

I VARGENS SPÅR

Myndigheters handlingsutrymme i förvaltningen av
varg

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In the tracks of the wolf: The use of discretion by public officials in the management of Swedish wolf policy

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Abstract

The aim of this dissertation is to analyze how and why officers both at the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and county administrative boards (CAB) use discretion to implement the wolf policy. The study also discusses some implications of the use of discretion for the outcome of the policy in particular and the practice of public administration in general.

The Swedish Parliament decided in the spring of 2001 to ensure the long-term survival of the wolf population and enacted the Coherent Predator Policy Bill (Bill 2000/01:57). This legislation specified an interim target for the size of the wolf population expressed and created an extensive administrative program that includes wolves surveys, grants to stakeholders in order to prevent and compensate for damage, controlled hunting, delegated decision making, research on predators (their biology, habitat, behaviour, population statics, and health status), enforcement of hunting legislation and dialogue and communication with stakeholders. The Swedish EPA and the CAB are jointly responsible for implementing the policy program. In order to manage the complexities inherent in the regulation of wolf policy and in order to reach the goals provided by law, the use of discretion has become a crucial instrument used by authorities to meet the challenges.

The present study is structured by five empirical cases, each corresponding to a specific measure of the wolf regulations policy. Data has been collected during a period of two and a half years by means of a combination of several social science methods: participant observation at meetings, formal and informal interviews with administrative officials, and document studies.

The results from the case studies indicate that the main reason why authorities exercise discretion is to add to the effectiveness of what they see as insufficient and incomplete law. The second main result from the study is that officials use discretion to regulate communication with stakeholders and contacts between authorities and citizens. A further result is that the collaboration and the dialogue between the regional/local and the national administrative levels, needs to be structured and redefined by rules. The study also indicates that officers use discretion to organize their work in order to cope with pressure and attempts to influence from community groups and other stakeholders.

Key Words

Agencies discretion, implementation, wolf policy, public administration, Sweden