COUNCIL OF EUROPE CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE
Committee of Ministers
Comité des Ministres

Resolution CM/ResDip(2010)3
on the renewal of the European Diploma for Protected Areas to the National Park of Donana (Spain)

(Adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 16 september 2010
at the 1091th meeting of the Ministers' Deputies)[1]

Appendix 5: Model plan for annual reports

Annual report for the year ....

Annual reports should describe the changes that have taken place since the previous year in dynamic terms of management and function and not be limited to basic data. Any new text or map introducing a change in the situation of the area should be attached to the annual report.

State: SPAIN

Name of the area: DOÑANA NATIONAL PARK

Year and number of years since the award or renewal of the European Diploma for Protected Areas: 2011 and 12

Central authority concerned:

Name: JUNTA DE ANDALUCÍA. CONSEJERÍA DE SOSTENIBILIDAD Y MEDIO AMBIENTE. DIRECCIÓN GENERAL DE ESPACIOS NATURALES PROTEGIDOS.

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www: https://www.juntadeandalucia.es/organismos/sostenibilidadmedioambienteyeconomiaazul.html

Authority responsible for its management:

Name: ESPACIO NATURAL DE DOÑANA. CONSEJERÍA DE SOSTENIBILIDAD Y MEDIO AMBIENTE

Address: Centro Administrativo El Acebuche. Ctra. Almonte-Matalascañas, SN. 21730 Matalascañas. (Huelva).

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www:

[1] As amended by Resolution CM/ResDip(2014)2 on 2 July 2014 at the 1204th meeting of the Ministers' Deputies.
Internet : http://www.coe.int/cm

1. Conditions: List here all conditions which were attached to the award or the renewal of the European Diploma. Explain either how the conditions have been totally complied with or detail the progress in complying with the conditions. Please also indicate any unresolved difficulties that you have encountered.

1. the Spanish authorities should continue to take all necessary measures to ensure that the Port of Sevilla development projects have no significant environmental impact on the Doñana ecosystems. Any decision should be conditioned by the results of a complementary study to the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) report;

There have been no variations in this matter. The project has been rejected by the Spanish authorities. The third planning cycle 2022-2027, approved by Royal Decree 35/2023, of January 24, published in BOE no. 35, of February 10, 2023, effective February 11, 2023, does not include it among its measures

2. **the Andalusian Government, responsible for the management of the national park and also for water management, should ensure the high quality of water entering the national park and eliminate the illegal extraction of groundwater; in accordance with the Water Framework Directive, it should monitor the status of the aquifer underlying the national park and surrounding lands, the extent of groundwater extraction and the water quality;**

The Governing Board of the Guadalquivir Hydrographic Confederation, at its meeting on July 16, 2020, declared the groundwater bodies of La Rocina, Almonte and Marismas as bodies at risk of not achieving good quantitative status. Likewise, it declared the groundwater body of La Rocina at risk of not achieving good chemical status.

This declaration has since become the main administrative and legal tool available in Spanish legislation to be able to address complex water management problems, providing the competent administrations with an extraordinary capacity for intervention compared to the normal regime. Through it, it has been possible to continue monitoring and controlling the aquifer's intakes, allowing the closure of illegal intakes.

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These regulations and closures are proceeding at a slower pace than expected, largely due to the high percentage of owners who appeal the closure orders through the courts, leading to contentious proceedings that can take years. In any case, even with all the legal safeguards in place, this is not a simple procedure to execute. On several occasions, the intervention of public order forces has been necessary in order to ensure its materialization, in addition to seeking the most opportune moment (at dawn, on a holiday, etc.) for the execution of the actions, avoiding potential public order conflicts.

The actions that are being carried out in this regard are concentrated in two large areas:

a) the concession of the El Fresno (Guadalquivir) Irrigation Community and

b) other forced execution procedures.

In addition, specific inspection plans are repeatedly implemented during irrigation campaigns to put an end to illegal cultivation under plastic located outside of irrigable agricultural land. Within the sanctioning procedures derived from these specific inspection plans, precautionary measures are issued to seal illegal wells, in order to prevent the continuation of the infringement. These measures, complementary to the sanctioning procedure, also affect the irrigation of the illegal greenhouse, which must be suppressed and is subject to monitoring.

In the case of the El Fresno Irrigation Community, an initial set of 410 wells to be closed was identified, although the definition of the works requires that any well found in the irrigable area, whether previously identified or not, must also be closed. The closure work under this file began in January 2021 and continues, with the closure of 476 wells having been completed. In addition to these procedures, there are also other closures carried out voluntarily by the owners. The overall data for this type of procedure, for the geographical area around Doñana, are summarised as follows:

203 wells with sealing in process

296 wells sealed.

66 wells sealed by precautionary measures

18 wells with closure suspended by court decision.

476 wells sealed by replacement with surface resources.

In total, and since 2015, the year in which the most intense process of closing, sealing or removing extraction elements began, 93 wells have been closed in the Tinto, Odiel and Piedras areas and 838 in the Guadalquivir area, adding up to a total, within the scope of the Special Plan, of 931 intakes.

The other measure capable of regulating and rationalizing the exploitation of groundwater provided for in the sectorial regulations, with respect to bodies of water declared as overexploited, is the preparation of Action Programs. These documents represent a fundamental element to determine the capacity of the aquifer to meet the existing demand based on the available volume and its recharge capacity. To do this, the constitution of user communities where the holders of exploitation rights of these bodies are clearly identified is essential. As a result of the declaration of the aforementioned masses at risk of not achieving good quantitative status, the procedure for the forced constitution of communities of users of the water body is

initiated ex officio under articles 56.1.a), 87 and 88 of Royal Legislative Decree 1/2001, of July 20, which approves the Revised Text of the Water Law and articles 171.5.e), 201 and 228 of Royal Decree 849/1986, of August 2, which approves the Regulations of the Public Hydraulic Domain.
The three communities are currently being established, with the Community of Users of Groundwater Masses (CUMAS) of La Rocina being the most advanced, as it already has the approval of the statutes that will now enter the public information period. Once this period (30 days) has elapsed, it will be sent to the CHG for the final resolution of approval of said regulations and the constitution of the community of users. The La Rocina groundwater mass has 318 owners and 1.111 intakes with which more than 5.000 hectares are irrigated.
The owners of the other two groundwater masses of the Doñana aquifer, Almonte and Marismas, also declared at risk of not achieving good quantitative status, have called for a vote on their statutes during the month of December of this year
These previous actions are essential to develop the action programme and the extraction plan with adequate guarantees of success and, although they are causing a delay in the application of the measures, they will mean greater legal security and effectiveness in the application of the measures necessary to correct the imbalances existing in the current exploitation of the aquifer.
At the same time as these administrative actions are being carried out, different research projects are being developed through an agreement between the CHG and the IGME to determine the size of the extraction capacity presented by the different water bodies and to begin to apply the extraction plan as soon as the aforementioned CUMAS are established.
At this point, it is important to highlight the launch in the near future of a web portal that will allow the publication in real time (every 5 days) the result of the processing of satellite images using remote sensing technology, accounting for the area of legal and illegal plastic cultivation throughout the campaign. It is estimated that the tool will have a deterrent effect, leading to a considerable reduction in the surface area of greenhouses that are not in compliance with the regulations, in addition to the fact that immediate action will be taken against attempts at non-compliant cultivation.
In addition to these actions, within the Framework of Actions for the sustainable territorial development of the area of influence of the Doñana Natural Space, a series of support measures have been planned for the reduction of water consumption and the sustainable transition of the agricultural sector. Specifically in lines 1, 2 and 3 relating to the agriculture-food sector, extensive livestock farming and the forestry sector, aid is prioritized based on the water savings obtained and those proposals that group a larger area to be renaturalized, such as one presented by a group of farmers, so that the positive environmental effects of renaturalization are maximized.
The program of measures that accompanies the Guadalquivir Hidrologic Plan GHP 2022-2027 also includes the construction of the final exploitation wells for the replacement of the two supply wells of the coastal urbanization closest to the Doñana lagoons and the pipelines from the new location of these intakes to the regulating reservoirs of Matalascañas. This action was planned as an emergency project due to the drought situation in the Guadalquivir River basin and, specifically, the Doñana area, with continuous decreases in water levels recorded in 2023.
One of the surveys and flow tests has already been carried out with positive results. At the beginning of July 2024, a minor contract was authorised for the drafting of the final project. The budget for the project has been increased to €3,100,000.
Work is also underway on the signing of a collaboration agreement between the Guadalquivir Hidrografic Confederation GHC and the Almonte Municipality Council, which is responsible for supply, for authorisation to pass through land owned by the GHC, as well as for the operation and maintenance of the facilities once the work is completed.
In addition to replacing the location of two of the wells, a new project has been planned to repair and improve the supply network of the Matalascañas urbanisation, in collaboration with the Almonte City Council. This supply network is more than 40 years old and is built of fibre cement. Losses in the network are estimated to be close to 40%. The Terms of Reference for a Services contract for the drafting of the corresponding project is currently being supervised.
The repair of the network and the minimisation of losses will allow the extraction of groundwater to be reduced to below the 2.5 hm3 per year that is currently recorded as an average. A detailed study of the impact associated with this measure will be carried out in subsequent reports.
Similarly, and with the aim of reducing extractions for the supply of the tourist centre, the reuse of regenerated water for irrigation of green areas of the future wastewater treatment plant of Matalascañas is planned.
The Guadalquivir Hydrologic Plan has also started several studies and preparatory procedures to advance towards the materialisation of the Transfer to Matalascañas from the Tinto DWTP in the Tinto, Odiel and Piedras D.H., with an assigned budget of €10,000,000. Specifically, a set of specifications for the contracting of the new project has been drafted and sent to the General Directorate of Water, which has already supervised the project and is currently correcting the indicated corrections

2. Recommendations: List here all recommendations which were attached to the award or the renewal of the European Diploma. Explain either how the recommendations have been totally complied with or detail the progress in complying with the recommendations. Please also indicate any unresolved difficulties that you have encountered.

1**. all efforts should be made to restore the good ecological state of the river at the level of its catchment (river basin or water basin), within the meaning of the Water Framework Directive; all appropriate measures should be taken in order to make water use and other activities, especially agricultural activities, in this catchment (basin) compatible with this aim;**

At this point, it is important to highlight the launch in the near future of a web portal that will allow the publication in real time (every 5 days) the result of the processing of satellite images using remote sensing technology, accounting for the area of legal and illegal plastic cultivation throughout the campaign. It is estimated that the tool will have a deterrent effect, leading to a considerable reduction in the surface area of greenhouses that are not in compliance with the regulations, in addition to the fact that immediate action will be taken against attempts at non-compliant cultivation.

In addition to these actions, within the Framework of Actions for the sustainable territorial development of the area of influence of the Doñana Natural Space, a series of support measures have been planned for the reduction of water consumption and the sustainable transition of the agricultural sector.

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The construction of an ecohydrological model has advanced slowly in recent years due to the complexity of the issue and the fact that other technological initiatives are being developed aimed at better understanding and improving the tools available for managing the water mass, which have been understood as priorities and initially more feasible than the model itself. So far, progress is being made on the hydrogeological model, but the ecological variable has not yet been achieved, for which further progress is still necessary in different areas of knowledge.

In order to understand and simulate the behaviour of the Doñana aquifers, the Guadalquivir Hydrographic Confederation (CHG), with the scientific and technical support of the Geological and Mining Institute of Spain (IGME), has been working for years with a numerical simulation model of the underground flow, which is currently directly managed for its usual exploitation by the technical services of the CHG itself. A perspective of all this can be found in various scientific publications, of which a work published by Guardiola et al. (2016) is suggested as an example.

The IGME-CHG collaboration is based on a four-year Collaboration Agreement. The Agreement covers various activities for the improvement of hydrogeological knowledge of the Guadalquivir demarcation. Activity 11 stands out in this agreement, entitled: “Updating the hydrogeological model of the Doñana aquifer”, consisting of the new definition of sectors with differentiated hydrogeological functioning and incorporation of alternatives to the environmental sustainability of the groundwater masses involved. The new hydrological runoff data will also be processed, the additional characterisation of the sectors of the groundwater masses at risk will be improved and new hypotheses will be proposed for their simulation, including their relationship with the hydrological model of the Doñana marsh.

From September 2022 to the present, work has continued with the numerical model of the Doñana aquifer, incorporating new hydrological data that have allowed a new calibration with many more piezometers and that have improved the accuracy of the results by about 20%.
After signing an agreement with the Research Foundation of the University of Seville in 2023, the CHG has also been working on a digital twin for the basin. This tool is a digital representation of the physical world that combines data, models and visualizations that allow for deeper knowledge, in order to help in the decision-making process.The idea is to develop technology and knowledge that allow the CHG to monitor the temporal evolution of water bodies and predict or detect anomalous situations.
Within the framework of the project, hardware tools (sensors), software tools (visualization, analysis and alert tools) and artificial intelligence tools will be developed to support decision-making processes. With this work, the technological architecture or environment is designed with Big Data, Artificial Intelligence, Machine Learning and Data Discovery capabilities, which will allow the implementation of a "data lake", all aimed at giving a clear technological boost and reinforcement to the Guadalquivir Hydrological Centre.
One of the main products obtained from this agreement has been the development of the computer application based on the analysis of satellite images using artificial intelligence that allows the identification of crops under plastic in an irregular situation.
Within the framework of the CHG agreement with the Pablo Olavides University, research has also been carried out since 2015 on the hydrological processes that occur in Doñana.
In order to deepen the knowledge of the chemical and biological processes that occur in the marsh, a strategic alliance has been established between the CHG and the Doñana Biological Station, through a collaboration agreement that is managed by the Doñana Technical Office. Specifically, these works are integrated into Line 7 of Improving knowledge and monitoring in the Framework of Actions for Doñana. This line 7 is in turn divided into two sub-lines: Research and monitoring of the Higher Council for Scientific Research (CSIC) (7.1), and, Improving knowledge of processes and monitoring of the hydrological system (surface and underground). They are also developed in line 15.3 of Coordination, monitoring and evaluation of the Framework of Actions for the sustainable territorial development of the area of influence of the Doñana natural space.
At present, work is being done on defining the set of indicators. It is expected that this set will be fully defined by the end of 2024 to begin monitoring them in 2025. The investment planned for the implementation of the monitoring program for these indicators is €1 million/year.
However, as a precautionary measure, specific measures are being adopted to avoid these potential effects, as developed in section 2.1.2.

2**. a specific emergency plan for the Doñana National Park should be prepared and a map of natural risks should be drawn up;**

The Natural Area has a Self-Protection Plan against hydrocarbons spills and It is a priority area in the Andalusian forest fire plan: INFOCA Plan. There have been no changes with respect to the last report issued

3. the implementation of the action plans for the conservation of the flagship species, in particular the Iberian lynx and the Imperial eagle, should be actively pursued; new action plans for other threatened species should be drawn up if needed;

The conservation plans for the most emblematic species of Doñana are still in force and developing normally. Currently there are 7 plans that include species present in Doñana:
- Iberian lynx recovery plan.
- Recovery plan for the Iberian imperial eagle.
- Recovery and conservation plan for necrophagous birds.
- Plan for the recovery and conservation of steppe birds,
- Plan for the recovery and conservation of wetland birds,
- Plan for the recovery and conservation of aquatic invertebrates and fish.
- The Dunes and Coastal Cliffs Plan.

Of all of them, the success of the Iberian lynx conservation program stands out, which has managed to remove the species from the “Endangered” category to the “Vulnerable” category. The Doñana population, in the last few years, has been breaking records for the number of specimens.
Regarding the imperial eagle, since 2022, when the imperial eagle population in Doñana recorded its worst data since 1999, the balance has been gradually improving, reaching values close to the average in 2024, at 6.9 chicks fledged per year. Once again, the difficult weather conditions that the region is experiencing are affecting the evolution of the species. To alleviate this difficult situation, work continues every year on management measures aimed at improving habitat conditions and favoring the feeding of the population at critical times of reproduction.
Data on red kites (Milvus milvus) have not changed substantially in recent years. The decreasing trend since 2015 in the number of pairs seems to have slowed down to around 20-22 pairs in the last three years. Similarly, the number of chicks fledged has stabilized in recent years between 8-10. This situation is not exclusive to Doñana but extends to the rest of the population in the entire Autonomous Community of Andalusia. The definitive data for 2023 show a total of 24 breeding pairs in Andalusia, of which 20 belong to the Doñana population, more than 83% of the total, showing the enormous importance of this area for the species in Andalusia. Authors specializing in the subject conclude that the red kite would most likely be extinct in southern Spain if it were not for the existence of a large national park such as Doñana (Sergio, F. et al. 2019).

4. concerning the Port of Sevilla development projects, the Spanish authorities should avail itself of the best international scientific expertise and also take account of the relevant international conventions, such as the Ramsar Convention, the World Heritage Convention and the Bern Convention, and work closely with the relevant international bodies, including the European Union and the European Environment Agency;

Through Royal Decree 35/2023, of January 24, the revision of the hydrological plans of the hydrographic districts of the Western Cantabrian, Guadalquivir, Ceuta, Melilla, Segura and Júcar, and of the Spanish part of the hydrographic districts of the Eastern Cantabrian, Miño-Sil, Duero, Tagus, Guadiana and Ebro were approved. This planning does not include the deep dredging of the Guadalquivir River, maintaining the commitment acquired by the authorities of the Kingdom of Spain.

5. the updating of the management plan should be started in 2011;

The current planning of the Doñana Natural Area has been in force since September 2016 (Decree 142/2016, of August 2, published in the Official Gazette of the Andalusian Regional Government of September 26, 2016).

6. the extension of the Doñana 2005 Project to riparian vegetation, correcting erosion problems or extending its scope to adjacent areas of agricultural marsh, should be undertaken;

The project reported in 2022 called “REVIEW AND UPDATE OF THE STUDY OF ALTERNATIVES FOR THE DEFINITION OF ACTION NUMBER 5: RECOVERY OF THE FUNCTIONALITY OF THE GUADIAMAR RIVER” continues its course, although with some delay over the initial forecast. It is expected that in the first quarter of 2025 it can be presented to the agents involved after completing the analysis of the different alternatives.

In addition to this project, the CHG has carried other for hydrogeomorphological restoration and naturalization of the final section of the El Partido stream to favor the natural recharge of the Almonte-Marismas aquifer.

In this line, a second project is being processed called Project for the extension of hydrogeomorphological restoration actions and naturalization of the El Partido stream up to the Ajolí Bridge in its lower section in the municipality of Almonte (Huelva).

7. the possibility of developing co-operation with other European Diploma sites which are deltas, such as the Camargue National Reserve (France) or the Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve (Romania), should be explored.

In order to strengthen relations with other international protected areas, a meeting between managers of Wetlands of International Importance took place in Doñana National and Natural Park from 17 to 20 April 2024, with the participation of the Director of Natural Heritage Management, Ecological Education and International Relations of the Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve Authority (DDBRA), (Romania); the Director of the Camargue Regional Natural Park, (France); the Superintendent of the Everglades National Park, (United States); the Advisor of the Banc d`Arguin National Park, (Mauritania); the Director of the Tablas de Daimiel National Park and the Management Team of the Doñana Natural Area:

This initiative, promoted by the Regional Council of Sustainability, Environment and Blue Economy (actuallyRegional Council fo Sustainability and Environment) of the Regional Government of Andalusia, and recommended by several international organizations such as the UNESCO World Heritage Committee, the Secretariat of the Ramsar Convention, or the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), was positively received by the different participating countries and areas.

The main objective of this meeting was the exchange of relevant information on the values of each of the areas, experiences on problems, threats and risks to these delicate ecosystems at the local, regional and global levels, as well as the different ways of dealing with them.

The group of professionals participating in the event were able to learn about and recognize the enormous effort being made for the conservation of these areas in the different countries and concluded the conference with a joint declaration on the importance and challenge of preserve wetlands, called the Doñana Declaration. The conference also served to facilitate the connection between the different protected areas and encourage cooperation between them.

3. Site Management: List here any changes to the European Diploma holding site management, in relation to both terrestrial and aquatic environments (as appropriate), and in relation to staff and finances, since the last annual report was submitted to the Council of Europe. Please also indicate any unresolved difficulties that you have encountered.

In terms of staff, 2024 remained at similar figures to 2023 with 134 regular workers and 106 more professionals, linked to different projects that support the management of the protected area. Investment in the National Park during 2023 after the accounting closure amounted to more than €17.8 million. Similar figures are expected to be reached in 2024.

4. Boundaries: Give details of any changes to the boundaries of the European Diploma holding site since the last annual report was submitted to the Council of Europe. If there are any changes, please attach an appropriate map to this report. Please also indicate any unresolved difficulties that you have encountered.

There have been no changes to the national park's boundaries.

5. Other information: List here any other information about the European Diploma holding site which you consider should be provided to the Council of Europe.

***

The following sections of the form should only be filled in if your area is in the year before a renewal of its European Diploma for Protected Areas, i.e. year 4 after the award of the European Diploma or year 9 after its renewal.

6. Natural heritage (general abiotic description: geomorphology, geology and hydrogeology, habitats, flora, fauna, landscape) – State of conservation

6.1. Environment: changes or deterioration in the environment, of natural or anthropic origin, accidental or permanent, actual or anticipated
6.2. Flora and vegetation: changes in the plant population and in the vegetational cover; presumed causes
6.3. Fauna: changes in the sedentary or migratory populations; congregating, egg-laying and breeding grounds

7. Cultural heritage and socio-economic context

7.1. Cultural heritage
7.1.1. Changes concerning cultural heritage

7.2. Socio-economic context
7.2.1. Changes concerning the socio-economic context

8. Education and scientific interest

8.1. Visitors – Information policy
8.1.1. Arrangements for receiving and informing the public (building, booklets, maps, cards, etc.)
8.1.2. Frequentation by visitors and behavior (number, distribution in time and space)
8.1.3. Special visits (distinguished persons, groups, etc.)

8.2. Scientific research
8.2.1. Current or completed research (observation, experimentation, etc.; identification or inventory of the species listed in the appendices to the Bern Convention, etc.)
8.2.2. Scientific publications

9. Site description (vulnerability, protection status, ownership, documentation)

9.1. Changes in legislation or regulations
9.2. Changes in ownership title (conversion to public property, rentals, etc.)
9.3. Extension or transfer, new uses (for example, conversion into total reserve)

10. Site management (management plans, budget and personnel)

10.1. Improvements made
10.1.1. Ecological action affecting the flora and biotopes; controls of fauna
10.1.2. Protection against the elements (fire, water regime)
10.1.3. Approaches and thoroughfares (paths, roads, car parks, signposting, fencing, etc.)
10.1.4. Field equipment (hides and study facilities)
10.1.5. Waste management
10.1.6. Use of renewable energy systems

10.2. Management
10.2.1. Administrative department: changes made
10.2.2. Wardens' department: changes made
10.2.3. Internal policing measures
10.2.4. Infringement of regulations and damage; legal action

11. Influence of the award of the Euroean Diploma for Protected Areas