

ENGLISH TRANSLATION  
PRELIMINARY EDITION

REGULATIONS ON NATURE CONSERVATION

No. 205/1973.

On Nature Conservation Committees.

Art. 1.

In each county, town, and in the city of Reykjavik a nature conservation committee of three to seven members shall act. The county, town, or city council decides up on the number of principal committee members in each district, elects them and appoints a chairman, elects the same number of alternates, and provides them with necessary working facilities. The term of office of principals and alternates shall be four years.

Art. 2.

The election of a nature conservation committee shall be reported to the Nature Conservation Council immediately after the election.

Art. 3.

The role of the nature conservation committees is to further nature conservation in their district. They shall take the initiative in promoting public appreciation of the value of nature conservation and an unspoiled environment. Nature conservation committees shall keep close watch to prevent any act which might spoil the country's natural environment, in violation of the provisions and instructions contained in law, i.a. through the following measures:

Observe vehicular traffic off the road and public conduct in uninhabited areas, and make recommendations to the Nature Conservation Council or other proper authorities for improvements where damage has been caused by such traffic or where this may be imminent.

Maintain inspection to ensure that the provisions in Art. 13 of the Nature Conservation Act concerning disposal of solid waste and refuse are upheld, and make recommendations for improvements to local authorities.

Prevent damage to vegetation and the pollution of water, cf. Articles 10, 11 and 37 of these Regulations.

Oversee that objects, buildings, and other constructions do not deteriorate from neglect, cf. Art. 15 of the Nature Conservation Act.

Pass an opinion on the mining of building materials, cf. Art. 17 of the same Act.

Ensure that any site which has been disturbed by construction work or the mining of building materials be repaired and left in good order.

Oversee the removal of any roadside advertisements or billboards erected in violation of the provisions of Art. 19 of the Nature Conservation Act, and report to the Nature Conservation Council in case of doubt.

Ensure that the provisions of Art. 20 of the Nature Conservation Act concerning free passage of pedestrians are observed.

Advise local authorities on the construction of summer houses, cf. Art. 19-23 of these Regulations.

Enhance the opportunities of the public for outdoor recreation in accordance with the provisions of Art. 27 of the Nature Conservation Act.

Offer advice and comments to the Nature Conservation Council on the preservation of notable natural phenomena, the establishment of recreation areas and the implementation of nature conservation measures.

#### Art. 4.

The Nature Conservation Council can charge nature conservation committees with the task of supervising protected areas, and the Council is authorized to grant them power to make exemptions from regulations.

Such tasks can also be given to other parties in a particularly good position to look after the protected areas.

#### Art. 5.

Nature conservation committees shall submit annual reports on their activities to county, town, or city councils. A copy of the report shall be sent to the Nature Conservation Council.

#### Art. 6.

If a nature conservation committee considers actions or projects to be in violation of the provisions of the Nature Conservation Act, or that such actions are imminent, the committee shall immediately report this to the proper authorities and to the Nature Conservation Council, if the committee believes there is reason to do so.

Art. 7.

Nature conservation committees shall co-operate with voluntary organisations interested in nature conservation.

On Public Conduct and Right of Access to Nature.

Art. 8.

Everyone is entitled to a free passage through and stay in areas lying outside the property of registered farms, such as outlying pasture areas and commons, provided the purpose of such passage or stay is legitimate.

Pedestrians may pass through privately owned areas provided such land has not been cultivated and is unfenced, and provided also that their presence does not disturb livestock, or cause inconvenience to those utilizing the land.

In the event that the land has been cultivated or fenced, passage through it shall be subject to the permission of those in charge of the land in question.

Art. 9.

The free passage of pedestrians must not be hindered by placing buildings, fences or other constructions on beaches, lake shores, or river banks.

These provisions shall not apply to buildings or constructions which are necessary for the conduct of economic activities, including the private dwellings of farmers, nor to those buildings or constructions which are erected with the permission of the appropriate authorities in planned areas, nor shall they apply to constructions which were erected prior to the coming into force of the present law.

Ladders may be erected to allow passage over fences which are inevitable and are authorized, cf. Art. 11, 20 and 27 of the Nature Conservation Act.

Art. 10.

Everyone is allowed to pick berries in areas lying outside the property of registered farms.

In uncultivated areas everyone is allowed to pick berries for immediate consumption.

The use of tools or implements for picking berries is prohibited if there is reason to fear that this may cause damage to vegetation. The Nature Conservation Council may forbid the use of such specified tools.

Art. 11.

Everyone shall take care in his dealings with the nature of the country in order to avoid unnecessary damage.

In the open countryside it is prohibited to throw away or leave behind refuse, which can constitute danger or defilement, or deposit such waste into the sea, on beaches, into rivers, lakes or streams.

Rest areas shall at all times be left clean and tidy, and nothing must be left behind which despoils the environment.

Travellers shall take care not to throw away containers or wrappings or other such refuse by the side of roads or trails.

It is forbidden to accumulate rubbish into heaps in public places or by roadsides. Garbage heaps must be kept in such a condition that objects can neither blow nor float away.

Vegetation must not be damaged or ruined unnecessarily, either by the tearing up of moss, heaths, or shrubs, or in any other manner.

Wherever a fire is lit in the open, this shall be done either in a specially prepared hearth, or on soil of a type where there is no danger of its spreading. Care shall be taken that the fire has been entirely extinguished before leaving the site.

Care shall be taken everywhere that neither water supplies, running water or lakes are damaged or polluted through careless handling of substances or objects.

All inscriptions on natural features are forbidden.

Art. 12.

All unnecessary vehicle traffic outside roads or marked trails is forbidden, where there is danger that such an action will cause damage to the natural environment. Necessary traffic in such areas shall cause no unnecessary damage or defilement to the land.

The Nature Conservation Council will issue regional rules concerning vehicular traffic along marked routes in uninhabited areas of the country.

In rest areas vehicles shall at all times be parked in areas which have been staked out or marked for such use. Obstructions or markers,

which demarcate such areas must not be moved for the purpose of by-passing them.

The owners or operators of buses and coaches are required to acquaint their passengers with rules of conduct stipulated in laws and regulations on nature conservation.

#### Art. 13.

Owners of buildings, beached ships, motor vehicles, machinery or constructions, such as fences, which have been abandoned or left in neglect, are required to remove them.

In the event that a farm is abandoned, its owner is required to leave all farm buildings, fences, water wells and other constructions in such condition that they do not blemish the surroundings or endanger man or beast. These provisions apply equally to other constructions which have been abandoned and not removed.

The local authorities shall see to that the provisions of this Article are followed and if necessary carry out the required cleaning and improvements at the owner's expense.

#### Art. 14.

In open-air gathering places, recreation areas, public parks and in other places where the public may gather, sanitary facilities shall be installed prior to such places being taken into use.

Health ordinances shall be followed in the design and construction of sanitary equipment.

Health ordinances and the provisions of Art. 11 of these Regulations shall also be followed concerning all refuse, as well as usage and supervision of such installations.

Furthermore the provisions contained in Articles 13 and 14 of the Nature Conservation Act shall be adhered to and no larger group of people allowed to convene in one place than the vegetation and environment can support without serious damage. Damages brought about by overcrowding must be repaired by those who are responsible for it.

It is prohibited to hold a meeting, allow camping, or permit people to stay in an area which has not been cleaned after a public gathering. The landowner or his tenant are responsible for the enforcement of the provisions of this chapter.

On Roadside Billboards.

Art. 15.

It is prohibited to erect advertising billboards by the roadside or elsewhere outside densely populated areas. Unobtrusive advertising of business operations, services or goods on sale shall be permitted on the property where such activity or production takes place.

Signposts providing guidance on routes, the names of farms, rest areas, national parks and protected areas do not come under the provisions of this Article.

Art. 16.

The term property, according to the provisions of these Regulations, shall constitute the buildings, their adjoining grounds or similar areas of work, as well as the fences surrounding them.

A densely populated area, according to the provisions of these Regulations, shall mean an uninterrupted inhabited area, which has been built according to an approved or ratified planning project.

Art. 17.

Should the owners of services wish to erect signs for the guidance of travellers, they are permitted to erect standardized signs, which are determined by Regulations on traffic signs, and in locations approved by the State Road Administration, the Chief of Police and the Nature Conservation Council, and are authorized by the rules governing the making of such signs.

Art. 18.

The Nature Conservation Council makes proposals to the Ministry of Justice as to what services may be advertised in this manner, and what rules shall, at any given time, apply to each sign.

On the Building of Summer Houses.

Art. 19.

The term summer house in these Regulations, shall mean a house erected for the purpose of being a dwelling place during the summer, but only occasionally in winter, such as on week-ends.

These provisions apply equally to mountain rest-houses, fishing- or hunting-lodges, ski-huts and similar buildings.

Art. 20.

The building of a summer house is prohibited without the permission of the local authority concerned.

An application for a permit to build a summer house shall state the location of the house or houses in question, its design and appearances such as whether it is to be built of concrete or wood, what its colour will be, and other such details which influence how the house will fit into its surroundings.

Municipal authorities shall always seek the opinion of the nature conservation committee prior to the granting of a permission to build a summer house.

Art. 21.

If the construction of a group of summer houses is intended, a plan of the project, in addition to the items listed in Art. 20, shall accompany the application to the local authorities.

The local authorities concerned shall always seek the opinion of the Nature Conservation Council concerning applications for the construction of groups of summer houses.

Art. 22.

Local authorities shall make it a condition for issuing a permit to build a summer house, that the applicant will follow their instructions concerning the choice of site, the design of the house or houses, and also that the instructions of the health authorities concerning the construction of water tanks, oil tanks, lavatories and the disposal of all kinds of waste and refuse, which could cause pollution or serve to blemish the environment.

Art. 23.

In case someone builds a summer house without the permission of the local authority concerned, or does not adhere to the conditions set by the municipality, it can demand that the Chief of Police put the building to a stand-still whatever stage it may have reached, and that all construction already erected be pulled down and removed.

The municipality shall immediately notify those responsible for the construction, either by telegram or by registered letter of its demand to the Chief of Police that the building project be stopped. The owner shall be notified in the same manner if the municipality demands that a summer house be removed.

On Declaration of Protection.

Art. 24.

The Nature Conservation Council shall with the aid of the nature conservation committees and other parties concerned collect information on natural features deemed worthy of protection as well as areas in which it may become desirable to establish nature reserves, recreation areas, or national parks. The Nature Conservation Council compiles a register of such natural features and areas, and makes this known by publication as it deems necessary.

Art. 25.

In the register of natural features there shall be a record of all information concerning natural features and areas which may be considered necessary for their protection or conservation, such as the rights of ownership and usage, desirable boundaries, conservation value, imminent threats and desirable measures for their protection.

Art. 26.

If the Nature Conservation Council finds reason to declare protection or to implement other conservation measures, it shall endeavour to reach an agreement with landowners, local authorities and other parties whose interests are involved.

If an agreement is reached, this shall be recorded and confirmed by all concerned.

Art. 27.

If the Nature Conservation Council decides to declare a protected area without having previously obtained the approval of owners or other rightholders, or the municipality concerned, the Council shall draw up a proposal for such a declaration.

This proposal shall be sent to landowners, occupants and other rightholders, who may be affected by this action, as well as to the local authority concerned.

They shall be given the opportunity to pass an opinion on the declaration of protection, present objections or submitting claims for compensation from the Nature Conservation Council within a period of four months. The proposal shall, furthermore, state that no claims will be recognized after this time.

Art. 28.

If objections or claims for compensation are received, the Nature Conservation Council can again attempt to reach an agreement on such claims and alter the terms of the declaration of protection according to the objection, provided the alteration in no way impairs the rights of others.

Art. 29.

Decisions of the Nature Conservation Council concerning protection or declaration of protection do not come into force until approved by the Ministry of Culture and Education.

Art. 30.

The Ministry of Culture and Education has the authority to expropriate land, constructions and rights in order to execute conservation measures provided for in the Nature Conservation Act.

Art. 31.

When a final decision has been reached in accordance with Art. 29, concerning declarations of and provisions for protection, the Ministry of Culture and Education will publish these in the Law and Ministerial Gazette. They take effect on the day of publication. They shall also be posted on the site in so far as the Nature Conservation Council finds this practical and necessary.

Art. 32.

The text of an announcement declaring the protection of a site or area shall always make reference to the relevant article of law. This shall also contain a description of boundaries and regulations for the area. A plan of the area, showing its boundaries and principal landmarks shall always be published with the announcement.

On Earth Removal and the Design of Construction Projects.

Art. 33.

In public land all excavation of earth materials listed under Article 34 below is prohibited without permission from the Ministry of Culture and Education, after prior consultation with the Nature Conservation Council.

Art. 34.

Anyone is permitted to mine gravel, sand, rock, scoria and pumice on his estate, provided that Articles 22 to 26 and the Nature Conservation Act are observed.

The local authority concerned may, having sought the opinion of the nature conservation committee, prohibit any mining if it is of the opinion that this will disturb unusual landscape or noteworthy natural phenomena.

The decision of the local authority may be appealed to the Ministry of Culture and Education which passes final judgement on the matter, having received the opinion of the Nature Conservation Council.

Art. 35.

Material for road construction shall be subject to the Road Act.

Art. 36.

If the landscape has been disturbed through construction works, the excavation of gravel, sand, rock, scoria or by other activities of man, those who have caused such disturbance of the landscape shall be required to restore the site. The Nature Conservation Council shall issue instructions on the condition in which sites shall be left, and can i.e. set a time limit within which restoration work shall be completed.

In areas subject to planning regulations, the local authority concerned, upon the approval of the State Planning Authority, may prohibit the removal of earth materials, rock, or other major earth moving or mining, if such action is considered likely to cause disruption leading to soil erosion, or to substantial difficulties in the implementation of current planning or in designing plans for the area for later implementation. In the same way a local authority can, with the approval of the State Planning Authority, make it a condition for the withdrawal of such a decision that the area, from which such materials are removed, will upon the completion of the work in question, be restored in accordance with the requirements of the local authority and demand a reasonable guarantee for the fulfilment of this requirement.

The landowner, or his lessee, shall be responsible for the compliance with the provisions of this article.

Art. 37.

In case there is danger that a projected construction activity or earthmoving will cause (1) a substantial change in landscape, (2) damage of noteworthy natural features, (3) pollution of air or water, or (4) damage to vegetation, then it is obligatory to seek the opinion of the Nature Conservation Council before starting work on the project in question.

Art. 38.

When electric power works, factories, highways, large bridges or other major construction projects are being designed, as well as roads and overhead lines connected with such developments, this shall always be done in consultation with the Nature Conservation Council. The Council shall be informed of the projected development in its initial stage and prior to undertaking costly preparatory research or taking other action which affect the final decisions.

Art. 39.

The executive parties to a construction project shall be responsible for seeking the advice of the Nature Conservation Council in accordance with the provisions of Articles 37 and 38.

Art. 40.

In the event that someone commences a construction project, cf. Articles 37 and 38, without having sought an opinion, then the Nature Conservation Council, or a nature conservation committee, can demand that the Chief of Police stop the work in progress, subject to a daily fine, until an opinion has been passed, provided always that the Nature Conservation Council expedite the matter under consideration without undue delay. The Nature Conservation Council shall notify those in charge of the construction project concerned, by telegram or registered letter, that cessation has been demanded.

On Penalties.

Art. 41.

Violation of the provisions of these Regulations shall be subject to fines reverting to the State Treasury or to imprisonment.

If a party concerned does not, within a specified time limit, heed the orders of a local authority, a nature conservation committee or the Nature Conservation Council, the Chief of Police may decide to impose upon him a daily fine of up to 2.000.- Krónur, until redress has been made. Such fines shall revert to the State Treasury.

These Regulations, issued in accordance with the Nature Conservation Act, No. 47/1971 shall enter into force forthwith.

The Ministry of Culture and Education,  
June 21st, 1973.

Magnús Torfi Ólafsson.

Birgir Thorlacius.