

Best practice execution: Area rehabilitation with waste prevention features

Date: 2017.06.24.

Location: Róka-hegy nature preserve, Budapest



Róka-hegy is located in the capital of Hungary, North-Buda side. It is a limestone formation where there used to be mining activities. Today it is a nature reserve and a very popular place to walk around or barbecue. The place has dedicated fireplaces, benches, tables, waste bins and even a nature trail, but where there are many people, unfortunately there will be amortization and littering, as well. The idea was to rehabilitate the place with the help of the local community. To make sure everything is going according to environmental and conservation rules, conservation officers from the law enforcement of the capital's municipality were present during the whole volunteer action.

The action was organized by Humusz together with its member organization from the Zero Waste Network, Zöldövezet Környezetvédelmi Társulás Egyesület. The volunteers came from a workplace near the location within a CSR program together with volunteers from the civil organizations helping out and coordinating the work of the others.

The main tasks that the volunteers had to deal with were the following:

- Cleaning out the fireplaces
- Making new bird nesting boxes
- Making new table and benches
- Repairing old benches
- Making waste bin
- Cleaning up the territory
- Repainting the nature trail signs

It was very important to prepare everything beforehand: laying out the tools so they are easily accessible, organizing the tasks and making sure everything needed is there. Therefore, the organizers and few volunteers had to start the work earlier. When the other volunteers arrived after a short summary of the tasks and their importance, a presentation was given for accident prevention. They were split into groups and in every group there was a coordinator making sure everything goes as planned.



It was a quite warm summer day so it was crucial to provide enough drinks and for the hard work a few snacks for the volunteers. Naturally the buffet was waste reduced: water was brought from a nearby pump, soda and sirup came in reusable packaging and reusable cups and plates were used. At the “base” separate waste collecting point were set.



Cleaning up

Fortunately the territory wasn't that bad regarding littering as anticipated. However, there was still a lot to work on. During the waste picking it was already collected separately so materials still recyclable (plastic, metal, glass) could be handled accordingly.



Tables, benches

A new table with two benches was placed. However, the work was really tough as huge holes had to be dug for the poles and the earth was really rocky (as it was an old limestone mine). The wood materials were treated with environmentally friendly substances.



Boxes for birds

From end boards new boxes were built for birds to build nests inside. The holes where the birds can fly in were specified by the conservation officers so certain bird species can just use them. They were placed by the instructions of the officers.



Making a new waste bin

The waste from the territory is normally collected by the company which takes care of the parks. Ideally people don't bring and leave their wastes there rather take them home with them, but the practice shows that littering is still a problem and it is better to have more bins outside. The bin project was a side project as it was made using the pallet that remained after all the other activities. Therefore, the waste bin was made from recycled material not only serving as a thing to place waste inside, but as a good example of the creative use of waste.



Painting the study trail and cleaning up the fireplaces

As the territory is a nature preserve it has a nature trail which needs repainting from time to time. Apart from hiking there is the possibility to use the designated fireplaces. However, they fill up with ashes after a while and needs to be cleaned up otherwise people start to make fire somewhere else. Around the fireplace that was cleaned up from the remaining materials the old log-seats got new boards so they can function as benches.





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Summary

The best practice example we wanted to show is how the local community can work to make their neighborhood a better place. The area rehabilitation had many purposes: to clean up the territory, to make it look nicer so people would treat it and appreciate it better and to connect the locals to their environment. While doing so there was a huge emphasis on waste reduction: using reusable tableware, recycling, repairing things instead of throwing them out, using leftover materials (recycling of another sort). The results speak for themselves: the place looks nicer and the volunteers enjoyed the work.