



LIFE+ NATURE PROJECT

LIFE 08 NAT/E/000072

Recovery of the riverbank habitats of the River Ter

POST-LIFE CONSERVATION PLAN Illa d'Avall (Jafre) Ter4

November 2013

Promoted by



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SANT GREGORI TOWN COUNCIL



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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, activities to discover the environment through guided tours, etc.) to raise awareness and publicise the natural values of these areas.

On 11 November 2013 there was a forest fire in El Baix Empordà which affected the Ter4 area of action of the LIFE+ NATURE “Recovery of the riverbank habitats of the River Ter” project. This conditions the drafting and approval of the Post-LIFE conservation plan for the Illa d'Avall (Ter4) area, as some actions from the previous draft which had already been agreed with the local council have become obsolete due to the damage caused to the area. This means everything that needs to be done must be reconsidered and an accurate assessment of the damage is required along with a new action plan to recover the affected habitats over the next few years.

With current information, it is known that the whole area of action has been affected to different degrees. There are areas that have been left practically bare, particularly those previously covered by bramble thickets, reeds and other ruderal formations. It seems that the undergrowth in areas with trees is most seriously affected. The tree layer is affected to different degrees, although in some areas it can probably recover. The dry Mediterranean meadows have also been particularly affected, as have chalk-loving rosemary scrub and areas of stone pine groves.

The recovery of the area will also have to be monitored over the forthcoming days and months, as the weather will play a fundamental role. So, the burning of the areas of reed on

Illa d'Avall can notably encourage this species, particularly bearing in mind that fires provide nutrients and the water for putting out the fire gives it what it needs to regrow strongly. It will also be necessary to wait and see whether, when growth begins, it is substantially affected by hard frosts whether it is encouraged by lack of frost.

In addition, some of the dry Mediterranean meadow species could be encouraged by the fire, although it will be necessary to wait several months to assess this.

OBJECTIVES:

In order to ensure the maintenance of the actions carried out after the fire and to not waste the careful efforts made to date, some of the actions that could be carried out in the short term 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, are included here.

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.

CURRENT SITUATION:

The El Baix Empordà fire began on Monday, 11 November 2013 in the municipality of Vilopriu and all indications are that it was started deliberately. It was brought under control by 13/11/13 and was put out by 16/11/13.

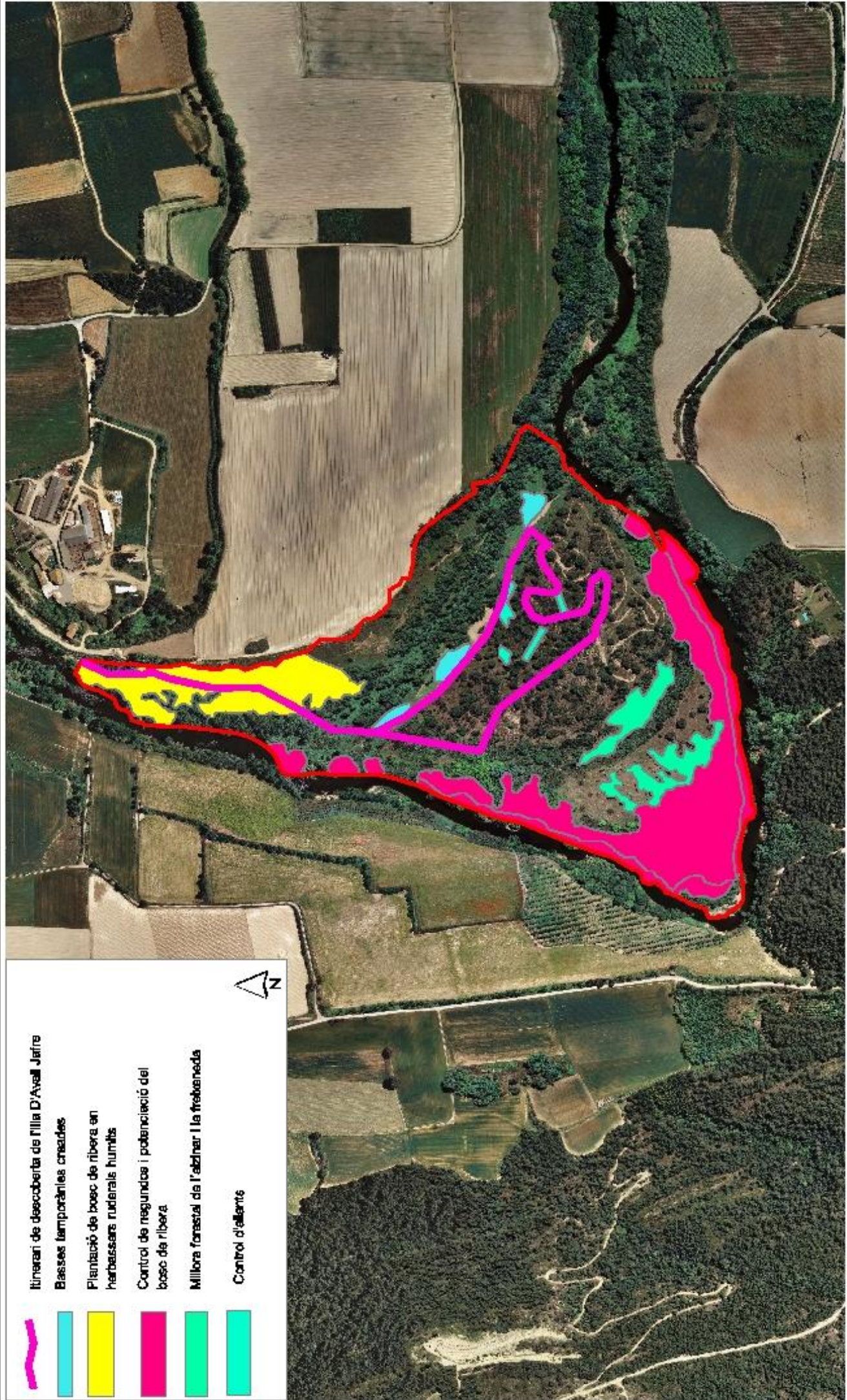
The provisional perimeter established to date by the Forest Rangers gives a total of 551.05 hectares, of which 377 are woodland (trees and scrub) and the rest crops (131.73), pastures (19) and urban land and water.







Although the fire began in Vilopriu, the worst affected municipality is Foixà, with 330 hectares, followed by Vilopriu with 140, Colomers with 46 and Jafre with 34.

The burned area of the municipality of Jafre corresponds to the entire Illa d'Avall and some other riverbank areas in the "Lower Ter Riverbank" area of the Natura 2000 Network.

All the areas of action that have been worked on from 2010-2013 corresponding to the Illa d'Avall area have been affected. So, almost the entire island has been affected by the fire.

A map of the specific conservation actions carried out on the island to November 2013 is shown below.



-  Itinerari de descoberta de l'illa d'Avall Jaire
-  Basses temporànies creades
-  Plantació de bosc de ribera en herbassars ruderals humits
-  Control de regunidos i potenciació del bosc de ribera
-  Millora forestal de l'alzinar i la freixeneda
-  Control d'allants



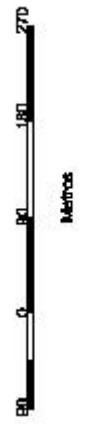
**RECUPERACIÓ
 D'HÀBITATS
 RIPARIS DEL RIU TER
 LIFE08 NAT/E/000072**



PLÀNOL:

**ACTUACIONS EXECUTADES A L'ILLA D'AVALL
 (TER4) FINS A NOVENBRE DE 2013**

NÚMERO DE PLÀNOL:
 DATA: NOVENBRE DE 2013
 ESCALA:



SWOT ANALYSIS

WEAKNESSES

- *Lack of finance from the organisations involved, especially a small municipal council without officers or a municipal works team.
- *Smaller sources of finance for nature projects and more competition for existing resources.
- *Entry of some motorbikes in the area of action.
- *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.
- *Lack of financial resources to resolve extraordinary situations.

STRENGTHS

- *High level of public interest in the publicity activities.
- *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 good predisposition to continue working together.
- *Public ownership of the area, ensuring maintenance of the natural area without the speculative interests that had threatened the area before.

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.
- *Development of environmentally friendly economic activities in the area.

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 are 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	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.
		Jafre, Foixà and Colomers Town Councils			
		Government of Catalonia: ACA and Environment Department			A new executive committee including all the agents involved in the burned areas of the "Lower Ter Riverbank" SCI, including Foixà and Colomers Town Council which were not present in the LIFE+ Nature Riparia-Ter project.

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 forestry management, among others. There are also other annual bidding processes that must be exploited, such as the Fundación Biodiversidad, the EU...</p>
ASSESSMENT OF THE EFFECT ON HABITATS FOLLOWING THE FIRE	CRITICAL	Ter Consortium	Own personnel	-	<p>It is planned that, during the next few months and, if possible before January 2014, a concise assessment will have been made of the effect of the fire on the Illa d'Avall area and the other "Lower Ter Riverbank" SCI areas affected. The effects of the fire on the fauna must be assessed. An attempt will be made to get volunteers to carry out the scientific monitoring.</p> <p>Over the next few days there will be an initial damage assessment in order to include it in the final LIFE+ NATURE RIPARIA-TER project report.</p>

PROPOSED ACTIONS	PRIORITY	RESPONSIBLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION	COSTS	SOURCES OF FINANCE	NOTES
DRAWING UP A MANAGEMENT PROJECT FOR THE AREAS OF THE "LOWER TER RIVERBANK" AFFECTED BY THE FIRE	CRITICAL	Ter Consortium	Own personnel	Own sources Private companies Aid from public bodies	<p>Once the damage and effects on the habitats has been assessed, it must be established whether it is necessary to take action to help recover the environment. It is possible that some of the habitats will recover by themselves in the short and/or medium term. In others measures must be planned to contain invasive species, etc.</p> <p>A document must be drawn up containing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General habitat management directives • Definition of specific habitat improvement actions • Definition of actions to control invasive species • Definition of actions to organise public use • Budget <p>This document must be agreed with all the administrations involved: Jafre Town Council, Foixà Town Council, Colomers Town Council, the Catalan Water Agency, the Environment Department of the Government of Catalonia...</p>
HABITAT IMPROVEMENT AND CONSERVATION ACTIONS:					

PROPOSED ACTIONS	PRIORITY	RESPONSIBLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION	COSTS	SOURCES OF FINANCE	NOTES
MAINTENANCE OF RIVERBANK WOODLAND, TEMPORARY PONDS, FIXED DUNES, ETC.	IMPORTANT	Ter Consortium	This must be assessed based on the project drawn up	Aid from the Government of Catalonia EU aid Private companies	The actions that must be carried out will be included, defined and budgeted for in a document that must be approved by the competent administrations: the local councils involved and the Government of Catalonia (Environment Department and the Catalan Water Agency). Finance must be sought from different institutions and private companies.
MANAGEMENT OF PUBLIC USE:					
MAINTENANCE OF THE ILLA D'AVALL DISCOVERY ROUTE	CRITICAL	Ter Consortium	This must be assessed based on the project drawn up.	Aid from the Government of Catalonia EU aid Private companies	It is planned that, over the next few months, there will be a recovery of Illa d'Avall and that actions will be carried out to make this area an environment for enjoying nature once again.

PROPOSED ACTIONS	PRIORITY	RESPONSIBLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION	COSTS	SOURCES OF FINANCE	NOTES
CONTROL OF MOTOR VEHICLE ACCESS TO THE ISLAND	CRITICAL	Ter Consortium Jafre Town Council	Awaiting assessment	Aid from the Government of Catalonia EU aid Private companies	<p>Access to the island is currently regulated by a wooden barrier installed with chains ensuring that four-wheeled vehicles cannot access the island without permission. The key is controlled by Jafre Town Council. However, access with motorcycles is easier because it is easy for them to pass through any space a pedestrian can get through. Over time, it will therefore be necessary to discourage motor vehicle access to these areas strengthening dissuasive measures at the points where entry continues.</p> <p>A control system is proposed to determine who can access the island in motor vehicles. See appendix.</p>

PROPOSED ACTIONS	PRIORITY	RESPONSIBLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION	COSTS	SOURCES OF FINANCE	NOTES
DEVELOPMENT OF ACTIVITIES AIMED AT THE PUBLIC	IMPORTANT	Ter Consortium in cooperation with the agents from the region and Jafre Town Council	<p>Staff: €2,500/year</p> <p>Native plant seedlings: €500/year</p> <p>Other materials: €350/year</p>	<p>Aid from the Government of Catalonia</p> <p>EU aid</p> <p>Private companies</p>	<p>Activities with the general public were very well received. Jafre Town Council has shown an interest in continuing to offer activities for both residents of the city and visitors.</p> <p>Some of the activities that can be developed every year are:</p> <p>Collection of rubbish that has been left exposed after the fire, mass plantings to restore the affected areas, etc.</p> <p>Later, depending on the recovery of this and the adjoining areas, there can be guided tours, bird ringing, amphibian listening...</p> <p>It is considered to be vitally important to involve the population in the actions carried out from now on in this area, not only to continue the publicity and awareness-raising work, but also to raise awareness about forest fires and their repercussions.</p>

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	Ter Consortium	€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 temporarily flooded areas.
		Environmental volunteering		EU aid	
		Professorial Chair in Mediterranean Coastal Ecosystems		Private companies	
		University of Girona			

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 (OVERALL FOR ALL AREAS)	NECESSARY	Ter Consortium	Organisation staff	Own sources Aid from the Government of Catalonia EU aid	

PROPOSAL TO REGULATE ACCESS TO ILLA D'AVALL (JAFRE)

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

The Alba-Ter Consortium presented the project for the recovery of River Ter riverbank habitats (Riparia-Ter) at the LIFE+ Nature 2008 bidding round. At the end of July 2009, the European Commission's LIFE Committee approved the list of projects to be financed, one of which was the one presented by the Alba-Ter Consortium.

One of the areas that has benefited from the European aid for improving the riverbank habitats of the River Ter in 2012-2013 has been Illa d'Avall in the municipality of Jafre. In this area, actions have been carried out to improve the riverbank woodland, temporary Mediterranean ponds have been created, there has been planting with native plants and an island discovery route has been set up. In order to maintain and strengthen these actions, Illa d'Avall should be maintained without wheeled traffic, as it could damage some of the most singular values of the island.

Access to the island will be restricted to motor vehicles in general but affected residents may apply for exceptional permission for access. The granting and issue of special permission for access will be the responsibility of Jafre Town Council, 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 D'AVALL

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 D'AVALL IS BEING REQUESTED:

Access with the following vehicle:

Registration:

Make:

Model:

REASONS WHY MOTOR VEHICLE ACCESS TO THE ISLAND IS BEING REQUESTED:

Once the necessary procedures and checks have been carried out, I request permission to access Illa d'Avall 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,

The application must be sent to Jafre Town Council. However, if exceptional permission is given, the Ter Consortium must be informed.