



DOÑANA, WORLD HERITAGE SITE... IN DANGER?

For years, the UNESCO World Heritage Committee has expressed great concern over threats to areas around Doñana National Park and management by national and regional governments. 1 December 2016 is the deadline given to Spain to report on its actions on a series of recommendations made by the committee.



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Threats and World Heritage Committee Recommendations

Spanish Government

Andalusian Regional Government

DREDGING TO DEEPEN THE GUADALQUIVIR RIVER

RECOMMENDATION: Make a permanent commitment to cancel the project and do not authorize future plans



WATER USE IN AGRICULTURE

RECOMMENDATION: Prepare a detailed implementation plan for the Doñana irrigation land use plan, so the conservation of the property is ensured



GAS EXPLORATION, EXTRACTION AND STORAGE PROJECTS

RECOMMENDATION: Do not authorize the projects until an environmental impact assessment evaluating their possible cumulative impacts is prepared



REOPENING OF AZNALCÓLLAR MINE

RECOMMENDATION: Develop a clear risk preparedness plan and assessment of impacts on Doñana of the mine, which was previously closed due to one of the biggest environmental disasters in Spain



METHODOLOGY USED FOR THE EVALUATION

WWF has used different sources to assess the compliance of administrations with UNESCO's recommendations, which were approved by the World Heritage Committee in Bonn in 2015. These include: published documents and plans (such as the River Basin Management Plan), meetings with stakeholders, interviews, press articles and independent and WWF reports. This document gathers data from the latest WWF report (January 2015) through November 2016, after WWF's Doñana campaign was launched in September 2016.

DREDGING TO DEEPEN THE GUADALQUIVIR RIVER. UNESCO has warned that if a permanent commitment to cancel the dredging project is not made, that should trigger an in danger listing of Doñana National Park. Not only has the Spanish government failed to cancel the project, it has included it in the new Guadalquivir River Basin Management Plan. The Port of Seville, which is dependent on the central government, announced in October 2016 that it won't abandon the project.

WATER USE IN AGRICULTURE. UNESCO asked for a detailed implementation plan for the Special Management Plan of the Irrigation Zones to the North of the Forest Crown of Doñana that ensures the ecological needs for the conservation of Doñana are met. The administration has not published this document and the implementation of the plan is, for the moment, very slow. Further, there has been no advancement on environmental issues such as restoration of streams and creeks. UNESCO requested that the implementation ensure that the ecological needs for the conservation of Doñana are met. Water management and governance around Doñana is so poor that the European Commission has opened an infringement procedure against Spain, and is about to take the country to court. The latest official documents presented by the government about Doñana's aquifer show that it continues its progressive deterioration, and that the administrations have not taken appropriate measures to stop it. A WWF report published in November 2016 gathers scientific evidence that proves the negative effect that the decrease of underground water levels is having on Doñana's natural values, such as lagoons. WWF has been demanding for years the closure of the more than 1,000 illegal wells and 3,000 hectares of illegal irrigation farms that are depleting Doñana's water resources. WWF has revealed the existence of 1,700 irrigation ponds around Doñana, most of them illegal. In October 2016, a proposal was made by the central government to temporarily legalize most of these wells, but this was withdrawn after WWF's intervention. Authorities have started to close a few wells, but progress is way not enough, because no farm surface is being eliminated.

GAS EXPLORATION, EXTRACTION AND STORAGE PROJECTS. In September 2016, Andalusian government approved a management plan prohibiting any further gas projects in the Doñana protected area. Social opposition against previously approved projects has grown strongly in the area, with a series of political and social platforms created. Local councils and the regional and national parliaments have requested that the projects be stopped. Nevertheless, ongoing projects undertaken by utility company Gas Natural-Fenosa continue. UNESCO has requested that the four gas projects pursued by the company in and around Doñana should not be allowed until an environmental impact assessment of their potential cumulative impacts is carried out. UNESCO has also asked for assurance that potential impacts will not affect the *outstanding universal value* of Doñana. The regional government has granted unified environmental authorization to two of the four projects (Aznalcázar and Marismas Occidental) and has denied another one (Marismas Oriental). The El Saladillo project requires authorization from Doñana's protected area authority, but this has not yet been requested by the company. Work on the Marismas Occidental has already begun with the installation of a new gas pipeline. Additionally, there are new seismic reports that show the risk for Doñana. The Spanish national government has not carried out an environmental impact assessment of the cumulative effects of the projects, as asked for by UNESCO.

REOPENING OF AZNALCOLLAR MINE. The project by Grupo México-Minorbis to reopen this copper and zinc mine –the site of one of the biggest environmental disasters on Spanish history– continues, and exploration work has begun despite the judicial decision to reopen the legal proceedings regarding the irregularities on the public concession of the mine in October. Further, the Guadalquivir River Basin Authority, which is dependent on the central government, has included in the basin's management plan a study on increasing the capacity of the Agrio dam in order to make water available for the mine. This would result in the further reduction of freshwater flows into Doñana's marshes.

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