

# THE GREEN LIGHT PROTOCOL

A tool from the Mediterranean Alliance for Wetlands  
to promote restoration activities in the  
Mediterranean



NolwennAuneau



Authors:

Lorena Segura<sup>1</sup>

Supportive authors: Chris Baker<sup>2</sup> , Rhimou El Hamoumi<sup>3</sup>, Kiraz Erciyas-Yavuz<sup>4</sup>, Lisa Ernoul<sup>1</sup>, Claudia Feltrup- Azafzaf<sup>5</sup>, Thomas Galewski<sup>1</sup>, Antoine Gazaix<sup>1</sup>, Anis Guelmami<sup>1</sup>, Bassima Khatib<sup>6</sup>, Catherine Numa<sup>7</sup>, Christian Perennou<sup>1</sup>, Besjana Sheshu<sup>8</sup>, Santiago Suarez<sup>7</sup>, Elisa Tuailon<sup>1</sup>, Teresa Zuna<sup>2</sup>

1 Tour du Valat (France), 2 Wetlands International European Association (Belgium), 3 GREPOM, Morocco, 4 Ornithological Research Center (Turkey), 5 Association Les amis des Oiseaux-Birdlife partner (Tunisia), 6 Society for the Protection of Nature (Lebanon), 7 IUCN Centre for Mediterranean cooperation, 8 Albanian Ornithological Society (Albania)



# The Green Light system

A system to promote restoration activities in the Mediterranean

## Background

Wetlands are one of the most productive ecosystems in the world. They are sources of biological diversity, providing water, food, recreation and protection against climatic events. Nevertheless, they continue to be degraded and destroyed. This affects not only our biodiversity and drinking water supplies but also impacts food security, health, jobs, recreation and tourism.

The destruction and degradation of wetland habitats is progressively reducing their ability to mitigate the effects of climate change and to host biodiversity. Furthermore, the conversion of wetlands into other land-uses transforms them from carbon sinks into carbon sources.



© Mauclert. Marais du Verdier

By conserving and restoring our wetlands, we can recover ecosystem functionality and habitat functions for biodiversity and humans. Thanks to their capacity for improving water quality, recharging aquifers, storing carbon and reducing the impacts of severe flooding events, wetlands constitute a natural, long-term, and cost-effective option to mitigate climate change effects. Wetland restoration has been recommended as an important part of the strategy to help counteract the biodiversity and climate crisis outlined in the COP15 agreements.

## What is ecological restoration?

Ecological restoration consists on assisting the recovery and functioning of the degraded ecosystem to a reference ecosystem. A reference ecosystem is a native ecosystem that have not experienced degradation. This ecosystem is used in setting goals and planning a restoration project, and later in its evaluation.

Ecological restoration can encompass a wide range of practices, depending on local conditions and societal choice (UNEP, 2021). Restoration can happen in many ways -for example through actively planting or by removing pressures so that nature can recover on its own. Effective wetland ecosystem restoration ensures maintaining critical habitats and species, securing natural buffers that soak up and store water, ensuring carbon sinks by capturing and storing atmospheric carbon dioxide and contributing to socio-economic well-being by providing water, food and natural recreational areas (Mediterranean Ecosystems restoration sites, 2023).

Ecological restoration and restorative management can be seen to be aligned along a 'restorative continuum' where a broad range of activities undertaken by society to repair damage to the broader environment, complement ecological restoration and provide improved conditions for broad scale recovery (Gann *et al.*, 2019) (Figure 1).

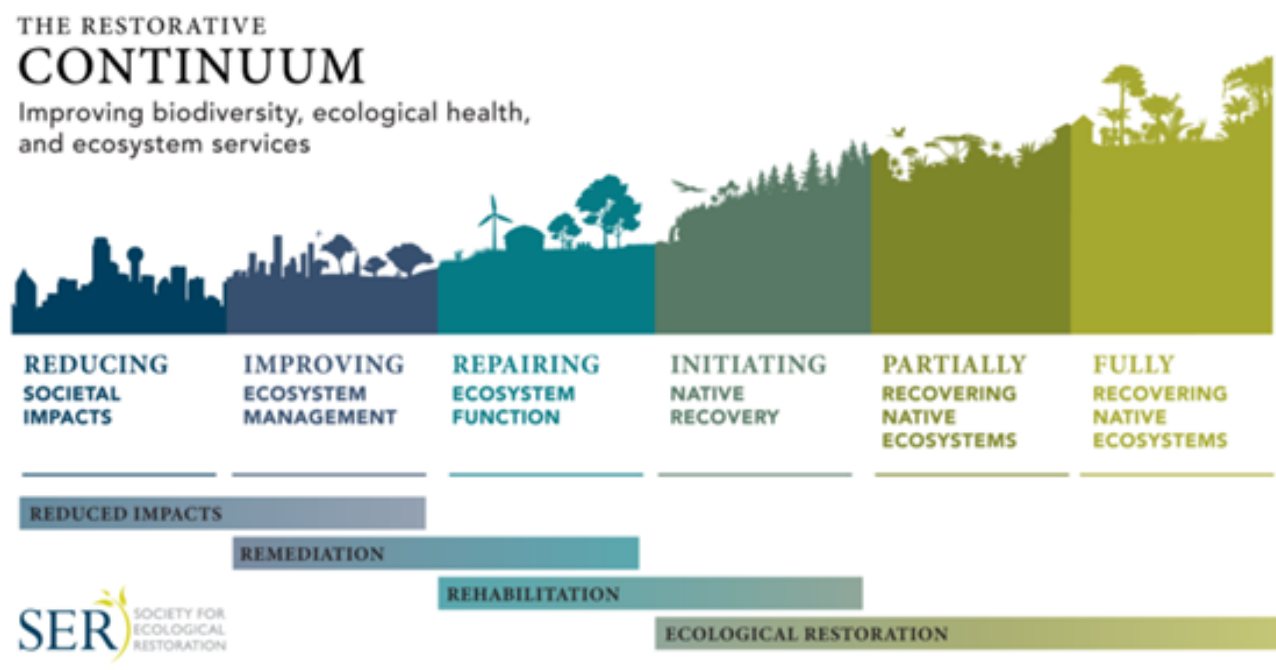


Figure 1. Restorative continuum

## What is the role of civil society in wetlands restoration?



© Dami, Alliance Members at Samsun, Turkey

The Mediterranean Alliance for Wetlands (MAW/ the Alliance) is a coalition of civil society organizations (CSOs) and research organizations, which began its activities in 2017 with the aim of increasing the capacity of Mediterranean civil society to ensure the protection, restoration and sustainable use of wetlands and rivers.

Now, the Alliance seeks to start a wetland restoration movement in the Mediterranean region by applying a method to promote restoration projects at the international level. This is the Green Light protocol.

The protocol attempts to create dialogue between stakeholders, scientists and architects to co-create the first concept for a restoration project. Involving different stakeholder perspectives through participatory visioning (Robinson, 2003) can help to create a common vision (i.e., a common set of key variables, functions and performance criteria set in time) and empower the partners, providing the groundwork for effective restoration projects. In order to ensure a good integration of user needs, we will rely on participatory design methods and work as a community of support to accelerate the restoration movement in a concerted way.

# The protocol

## Supporting restoration of Wetlands: Green Light

The Green Light protocol is a positive approach that seeks to support partners to conceptualize, communicate and look for funds to start wetland restoration projects. Inspired by the 5 step approach of the Conservation Standards, (see Figure 2), the Green Light will help to contribute to the first phase of conceptualization of a project.

The Alliance will support the co-construction with the partners of a first concept note for the project. This will illustrate the partners' common vision and design key messages to support the project among stakeholders, decision makers and donors.

Our assumption is that if we, as a network of experts, support the conceptualization and communication of an ecological restoration project, NGOs would be empowered to build ecosystem restoration projects and find support among decision makers and donors to start their restoration activities.



Figure 2. 5 steps of the Conservation Standards cycle

If governments and funders see the support of the international community to the NGO project, they can feel more motivated/convinced to support the project. Also, providing an image of the common vision will be a powerful tool to convene stakeholders, decision makers and donors on a common vision. The "Green Light" works similarly to the Red Alert system of the Mediterranean Alliance for Wetlands.

# Steps of the Green light protocol

## Here are the steps of the project, illustrated in figure 4.

**REQUEST and APPLICATION:** An organization can contact the Alliance to ask for assistance to conceptualize and communicate on a “Green Light” meaning a wetland restoration opportunity to its stakeholders and donors. The organization first completes the Annex 1.

**EVALUATION BY THE STEERING COMMITTEE:** The steering committee analyzes the request and if this is approved, a group of experts is mobilised. This group can include: a landscape architect, a restoration expert, a designer and a film maker.

**1) STRATEGY.** Once the Green Light is accepted, a restoration expert will visit the field and support the co-construction of the restoration project together with a TdV team, that will facilitate a workshop to build a strategy and an action plan.

**2) VISUALIZATIONS.** Once the vision is defined, the applicant and restoration experts will meet a landscape architect. This vision will be revised by the stakeholders through consultation organized by the local organization (example figure 3)

**3) COMMUNICATION and FUNDRAISING SUPPORT:** Support to build a communication strategy will be provided by the Alliance secretariat, particularly IUCN Med. It can include support to build an infographic (Annex 2) and a video. An identification of suitable donors and support to reach them will be provided by the Alliance secretariat, particularly by Wetlands International.

**MONITORING:** The TdV team will monitor the results of the Green Light for 3 months. This includes the responses from the government and donors.

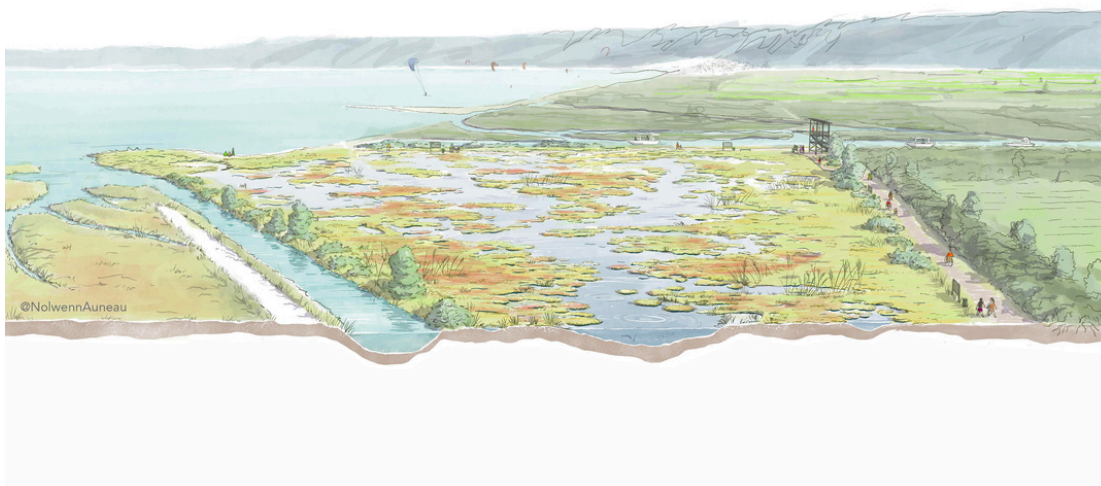


Figure 3.  
Example of a landscape visualization of the common vision for a site to be restored

# Green Light protocol

REQUEST OF SUPPORT to design a plan for a wetland Restoration opportunity



Fill the form to provide all details



Steering committee evaluation

## 1. BUILDING A COMMON STRATEGY



Workshop to define the strategy and action plan



Field assessment together with a restoration expert

## 2. SHARING A COMMON VISION



Production of visualizations for stakeholder consultations

## 3. SUPPORTING COMMUNICATION AND FUNDRAISING



Communication materials for public acceptance and fundraising

Figure 4. The steps of the Green Light protocol

 6 months process



## **BOX 1: Details on meetings and engagement**

The Alliance will facilitate regular meetings, exchanges with the different consultants and the fulfillment of the process. A restoration expert (preferably local) will be mobilized to support the co-construction of the note for the restoration project.

The different meetings needed are described as follows:

### **Workshop for the Strategy definition**

Following the responses of the questionnaire, the key partners, together with the restoration expert and the selected stakeholders will define the following aspects of the project.

- Vision (desirable ecosystem)
- Mission
- Objectives (short, medium and long-term)
- IUCN Nature based solution assessment
- PESTEL Analysis (context and threats)
- Definition of the Restoration targets and possible actions
- Actors cartography
- Brainstorming of the actions to achieve the objectives
- Action plan

### **Meetings with the Landscape architect**

With images and the vision provided, the landscape architect will create a graphic representation of the common vision of the future restored site. The image should support the stakeholder consultation process organized by the applicant. The applicant team will meet the architect 3 times.

### **Communication and Fundraising support**

3 Meetings to build and validate communication materials (e.g. infographic and a video), messages and donor map and contacts.

# Evaluation criteria

The steering committee of the Alliance will select the next project based on the following criteria.

## **1. Capacity of the organisation (management experience) (16 points)**

Priority will be given to sites where partners can demonstrate wetland restoration/management capacity

## **2. Improve in Biodiversity (16 points)**

Priority will be given to sites that demonstrate that the restoration actions will favor a hotspot of biodiversity (KBA, IBA or other)

## **3. Improve of water quality and quantity (16 points)**

Priority given to sites in which water quality and quantity (when needed) will increase

## **4. Timeline (is there an urgency) (12 points)**

Priority to areas in which urgency to restore is demonstrated, otherwise the site will be destroyed.

## **5. Restore towards a more natural state (12 points)**

Priority to sites that can recover some natural functions

## **6. Knowledge on wetlands (8 points)**

Priority to sites with scientific studies or inventories

## **7. Financial status (8 points)**

Priority to sites with little or no funding

## **8. Project progress (6 points)**

Priority to projects that are starting and need the conceptualization support

## **9. Restorability effort (6 points)**

Priority to sites that can be restored with little effort

# Annex 1. Application form

The Alliance will not support any ecological restoration project as a justification for destroying or damaging existing native ecosystems or for unsustainable use.

## About your organization

1. Organization name

2. Name and email of the contact person

3. What is your experience on wetland restoration and/or management?

## About the wetland

4. Country (wetland)

5. Wetland name

6. Wetland type

- Coastal wetland
- Inner wetland
- River

7. Coordinates (Geographic)

Lat

Long

8. Total area of the existing wetland (in hectares)

9. Former extent of the wetland

10. Area in need of restoration (in hectares) . Please attach some photos.

11. Has the wetland (or part of the wetland) any local, national or international designation (Ramsar, Natura 2000, etc)?

## Environmental values

12. Why is it important to restore this site?

13. Describe how the wetland was before it was degraded or how you think it was, based on the evidence available to you.

14. Describe the threats and degradation state of the wetland  
In terms of hydrology, pollution, vegetation, land use (urbanization, agriculture, etc.)

15. Do you plan to restore to the previous state of the wetland? If no, explain your objective and why it is different from the "previous natural" state

16. Is there any urgency to restore the wetland? Please describe.

17. What will be the improvements in biodiversity?

18. What will be the improvements in water quality/quantity?

### About the management of the wetland

. Who is the owner of the wetland land?

2 . Managing bodies (choose 1 option).

- No managing body
- Private/company managing body
- Local/municipality managing body
- Environmental authority managing body at regional/national level
- Cultural heritage or other sectoral body at regional/national level

Other:

2 . Social support towards wetland restoration (choose 1 option)

- There is a social conflict against the restoration of the wetland (e.g. due to other developing interests in the area)
- There is no specific movement in favor of the wetland restoration nor against
- There is specific support towards the restoration of the wetland by some population sectors
- There is an important social support, e.g. awareness campaign from NGOs, local population that can even become involved in restoration activities (if possible).

Other:

2 . Authorities support (choose 1 option)

- The competent authorities are against the restoration project (e.g. there are other development interests)
- No authorities support nor oppose the restoration
- Authorities passively support the project facilitating the granting of permits
- The regional and local authorities actively support the restoration project, its long-term maintenance and are involved in the initiative.

## About the project

23. What are the objectives of the restoration project?

2 . What are the previous conservation/restoration actions in the site ? If some, describe them

2 . Do you have acquired funds for the future restoration project?

2 . Attach photos of the current state of the degraded wetland

Photos attached

27. Presence of threatened species (IUCN Red List) whose habitat will be improved or recovered after the restoration activities. Mention if: Threatened(T), native (N), etc. Also if they were present before restoration (BR) or likely to come back after the restoration activities (AR)

. Do you know a restoration/ecology expert that you would like us to contact to the assess project?



# Annex 2. Infographics



 **THE GREEN LIGHT PROTOCOL**

A SYSTEM FROM THE MEDITERRANEAN ALLIANCE FOR WETLANDS TO PROMOTE RESTORATION ACTIVITIES IN THE MEDITERRANEAN.

The Alliance aims to contribute to the ecological restoration movement with a protocol that supports civil society organizations to initiate projects.

**50% OF WETLANDS HAVE BEEN LOST IN THE LAST 50 YEARS**

 The Mediterranean Alliance for Wetlands is a network of environmental NGOs and scientific institutes committed to strengthening the capacities of Mediterranean civil societies for the protection, restoration and sustainable use of wetlands.

**? WHAT**

**Using the power of images to reach a common vision in wetlands restoration**

The Alliance works with NGOs to support them to conceptualize, advocate, communicate and find funds for wetland restoration projects in the Mediterranean basin. By bringing together a landscape architect, a restoration specialist and local stakeholders, the Alliance provides technical and scientific support in developing a common vision and a strategy for the site.

**HOW**

**Promoting a concerted wetland restoration opportunity**

-  Build a common strategy
-  Visualize a common future with a landscape architect
-  Support communication, acceptance and fundraising

**WHERE**



**All Mediterranean wetlands**

Any Mediterranean location can be considered if there is a potential and interest to initiate restoration activities.

**WHY**

**Lighting up restoration opportunities**

The Green Light supports local partners to initiate dialogs and the conceptualization of proposal for nature restoration actions.

**WHEN**

**2023 - 2025**

5 project in 5 sites



**WHO**

**Local NGOs and an Alliance team**

The local NGO works with a team from Alliance members, consultants and other local stakeholders towards a restoration proposal.





GREEN LIGHT SITE

# DAR FATMA PEATLANDS | Tunisia

The Dar Fatma peatlands in the Kroumiria-Mogods Region, are a **Key Biodiversity Area**, designated as a nature reserve in 1993 and a **Ramsar site** in 2007. They are home to endemic and rare species, providing crucial scientific information on the dynamics of ecosystems that have existed for nearly 33,000 years.

Unfortunately, they are endangered and need immediate action. Globally, peatland degradation contributes 5-10% of annual anthropogenic CO2 emissions, making their restoration, a priority for climate change mitigation.



© Nolwenn Auneau



© Nolwenn Auneau

## OBJECTIVES

Restore 13 hectares of peatland and its unique biodiversity, contributing to carbon storage, water security and creating new income for local people.

## WHERE?

Located in the governorate of Jendouba, in the mountainous region of Kroumiria (forest of cork oak and Zean oak), in northwestern Tunisia.



## WHY?

Increase the carbon and water stock capacity of the ecosystem and wellbeing of the local population.

## WHO?

WWF North Africa, in collaboration with local stakeholders with the support of the Mediterranean Alliance for Wetlands.

## HOW?

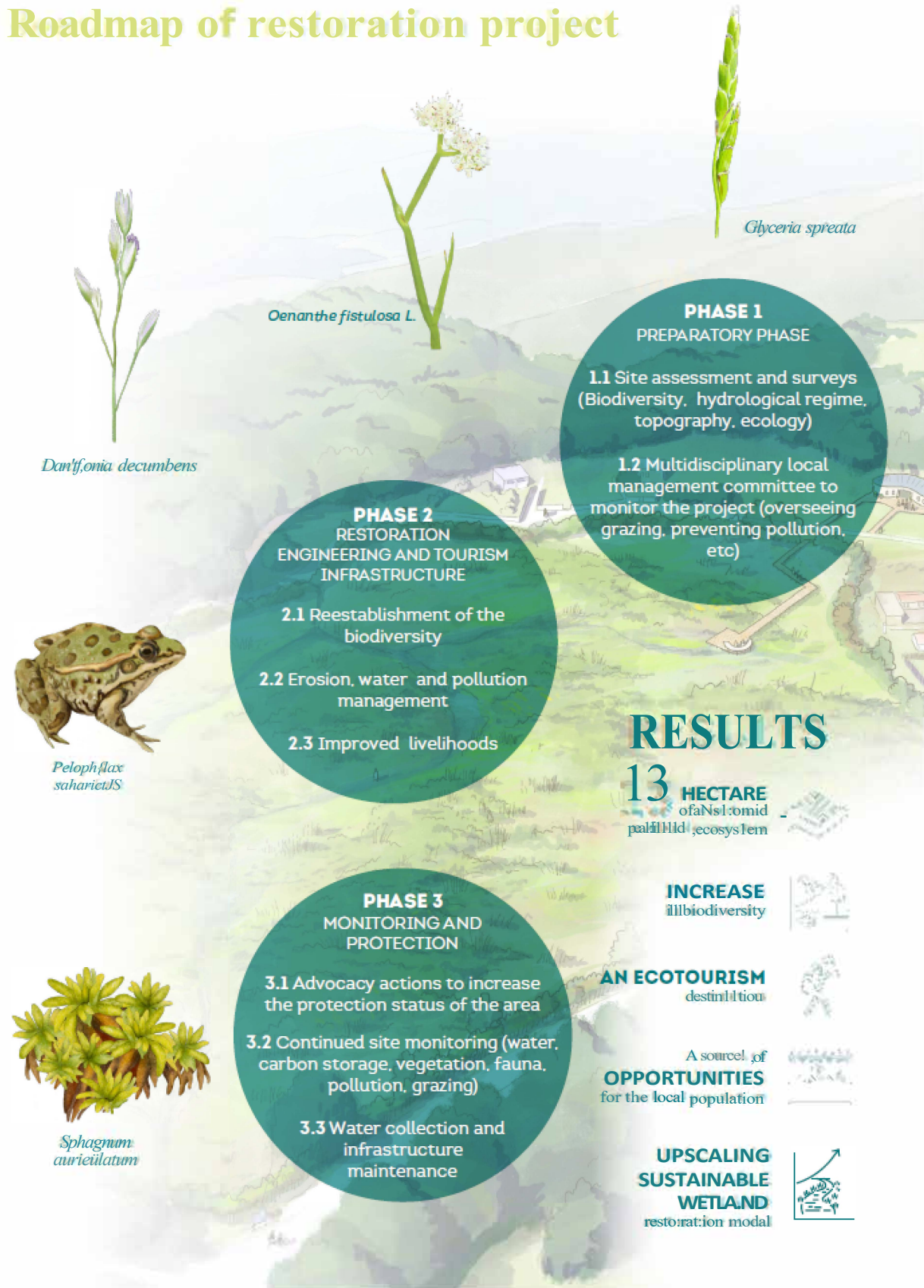
- Scientific studies
- Restoration of biodiversity
- Recover hydrology
- Improve local livelihoods
- Engage communities in biodiversity preservation

## WHEN?

From 2025 till 2030



# Roadmap of restoration project



# Literature

Gann et al. (2019) International principles and standards for the practice of ecological restoration. Second edition. Restoration Ecology S1-S46

Mediterranean ecosystem restoration sites (2023), Interreg Mediterranean Biodiversity Protection Community project

Robinson, J. (2003). Future subjunctive: Backcasting as social learning. *Futures*, 35, 839–856.