Mediterranean ecosystem Restoration sites

Adaptive management of saltworks in France

The former saltworks restoration project in the Camargue is an example of how humans can help reverse human-made degradation of ecosystems through adaptive restoration until nature can regain its functionality and restore its resilience. The former salt works (5,000 ha of lagoon, salt marsh and dunes), are located in the Rhône delta, in the Camargue Regional Nature Park. This site belongs to a vast coastal area of 6,542 ha located in the communes of Arles (Salin-de-Giraud) and Les Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer.

Goals

Restoration of the natural characteristics and processes of the ecosystem to ensure connectivity among different water bodies, increase natural resilience and reduce the effects of climate change and risks of natural disasters.

General information

FRANCE

Organisation
Tour du Valat

Type of organisation
International or regional organisation, network or initiative Research or academia (incl. tertiary education)

Contact person
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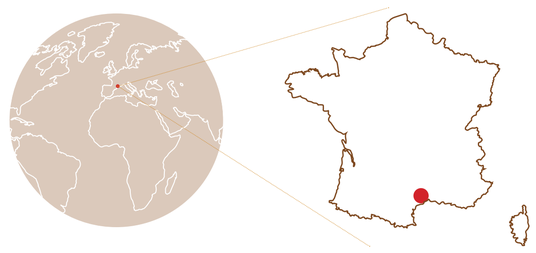
Website
https://tourduvalat.org/

Site location



Latitude
43.4048 N

Longitude
4.6225 E

Implementation area
5 000ha

Public cost reduction
13-17 M €

Restoration started
2011

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Wetland

> The restoration project has made it possible to reinforce the wilderness of the site and therefore its landscape value for welcoming the public, while allowing hydro-biological exchanges favorable to migratory fish and strengthening the buffer role of coastal wetlands against the sea level rise.

Marc Thibault,
Ecosystem management-restoration project manager at the Tour du Valat and co-manager of the former Camargue saltworks site

Type of restoration intervention

- Natural regeneration
- Assisted natural regeneration
- Control of invasive alien species
- Channel reconstruction
- Reconnecting water bodies, reshaping water paths in a natural way, restoring the natural hydrological functioning of coastal lagoons, restoring sandy coastlines, salt steppes and saltmarshes

Main drivers of degradation

- Infrastructure and industrial development and urbanisation
- Economic interests
- Alteration of vegetation
- Alteration of the natural hydrological functioning of coastal ecosystems

What is the practice about

- Creation of a buffer zone which contributed to a broader strategy (including dyke adaptation and consolidation further inland) to mitigate flood risks
- Protecting the Camargue from marine submersion
- Major hydraulic works carried out to re-establish the hydrobiological connections between the various lagoons, the sea and the peripheral sub-catchment areas
- Artificial islets created to encourage the reproduction of Greater flamingos and colonial laro-limicolous birds
- Interdisciplinary and prospective workshops initiated to apprehend collectively the dynamics underway

Achievements and impact

- Natural formation of a moving barrier beach to reduce the risks of erosion and flooding
- Improvement of the ecological status
- Development of fish stocks at sea and in the lagoons
- Increase in the number of colonial breeding gulls and shorebirds
- Recolonisation of bare soil by Salicornia and Limonium
- Gain in quality, diversity and naturalness of the landscape
- Diversification of uses (ecotourism, beach tourism, fishing, hunting, etc.)

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UNITED NATIONS DECADE ON ECOSYSTEM RESTORATION 2021-2030

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