



FOREWORD

The need to eliminate or to soften the boundaries which nowadays mark the limits of protected nature is being explicitly envisaged within the framework of the 5th World Park Congress (WPC), whose core subject, *Benefits Beyond Borders*, does suggest that the current visions and perspectives on nature conservation and management be widened as one of the basic requirements for the efficient conservation of biotic, abiotic and cultural values being represented in the protected areas.

Out of the 7 thematic lines into which the next WPC will be structured, the Mediterranean ecoregion has identified the contents of Workshop I - Linkages in the terrestrial and marine landscape - as one of the priority subjects on which efforts have to be focused, with regard both to the coming world event that will take place in September, and to the devising of an ecoregional action plan concerning protected areas.

The significance of linkages in the landscape as the basis of an efficacious planning and management of our protected heritage, in spite of its having remained unrecognised until very recently is, nevertheless, something inherent to Mediterranean nature. The best practical examples embodying this new concept of conservation of protected areas are to be found, without doubt, within the limits of this ecoregion, in which the existence of relationships and connections among the different elements and functions of the territory has been a reality which has characterised the Mediterranean landscapes throughout History and which has been implicit in them.

Andalusia is one of the regions that have pioneered the practical acknowledgement of the importance of the linkages in the landscape with a view to preserving and enhancing the natural and cultural wealth of its territory, and the RENPA, the Andalusian Network of Natural Protected Areas, is nowadays one of the most original models for the ecosystemic management of protected areas in the Mediterranean region. Through RENPA we have learned that the important thing is to preserve ecological diversity and that, as a direct consequence of it, we can improve the quality of life and the standard of living in our region. Today it is blatantly clear to us that it is necessary to take territorial and environmental connections into consideration within a large spatial context - beyond protected areas - as the foundation not only of the conservation of biodiversity, but also for the recovery and conservation of our millennia - old culture as well as for the development of our region. We are gradually achieving our goal that natural areas, be they protected or unprotected, cease to be



LINKAGES IN THE MEDITERRANEAN LANDSCAPE

deemed by the rural world to be a barrier to progress and begin to be valued and recognised by society at large as an opportunity to develop the local economy.

As a result of the need to integrate our protected areas into the context of the territory, and as a part of the Mediterranean ecoregion, this Ministry of Environment has joined, through the offices of the General Directorate of the RENP and SA, the process launched by the IUCN's Mediterranean Cooperation Centre (CCM) with a view to developing and putting forward an ecoregional position in the coming World Park Congress.

We have trodden this path in close cooperation in order to identify the distinguishing marks of the ecoregion and to find out how, on the basis of them, we can achieve a more efficient management of the protected Mediterranean areas. The product of such an effort has been the edition by this Ministry over the last few months of several documents preceding and complementing this publication:

- ***Territorial Integration of Natural Protected Areas and Ecological Connectivity within Mediterranean Landscapes*** (Múgica *et al.*, 2002), which was the document of reference around which the meeting called *Environmental Connectivity. Protected areas in the Mediterranean Basin* (Malaga, September the 21st to September the 26th, 2002) took place. The said meeting was jointly organized by this Ministry and by CCM within the framework of the Mediterranean process towards Durban;
- ***Environmental Connectivity. Protected areas in the Mediterranean Basin*** (García Mora, 2003), which includes the contributions to and the conclusions deriving from the meeting mentioned in the preceding paragraph, and which was presented in the course of the *Mediterranean Conference: Protected Areas in the Mediterranean Context. Towards a Rational Use of Protected Areas*, which was held in Murcia in March 2003, and in which this Ministry played an active role, in the planning as well as in the development thereof; and
- ***Andalusian Wetlands Plan (PAH)*** (Consejería de Medio Ambiente, 2002), Sectorial Plan of the RENPA's Master Plan, which provides novel initiatives on the environmental policy of this Ministry concerning wetlands' ecosystems. By taking an ecosystemic approach, the conservation and restoration is being considered of the ecological processes beyond the administrative boundaries of the



protected stretches of water, and for the purpose of preserving the ecological integrity by means of a sustainable use of the Andalusian wetlands, the PAH is putting forward the management of these ecosystems within their superficial and subterranean basins, in an attempt to providing water and agriculture policies, as well as those concerning territorial regulation, with an environmental content.

In this work the needs, the challenges and the opportunities are being put forward which, from an ecoregional frame of reference and approach, are going to influence in the short, in the medium and in the long term the management of protected areas and the preservation of their resources. The Andalusian experience is being brought under the reader's consideration as a pioneering and illustrative example of the ecosystemic management of natural protected areas within the context of the Mediterranean ecoregion.

The ideas set out here basically take as their starting point the discussions on the subject which took place in the course of the preparatory meetings prior to the Durban conference, organised by this Ministry in conjunction with the Mediterranean Cooperation Centre. We sincerely hope that this document, a synthesis of the Mediterranean vision of linkages in the landscape and in the seascape, do play an important role within the framework of the discussions which, on this subject matter, are to take place over the coming months in the South African city of Durban.

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