



Application of the decision VI/12 of the COP 6
Case study on the implementation of the ecosystem approach
The area forest charter of
Luberon Regional Nature Park
(France)



February 2003



The area forest charter of the Luberon Regional Nature Park

In 1998 the Conference of the Parties at the Convention on Biological Diversity defined the ecosystem approach as "a strategy for the integrated management of land, water and living resources that promotes conservation and sustainable use in an equitable way" (Decision V/6 of the CBD). This approach, containing detailed principles and operational guidances, was intended to serve as an integrated concept for the implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity. In fact it was criticised for being a theoretical concept that could not be implemented. So the Conference of the Parties decided to re-examine the concept with the help of case studies, provided by the Parties and evaluated by the SBSTTA (Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice).

This document demonstrates a practical example of the use of the ecosystem approach in a French forest: the application of the new Forest Charter, created by the latest Forest Law (July, 2001), in the Lubéron area.

This Law introduces new practices into French forest policies. It favours a multipurpose approach to forest management and aims to improve the dialogue between foresters and the society. Several methods are suggested, with emphasis on a more holistic approach to managed ecosystems, on participation, negotiation and contracts, and decentralised decision-making.

Here the conservation of biological diversity is closely associated with the implementation of sustainable forest management. All these changes, giving more responsibility at each level, should lead to a better understanding of biodiversity at the different spatial scales, and also of the wishes of all those involved in the forest.

This example of area forest charters is relevant as a case study because it illustrates two main aspects of the implementation of an ecosystem approach: (i) the integration of a forestry approach into a wider territorial approach, and (ii) the different levels and facets of the participation and consultation.

Luberon, chosen for its original approach, is a very rich area, on both cultural and biological levels. A long-existing human influence has moulded and still moulds the landscapes that visitors like so much. Here the management and protection of biodiversity involves a reconciliation between environmental and socio-economic issues: how can we preserve the biological and landscape diversity created by ancient practices while land use is changing. The Luberon Regional Nature Park, supported by the Maß Reserve, took up this challenge. In 2001 the Luberon Regional Nature Park decided to volunteer to test the new area forest charter.

I. Luberon: introduction

(See *Figure 1: Location of Luberon*)

Luberon is influenced by two climatic types (Alpine and Mediterranean), and has a contrasted relief (plains, gorges, plateaus, cliffs...) and a diversified river system (intermittent Mediterranean rivers). All these factors give rise to a wide diversity of microclimates and habitats.

Past agricultural and industrial practices have created a mosaic of habitats and landscapes. Using all of the available space, including the forest, agricultural practices combined subsistence crops with grazing. The ochre industry opened areas with characteristic bright colours (quarries, mining zones). The forest was mainly managed to produce firewood (oak coppice) and more recently and locally to protect soils (pine and cedar plantations).

Today Luberon is mainly an agricultural area with diversified and more intensive practices (fruit, vegetables, vines, sheep, lavender) which use less space. The abandonment of agricultural land has radically changed the landscape: widespread land closure and new vegetation dynamics. Due to its attractive climate, landscapes and its proximity to Avignon and Aix-en-Provence, in the Mediterranean hinterland, urban and touristic pressures are increasing in Luberon. The Park and its activities in favour of a sustainable development of this area increase the attractiveness of Luberon and favour property speculation.

Inset n°1:

What is a Regional Nature Park?

The status of Regional Nature Park (RNP) is given by State and promotes a global approach to an area and sustainable development, based on partnership, consultation and contracts. A park is built around three mainstays:

*an area: it shelters a rich natural and cultural heritage, but the fragile balance between the two is threatened. All the partners negotiate its borders and its final outline is determined by the ratification of the charter by the townships concerned.

* a project: this is intended to ensure rational protection, management and development in the parklands. It is implemented by a mutual organisation representing all the local administrations involved (regions, departments and townships), completed by a contract with State.

* a charter: it is the contract that confirms the preservation and development project of the park. It establishes the objectives for the park, the actions needed to achieve them and the measures required to implement these actions. The charter is assessed and revised every ten years.

The original aspect of the RNP is that they have no restrictive power over the townships or inhabitants: the parks can only use consultation, participation and contracts to achieve their aims.

The threat to the environmental and cultural richness of this area, by the abandonment of agricultural land, lead to the foundation of the Luberon Regional Nature Park in 1977, which includes 69 townships and 155 000 inhabitants today, within an area of 165 000 ha, from Cavaillon (Vaucluse) to Villeneuve (Alpes de Haute Provence), on both sides of the Luberon Mountains (1125 metres high at the Mourre Nègre). [See *Inset 1: What is a Regional Nature Park?*]. The Park was given the status of Biosphere Reserve in 1997 (the 9th in France). [See *Inset 2: What is a Biosphere Reserve?*]

Renewed in 1997, the Park Charter institutes the freely negotiated responsibilities of all Charter signatories (Regional Council of Provence-Alpes-Côte-d'Azur, Council of the Vaucluse Department, Council of the Alpes-de-Haute-Provence Department, the 69 townships and State).

The charter defines the following mandates for the RNP:

- * to protect the natural and cultural heritage, through an adapted management of natural areas and landscapes;
- * to contribute to land use planning;
- * to contribute to the economic and social development and to the quality of life,
- * to carry out experimental or exemplary actions and to contribute to research programmes.

These mandates generate several objectives:

- * to maintain large natural areas and to conserve the biological diversity by management rather than integral protection, and to meet the social demand for "nature";
- * to support agriculture in its traditional production role and to promote its secondary functions, which are important for the preservation of the environment and the quality of life: the upkeep of open-spaces, the prevention of natural hazards, and the preservation of cultural heritage etc;
- * to use the quality of the environment as an asset for the economy and tourism;
- * to promote the environmental quality in each development or project and to make people, and particularly young people, aware of this issue;
- * to consolidate the identity of the Lubéron area;
- * to accompany social change: the demand for a more urban way of life by rural populations, and the need of new inhabitants to learn about the area and take part in local activities in order to become integrated into the community.

Inset n°2:

What is a Biosphere Reserve?

UNESCO gives the status "Biosphere Reserve" in the framework of its Man and Biosphere programme. This programme aims to increase knowledge about the relationships between man and his environment, in order to develop tools for sustainable economic and social development. The designated areas remain under the jurisdiction of the country where they are located. In some ways they act as "living laboratories" to test and demonstrate integrated land, water and biodiversity management.

Each biosphere reserve is intended to fulfil three basic functions, which are complementary and mutually reinforcing: (i) conservation (landscapes, ecosystems, species and genetic pools), (ii) development -(human and economic, socioculturally and ecologically sustainable), (iii) logistic (support for research, monitoring, education and diffusion of information).

Biosphere reserves are organised into three interrelated zones, known as: the core area, the buffer zone and the transition zone; only the core area requires legal protection. A number of biosphere reserves simultaneously encompass areas protected under other systems (such as national parks or nature reserves) and other internationally recognised sites (such as World Heritage or RAMSAR wetland sites).

To fulfil these objectives, the charter defines three zones with different objectives (*See Figure 2: Landuse in Luberon area*):

* the nature and silence zone: the uninhabited area of the Luberon and Vaucluse mountains . This is the natural zone in the park; in which a holistic management, including different uses (agriculture, forest, outdoor activities...), is developed for sustainable development. People are dissuaded from using motor vehicles here; urbanisation plans prevent new constructions and the creation of new roads.

* the agricultural zone: this zone can be divided into two sub-divisions, the dry mountain and the irrigable land. The dry mountain is mainly present in the eastern part of the park; remarkable ecosystems have been created by agricultural practices (grazing) and need to be managed. More productive activities are concentrated on the irrigable land and its products need to be promoted.

* the urban zone: Luberon is very attractive and so there are numerous new constructions in the forested land around villages. Urbanisation plans must be agreed by the Park to ensure a rational management of the area.

The three zones of the Biosphere Reserve correspond to the three zones of the Regional Nature Park: the core area and the buffer zone encompass the silence and nature zone / the cooperation zone covers the rest of the Luberon area.

Inset n°3:

The Area Forest Charter

The 2001 Forest Law reorganised the different levels of forest planning, and set up a new tool for local participation: the Area Forest Charter, a tool for forest planning at the local level, in association with all stakeholders. It must take the wishes of all the local people involved in the forest and the forest owners into account . The charter provides a concerted framework for integrating social and environmental values in forest economy around a local project.

The methodology consists of three stages:

- * a characterisation, to identify issues;
- * the classification of these issues in order of importance and the definition of common objectives;
- * the definition of local actions to achieve these objectives.

The initiative relies on locally elected representatives and the "area" is typically made up of several municipalities within a well defined geographical entity.

The forest charter is a flexible tool, both for the topics to be considered (biodiversity, tourism, development of the wood industry etc) and for the form of the final document (it can be an independent document or included in another land planning document). All stakeholders involved recognise the charter by signing the final document.

Conclusion: The Luberon is of the highest importance at a national and international level due to its very rich and diversified natural heritage (fauna, flora, geology). At a local level, it also makes a major contribution to the quality of life. Therefore the integration of biodiversity conservation into the economic development and land planning strategies in this area is essential, while answering the popular demand for natural areas. Supported by the Regional Nature Park and the Biosphere Reserve, the Luberon area has, been implementing concerted global management, taking environmental aspects into account for a long time.

Inside the park, the forest represents 92 % of the natural areas, which represent more than 50 % of the total area. Therefore it was only natural that the Luberon Park should decide to test this new Forest Charter tool on its land.

[See *Inset n°3 : The Forest Charter*]

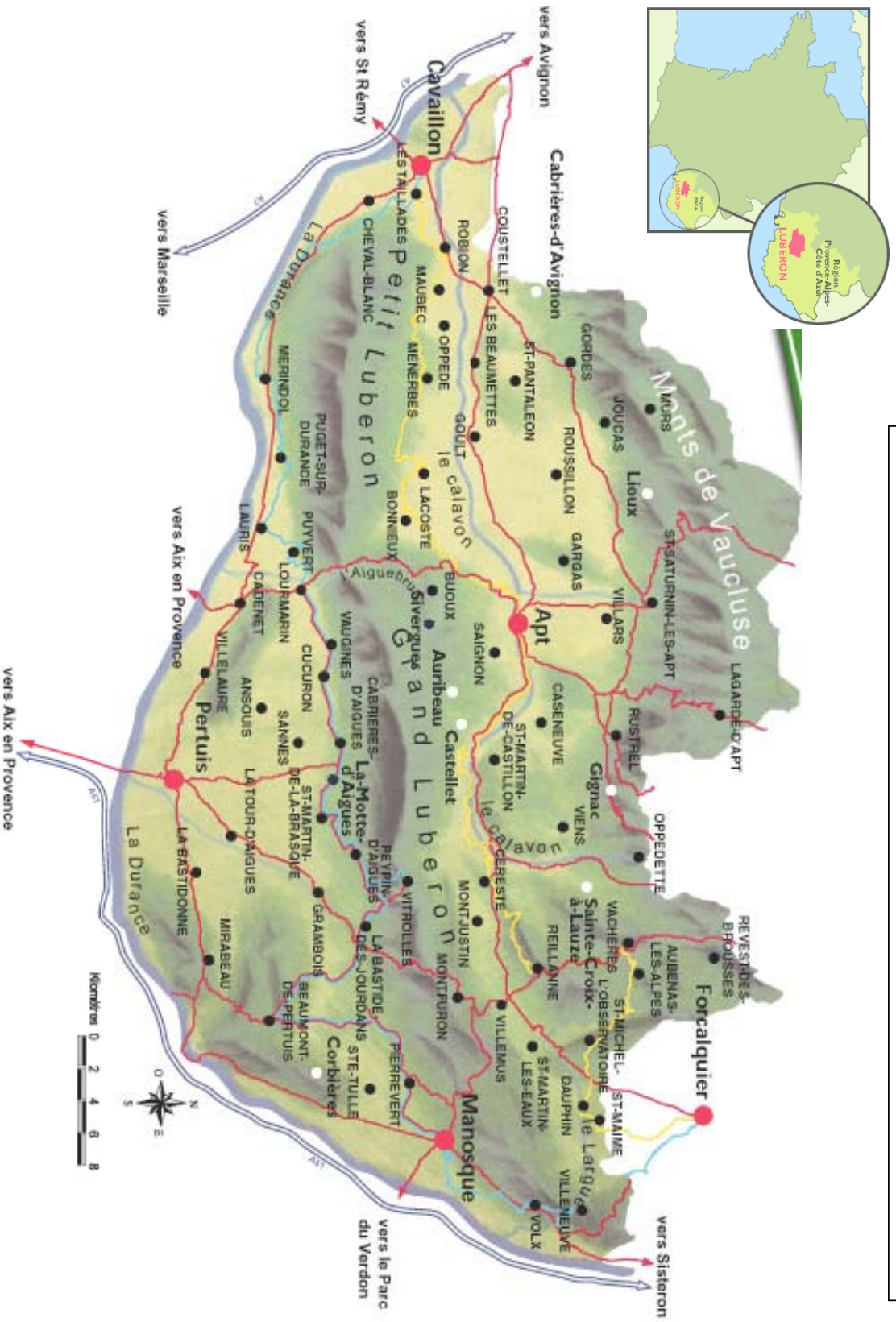
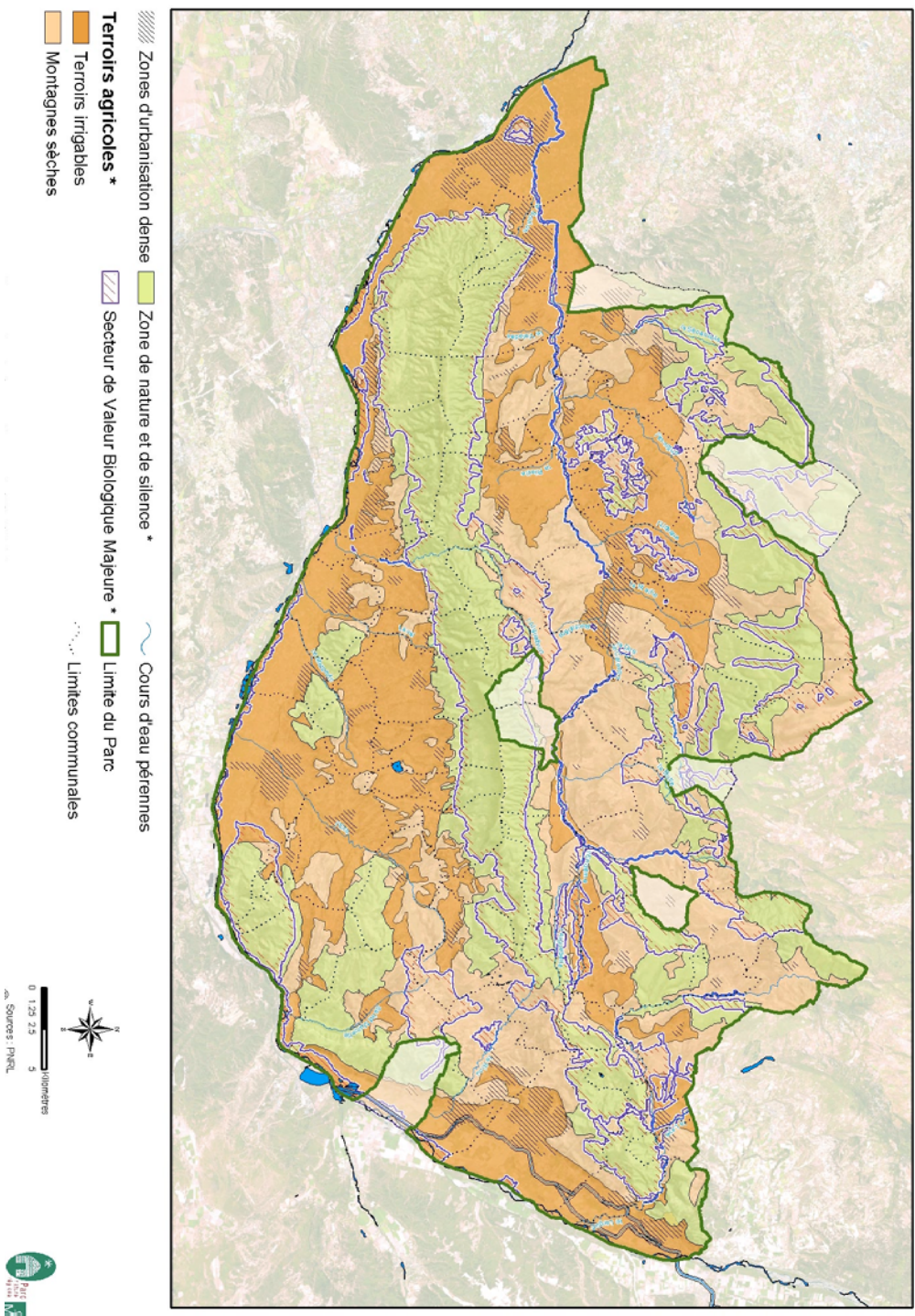


Figure 1: Location of the Luberon Regional Nature Park

Figure 2: Land use in the Luberon area



II. The experimental Luberon forest charter

The forests of Luberon are characterised by high species and stand diversity. They fulfil two functions, economic (wood production) and environmental (biological diversity, soil protection, landscape, a pleasant way of life). The zones opened up by past agricultural and industrial practices also shelter a wide diversity of species, which are different from those in the forest. It is this mosaic which provides the wealth of ecological variety in the Luberon area.

Economic problems encountered by forest owners on the one hand (division of forest property into smaller units, low yield, high exploitation costs), and the abandonment of agricultural land on the other hand have consequences on the landscape: overgrown and wooded areas are becoming larger and the diversity linked to open areas is endangered.

The Park is already involved in forest policies on its land and the Park Charter includes a forest section. In fact the park wants to act as a coordinator of actions related to the development of sustainable silviculture that respects biodiversity and involves owners, managers and land-users. Without giving restrictive norms, the Park provides advice for the management of forested areas. For example:

- * to favour co-operation between private owners, in association with the Regional Centre for Private Forest;
- * to encourage management planning based on each forest massif;
- * to create a network of control stands, particularly in high oak forest;
- * to protect beech stands: they are in their southern limit and are extremely rare in this region;
- * to limit the extension of cedar forests (introduced during the 19th century) into grasslands.

The diversity of uses and issues has led the park to begin a global interrogation on sustainable and multifunctional management of the forest that would involve all stakeholders. As an extension to this, the park wants to define and implement real forest policies in its area and the Area Forest Charter is a suitable tool for this purpose.

1°) Methods

The Park made a decision to test a two-level method, adapted to its objectives:

- * at a global level: a sound diagnosis of forest areas and issues will support a general document that explains the main objectives for Luberon forest. This document will be included as a reinforced forest section in the Park Charter. The diagnosis identifies homogeneous zones (stands and issues), useful as a basis for forest management. This is the Forest Charter level.
- * at a local level: for each zone, consultation with all the local parties involved will refine the diagnosis and define actions for the implementation of the general document. This is the local agreement level of the Area Forest Charter.

As management of private land is a major issue in Luberon, the implementation and the monitoring of the Forest Charter is ensured by a coordinator under the supervision of both Park and Regional Centre of Forest Property (an organism in charge of monitoring the

management of private forest land) and under the control of a steering committee. This is a two-level-committee, general and local; is made up of representatives of involved stakeholders (locally elected representatives, land managers, users, and owners) and, in the extended local committee, representatives of town councils.

(See *Figure 3: Organisation flow-chart*)

The creation of the forest charter is divided into four major stages:

- * a characterisation of the Luberon forest, supported by (i) previous studies and inventories and (ii) consultation with the interested parties.
- * the identification of relevant management units, defined by both biogeographical and socio-economic criteria.
- * the identification, of major objectives and issues for each unit.
- * the ratification of this diagnosis through its addition to the Regional Nature Park Charter and the implementation of local actions.
- * the monitoring through the continuation of the coordination action and the organisation of regular assessments (every 5 years).

The two first stages have been completed, and the last two are in progress.

2°) *Characterisation*

The characterisation of the forest area in Luberon was achieved in two ways:

- * a bibliographical analysis of different kinds of documents: forest management plans, catalogues of forest sites, inventories of the fauna and flora, data from the National Forest Inventory, etc.
- * the consultation of with the local stakeholders: land owners, forest managers, elected representatives, forest industrials, farmers, Park staff and representatives of hunters and hikers. This step is necessary to get the support of the interested parties for the project.

The data collected is recorded in a Geographical Information System so that it can be updated and so that the charter can be monitored better.

The results of these two complementary analyses can be resumed as follows:

- * Natural areas cover more than 50 % of the area of the Luberon Regional Nature Park; 92 % of these natural areas are forested (pine, pubescent and evergreen oak, cedar, beech). The two major vegetation associations are: (i) in the south, Alep pine and evergreen oak with pubescent oak and (ii) in the north, pubescent oak and Scots pine (with beech in wet valleys).
- * Forested areas and open zones create a mosaic with high biodiversity. Localised patches of wetlands are also very rich areas (intermittent Mediterranean rivers), but this mosaic is now threatened by canopy closure (at least partial) due to the decrease in agriculture and, in particular, grazing activities. This has consequences on biodiversity, landscape, fire risk, and forest economy.
- * Many issues overlap in the forested areas of Luberon: wood production (low yield), picking (mushrooms, medicinal plants), protection of biodiversity, fire risk, grazing, hunting, tourism, cultural heritage, landscape and urban pressures.

Planning documents

Consultation authorities

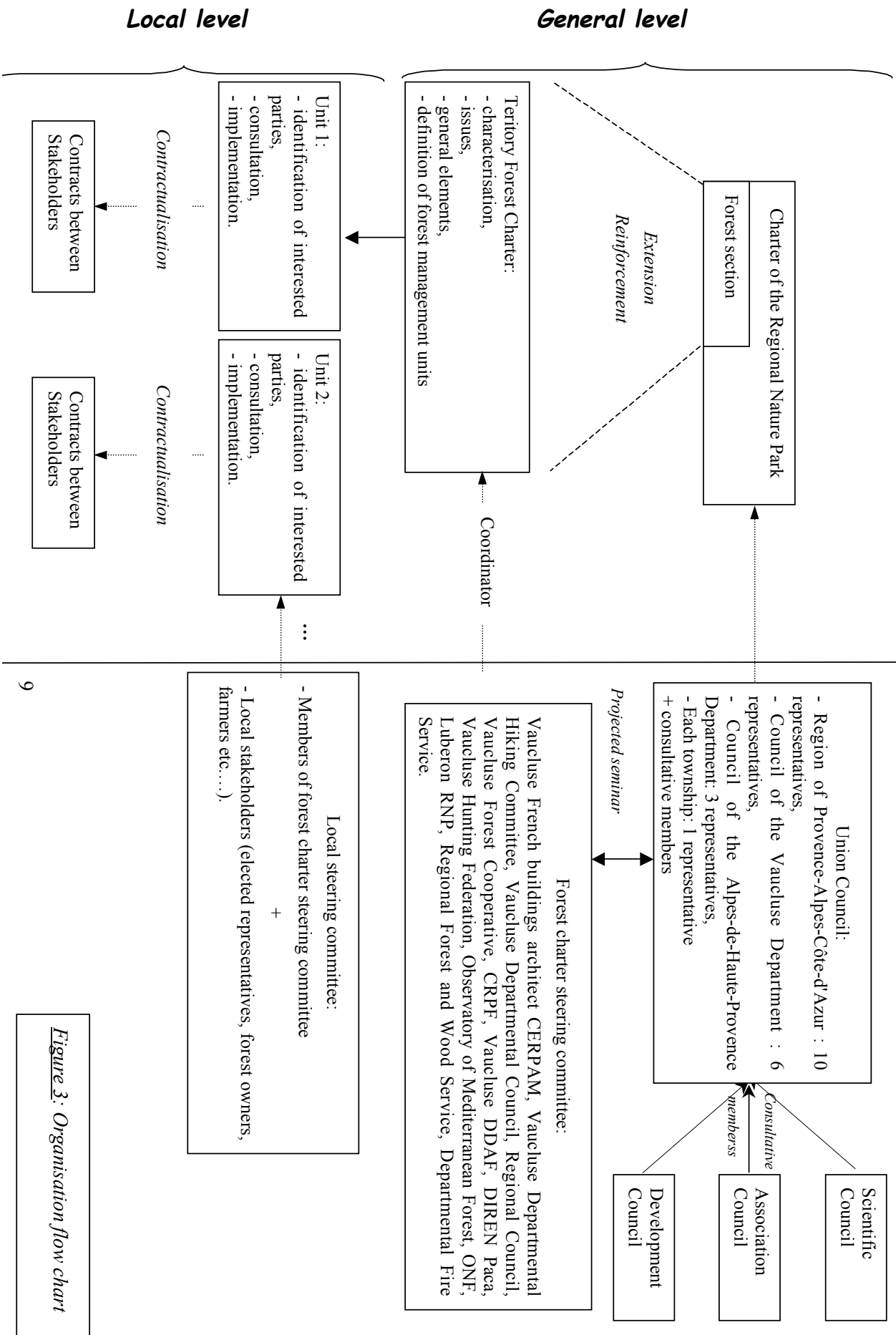


Figure 3: Organisation flow chart

3° Identification of issues and forest management units

These issues are common for the whole of the Luberon area but their significance is different depending on the zones. That is why a subdivision of the area has been made to define zones as accurately as possible in terms of biogeography and management. The hierarchy of issues is different from one zone to another. Twenty-two "forest management units and environmentally associated areas" were defined in 2001. Environmentally associated areas are important for the management of fire risk and biodiversity. The diversity of the management units reflects the remarkable diversity of the Luberon area.

(See *Figure 4 : Map of forest management units and associated areas*)

4° Definition of objectives and the recommendations for each unit

For each unit the classification of issues defines the order of priority of the objectives. General management directions are given to attain those objectives: Park technicians make suggestions (after discussion with experts) and then all stakeholders negotiate. The widespread consultation during the division into units increases public awareness of the approach.

Conclusion:

The horizontal approach draws parallels between the different themes, which is a key point for the implementation of concerted and efficient action in an area. Biodiversity is a major issue in the Luberon forest area but it has to be considered in parallel with other issues. The approach proposed by the Luberon Regional Park ensures the identification of areas where biodiversity is the main issue. In a given zone, the question is how to reconcile the different objectives and expectations.

Because the process is very recent, the general text of the charter has only just been clarified in terms of the characterisation. In November 2003, it will be comforted strengthened by a seminar involving locally elected representatives, to define long-term objectives and sign the definitive text. Nevertheless, implementation has begun: two units were chosen to serve as examples and then the process will be extended to the whole area. We will present the case of one of these two zones in which the protection and the management of biodiversity is one of the main issues but not the only one, which implies widespread consultation. It is the "Provence Colorado Ogres " unit.

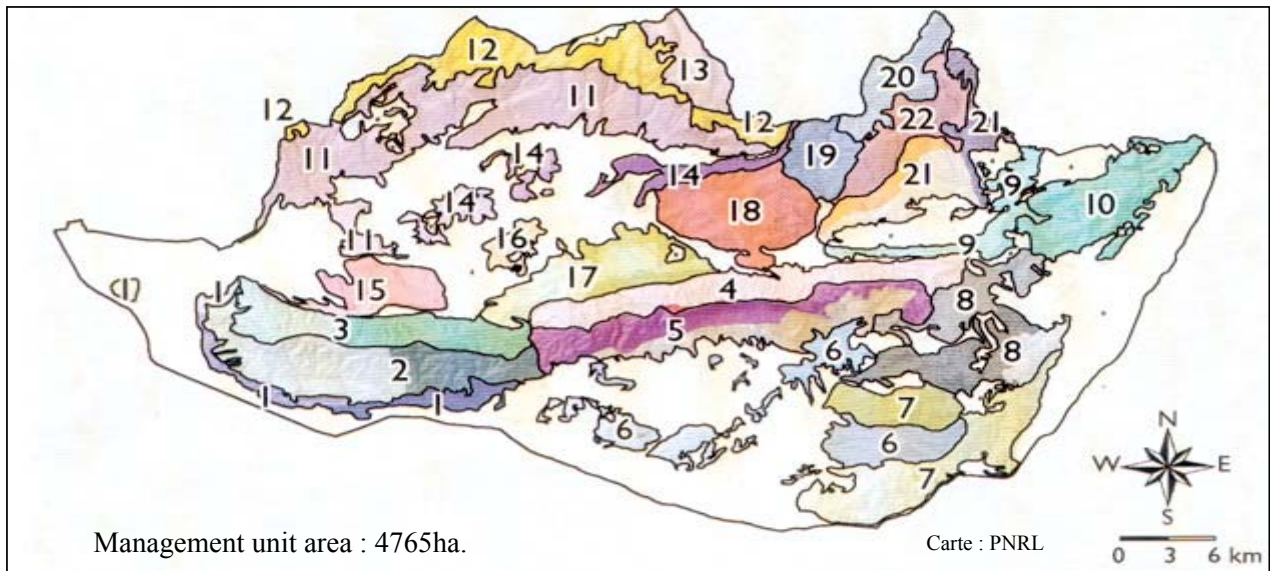


Figure 4 :Forest management units

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| <i>it 1 : Southern foothills of the Petit Luberon</i> | <i>Unit 13 : Lagarde d’Apt high plateau</i> |
| <i>it 2 : Petit Luberon – South-facing slope</i> | <i>Unit 14 : Ogres</i> |
| <i>it 3 : Petit Luberon – North-facing slope</i> | <i>Unit 15 : Petit Luberon – Northern foothills</i> |
| <i>it 4 : Grand Luberon – North –facing slope</i> | <i>Unit 16 : Roquefure Massif and Sauvage woods</i> |
| <i>it 5 : Grand Luberon – South-facing slope</i> | <i>Unit 17 : Claparèdes plateaux and spurs</i> |
| <i>it 6 : Aigues area</i> | <i>Unit 18 : Caseneuve plateau</i> |
| <i>it 7 : Durance hills</i> | <i>Unit 19 : Haut-Calavon plateaux and hills</i> |
| <i>it 8 : Eastern Aigues area</i> | <i>Unit 20 : Fugara Massif</i> |
| <i>it 9 : Montjustin hills and the banks of the Moyen-</i> | <i>Unit 21 : Reillane Plateau and the east-facing slopes ,</i> |
| <i>güe</i> | <i>Largue</i> |
| <i>it 10 : East Luberon</i> | <i>Unit 22 : Revest-des-Brousses à Sainte-Croix-à-Lau-</i> |
| <i>it 11 : Lower slopes of Monts de Vaucluse</i> | <i>Plateaux and hills</i> |
| <i>it 12 : Upper slopes of Monts de Vaucluse</i> | |
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III. Implementation of the area forest charter: The Provence Colorado example.

Close to the northern boundary of the Park, an exceptional natural and cultural heritage originates from the substratum of grit and sandstone. The landscape is characterised by the bright colours of ochre (*See Plate 5: Colours of the ochre*) and an acid vegetation, rare in other places in the park. There was also an industry linked to the extraction of ochre, which marked the landscape (quarries, exploitation areas), and is now a valuable cultural heritage. The beauty of the landscape attracts many tourists to a very small area, which is almost exclusively on private land.

The experimental interest of this site, more than its patrimonial value, is its private status and its interest to tourism. It is necessary to come to an agreement between forests owners and the community about concerted and sustainable management in this area.

Threatened by this high pressure of tourism, the erosion and partial closure of the landscape, is the object of several protection processes but none of them has had any real impact yet. This small area is partly included in the nature and silence zone (*See Picture 2*), with the implied restrictions on traffic and building. The area was also designated as a Major Biological Value Zone, which is a recognition of its habitats and species diversity. A Natura 2000 process is also currently underway.

The Luberon Park chose the Ochre zone as a pilot area for the area forest charter to experiment with the widespread consultation and coordination programme necessary for the protection and highlighting of this natural and cultural heritage.

Plate 5: Colours of the ochre



1°) *Characterisation and management advice resulting from the area forest charter.*

The Ochre zone corresponds to forest management unit 14d "Ogres of the Provence Colorado ". The main issues here are biodiversity, tourism and landscape. Other topics, such as the division of the private property into smaller units and fire risk, are also important.

* biodiversity: the vegetation is supra-Mediterranean, with forests of maritime pine (*Pinus pinaster*) and Scots pine (*Pinus sylvestris*), pubescent oak (*Quercus pubescens*), a few Aleppo pines (*Pinus halepensis*) and locally, moorland with heather and broom. The bottom of valleys shelters a peculiar vegetation with poplar, ash and alder. Remarkable habitats were identified in the ochre area: *Helianthemion guttati* grasslands (annual formation on fine sands), *Calluno-uliceta* dry heath, Mesogean pine forests with maritime pine, intermittent Mediterranean river formations with *Salix alba* and *Populus alba* and *Alno-fraxinetum oxycarpae* alder-ash groves. A lot of plant (*Gagea bohemica*, *Trifolium hirtum*, *Venteneta dubia*...) and animal (*Rhinolaphus hipposideros*, *Archanara neurica*...) species are also of high value, and a particularly high diversity of rare lichens and fungi were found (*Lobaria pulmonaria*, *Lobaria scrobiculata*, *Peltigera leucophlebia*...).

* tourism: many people visit the Provence Colorado (20 000 cars in six months in 2001: that is about 150 000 visitors). Two paying car parks currently ensure access to the zone: one managed by the municipality of Rustrel and the other by a private owners association. Financial issues are crucially important here and the two paths originating from the two car parks are only several hundred metres-apart. In spite of this, the best is not made of this site: the site is criss-crossed with paths which are poorly signposted, without any explanation about the formation of the landscape (ochre quarries) nor of its ecological value.

* landscape: the ochre zone is a landmark and a pleasant setting for the resident population. The progressive abandonment of quarries and grazing has lead to the colonisation of areas by pioneer species, the environment is becoming more ordinary and the places where ochre is open-air-exposed are disappearing. Forestland is often badly maintained, for example, two years ago, heavy snowfall (very rare in this region!) caused windthrow that is still uncleared in the forest and some places remain almost completely inaccessible.

* division of private land into small units: ochre was exploited on very small concessions (some tens of m²). The current land registry reflects this heritage: many people own very small areas of land. This makes management difficult on the site (problem of identifying owners, and of bringing them round to the same way of thinking). An enormous amount of coordination work needs to be done. There is an owners association but some owners are not members of this association and even between its members there is some tension.

* fire risk: the site is progressively becoming overgrown, which increases the fire risk, especially close to paths and quarries (which are very dangerous cul-de-sacs in case of fire). The more dangerous parts of the site could be closed during high risk periods.

In addition to these elements, the site characterisation emphasizes the lack of knowledge about certain topics such as the impact of tourist movement on erosion or the influence of grazing on floristic diversity. Further studies are of paramount importance before definitive recommendations about management can be made.

2°) *Methods*

In a situation where passions run high, the object is to find a good compromise between, construction for tourism, management of a fragile natural sites and risk prevention. To achieve this the Park. relies on thorough discussions to take the wishes of all those involved into account.

* Identification of stakeholders: the first step is to identify the owners and to associate them with the process; that involves time-consuming work using the land register. Some owners are members of the association but it is necessary to identify the others too (which is sometimes difficult). Other stakeholders also have to be contacted: locally elected representatives (the mayor and town councillors), local naturalist, hunting or hiking associations, farmers, shepherds and the Tourist Information Office.

* Information: as soon as identification is achieved, a meeting is organised with the steering committee to present the diagnosis, identified issues and management proposals . This meeting ensures that everyone has the opportunity to express his or her opinion and the involvement. It is a particularly difficult challenge to bring the townships and the owners' association together to have a constructive discussions, while they are inhav e conflicting ideas. The aim is to unite people with opposing views in a common project that will be good for the area.

* Discussion

The discussion is multifaceted:

1) A coordination role

The park presents suggestions of possible projects as a basis for discussion. The suggestions will be modified to meet the wishes of the stakeholders. The park acts as a mediator and a suggestion maker to end the deadlock in a conflicting situation which has a bad impact on biodiversity and land management.

2) The use of demonstration examples and the acquisition of basic information.

The first stage in the implementation involves two elements: (i) the realisation of further studies on previously identified topics, and (i), practical demonstrations on communal areas or on motivated owners' property. [*See Inset 4: Diversity has to be managed at the landscape scale*][*See Inset 5: Forest management must be adapted to protect biodiversity*]. The park relies on the learning by example process and emulation to convince other property owners.

3) A long-term action

Another part of the strategy is to develop scenarios to define the consequences of no management, of minimal management and of voluntary action. The aim is to make all those involved aware of their responsibilities, leading to an overall understanding of forest related questions and biodiversity management and finally an enlightened choice. In these scenarios it was chosen to highlight issues that interest people directly, for example fire risk. The practical demonstrations will also have an impact in other fields, such as biodiversity protection.

4) A awareness campaign

The charter must not only involve those working in the field but also the whole of the population. At the moment it is just a public awareness campaign directed at the local population, through articles in local newspapers, but a larger awareness campaign will be launched later.

Inset 4

Diversity has to be managed at the landscape scale

The high ecological value of the ochre is linked to the grit and sandstone substratum on which there is a remarkable acid-loving flora and a mosaic of open and forested areas, providing varied habitats for diversified flora and fauna.

This mosaic needs protection. In some priority areas, clearing will be necessary; and agricultural practices such as grazing will have to be controlled.

For example a shepherd using a communal area is prepared to adjust his grazing habits to achieve environmental protection. This will be finalised with a contract between the farmer and the township that will fix the period of grazing, the number of sheep and the areas concerned.

Inset 5

Forest management must be adapted to protect biodiversity

In the bottom of some valleys in the Ochre zone, the forest shelters a wide diversity of lichens and fungi, some of which are very rare. An inventory provided a detailed list of species. Some of them are linked to a fairly closed canopy cover, others to more open areas. Management must avoid brutal changes that would let in high light intensities, in order to preserve habitats in the first category and maintain open zones for the second.

A code of forest practice will be written to explain the objectives of biodiversity management: the preservation of old trees for hole dwelling species, the maintenance of sloping ground for wasps, wetland conservation and management of riparian woodlands.

Conclusion

The forest charter process guarantees a global approach for an area such as Luberon: even if the main subject is forest management, many other topics are tackled and taken into account. With regard to the protection and management of biodiversity, the of wide ranging consultation and an effective participation, supported by tangible projects, ensures the acceptance of the measures by the local people, which is a guarantee for the success of these projects. Similarly, the contracts ensure that the projects are completed.

However, the method has some limitations:

- * it is not always easy to identify representatives of all those involved.
- * the impact of demonstration projects is not always assessed correctly: it is necessary to be able to reorientate the management; the process has evolve with the situation. This implies the use of monitoring and assessment of the charter.
- * it is also necessary to bear in mind that despite the consultation, some people may remain recalcitrant, for example owners who cannot see the interest of proposed projects and refuse to implement them on their property. There are not many ways of by-passing this opposition, even in the name of public interest.

Even if the Area Forest Charter is not a magic tool that can provide solutions to every problem, it can still instigate some changes in management practices, towards concerted planning at a more relevant scale, which is a step in the right direction, notably for biodiversity management.

Finally we must emphasise that one of the aims of the Forest Law was to adjust French forest policies to be able to implement its international commitments. The area forest charter, which is a decentralised tool based on consultation and participation, is a good example of the implementation of the ecosystem approach as defined by the Convention on the Biological Diversity. It implements the principles and operational guidance defined by the Conference of the Parties and in particular principles: 1 ("*the objectives of management of land, water and living resources are a matter of societal choice*"), 2 ("*management should be decentralised to the lowest appropriate level*"), 7 ("*the ecosystem approach should be undertaken at the appropriate spatial and temporal scale*") and 12 ("*the ecosystem approach should involve all relevant sectors of society and scientific disciplines*") and also operational guidance 3 ("*use adaptive management practices*"), 4 ("*carry out management actions at the scale appropriate for issue being addressed, with decentralisation to the lowest level, as appropriate*") and 5 ("*ensure intersectorial cooperation*").

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For further information...

1) Regional Nature Parks website:

http://www.parcs-naturels-regionaux.tm.fr/un_parc/index_en.html

2) Luberon RNP website:

<http://www.parc-du-luberon.org/>

3) Maß website:

<http://www.unesco.org/mab/>

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