





Una manera de Bacer Europa



"Environmental Improvement: environmental recovery and revitalization of the livestock trails of El Perelló, Baix Ebre"

Government of Catalonia

Programa Operativo de Cataluña

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Fondo Europeo de Desarrollo Regional

The project presented as Good Practice: "Environmental Improvement: environmental recovery and revitalization of the livestock trails of El Perelló, Baix Ebre"



The operation consists of the restoration and creation of ponds associated with the former livestock trails of El Perelló, in the Baix Ebre region of Tarragona province. It is a highly significant endeavour addressed to increasing the number and surface area of water points and thus encouraging the recovery of the zone's biodiversity. In the specific case of El Perelló, the objective is to reestablish the municipality as a working biodiversity reserve, particularly for Iberian ribbed newts, and to recover the memory of the livestock trails.

The livestock trails are the routes along which livestock was historically herded. They previously played a very important role in connecting different ecosystems. They also acted as ecological corridors and thus encouraged biodiversity. These livestock trails brought great natural and ecological value to our region by boosting the biodiversity alongside them, by boosting land and water planning and management, and by helping to preserve a Mediterranean landscape mosaic. Livestock grazing has, moreover, always been a very important tool of forest management, as it helps to reduce the fuel load of undergrowth and, therefore, the risk of forest fires.

The project has involved several steps. It has specifically involved the restoration and improvement of six ponds and the construction of nine new ponds and fifty-one small ponds with a capacity to retain rainwater for several days. Three rest areas will also be adapted with the construction of new facilities, improvements to existing amenities, and the installation of signposting and information signs.

The project has a total cost of \in 334,067.62, a total eligible cost of \in 306,458.89 and support from an ERDF grant worth \in 153,229.45. This operation is expected to impact 6,776 square metres of protected or regenerated land.

This operation is presented as a Best Practice as it meets the following criteria:

1. Widespread dissemination among beneficiaries, potential beneficiaries and the public at large.

Raising awareness of the operation has included the following action:

Permanent panel:





Description of the operation on the website of the beneficiary:



Press release about the operation:



Es rehabiliten les basses dels antics camins ramaders del Perelló per millorar la conservació i la recuperació de l'ofegabous

Acció Climàtica, Alimentació i Agenda Rural Del. Terres Ebre



També s'han construït bases pilot de dimensions més reduïdes per facilitar la dispersió dels amfibis i garantir la viabilitat de les poblacions

El projecte ha tingut un cost de 334.067 euros, finançat en un 50% a través del fons Feder

El Departament d'Acció Climàtica, Alimentació i Agenda Rural, a través del fons Feder, ha rehabilitat i construït una sèrie de basses al Perelló (Baix Ebre)

News in digital media about the operation:



2. The action has some innovative features

This action has involved three clearly innovative elements.

First, GPS tracking technology was applied innovatively in the diagnosis phase of the operation. Specifically, several specimens of the endangered Iberian ribbed newt were tracked to determine the structure of the breeding sites by estimating the mobility of specimens. With this information, it was possible to identify a network of water points that would enhance the distribution area of this species and meanwhile also benefit other groups of fauna and flora.

A second innovative item is the combination of traditional and modern construction techniques. Examples are the new ponds that have been designed and built by replicating traditionally used

techniques and, in some cases, even using traditional materials, in combination with specific machinery to compact materials better, to reinforce layers with insulating materials and thus to ensure successful excavation of not very penetrable soils.

The third element allows for quantitative evaluation of achievements by comparing them to objectives established for the project. In the monitoring and maintenance phase the intention is to replicate GPS tracking, which was already used for the Iberian ribbed newt to monitor fauna, and thereby to perform pre- and post-operative corporate analyses, which is very unusual in projects of this kind.

3. Adaptation of the results obtained from the operation to the established objectives.

The green infrastructure programme (2017-2021) is an initiative of the Government of Catalonia for the implementation of green infrastructure. The programme includes the recovery of natural capital. The objective of this specific action is therefore to increase the number and surface area of water points and to enhance the spatial network configuration of these ponds. As mentioned above, the operation is also intended to raise awareness of the history of the livestock trails.

Insofar as increasing surface area is concerned, the construction of the nine new ponds, the improvement of a further six and the creation of fifty-one small pools, has taken place in an area of 15.5 square kilometres, all in the municipality of El Perelló. The initial objective of increasing the number and surface area of water points can therefore be considered to have been achieved.

Second, the action taken has also meant completion of the operation's target of raising environmental awareness of the livestock trails, which has mainly been achieved through the installation of explanatory panels and signposts.

Lastly, although it is too early to extrapolate the results, the envisaged use of GPS methodology will allow for pre- and post-analysis, known as BA/BACRI, which is not commonplace. Experts recommend not starting monitoring until a reasonable period has elapsed, so that the results may first be properly checked. For the time being, there has therefore been no evaluation of any increase to the number of Iberian ribbed newt specimens.

4. Contribution to resolving a problem or weakness detected in the territorial area of implementation.

The amphibian population in Catalonia is currently generally regressing, mainly because of progressive changes in the territory, abandonment of agricultural and livestock farming practices and a loss of water points for their reproduction.

In the past, livestock trails contributed significantly to the proliferation of biodiversity. The disappearance of livestock farming has led to the abandonment of ponds and to their deterioration and disappearance. This has meant a loss of biodiversity and a negative impact on certain species such as the Iberian ribbed newt. In addition, the livestock trails of El Perelló have high ecological potential for the conservation of rare and endangered species.

Through this initiative, it has been possible to improve the habitat of the Iberian ribbed newt, a species under threat of regression, through the connection of potential reproduction points for this

amphibian. Likewise, with the improvement and creation of new ponds, the ecosystem that had deteriorated through neglect has been regenerated.

Lastly, the municipality of El Perelló has witnessed an enhancement of its ethnographic and cultural heritage value associated with agricultural activities and landscape elements and has become more interesting for fauna.

5. High degree of cover for the target population

The operation has generally had a positive impact on the municipality of El Perelló, as regards the land area of cover established and the recuperated area covers 15.5 square kilometres. More specifically, the action taken has prompted significant recovery of species associated with the ponds, has improved ecological connectivity among the main water points and has revitalized the heritage most associated with traditional uses such as the old pens for grouping herded livestock, as well as the history of the livestock trails.

In the specific case of the Iberian ribbed newt, an initial high degree of cover for improving and preserving this protected animal species has been observed based on improvement of the habitat for its development and elimination of physical barriers to its reproductive development.

6. Consideration of horizontal criteria of equal opportunities and non-discrimination, social responsibility, and environmental sustainability.

The horizontal principles of gender equality and non-discrimination were observed in all phases of both preparation and execution, through application of Community Regulations, Constitutional Act 3/2007 of 22 March for effective equality between men and women and the Plan for Equal Opportunities of Men and Women of the Administration of the Government of Catalonia. Obligations regarding the promotion of equality between men and women and non-discrimination on the grounds of sex, race or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation have also been fulfilled. Furthermore, this project complies with the protocol for the prevention, detection, action and resolution of situations of sexual harassment on the grounds of sex, sexual orientation and/or sexual identity in the Government of Catalonia Administration

Regarding environmental regulations, the requirements of the European Union and current environmental legislation were followed. This operation is likewise very much associated environmentally with the principle of sustainable development, insofar as one of its main objectives is to prevent a loss of biodiversity and to foster the conservation of local ecosystems.

7. Synergies with other policies or instruments of public intervention

The improvement and recovery of environmental areas is one of a series of regional and local activities of interest to the European Union.

The project for the environmental recovery and enhancement of the El Perelló livestock trails is part of the Government of Catalonia's strategic axis to promote the management, protection, and maintenance of the land, of natural areas and of their biodiversity, and includes measures to alleviate problems of erosion.

The initiative is also aligned with the Green Infrastructure Programme (2017-2021), which is the Government of Catalonia's programme for implementing green infrastructure. This plan is intended to encourage smart, sustainable, and inclusive growth, which are priorities of the European Union Europe 2020 framework, a programme intended to foster the recovery of natural capital. The Green Infrastructure Programme was likewise part of the EU 2020 Biodiversity Strategy, the objective of which was to halt biodiversity loss and the degradation of ecosystem services in the EU by 2020 and established 2050 as the year in which the EU's biodiversity and ecosystem services must be protected, valued and restored.







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