

Improve governance and quality of the forest management in protected Mediterranean areas

Thematic enlightening n°3

Active social participation in forest fires prevention



Partners: Generalitat Vlenciana, PNR of Alpilles
Leader: Generalitat Vlenciana (Francisco NAVARRO and Raquel MORENO, VAERSA)

Table

Introduction	2
Forest fire prevention plans, at different levels	2
Forest fire prevention plans at local level	3
Economic aids	3
Methodological guide	4
Manual of “good practices”	4
Voluntary groups for fire surveillance	5
Annex 1: Excerpts from the manual of “best practices” for prevention of wildfires in protected areas of the Region of Valencia	6
Conclusion	8

Introduction

Fires are one of the most important problems that affect Mediterranean forest systems. Therefore, fire prevention is a key piece of forest governance in the Mediterranean areas. There are many agents involved in forest fire prevention, both in number, interests and their relationship with the environment (owners, farmers, hikers, ecologists, residents, etc.).

If we define governance as the way of establishing government action¹, the term takes on a much wider sense than social participation in decision-making. In its broadest sense, good governance must include actions to improve the society's involvement in active management, also understood as participation and/or co-responsibility in the execution of actions by themselves.

Therefore, the analysis of governance scheme should include the various agents that have corresponding competences and responsibilities. Its quality will increase when the agents have enough resources to carry out its competences tasks (self-sufficiency²), or they are able to take advance about the potential of agents to assist in achieving objectives.

In this sense, governments can determine as target to implicate and the participation of different agents in fire prevention, seeking co-responsibility. This objective should necessarily establish clear and common aims and promote/support involvement of an active management, ensuring that the required resources and knowledge are available.

In any case, the different objectives and realities make the solutions and tools complex and diverse. In this cadre we collect a series of punctual actions and general considerations about the actions developed within QUALIGOUV project to improve the social active participation in forest fire prevention.

Therefore, the actions outlined are not intended as a recipe to follow, but punctual clarifications considering specific actions that can improve the governance.

Forest fire prevention plans, at different levels

A clear and common picture is necessary to achieve any goal, but it is particularly important when we are looking for a coordinated and coherent participation of stakeholders that not always have the same interests and philosophy. Forest fire prevention plans allow us to set that common picture in a document.

Forest fire prevention plans in natural parks define the general framework for the action. They provide clarity and certainty regarding to the definition of common objectives, making possible its transmission to the whole society and to stakeholders in particular (horizontal governance). They can also establish cooperative and collaborative actions between the different levels of government (vertical governance).

They are particularly interesting and useful because of the large number of agents involved in forest fire prevention. Once the plan is established, the different governments and stakeholders can develop their own actions and exercise their own competences and duties on a common framework.

There are plans to prevent forest fires at different territorial levels in both France and Spain. The different scales ranging from departments or regions to more concrete levels: massifs, protected areas or even properties.

In France, the main plans and actions used are the following ones:

- "*Plan de massif pour la défense des forêts contre l'incendie*" (Massif forest fire prevention plan).
- "*Plan départemental de pour la défense des forêts contre l'incendie*" (Departmental forest fire prevention plan).
- Concept of "*Servitude de défense des forêts contre l'incendie sur certaines voies et sur les zones qui les bordent pour le maintien de zones débroussaillées*" (Forest fire prevention easement on some tracks and on zones that surround them to maintain zones cleared of undergrowth).

While in Region of Valencia, the main tools are the following ones

- "*Planes sectoriales de prevención de incendios de demarcación*" (Sectorial plans of fires prevention in borders areas).
- "*Planes de prevención de incendios de parques naturales*" (Plans of wildfires prevention in natural parks).
- "*Planes locales de prevención de incendios forestales*" (Local plans of wildfires prevention).

Notes :

1 - See governance definitions in the introduction of the present document.

2 - Self-sufficiency understood as the availability of resources (knowledge and resources) to carry out the tasks assigned optimally, it must not be associated with isolation or lack of interaction with other agents.

The Forest fire prevention plans are often required by the proper rules of the protected area, in addition to the numerous regulation and plans that affect the protected areas, creating a very large regulatory and planning framework. This can be consistent from a technical and regulatory point of view, but the consequence is a very complex regulatory framework that complicates the management of the protected area. So, finally, the main management objectives can be hidden by unclear names, which also make management more complex.

For all these reasons, we write some considerations and recommendations:

- We should aim to simplify the planning framework (number of plans), in order to improve the transparency and efficiency.
- When different plans overlap in the same territory, we should clearly specify the content, scale and detail of each plan.
- We should establish the actions under a positive and realist point of view, considering human actions as an inseparable part of the forest environment.
- We should provide the access information to potential stakeholders. Promote simplicity, brevity and accessibility.



Photo 1: The water supply network is one of the fundamental elements of the wildfires prevention system of the Valencia Region.

Forest fire prevention plans at local level

In the Region of Valencia, the municipalities or local entities are required by legislation to draft local plans to prevent forest fires, however, until recent years, the number of drafted and approved plans was rather limited.

Due to limited progress in this process, the Region of Valencia government raised some encouraging measures such as economic grants to draft prevention plans and development of a methodological guide for its drafting in support to the local entities. Both actions can be considerable to improve the vertical governance with the help of the QUALIGOUV project.

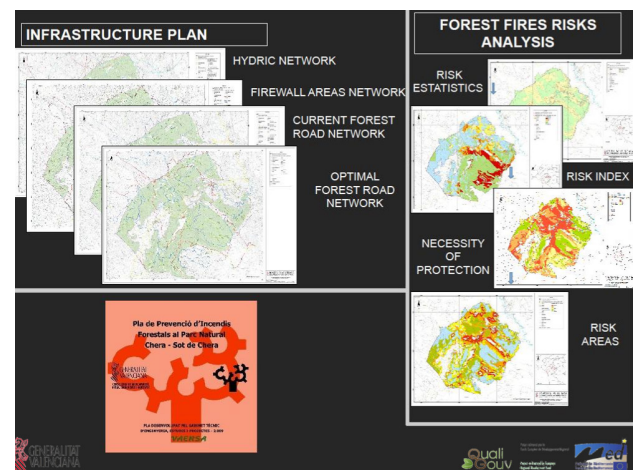


Figure 1 : Presentation of the Fire prevention plan of the Natural Park of Puebla de San Miguel to the attention of the general public.

Economic aids

By establishing a grant for the drafting of the local plans (6 000 euros maximum per project), promotion of plans drafting has been implemented.

Success is achieved not only thanks to the interest of the municipalities themselves, but also thanks to the own consultancies and to the foresters that, regarding to the possibilities, helped the municipalities in drafting up local plans.

This economic aid has fully energized an aspect that was current some years ago, but that was not giving any result until now. Today, we also reached a real added

value for the employment in forest sector.

There have been a total of 90 requests to receive aid. Finally, 62 municipalities have received it. Some of these (26) already approved their plan and some other are in process (37 plans).

Methodological guide

In addition to economic support, there is need to clarify and provide a guidance about the content, scale and development of local plans. The first step in drafting local plans has become into several questions about how to draft them, the content, scale, etc.

While the legislation provides a minimum content, the way to draft is not indicated. The guide provides methodologies for use, and index of structure and contents, etc.

In this sense, a methodological guide to draft fire prevention local plans has been realised (see DVD containing project deliverables, attached to the Final capitalization book) and is expected to be a useful tool that allows orienting the drafting. It can also contribute to transfer knowledge and needs from regional government to local government (vertical governance) and to give a greater coherence to all local plans.

Manual of “good practices”

The human factor strongly affects the forest fires. To mitigate the risk, fire prevention efforts have tended to coercive measures, limitations and prohibitions.

These restrictive policies entail a reduction of forest fires, but in turn cause unexpected effects. They make human communities and their traditional activities disappeared from the forest environment. In addition, they create guilt on those who bear the regulation, so they are one more factor that complicates the management and leads to the abandonment of traditional activities.

A different or complementary point of view to the restrictive one, open a new framework of collaboration, participation and co-responsibility, where the farmer, user, forester, resident and others become an ally in the detection and prevention of forest fires.

While society and users are largely aware and sensitive to the forest prevention risk, it is surprising how frequently there is a clear ignorance about the risk of certain actions that have been traditionally performed, and the possible measures to mitigate the risk.

In order to manage the existing sensitivity, promoting the co-responsibility and cooperation, the **manual of good practice** is considered as a powerful tool where, through information presented in an attractive and useful way, you get perfectly connected with stakeholders.

The case is very different when there is no sensitivity and / or knowledge about the problem. In this case the manual of good practices by itself is not enough and could not be considered as a progress.

The manuals must be simple, direct, attractive and suited to the target audience.



Figure 2: Cover page of the manual of “good practices” for the prevention of wildfires in protected areas of the Region of Valencia. A document at once comprehensive, clear, accessible and visually attractive.

Voluntary groups for fire surveillance

Some of the partners (French Regions of Languedoc-Roussillon, Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur and Corse, within provinces that have high forest fire risk and the Spanish Region of Valencia) do recruit volunteers' groups for the surveillance of fires.

In the French case, the volunteers depend on the municipalities who provide funds for them, while the fire prevention rely mostly on the national forestry office (ONF). In the Region of Valencia, numerous organized volunteers' groups (sports teams, associations, municipal authorities, etc) collaborate for years in forest fire prevention. These groups receive economic support from the Valencia's regional Government.

Volunteering is a way to target the concerns of societies (particularly local society) for active participation in fire prevention, enabling both increased surveillance resources and/or better information.

The involvement and willingness of the volunteers is high. Thanks to their interest and relationship with the local environment, they have a high knowledge of it, and their social involvement enables a closer action.

In a context of economic difficulties, it is particularly appealing to assign a part of the monitoring of volunteers to multiply the capacities of observation without increasing costs. In general terms, the positive aspects to emphasize are similar between the pilot sites. But, thanks to some differences existing in governance between the Region of Valencia and France, it was possible to collectively define which are the main aspects to be considered in order to get a better efficiency of the volunteers:

- The functions and competences of the volunteers must be clear and explicitly defined, according to a juridical analysis that clarifies their administrative, civil and/or penal responsibilities.
- The promotion and economic support to the volunteers is necessary, but it's important to maintain an altruistic character (no economic benefit).

- The initial training is important, as well as the definition of the minimum required profile to implement the volunteer activity.
- The non-professional character of volunteers conducts to assign them to areas or points particularly safe in case of risk occurrence.
- Volunteering can be a complement to the surveillance system, but never the key piece of the surveillance system.

Their activities and actions must be integrated and coordinated with the rest of the resources involved in fire prevention in order to optimize resources.

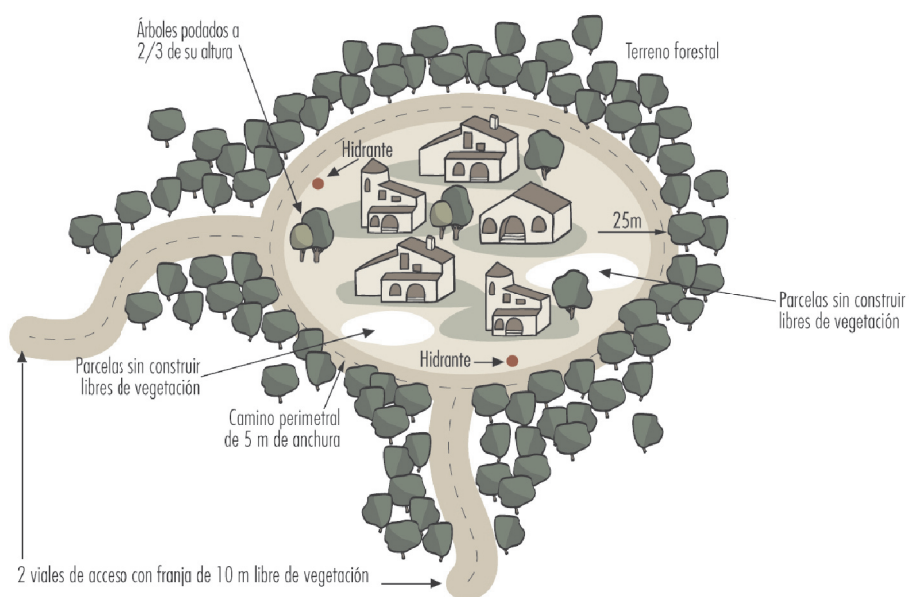
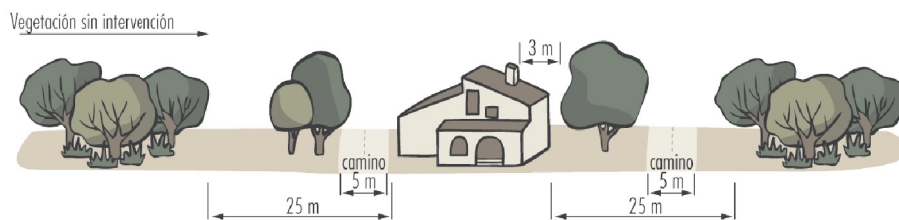


Figure 3: The participation of volunteers alongside the official staff to wildfires surveillance allows both to reduce the number of fire outbreaks and to improve the effectiveness of awareness-raising campaigns.

Annex 1: Excerpts from the manual of "best practices" for prevention of wildfires in protected areas of the Region of Valencia

- Las parcelas no edificadas dentro de la urbanización, es conveniente que estén libres de vegetación seca y con los árboles podados, para evitar la propagación del fuego.
- Se instalarán hidrantes perimetrales homologados y se garantizará el suministro de agua para su utilización. Estos hidrantes estarán debidamente señalizados.
- Avisa inmediatamente al **112 en caso de incendio.**

DISTANCIAS DE PROTECCIÓN PARA EDIFICIOS QUE SE ENCUENTREN EN EL TERRENO FORESTAL



Es tu responsabilidad...

...actuar con precaución, informarse del nivel de preemergencia.

Seguir las recomendaciones básicas que aparecen en este manual puede evitar en gran medida que se produzcan incendios forestales causados por negligencias.



52

Ayúdanos a conseguirlo

Puedes consultar el nivel de preemergencia y su previsión para el día siguiente en:

En la página web: www.112cv.com

 En twitter: [gva_112cv](https://twitter.com/gva_112cv)

En tu ayuntamiento.

Si ves un incendio llama al 112



Conclusion

The way of addressing fire risk prevention are very different from one region to another. But generally, there is a lack of integration of concerned stakeholders (firemen, farmers, population, etc.) in the elaboration of local fire management plans. That is why several partners of the QUALIGOUV project decided to develop some tools and methods aimed at improving social participation in this sector. Beyond making civil society representative and professional to take part in decision-making, one of the more efficient and economic ways to capture the interest of local population is to make them concretely participate in fire prevention, in particular through volunteering.

This publication was realised with support from:



Partnership of the project:



Marseille, May 2012

INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR MEDITERRANEAN FORESTS

14, rue Louis Astouin 13002 Marseille - France - Tel. : +33 (0)4 91 90 76 70 - Fax : +33 (0)4 91 90 71 62 - Email : info@aifm.org - Website : www.aifm.org