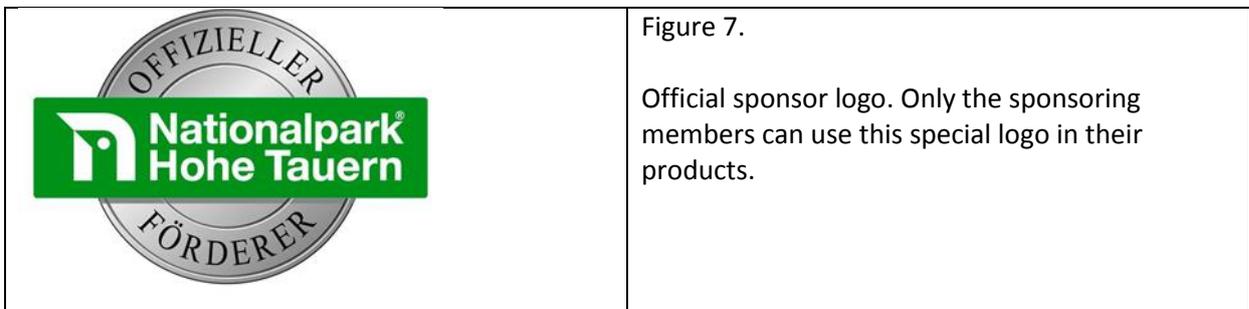
We have to bring a very clear structure in the organisation to make a proper position and role to our Friends. There we have three types of memberships:

- **Organisation members**; they are really involved in the organisation, most of them are the founding members who have invested to the Friends min €500 000 in 5 years. Four organisation members exists.

- **Sponsoring members;** most important members donating in average about €10 000/year. Only the sponsoring members can use the Friends logo. We have had long discussions about ethics of publishing the logos of sponsoring members. After that the ethical rules are clear and no complaints have occurred.
- **Individual members;** some 3000 members , membership fee €10/year plus possible donations , all around the country, difficult to enlarge this number.

The sponsoring concept has been thoroughly discussed and defined. There we have these rules:

- **Community document** of the Association of Friends and National Park Council.
- **Sponsoring = partnership** (value added for both sides).
- **Integral part** of the strategy of Corporate Social Responsibility (PR & communication instrument).
- No Greenwashing accepted.
- **Rights and obligations** clearly regulated.



Supporting members have donated all together for park information and project development about €11 mill in 22 years. This resource is earned by the Friends and used on behalf of the Park development.



Figure 8. The Nationalpark Magazine is the key tool for delivering important information of nature and culture and the projects of Hohe Tauern NP. It is crucial also for awareness rising for the people living in the park regions.

It is most important that the Friends since 1994 have published an official Park Magazine annually, together with the park administration. The Friends always have two pages in the Magazine for our info. We carefully want to avoid greenwashing. The Friend's pages are only open to our members, not to the other companies. We publish 750 000 copies per each number, 3 issues per year, all households in the park region receive it, and 3000 copies go outside the park provinces. We have received a very positive customer evaluation; key message being "do not change anything".



Figure 9. Wilhelm Swarovski's observation tower in the high mountain in the vicinity of Grossglockner on Kaiser-Franz-Josefs-Höhe is an effective information point for public awareness rising. . In 2015 there visited 70 000 visitors. Photo: Hohe Tauern NP Archive.

#### What we are doing in projects:

Education and Youth projects: Claus Jacobs donated millions to young people. That is also important to Friends.

- Swarovsky projects for environmental education: Water School with Swarovsky 1999, mobile school for children in age 9-11. In schools with rangers. The project was launched and protected by by a former Austrian president. Some 65000 children participated in the training. Project was a part of the international strategy of Swarovsky company in seven countries like Austria, India. China, Brasil, Uganda



Figure 10. Water school

- Since September 1999 (with interruptions)
- Mobile school
- For classes of schoolchildren aged 8 to 11
- Four days of lessons, four hours each
- National Park Rangers as teachers
- Free offer to schools

**Aim: To make children 'Water Ambassadors'**

- Climate school: We adapted the educational model from the Water school project. Park rangers are going to schools. With the funding support for the Climate school the Park can offer 10 rangers job all year round. In the beginning park had so many conflicts so we wanted to go to schools and talk to the teachers and children. One ranger has responsibility of several schools.
- Junior rangers program together with EUROPARC.

Biodiversity and genetic protection projects:

- Vulture project in several countries: About 200 birds were alive in different zoos. Then together with French and Italians we could do this project.
- *Ibex capra* project: Ibex introduced back to Hohe Tauern.
- Native trout project: The Park could do this only with Friends support in some selected rivers.

See more of the projects in my power-point presentation and in Friends' homepages.

#### **Summary of the key lessons learned:**

1. You need strong personalities in the lead for the partnerships. Strong personalities and personal commitment is a critical factor for success.
2. You have to convince the partners and sponsors by yourself. For that you need good network to open the doors for meetings. These good numbers in resources and development connections are because of the Friends. They have the extra resources and they have the necessary degrees of freedom and have earned the confidence of the partners because they are not administrative actors of the government.
3. Hohe Tauern National Park itself is a very strong product. Everybody know it in Austria. We want to keep that status alive. NP is a product, which shall be kept strong. All the parks are important in the conservation of natural and cultural heritage. But some NPs can have a very important role in national development or rural economy.

**Appendix 1.** Presentation with powerpoint slides in PDF format; see the next file on the list in <http://www.ukko-kolinystavat.fi/pages/in-english.php>.

**See more in internet:**

<http://www.tauernfreund.at/der-verein>

<http://www.tauernfreund.at/projekte>

<http://www.tauernfreund.at/sponsoren>