



LIFE+ NATURE PROJECT

LIFE 08 NAT/E/000072

Recovery of the riverbank habitats of the River Ter

POST-LIFE CONSERVATION PLAN

Illa de la Pilastra - Ter1

(Bescanó, Sant Gregori, Salt)

November 2013

Promoted by



BESCANÓ TOWN COUNCIL



SANT GREGORI TOWN COUNCIL



SALT TOWN COUNCIL



GIRONA CITY COUNCIL



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Y MEDIO AMBIENTE



Fundación Biodiversidad

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BACKGROUND:

The LIFE+ NATURE Project “Recovery of the riverbank habitats of the River Ter” (Riparia-Ter) project has been carried out from 2010-2013 by the Ter Consortium in four areas of action in the mid and lower stretches of the Ter included in the Natura 2000 Network (specifically “Baix Ter Riverbanks”). This project has been carried out in the territorial areas of Bescanó, Sant Gregori, Salt, Girona and Jafre, whose municipal councils have actively cooperated with the project.

The main aim of the project has been to recover riverbank habitats on the River Ter, particularly: alder groves (91E0*), willow and white poplar gallery woodland (92A0) and temporary Mediterranean lagoons (3170*). The project also provided for the organisation and control of access to the areas of action to prevent the degradation of these habitats. In addition, many activities were carried out to publicise and inform the public of the rich natural heritage of the River Ter.

Work was done through the project to improve the riverbank woodland. Actions were carried out on invasive plant species, making an in-depth study of the most effective methods for managing and controlling them. Public use actions were carried out to organise the accesses and prevent the degradation of these most vulnerable habitats, publicising those in the least vulnerable areas. Many activities were organised (visits, an exhibition, bird ringing...) to raise awareness and publicise the natural values of these areas.

OBJECTIVES:

In order to ensure the maintenance of the actions carried out over the next few years and in the future, it is intended to approve this Post-LIFE Conservation Plan, which includes the actions that must continue to be carried out to ensure proper management of these areas, making it possible to continue the tasks carried out during the four years of the project LIFE 08 NAT/E/000072.

It must be taken into account that a large part of the actions carried out require a certain level of maintenance over the years, especially in the early “Post-LIFE project years”, as they are actions directly linked to improving the riverbank woodland. Firstly, the elimination of foreign species needs to be overseen to ensure its continuity until the riverbank woodland can develop for itself without regrowth from removed stumps or new saplings. The reed removed could still have more colonisation nuclei, despite the repeated aggressive action to reduce its presence. The newly created ponds must also be kept in good condition (bank slopes, shade, colonising plants, cleaning, etc.), especially if there is severe flooding on the river during their early years in operation. Finally, the routes, signing, boards, viewpoints and other elements created to encourage public use must be maintained in the best possible condition for their function: to bring the public to the recovered natural areas so that they become centres for active education and increased environmental awareness.

The four areas of action form part of the Natura 2000 Network, specifically the “Lower Ter Riverbanks” area (ES5120011). This is designated as an area of continental waters. These areas have no other specific protection system with an allocated management body. However, they are publicly owned areas, so it is viable to ensure their proper management in the future with the participation and goodwill of the different public authorities making up the project. That is why this Post-LIFE Conservation Plan includes the involvement of the municipal councils and the Ter Consortium in order to ensure proper future management.

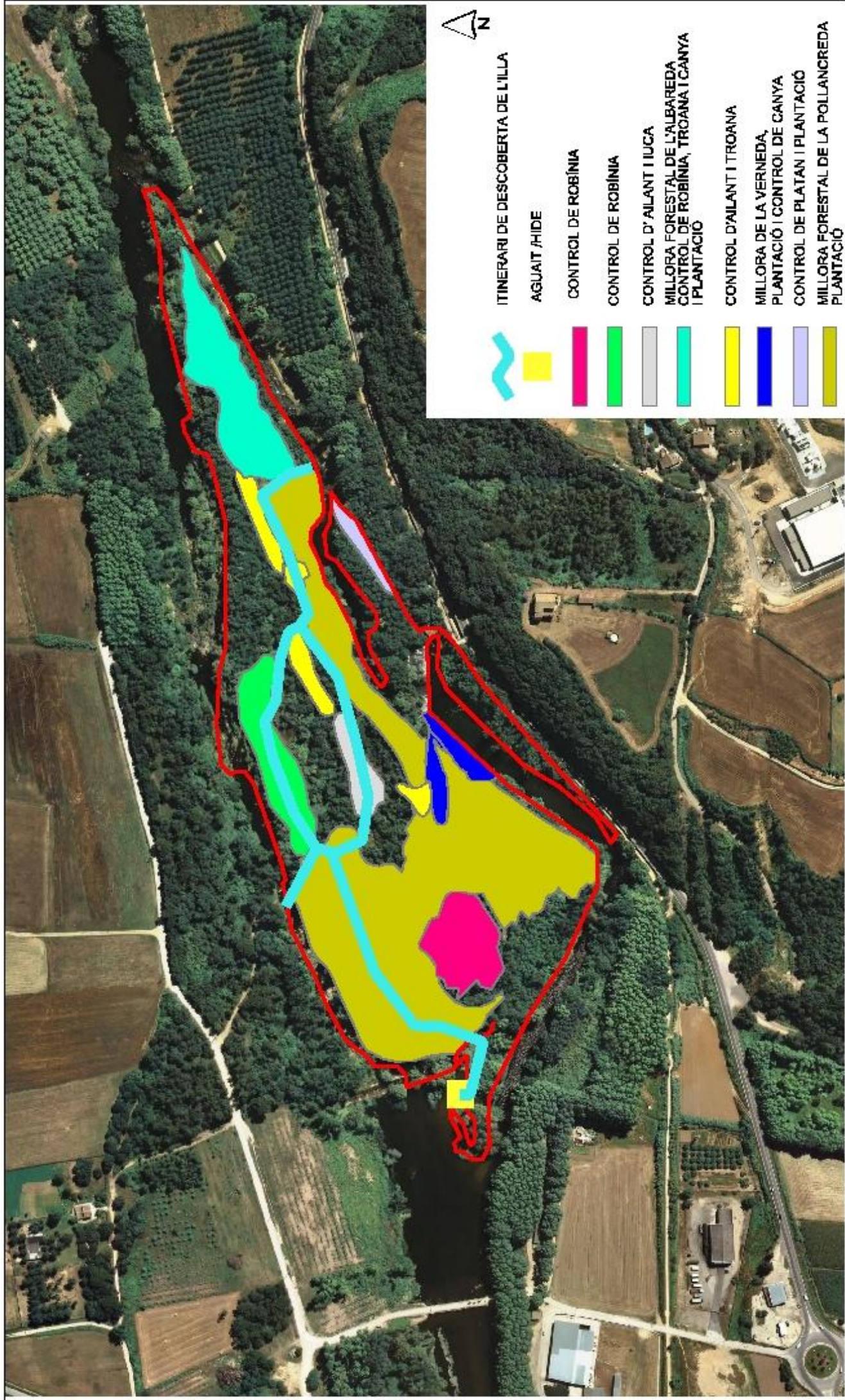
Along these lines, the involvement of the councils has specifically been shown with the commitment to make a particular effort, either in budgetary terms, through the contracting of gardening companies that carry out tasks in the public municipal sphere or through the use of teams of the councils’ own employees.

CURRENT SITUATION:

At the end of autumn 2013, all the forestry work, the control of exotic species and the organisation of public use are practically finished.

Work has been carried out to improve the riverbank woodland present on the island, invasive species have been controlled in the places where there was great potential for recovering the native vegetation and the planting of riverbank trees has been carried out to strengthen the native species. Meanwhile, a route has been adapted to discover the island's natural heritage and a birdwatching hide has been installed. Access to the island has been strengthened, both from the north and from the south, where stepping stones have been installed. It now only remains to install the information and direction signs to make it easier to follow the route. Maintenance is also being carried out on these actions (planting, invasive species control, route...).

The map below shows the specific conservation actions carried out in the Illa de la Pilastra area.



- ITINERARI DE DESCOBERTA DE L'ILLA
-  AGUAIT / HIDE
 -  CONTROL DE ROBINIA
 -  CONTROL DE ROBINIA
 -  CONTROL D'AILANT I IUCA
 -  MILLORA FORESTAL DE L'ALBAREDA CONTROL DE ROBINIA, TROANA I CANYA I PLANTACIÓ
 -  CONTROL D'AILANT I TROANA
 -  MILLORA DE LA VERNEDA, PLANTACIÓ I CONTROL DE CANYA
 -  CONTROL DE PLATAN I PLANTACIÓ
 -  MILLORA FORESTAL DE LA POLLANCREDA I PLANTACIÓ

PLÀNOL:
ACTUACIONS EXECUTADES A
L'ILLA DE LA PILASTRA (TER1)
FINA A NOVEMBRE DE 2013



RECUPERACIÓ
D'HÀBITATS
RIPARIS DEL RIU TER
LIFE08 NAT/E/000072

NÚMERO DE PLÀNOL:
 DATA: NOVEMBRE DE 2013
 ESCALA:



SWOT ANALYSIS

WEAKNESSES

- *Lack of finance from the organisations involved.
- *Uncontrolled public use in some areas or massive crowds participating in some activities.
- *Smaller sources of finance for nature projects and more competition for existing resources.
- *There are natural factors (soil, climate, etc.) that make the results of chemical treatments vary, which mean the results are not the same everywhere.

THREATS

- *Lack of specific political agenda concerning nature at high-level institutions.
- *Lack of environmental criteria in the management of the water of the Ter and water spillages.
- *Proliferation of new invasive species.
- *Infrastructures that could affect the area.

STRENGTHS

- *High level of public interest in the activities to publicise the area.
- *Better knowledge of the control of invasive species makes the treatments more effective.
- *Involvement of the competent administrations in the project, both the municipal councils and ACA and the Environment Department, and predisposition to continue working together.

OPPORTUNITIES

- *Great potential for recovering the riverbank communities and their rapid response to disturbances.
- *The Natura 2000 areas are priority action areas and will increasingly be so for European Union finance instruments.

MANAGEMENT DIRECTIVES FOR THE AREAS IN THE NATURA 2000 NETWORK:

In 2006 the Catalan Government approved the Catalan Natura 2000 Network proposal. In appendix 8, the Government Agreement 112/2006 approving it includes the document with the Directives for the management of Natura 2000 areas. This document defines the directives for the management of the areas in the Natura 2000 Network, which have been grouped into eight types of management. They include general management requirements specific to each type of area and specific for certain important elements.

In the case that concerns us, the type of area is continental waters. The management directives can be consulted at this link:

http://www20.gencat.cat/docs/dmah/Home/Ambits%20dactuacio/Medi%20natural/Espais%20naturals/Espais%20naturals%20protegits/La%20planificacio%20dels%20espais%20naturals%20protegits/Xarxa%20Natura%202000/Xarxa%20Natura%202000%20a%20Catalunya/Documents/directrius_gestio.pdf

Management measures deriving from the inclusion of an area in the Natura 2000 Network.

MANAGEMENT

- Instruments mobilised with the establishment of Natura 2000 include management plans, species and habitat conservation plans, monitoring and observation of the state of conservation of biodiversity and the restoration of the most threatened habitats.

ASSESSMENT

- The environmental monitoring of the plans and projects in the network's areas is intended to ensure that their ecological coherence is maintained and that they meet their conservation objectives.

PARTICIPATION

- The involvement of a large number of interested sectors (local administrations, foundations, land custody bodies, consortiums, farming organisations...) in the management should make Natura 2000 management a major joint objective of society through participation, dialogue and consensus.

COMPATIBLE USES

- The uses and activities of Natura 2000 areas continue to be developed normally, in some cases with more opportunities for progress. The integration of Natura 2000 into the Plan for Areas of Natural Interest also ensures the application of Catalonia's own regulatory framework.

PROPOSED ACTIONS:

PROPOSED ACTIONS	PRIORITY	RESPONSIBLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION	COSTS	SOURCES OF FINANCE	NOTES
ADMINISTRATIVE TASKS:					
ADMINISTRATIVE COORDINATION BETWEEN THE AGENTS INVOLVED	NECESSARY	Ter Consortium Bescanó, Sant Gregori and Salt Town Councils Government of Catalonia: ACA and Environment Department	Staff from the administrations involved	-	The executive committees have made it possible to develop the project by getting all the agents involved to agree, taking into account the points of view and criteria of the different administrations. This dynamic has been positive and has made it possible to resolve difficulties easily.

PROPOSED ACTIONS	PRIORITY	RESPONSIBLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION	COSTS	SOURCES OF FINANCE	NOTES
DESIGNATION OF ILLA DE LA PILASTRA AS A WILDLIFE REFUGE	NECESSARY	Ter Consortium Bescanó Town Council (landowner) Environment Department (Government of Catalonia)	Staff from the administrations involved	-	<p>Once the project has been completed, the procedure for having these places designated as a Wildlife Refuge will begin. The application must be drawn up by Bescanó Town Council (landowner) following the provisions of LEGISLATIVE DECREE 2/2008, dated 15 April, approving the reformed text of the Animal Protection Act.</p> <p>The Ter Consortium will speed up the processing of the application which Bescanó Town Council will send to the Environment Department (Government of Catalonia).</p> <p>Once the wildlife refuge declaration has been approved, any hunting or animal capture activity will be prohibited in the area declared a wildlife refuge.</p>

PROPOSED ACTIONS	PRIORITY	RESPONSIBLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION	COSTS	SOURCES OF FINANCE	NOTES
SEARCH FOR FINANCE TO IMPLEMENT THE PROPOSED ACTIONS	CRITICAL	Ter Consortium	Ter Consortium staff	-	<p>The current economic situation means the resources needed for carrying out all the actions proposed in this Post-LIFE Conservation Plan are not available. For this reason it is vitally important to be able to have alternative finance and/or resources to be able to carry them out.</p> <p>Every year the Government of Catalonia invites bids for lines of specific aid for conservation and restoration projects, for public use of areas and for publicity and interpretation in the network's areas. In addition, Natura 2000 is becoming a priority criterion for aid for sustainable forest management, among other things. There are also other annual bidding processes that must be exploited, such as the Fundación Biodiversidad, the EU...</p>
HABITAT MAINTENANCE ACTIONS					
MAINTENANCE OF RIVERBANK WOODLAND IMPROVEMENT ACTIONS.	IMPORTANT	Ter Consortium Bescanó, Sant Gregori and Salt Town Councils	Outside assistance: It must be evaluated after a time	Aid from the Government of Catalonia	Forestry improvements were carried out on Illa de la Pilastra both in the alder grove area following the wetland to the lock and the groves of white and black poplar. These actions must be evaluated after a time and the relevant actions taken to ensure the existence of vigorous, well-structured woodland hosting the richest and most diverse community of flora and fauna possible.

PROPOSED ACTIONS	PRIORITY	RESPONSIBLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION	COSTS	SOURCES OF FINANCE	NOTES
MAINTENANCE OF ACTIONS TO CONTROL INVASIVE SPECIES: Chemical control of the regrowth of tree of heaven, black locust and glossy privet, especially in the most sensitive areas, the alder grove (pond) and the willow grove in the north of the island, as well as the eastern point of the island and the elm grove area to the west.	NECESSARY	Ter Consortium	Outside assistance: €3,000 2014 €2,500 2015 €2,000 2016 €1,000 2017 €1,000 2018	Aid from the Government of Catalonia EU aid Miscellaneous aid Private companies	Over the next few years it is likely to be necessary to carry out a degree of control of exotic vegetation, either because there will be some regrowth or because the seed bank will continue to be active. These actions are likely to decrease over the years.
MAINTENANCE OF THE PLANTATIONS CREATED	NECESSARY	Ter Consortium	Outside assistance: €3,000 2014 €2,000 2015	Aid from the Government of Catalonia EU aid Miscellaneous aid Private companies	During the early years of the plantations it is important to carry out brushwood clearance, watering and maintenance to ensure their vitality. It is proposed to carry out these actions over the next 2 years.

PROPOSED ACTIONS	PRIORITY	RESPONSIBLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION	COSTS	SOURCES OF FINANCE	NOTES
MANAGEMENT OF PUBLIC USE:					
Maintenance of the Illa de la Pilastra discovery route	CRITICAL	Ter Consortium		Bescanó and Sant Gregori Town Councils	A lack of maintenance of the infrastructures created during the implementation of the RIPARIA-TER project could be seen by the local population as a lack of will to continue development...
Brushwood clearance (3/4 a year)		Bescanó and Sant Gregori Town Councils	Municipal team staff or €4,500/year (AE)		It is an area that requires maintenance as the vegetation grows exuberantly because plenty of water is available. The path surface will require more than an annual check particularly if there are floods.
Path surface maintenance (1 a year; if there are floods it will need to be done more often)			Outside assistance: €1,750/year		Maintaining the route in good condition will allow visitors to take care of the area and discover its values by following the indications of the panels and direction signs. An agreement will be signed with Bescanó Town Council to receive finance to carry out these tasks.
Maintenance of signs and items installed for public use (hide) (in the case of flooding and/or vandalism)			Depending on the state of conservation		Sant Gregori Town Council will make its team of municipal workers available to the Ter Consortium for carrying out certain tasks, like brushwood clearance, sign maintenance...

PROPOSED ACTIONS	PRIORITY	RESPONSIBLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION	COSTS	SOURCES OF FINANCE	NOTES
Maintenance of the stepping stone access to the island in the case of flooding	NECESSARY	Bescanó and Sant Gregori Town Councils	Mobile crane hours: €95/hour	Bescanó and Sant Gregori Town Councils	In the medium term, a cyclable pedestrian river crossing is planned to join the two banks and provide access to the island too. The stepping stone accesses ensure access to the island when the flow is low, but they do not allow it when it exceeds 20-25 m ³ /s.
Control of motor vehicle access to the island	CRITICAL	Ter Consortium Bescanó, Sant Gregori and Salt Town Councils Police Force of the Government of Catalonia	Staff from the administrations involved	-	<p>Access to the island is currently controlled by wooden barriers installed at both main access points. These barriers can be fastened with a chain to ensure four-wheeled vehicles cannot access the island without authorisation. The keys are held by Bescanó, Sant Gregori and Salt Town Councils A control system is proposed to determine who can access the island in motor vehicles. See appendix.</p> <p>During the last few months there has been damage to the barriers and indiscriminate access to the island has been repeated. Over time, it will therefore be necessary to discourage motor vehicle access to the island because of the serious damage they can cause. It will also be necessary to strengthen the dissuasive measures at the points where entry continues.</p>

PROPOSED ACTIONS	PRIORITY	RESPONSIBLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION	COSTS	SOURCES OF FINANCE	NOTES
Control of the activities of the canoe slalom course and the effects of these activities on the environment	IMPORTANT	Ter Consortium Bescanó, Sant Gregori and Salt Town Councils	Staff from the administrations involved	-	Indiscriminate access to the island and negative effects deriving from these activities (motor vehicle access, litter, deterioration of habitats, damage to plantations, excessive noise, indiscriminate parking...) must be prevented when there are activities on the slalom course. Coordination with local agents in charge of the canoeing slalom course (SALT Ter) to prevent human concentration on the island that could negatively affect the habitats of community interest and the species of interest present.
Development of activities aimed at the public	IMPORTANT	Ter Consortium in cooperation with the agents from the region	Staff: €2,500/year Native plant seedlings: €350/year Other materials: €300/year	Aid from the Government of Catalonia EU aid Private companies	Activities with schools and the general public were, in general, very well received. Some schools have asked to be able to repeat the tree planting experiences every year. Some of the activities that can be developed every year are: bird ringing; planting of native trees with schoolchildren; guided tours of the area, etc.

PROPOSED ACTIONS	PRIORITY	RESPONSIBLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION	COSTS	SOURCES OF FINANCE	NOTES
MANAGEMENT AND MONITORING:					
MAINTENANCE OF THE PROJECT WEBSITE (OVERALL FOR ALL AREAS)	IMPORTANT	Ter Consortium	Staff: Ter Consortium staff communication officer.	Aid from the Government of Catalonia	Over the next 5 years (2014-2018), the website http://www.liferipariater.com
			€1,000/year	EU aid	must be operational. This activity must be carried out by the consortium's own staff. On the website, the activities aimed at the public held in these areas can be publicised to raise awareness and improve knowledge of the environment.
SCIENTIFIC MONITORING (OVERALL FOR ALL AREAS)	IMPORTANT	Environmental volunteering	€15,000 period 2014-2018	Aid from the Government of Catalonia	The initial RIPARIA TER document already considered that, once the project was over, a review should be carried out of the state of the vegetation and the bird, amphibian, reptile and mammal populations every 5 years, to which must be added the state of the temporarily flooded areas.
		Professorial Chair in Mediterranean Coastal Ecosystems University of Girona		EU aid Private companies	

PROPOSED ACTIONS	PRIORITY	RESPONSIBLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION	COSTS	SOURCES OF FINANCE	NOTES
Coordination, implementation and monitoring of the proposed actions in the Post-LIFE conservation plans	NECESSARY	Ter Consortium	Organisation staff	Own sources Aid from the Government of Catalonia EU aid	An agreement will be signed, if necessary, with the municipal councils detailing the contributions in cash or in kind they will make in relation to the actions defined and in order to commission the Ter Consortium to manage the coordination, implementation and monitoring of the Post-LIFE conservation plan actions.

Appendix:

PROPOSAL TO REGULATE ACCESS TO ILLA DE LA PILASTRA

(regulation of motor vehicle access restricted to authorised services)

DETERMINING THE EXCEPTIONS TO THE RESTRICTED USE OF WHEELED TRANSPORT ON THE ISLAND TO PRESERVE ITS NATURAL VALUES

This proposal lays the basis for determining exceptions to the restricted use of wheeled transport on the island to preserve its natural values.

Access to Illa de la Pilastra will be restricted for motor vehicles in general, but the local residents affected may obtain exceptional permission for access. The granting and issue of special permission for access will be the responsibility of the respective municipal councils, with a commitment to preserve the natural values of this landscape.

Sometimes, exceptionally, emergency vehicles, the fire, police or ambulance services and other services doing their duty may also drive on to it.

In issuing special permission, the following aspects must be taken into account:

APPLICATION FOR EXCEPTIONAL MOTOR VEHICLE ACCESS TO ILLA DE LA PILASTRA

APPLICANT'S DETAILS

First name and surnames or company name:

ID card number:

Address:

Town/City and Postcode

E-mail address:

Telephone(s):

REASONS WHY MOTOR VEHICLE ACCESS TO ILLA DE LA PILASTRA IS BEING REQUESTED:

Access to plot num.: located on estate num. with the following vehicle:

Registration:

Make:

Model:

I attach the following document proving my right of access via La Pilastra to the plot mentioned:

- Deed or property tax receipt (if you are the owner)
- Rental agreement*
- Assignment agreement*
- Authorisation signed by the owner*

*The owner must appear in the land registry database

Others (specify and provide evidence)

Once the necessary procedures and checks have been carried out, I request permission to cross Illa de la Pilastra with a vehicle.

Access will be under my own responsibility and without leaving the main track, at low speed and without damaging the natural values of the island. I pledge to pay for any damage caused, if necessary.

....., of,

Clarification: ONLY RESIDENTS OF ONE OF THE THREE MUNICIPALITIES WHO HAVE PROPERTY ON BOTH SIDES OF THE RIVER HAVE A RIGHT TO PERMISSION.

The application must be sent to the municipality where the interested party is a resident. However, BEFORE exceptional permission is given, the other municipal councils and the Ter Consortium must be informed.