

## Towards sustainable prevention of forest fires in the French départements

Workshop on the Assessment of Forest Fire Risks and Innovative Strategies for Fire Prevention  
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The South of France ( 32 départements), highly vulnerable to forest fires ( S > 6, 7 Mha), must be protected by the public authorities, territorial *département* by territorial *département*, year after year.

Several policy areas are involved here :

- protection against Forest Fires (FF) : prevention of FF and FF fighting,
- forest,
- environment (high biodiversity),
- agriculture and rural affairs,
- town planning and housing (population expansion),
- ...economic development (tourism and accommodation of extra populations),

Furthermore, all these policy areas mutually interact.

How can long-term, sustainable FF prevention be guaranteed within any given territorial *département* ?

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### Plan

1. The example of the protection planning of the Var forests against fire
2. Preventive actions programming in the French départements
3. Ways forward to sustainable prevention policy ?

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### 1. Protection planning of the Var département against the forest fires

The departmental Plan for protecting the forests and their surroundings (forest code, PPFCI) ; S > 450 000 ha of combustible area in the French Mediterranean zone (approved in Dec. 2008 by the Prefect of the *département* ).

This plan was worked out, under the state representative who coordinated, in accordance with the **Forest law** (2001) ; this document is composed of 3 parts:

- the **diagnosis** of this area (7 sectors of the *département*),
- the **strategy** (2009-2016), and,
- plus accompanying **graphics and documents**.

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### The Plan for protecting the forests and their surroundings of the Var département

After **dialogue** between all local actors and those of the Prefect of the South Zone of defense (15 *départements*) in charge of FF protection (fire fighting and prevention) one action plan (23) with 4 strategic priorities was shared and fixed for one 7 year period :

- 1) **to reduce the number of fires by a quarter** (annual average of 317 FF for last 7 years period) through investigations and prevention (with implementation of available legal instruments and beginning from knowledge of the causes of fires) ;
- 2) **to increase the rate of the extinction of incipient fires ( S < 1 ha) from 82 % to 90 %** through optimisation of the action taken by fire fighters ;
- 3) **to reinforce the protection of people and property, through adherence to legal obligations** (to clear undergrowth and constraints on housing in forested areas, or near forests, and on grounds of public utility) ;
- 4) **to improve the quality of the protection works** (more rational programmes with standards, study of the feedback of the catastrophic events...) and to ensure that they are maintained.

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### The Plan for protecting the forests and their surroundings of the Var département

#### -First performance targets in 2009:

Good annual results (one quantified indicator, **the rate of the extinction of incipient fires**), but inadequate results for the evaluation of FF prevention policy specifically.

The majority of the fires (2/3) occurs in **periurban and agricultural areas**. The risks of anthropic origin increase there with new constructions localized near - or in - the forests or in abandoned rural terrains.

However our **FF database** is not able to inform us about the evolution of this urban risk.

#### - A territorial and global strategy.

All territories which are sensitive to the fires and grouped around a main forest are to be regarded as a territorial unit of risk management, the **basin of risk**.

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## 2. Preventive actions programming in the French départements

- 3 decision-makers for the risk management for land vulnerable to fire : the land - or forest owner, the mayor and the prefect.

### Private decision of the forest owner

- He decides the way to manage his forest :
- managing forestry or capitalizing of land reserve ;
  - only one legal obligation around houses and roads : undergrowth clearance.

### Lawful decisions for installations and protection of areas

#### 1) The prefect

- He approves after the PPFCI many official public decisions :
- the annual activity programmes of public services for FF risk,
  - the annual programming of the FF prevention actions,

He also grants

- the individual authorizations of "deforestation" of pieces of grounds of private forest, and,
- the state and European subsidies for prevention actions (RDR).

He has the competence for controlling the legality of the decisions taken by mayors in urban planning.

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### Lawful decisions of installation and protection of the territories

- 2) The mayor is responsible for 2 categories of decision :
  - town planning when the urban plan exists (1/2 of all municipalities) and,
  - building permits.

Finally a lot of constructions are in the risk areas and cannot be quickly protect in case of forest fires.

A lot of new projects of construction are planned in the high risk sector !

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## 3. Which ways forward to sustainable prevention policy ?

The urban plans are not in coherence with the PPFCI. This kind of situation needs a compromise between the 2 decision-makers : the prefect and the mayors and ...very much time, with a low rate of agreements between the representative of the state and the mayor who represents the municipality.

The mayor is an elected people ; the prefect is a civil servant.

Today, hundreds of thousands of dwellings are installed in the sectors of FF risk in the departments of the Mediterranean zone.

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### Définition de l'interface habitat-forêt

S'appuie sur l'obligation légale de débroussaillage - Article 322-3 du code forestier  
Bâti résidentielle atténué à moins de 200 m de forêts, garrigues, maquis et leur environnement de 100 m

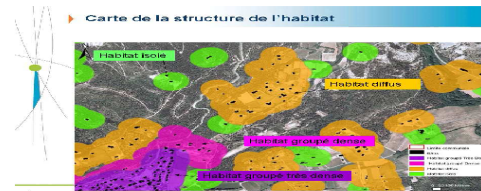


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(Lampin-Bédouet et al., 2008, Revue Forestière Française)

Geotopnet

### Carte de la structure de l'habitat



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Plan of financing (M€) of the protection against forest fires  
(6,7 Mha in 2008)

	Prevention	Forest fires fighting	Total	Evolution 1988 – 2008
State	33 + 2 + 13 = 48	142	190	62 % => 35 %
Territorial communities + SDIS + BMPP	99	231	330	40 % => 60 %
Private (ind. owners and Cies)	13	0	13	n. a.
European Union (FEADER)	3	1	4	n. a.
<b>Total</b>	<b>163</b>	<b>374</b>	<b>537</b>	
Rates	Ca. 30 %	Ca. 70 %		In 2008, ca. 80 €/ ha / year

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## Conclusions

The current debates on the **Green Paper** « On Forest protection and Information in the EU » ( March , 2010 ) represents a new opportunity to fix the new priorities of the prevention of forest fires.

The sustainable prevention of the fires in the sensitive rural territories probably requires the re-examination of the methods of subsidising the action plans for prevention of the forest fires :

- Respective competences: local authorities, MS, EU ?
- Cross compliance of the grants ?.

**Σας ευχαριστώ.**

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