

First Congress on fire prevention and land management in environments bordering the Natura 2000 Network

The purpose of this document is the presentation by the Fundación Naturaleza y Hombre (FNYH - www.fnyh.org - based in Castilla y León in Estación Biológica Campanarios de Azaba, Espeja, Salamanca) of the development of the I Congress for fire prevention and land management in environments bordering the Natura 2000 Network to be held on 26 and 27 November 2020.

The activity, to be held ON-LINE due to the current pandemic situation, contributes to the promotion of environmental preservation by preventing and fighting fires through the participation of all stakeholders in the Spanish-Portuguese border and through the involvement of other projects carried out in cross-border cooperation.

Objective of the Congress

The Congress "Fire Prevention and Territorial Management in environments bordering the Natura 2000 Network" will be a unique opportunity to give visibility to the experiences implemented in the project and to discuss other intervention and prevention measures. Other Spanish-Portuguese and European experiences will be presented, allowing for the transfer and further enrichment of the results.

A working tool will be available and will enable the project to be transferred, where possible, to the whole of the first and second line areas, given that we are in the presence of a "buffer zone" which must be preserved.

The multiple and devastating fires suffered in the last decade show that this area, which is horizontal and transversal to the territory, is a priority.

The central axis of the cross-border cooperation area is the Spanish-Portuguese border in the central-western segment of Salamanca-Guarda and the northern segment of Cáceres-Castelo Branco, encompassing Campo Charro and the foothills of the Sierra de Gata.

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This is an ecological corridor that transcends administrative boundaries, alternating - on both sides of the border - oak and cork oak pastures with mature Mediterranean woodland, rocky cliffs, wooded pastures, extensive crops, river ecosystems and mid-mountain ranges covered with scrub.

This mid-mountain area, with its combination of Mediterranean mountains and foothills, forms one of the most important reservoirs of biological diversity on the Peninsula, housing priority species such as the imperial eagle, the black vulture and the Iberian lynx.

The consideration of the Iberian centre-west as a biodiversity hotspot in Europe has been endorsed by reference bodies at a global scale, such as the World Conservation Union (IUCN - www.iucn.org) or Conservation International (CI - www.conservation.org). In fact, the IUCN Centre for Mediterranean Cooperation, in its document "Regional Situation Analysis" (June, 2007), has included the target area among the main hotspots in the Mediterranean basin as a whole, while CI has included it in its priority area in the aforementioned basin.

At the same time, its special characteristics - predominantly its nature as an agro-ecosystem that has been intervened for centuries by human exploitation - make the proposed territory particularly vulnerable to factors such as arson (associated with impacts such as soil impoverishment and the clogging of riverbeds).

Therefore, its character of cross-border ecological entity and the presence of numerous protected areas as pillars of territorial structuring, together with the need, linked to the fragility of the natural heritage of the target area, determine a common Spanish-Portuguese space in which the exchange of experiences and cooperation between the managers of protected areas is essential.

Target group and objectives

This congress is aimed at the managers of natural protected areas in the Salamanca - Central Region cooperation area, adopting a broad definition of the concept of managers, namely

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those groups whose decisions and/or professional practice have a direct impact on the areas of high natural value in question.

In order to classify the above-mentioned recipients, the following three categories can be established:

- **Public sector:** Made up of elected officials and technicians linked to the environment and the management of protected areas in the target zone, from the local to the state level.
- **Civil society:** Integrated - for project purposes - by technicians from conservation NGOs, as well as by those responsible for the environmental department in sectorial representative bodies such as trade unions and business groups.
- **Scientific-technical collective:** Made up of graduates in scientific-technical disciplines related to environmental conservation and territorial planning (biologists, forest engineers, environmentalists, geographers, etc.)

As regards the objectives of the proposed activity - as stated above - it is the definition of a forum for cooperation between managers of protected areas and related groups in Salamanca (Castile-Leon) and Cáceres (Extremadura) in Spain; and the Centre Region in Portugal. From this general objective several specific goals are derived, as shown in the following diagram:

- **General objective:** To share information on nature conservation in terms of forest fire prevention and associated cooperation between managers, researchers, politicians and environmental organisations in cross-border areas in Spain and Portugal.
- **Specific Objective 1:** The exchange of experiences and transfer of good practices in the management of protected areas in the prevention of forest fires (National Parks, Natural Parks, Biosphere Reserves, Natural Reserves, etc).

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- Specific Objective 2: To establish specific and innovative measures for the protection, surveillance, detection, monitoring and prevention of fires
- Specific Objective 3: Promoting knowledge of forest fire management experiences in the proposed area of cooperation
- Specific Objective 4: Transfer of knowledge on equipment and means to facilitate and promote early action on urban and forest fires
- Specific Objective 5: To disseminate the existence of the project and give visibility to the actions of the partnership in terms of risk prevention. Involve the municipalities, parishes, councils, civil protection services and organisations in the area of fire prevention and fighting as a key aspect of territorial management.

Programme by thematic parts:

Thursday 26th November 2020

PART I: TERRITORIAL MANAGEMENT AS A TOOL FOR PROTECTION AGAINST FOREST FIRES

PART II: TOOLS AND TRANSBOUNDARY MANAGEMENT IN FOREST FIRES

Friday 27th November 2020

PART I FOREST FIRES. NATURAL HERITAGE. Ecological and social damage

PART II GOVERNMENTS, DATA AND FOREST FIRES How much progress have we made?