



Partnering for biodiversity conservation on landfill sites



The business case

As part of its reputational risk management, SITA France is developing different programs aiming to conserve biodiversity on its landfill sites. These initiatives include field programs, such as the Red Kite conservation project, and development of new methodologies designed to better assess impacts on biodiversity and consequently better monitor conservation and rehabilitation actions.

The issue

SITA France, a GDF SUEZ group company, is specialized in waste management. From collection to recycling, treatment, and landfill operations, it manages a great number of facilities across France. Landfills impact ecosystems since they occupy large areas of non-developed land and can induce changes in the population equilibrium by being a foreign source of food for local fauna. As the company depends on public acceptance to secure its license to operate, SITA France needs to mitigate its impact on local biodiversity and to show active involvement in biodiversity conservation. It has designed different projects to respond to these objectives.

The response

Program 1 – A biodiversity quality index to assess biodiversity conservation plans

Implementation of conservation plans in and around landfills, and restoration measures after exploitation require the understanding of specific local stakes for each landfill. However, there is currently no simple standardized, ready-made tool that allows this analysis. SITA France has therefore decided to develop a tool that could help to assess the ecological quality of the sites, with the objective of tracking the effects of conservation and implementing restoration measures on its landfill sites in a standardized way.

Developing a standardized evaluation – Biodiversity Quality Index

In cooperation with the French Natural History Museum (MNHN), SITA France has developed a Biodiversity Quality Index (BQI) for landfill sites that was tested on 20 of its French sites. The BQI allows the assessment of landfill sites ecological quality, giving them a score out of 100. The Index is the result of the evaluation of several variables used to characterize the ecological interest of all types of sites. According to the results of standardized field investigations, each variable is given a mark, which is then totalled to produce a global biodiversity quality score.

This Index is a decision-making tool to improve biodiversity management on landfill sites: the mark attributed to each variable allows the determination of weaknesses and strengths of actual land management, and is thus used to define the objectives of biodiversity management plans on landfill sites. The follow-up of these variables will be a measure of the effectiveness of biodiversity management plans, which can be adapted every year, if necessary.



Red kite, *Milvus milvus*. © Christian Aussaguel, LPO

Program 2 – Red Kite conservation on landfill sites

SITA France operates over 80 landfill sites in France, and has a key role to play regarding the conservation of the Red Kite. This great long-winged European bird is threatened due to a number of reasons such as intensive agriculture which eradicates its potential prey and degrades its habitat, or collisions with cars and electric cables.

A two-fold program: direct actions and sensitization

In order to contribute to the conservation of the Red Kite species, SITA France established a partnership with the French Bird Protection League (LPO) in 2008. Several feeding platforms were built in 2009 and adequate food was supplied during the winter months in order to maintain juveniles which could not yet migrate in good health. Landfill site staff were also trained in raptor identification so they could contribute to data collection and knowledge about Kite species. Action to safeguard this species also includes sensitization, in which scholars and the general public are invited to the landfill sites at least every year to observe Red Kites, learn about its ecology and the causes of its decline, so they can in turn join the conservation efforts.

The historical presence of Red Kites on landfills is an opportunity for SITA France to involve its employees in the conservation of this species and also to inform the general public about its actions to protect biodiversity.

The results

These two examples demonstrate the company's involvement in conserving biodiversity on its landfill sites, whether it is through field projects (Red Kite conservation) or elaboration of structured methodology (Biodiversity Quality Index). These initiatives are critical to the acceptance of landfills at regional and national levels, and are therefore the key to strengthening SITA France's future activities.



Centre landfill, © Philippe Gourdain, MNHN

FURTHER INFORMATION

Anna-Maria Llorens
anna-maria.llorens@sita.fr

Carole Bloquet
carole.bloquet@sita.fr