



## **Integrated management of Natura 2000 forest sites in Spain: experiences**

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Conservation, protection and improvement of the environmental quality, including the conservation of habitats, as well as natural flora and wild fauna are one of the main objectives of the European Union environmental policy. The conservation of biodiversity in Europe is defined by Directive 92/43/EEC –commonly known as Habitats Directive– relating to the conservation of natural habitats and of wild flora and fauna. This Directive established the creation of a ecological network of European protected areas: the Natura 2000 network, and also recognised the need to manage these areas in order to maintain their “favourable conservation status”.

A methodology is proposed for the elaboration of plans for integrated management of Natura 2000 forest sites that shall include the contents of forest and livestock management, in order to apply this methodological proposal in these forest sites. This methodology harmonizes the objectives of restrictive protection and conservation of natural habitats and species, included in Annexes I and II of Habitats Directive, with other objectives such as forest exploitation, livestock and other productive uses and recreational activities. Moreover, the elaboration of an integrated physical planning and conservation status assessment are useful and necessary tools for management of Natura 2000 forest sites. In addition, remote sensing and GIS techniques support the location and identification of habitats within these protected sites.

This management proposal has been applied on four Natura 2000 forest sites. In these spaces, methodological proposals for cartography of habitats, conservation status and fragility assessment, and specific recommendations for management have been developed. This proposal has been also integrated in the content of the planning projects defined by the referred General Instructions for Management of Forest Sites.