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Reviews of Web Sites: Web sites on the European Alps and Southern Alps of New Zealand

Author: Zimmermann, Anne B.

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Web sites on the European Alps and Southern Alps of New Zealand

As pointed out several times in this issue, there are radical differences in population density and human history in the European Alps and the Southern Alps of New Zealand. This is reflected in the amount of information available on both mountain areas on the Internet. While many institutional organizations concerned with research and development in the European Alps have a web site, there is far less New Zealand-related material except for numerous commercial sites that advertize mountain tourism in the Southern Hemisphere. The following list of sites therefore consists of a very limited selection focusing on topical issues in the European Alps, followed by a few New Zealand sites on recent national issues related to development in the Southern Alps.

Europe

CIPRA: International Commission for the Protection of the Alps
www.cipra.org
CIPRA (Commission Internationale pour la Protection des Alpes) is a very active organization that promotes the exchange of information and experience at many different levels. It organizes an annual conference, has established a summer academy to promote further education and interdisciplinarity (see the report in this issue), publishes an electronic newsletter, supports the Alliance in the Alps (see below), and has developed an action plan to promote implementation of the Alpine Convention (presented by Martin Price in *MRD* 20(2), pp 192–194). The site can be accessed in 4 languages: French, German, Italian, and Slovenian.

SOIA: Alpine Convention in English
alpamayo.ei.jrc.it
This web site provides information on the System for the Observation of and Information on the Alps (SOIA), a network set up to achieve information goals defined in the Alpine Convention. The SOIA, occasionally referred to as the Alpine Observatory, has taken the form of a network consisting of 8 national communication centers designated by each of the Alpine states and completed by a coordination unit, located in the Joint Research Center in Ispra (Italy), which also acts as a communication center for the European Community. The value of the web site is related not so much to the SOIA, as information does not seem to have been updated since 1999, but lies in the fact that the site offers an English version of the Alpine Convention.

International Centre for Alpine Environments
perso.club-internet.fr/icalpe
ICALPE is a scientific international nongovernmental organization based in France. It seeks to promote a holistic and scientific approach for better integration of conservation and development in the mountains of Europe, especially in Corsica. It has established a network of individuals and institutions that contribute to knowledge about mountain environments and maintain contacts with the European states and international bodies (IUCN, UNESCO, FAO, Council of Europe, European Union, European Science Foundation, etc).

Major objectives are to build and coordinate research programs, facilitate exchange of experience, and disseminate knowledge among the public and decision-makers. Many programs have been carried out on key issues of sustainable development in European mountains, such as the impact of climate change, forest dynamics and management, land use changes, quality of rivers and groundwater, trends in biodiversity, tourism, and the environment, and desertification in the Mediterranean.

Swiss Alpine Studies and ICAS
www.alpinestudies.unibe.ch
The Swiss Alpine Studies site is presented by the Interacademic Commission on Alpine Studies (ICAS) and is supported by the Swiss Academy of Natural Sciences, the Swiss Academy of Humanities, and the Swiss Federal Office for Environment, Forests, and Landscape. ICAS aims to promote inter- and transdisciplinary research on Alpine environments. A very useful feature of this site is the searchable database of events related to Alpine matters. The site is available only in German and French.

Euromontana
www.euromontana.org
This European association promotes cooperation between mountain regions. It brings together regional and national organizations of mountain people such as professional organizations, rural development centers, associations, regional authorities, and research institutes. It includes organizations from Western Europe as well as from Central and Eastern European countries in an effort to develop international cooperation and in anticipation of the expansion of the European Union. Euromontana also collaborates with other organizations involved in the promotion of mountain areas and is associated with several official European and international programs.

"Alliance in the Alps" Network
www.alpenallianz.org
Alliance in the Alps is an organization of local authorities (villages, towns) from all Alpine countries in Europe. Its main objective is to implement the Alpine Convention, that is, promote sustainable development in Alpine villages and towns. This is achieved through regular and intensive exchange of information and experience. Alliance in the Alps also offers know-how about promoting sustainable development on site. True to

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the historical and cultural variety in the Alps, information on this web site is available in 4 Alpine languages: French, German, Italian, and Slovenian.

ALPENFORUM: International Society for the Promotion of Alpine Interests
www.alpenforum.org
ALPENFORUM (Internationaler Verein zur Förderung alpenländischer Interessen) was founded in 1995 as an international and independent nonprofit organization located in Murau (Austria). It aims to promote and implement sustainable development in the (European) Alps, improve social and economic conditions, help conserve and protect fragile Alpine ecosystems and nature as an asset, and preserve cultural values and heritage. ALPENFORUM brings together members from all economic sectors and all political levels. Subjects discussed at conferences include development of Alpine tourism and winter sports, disaster management, perception of development in the Alps by their inhabitants, health management in recreational projects, etc.

REGIONALP (European Commission)
www.alp-info.net
This is the European Commission site devoted to Regional Development and Spatial Planning in the Alpine Space. REGIONALP is a political and strategic project with the objective of helping the Alpine space (with its special development requirements and challenges) to improve its position at the EU regional policy level but also within the countries concerned. The project promotes the lively exchange of information and opinions between representatives of regional and national administrative offices, spatial planning and regional development experts, and the Alpine organizations from the entire (Eastern) Alpine space (REGIONALP partners).

New Zealand

Implementation of Agenda 21, Chapter 13 in New Zealand
www.un.org/esa/earthsummit/newze-cp.htm
On this United Nations (UN) site, New Zealand presents a review of the progress made by 1997 in implementing Agenda 21 since the 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development in Rio. The section on implementation of Chapter 13 (often called "Mountain Agenda") shows that this was not a national priority at the time. The section refers the reader back to chapter 12, "Managing Fragile Ecosystems: Combating Desertification and Drought," where strategies to combat drought in the South Island High Country are mentioned.

Ngai Tahu and Aoraki/Mt Cook
www.ngaitahu.iwi.nz
Ngai Tahu *iwi* is the main indigenous (Maori) tribe on the South Island of New Zealand. The details of the 1986 Ngai Tahu Waitangi Tribunal Claim that led to the 1997 Crown Settlement Offer are presented in this well-structured and informative web site. The site (see www.ngaitahu.iwi.nz/claim.htm) also offers insight into the nature of the Settlement and its implementation. *MRD* readers will find the explanations about the return of Aoraki (named Mt Cook by the colonial government) to the tribe particularly interesting. As a symbol of its commitment to comanagement of areas of high historical, cultural, and conservation value, Ngai Tahu *iwi* will gift Aoraki—the highest peak in New Zealand—to the nation.

Tussock Grassland Management Information System
www.tussocks.net.nz/index.html
The Tussock Grassland Management Information System is owned by all those involved in the management and use of the tussock grasslands of New Zealand, which cover much of the land used for agricultural purposes in the South Island High Country. The System is intended to serve as a one-stop information shop for land managers, policy-makers, and other interested groups and as a framework that can be used by scientists, land managers, and policy-makers to refine existing or add new knowledge to the system as it becomes available through ongoing research (by scientists) and monitoring programs (by land managers). The site is hosted by Landcare Research.

Anne B. Zimmermann
Assistant Editor, *MRD,* Centre for Development and Environment, University of Berne, Hallerstrasse 12, 3012 Berne, Switzerland.
azimmer@giub.unibe.ch

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