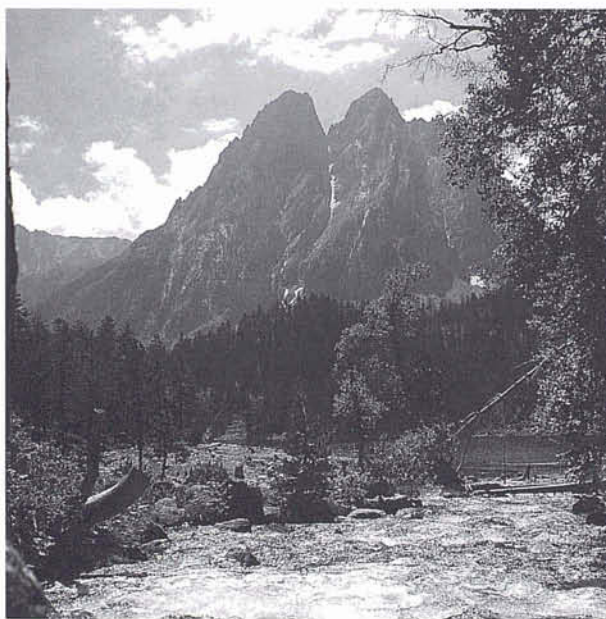


# THE PLAN FOR AREAS OF NATURAL INTEREST IN CATALONIA

THE "PLA D'ESPAYS NATURALS DE CATALUNYA", WHICH HAS ITS ORIGIN IN THE 1985 "LLEI CATALANA D'ESPAYS NATURALS", IS BASICALLY A LAND CLASSIFICATION PROGRAMME TO WHICH THE LAW CONFERS THE STATUS OF "PLA TERRITORIAL SECTORIAL", AND WHICH LAYS DOWN COMPULSORY GUIDELINES FOR TOWN PLANNING AND, IN GENERAL, FOR THOSE ADMINISTRATIVE ENTERPRISES WHICH AFFECT THE TERRITORY.



ELS ENCANTATS. CATALAN PYRENEES.

**T**he main instrument in establishing the Areas for Special Protection in Catalonia will be the "Pla d'Espais d'Interès Natural", which is now nearing completion. The plan is being drawn up by the department of public works and the department of agriculture, and has to be approved by the Executive Council, after consultation with the relevant local organizations and institutions.

#### *Protection and Guarantee*

This document, defined in chapter III of the relevant law as a "Pla Territorial

Sectorial", sets out to establish the necessary considerations for the basic protection of natural areas whose conservation is felt to be in need of guarantees, according to their scientific, ecological, aesthetic, cultural, social, educational or recreational value.

This sort of environmental protection should not be confused with measures involving the application of stricter regulations, as in the case of natural parks, natural reserves, etcetera, though the plan will include all those areas of special interest already protected by Law or by an Executive Council Decree: the woodland areas in need of pre-

servation, those areas classified as zoological or botanical reserves, the hydrologic and orographic systems so characteristic of our country, the lake districts, the mountain areas and, as a reference, the areas included in the urban development committee's resolution of 21st April 1980. The plan lays down compulsory guidelines for town-planning and, in general, for those administrative enterprises which affect the territory.

#### *Reliable Scientific Knowledge*

As a necessary condition for the effective participation of local organizations, the proposed plan had to be able to



assimilate contributions of different sorts, while at the same time having a reliable technical preparation. In this respect, it should be pointed out that the document is the work of specialists from the administration of the *Generalitat*; complex planning techniques have been combined with an exhaustive field study covering more than 30,000 kms. Some twenty specialists from almost all the Catalan university departments connected with ecology and from other scientific organizations have also collaborated. In short, the project under consultation is a reliable measure of the present level of scientific knowledge in Catalonia as regards the environment. In the case of the higher mountain regions, the plan's proposals had already been put forward in the respective regional plans and had therefore already been released for public information.

#### *Principal Characteristics of the Project under Consultation*

The proposal includes a total of 147 natural areas covering the equivalent of almost 18.5 % of the territory of Catalonia. In keeping with the World Strategy for Conservation, the basic criterion used in the selection and delimitation of these areas has been that of including the most representative samples of the great ecological diversity which characterizes our countryside.

Following the plan's approval, all these areas will be subject to the four principles which make up the basic regulations established by the relevant Law and by other dispositions. In many cases this general legislation is complemented with specific regulations ac-

ording to the respective needs of each area.

The delimitations established in the plan are only intended as indications. The definitive delimitation of each area will normally be the result of a special development plan which can be promoted by any competent planning body.

#### *Regulations of the Plan*

As regards the general regulations, their function is essentially a preventive one which does not affect agriculture, forestry, farming, hunting, fishing, etcetera. The specific legislation applicable is that covering non-developable land. Those projects for works and installations that could be a serious threat to the values preserved in the areas included in the plan will have to follow the environmental impact evaluation procedure.

At the same time, improved guarantees are provided for the restoration of areas affected by mining activity. Also, the use of motorized vehicles off the tracks and roads set aside for this purpose is forbidden, except when it is necessary for agricultural or farming purposes.

In some areas, the proposed plan foresees special considerations. These range from details of activities the two departments will have to undertake or promote in the four years following approval (these make up the plan's action programme) to specific legislation included in the plan's regulations.

As I have already mentioned, the regulations laid down in the plan are of an essentially preventive nature and are unlikely to impose limitations on traditional land use. Very often, municipal

planning itself, or the various sectorial legislations, impose stricter controls than those included in the plan. However, the plan can directly affect projects which have not been legally finalised, and especially those relating to development.

Finally, it is important to remember that the plan establishes technical and financial benefits for the towns included and the rural areas involved. These can take the form of a specific programme of annual investments, financial aid for the improvement of the areas and their natural resources, priority in the allocation of already existing aid, etcetera.

It is worth mentioning the valuable effort made during the consultation phase with local organizations, which ensured that it was not reduced to a mere administrative formality, but became a genuine instrument of participation. This has allowed the local organizations access to all the information necessary for a full evaluation of the effects of the plan and the chance to present their own appeals or proposals.

Once the results of the consultations have been included in the project, it will be passed to the Executive Council of the *Generalitat* for approval, which could be obtained before the end of the year.

In expectation of the plan's approval, many conservation projects have already been started: the declarations of animal species to be protected; the continuing task of reforestation, and the campaigns to stimulate the public's—and especially children's—awareness of the great wealth this natural heritage represents for the country. ●