



Eliciting public preferences for wildfire management policies in Crete, Greece

Haleema Misal¹, Ioannis Kountouris^{2,4}, Apostolos Voulgarakis^{2,3,4}, and Anastasios Rovithakis^{3,4}

¹Imperial College London, Natural Sciences, Centre for Environmental Policy, London, United Kingdom of Great Britain

²Imperial College London, Natural Sciences, Department of Physics, London, United Kingdom of Great Britain

³Technical University of Crete, School of Chemical and Environmental Engineering, Chania, Crete, Greece

⁴Leverhulme Centre for Wildfires, Environment and Society, London, United Kingdom

Fire regimes form an integral part of terrestrial biomes in the Mediterranean region as they provide essential disturbances which change the structure and function of plants that favour Mediterranean type climates. Fire is inextricably linked to such ecosystems and cannot be excluded from them. However, the intensification of human activities in Greece, coupled with increasingly unpredictable wildfires has created huge imbalances and jeopardised the ecological integrity of ecosystems. Expansions into the wildland urban interface, rural abandonment, and the focus on fire suppression are increasing the vulnerability and flammability of the Greek environment. The duality of fire is delicate, both at local and national level, catastrophic wildfires singe deeply on landscapes and economies, social burns can take just as long to heal. In Greece, this is further exacerbated by the burgeoning socio-economic and political complexities that have catalysed the current ineffective and unsustainable fire management strategies. Damages from wildfires affect ecosystem services which can lead to a reduction in human wellbeing. Understanding the interactions between ecosystems and humans through environmental valuation is key to implementing effective policy. This study uses economic valuation methods in the form of a choice experiment to elicit public preference for a wildfire management policy in Crete. A survey was deployed around the island, with respondents asked about their preferences between different management strategies. The policies outlined in the survey are made up of the following attributes: risk of fire, agricultural production, landscape quality and post-wildfire damage mitigation. Results from this study indicate a positive preference by the public for a new proposed policy. The findings from this study can be used for decision making in Crete and other similar southern European environments by providing metrics for appropriate wildfire management.