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BETREFT Summary NCA audit report Compensation for damage to nature areas

Compensation for damage to nature areas. Follow up audit of the protection of nature areas

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1 Conclusions

More nature compensation but new nature not always protected effectively

Both developers on the one hand and municipalities and provinces on the other are now paying more attention to nature compensation, especially during the preparatory phases. It is usually determined in advance how and where a construction project will damage nature and how and where compensation will be provided. The protection of newly developed nature areas, however, is not yet effectively arranged. It is therefore not certain whether new nature areas are of acceptable quality or whether they will remain intact in the longer term.

Supervision of compliance still inadequate

Supervision of compliance with the nature compensation requirement is still inadequate. Responsibility for supervision is not yet properly arranged. In consequence, it is uncertain whether the measures taken actually produce sustainable and permanent compensation for damaged nature areas.

Nature compensation not yet properly registered

The provinces do not have a good oversight of the current situation regarding nature compensation. In so far as they do register nature compensation, they do not do so uniformly and the information accordingly cannot be compared. As a result, the State Secretary for Economic Affairs, who is responsible for nature management, cannot form an overall impression of the situation and cannot monitor how nature areas of national or European importance are protected.



No up-to-date national map of protected nature areas

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A digital map of protected nature areas in the Netherlands is currently not publicly available. This makes it difficult for developers to determine where they must observe the nature protection regimes.

2 Recommendations

We recommend that a straightforward, up-to-date map should be compiled of protected nature areas in the Netherlands. On the basis of our audit, we took the initiative to compile our own map. The map should be kept up to date by the State Secretary for Economic Affairs and the provinces and published online in the form of open data.

We also recommend that the State Secretary for Economic Affairs:

- Give the provinces specific powers to supervise nature compensation. Such powers would complement the provinces' responsibilities for the development and management of protected nature areas.
- Ensure that nature compensation and the protection of new nature areas are properly arranged when decisions are taken on development work in protected nature areas.
- Ensure that the provinces keep comparable records of projects that damage protected nature areas, that they monitor the implementation of compensation measures and report on them publicly.

3 Response

The State Secretary for Economic Affairs agrees with our analysis that improvements are needed in the implementation of the nature compensation requirement. She also agrees that the provinces should have the powers necessary to supervise nature compensation. She accepts all our recommendations and has made a series of undertakings. We trust that the State Secretary will inform the House of Representatives in the near future about how she will fulfil them. In particular, we hope she will clarify who will take the initiative to work with the provinces on the compilation of a simple map of all protected nature areas in the Netherlands and state when it will be published in the form of open data.