



**Projet LIFE
Eau et Forêt
Forests for Water**



**An overview of the LIFE Project Forests for Water
and of its French Component.**

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Report drawn-up by the French component of project LIFE « forests for water ».

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(this report can be downloaded from the internet sites www.life-forests-for-water.net and www.onf.fr)

Context.

The Swedish National Board of Forestry – Environmental Department, piloted the introduction of a LIFE Environment forestry project as part of the European Water framework Directive (WFD).

Whilst assuring the general management of the project, Sweden also joined forces with other countries in the Union, establishing contacts with the UK Forestry Commission (the British equivalent of the ONF) and the Rhône-Alpes ONF (France). The Rhône Alpes region was specifically chosen in order to broaden the scope of the project, now covering Alpine and Mediterranean forests as well as Boreal and Atlantic ones.

Within this context, the Rhône-Alpes ONF intervened throughout the planning phase of the project as “Chief Co-ordinator” for the entire French component. It strove to amass the necessary technical and budgetary elements, in their required forms for both the regional partners and the LIFE program. The geographic approach of regional policies (taking into account the agents and territories involved) thus had to be juxtaposed with the thematic approach (taking into account the agents and the policy types) selected by the Swedish Partner for the presentation of the project to Europe.

This document, destined for use by the French project partners, summarises the report submitted to the European Union. It demonstrates the link between the territorial approach favoured by the French and the thematic approach favoured at the European level.

Project’s organisation.

The Swedish NBF (National Board of Forestry) is responsible for the general management of the project. It employs a full time co-ordinator and ensures the smooth running of all shared policies set down in the project, such as the manner in which the Expert Group operates and the principal methods of communication (international seminars, the publication of the final report).

The ONF continues in its same role, coordinating the French component, as it did during the planning phase. The CNRS (University of Lyon 3) is responsible for the coordination of the scientific branch of the project as well as representing the French component within the group of experts.

By April 2003, a steering committee had already been established by the French component to include all project partners. This committee was definitely established with the official launch of the project so as to unite the principal parties as well as those partners not directly involved with the intended policies. A revolving presidency was established between the inter-community organizations holding the river contracts (and Cohennoz) as well as the regional financial partners. In its role as project co-ordinator, the ONF holds the office of Secretary.

This steering committee met in Cohennoz on the 7th October 2003, for the official launch of the project.

The main regional partners (other than the aforementioned ONF and CNRS) that directly contribute to the financing of the French component are:

- The RMC Water Agency as a financial partner and regional participant in water management policies.
- The Rhône-Alpes DIREN as a financial partner and regional participant in water management policies.
- The Rhône-Alpes region as a financial partner and regional participant in water management policies.
- The SM3A as Project Manager for the work conducted within the Arve River Contract,
- The Ouvèze-Vive Union as Project Manager for work conducted within the Ouvèze River Contract
- The CCVD as Project Manager for work conducted within the SAGE and the Drôme River Contract,
- The URACOFRA as a financial partner and the representative association of the Forest municipalities,
- The Haute Savoie county council and the ATMB as financial partners for the Arve River Contract,

- The municipality of Cohennoz as Project Manager for work conducted in the Arly valley.

Other regional partners participate in the steering committee on account of their involvement with certain activities or in the regional water and forest management policies:

- The SERFOB for their forestry policies,
- The CRPF for representing the privately owned forest land,
- The county councils directly concerned by the territorial policies (O7, 26 et 73),
- The GRAIE and the OEFM for their methodological and scientific support,
- The Rhône-Alpes Rivers Association for its federative work for the participants in river contracts or projects,
- The FNE as the Federation of National Associations for the Protection of Nature.
- The Basin Committee as regional participant in water management policies (represented by the water Agency).

To ensure coherency of policies on a national level, a « national reference group » has been created, composed of members of the national institutions most involved in the synergies between water and forestry policies.

Finally, local steering committees were established for each one of the four zones selected for territorial policies. In this manner, each group taking part in the project will have the possibility to directly influence it, at a level which is best suited: regional or local (the two not being exclusive). For each of the four pilot zones, the committee is run by the President of the inter-community organization responsible for the river contract or by the Mayor in the case of the Arly valley.

The principal objectives of this organisation are as follows:

- **To ensure the overall coherence of the project** on a European level (coherence between the various components of the LIFE-Environment project : French, British and Swedish) as well as at the French level (coherency with regards to public water and forest policies and the eligibility criteria for financial partners).
- **To further develop river contracts, the “backbone” of the project:** a manner of formalization by contract that stemmed from water management policies, they provide a suitable context for research into synergizing plant cover management and global water management.
- **To further enhance the value of the project:** exchange of information, experiences and methods between the partners and between the different levels of decision making (from the municipalities to Europe) ; seek out and strengthen existing ties with strategic partners (scientific backing, contractual links, such as the river contracts, methods of working with the general population) ; training people so as to produce better “Water and Forest” synergies.

The principal objectives of the project.

As mentioned above, the general aim of the project is to apply water policies in forest land as best possible. In order to accomplish this, some more precise objectives were put forward and listed as action items within the project:

1. Help change current practices :
 - Research, communicate and popularize plant cover management techniques that improve the quality of water in aquatic areas. (especially, though not exclusively, forestry ones)
 - Carry out experiments within the selected test zones and evaluate the results with the aim of either approving or changing the recommended techniques of good forest /water management.
 - Perfect the reference system needed to create a support mechanism for the forestry agents committed to changing their current practices.
2. Introduce simple yet effective evaluation and tracking methods for the problems uncovered in the project linking forest and water management (for example : the role played by vegetation in the hydrologic dynamic of a catchment basin)

3. Carry out and /or reinforce participatory measures that explain forestry policies and their links with those on water management to the general public and all the forestry agents.

Project Policies

To facilitate understanding, the policies and action plans are described within the following framework :

- Territorial policies, which highlight the zones and issues related to the Alpine and Mediterranean regions,
- The « transversal » policies which are common to all the territories concerned.

This presentation is preferable to that of the actual LIFE project which favours a much less readable thematic introduction for the French participants. Conformity between the two documents is assured by the fact that every policy is listed in this here document.

The legibility of the actual LIFE document itself is made even harder, for the French participants, by the fact that it is written as an agglomeration of documents submitted by the three components (Sweden, UK and France) and by the fact that... it is written in English. The ONF, in its role as Chief Co-ordinator of the project and as the interface with Sweden and the EU, of course holds the LIFE version of the project at the disposition of all those interested in reading it.

Territorial Alpine Policies : The Arve valley.

The main issue tackled concerning this watershed was how to protect and restore the ecological, recreational and environmental quality of the alluvial forests at the foot of the valley, which are being threatened by “collateral damage” from intensive urbanization. This policy works towards risk prevention in flood zones.

Action policies presented in the LIFE project are as follows:

- Analysis of plant cover, the prioritising of interventions and the establishment of tracking indicators in the area.
- Study and experimental rehabilitation work in affected zones (for example the planting of a willow tree nursery)
- Publication of a technical guide explaining the reproducibility of such work (including the land administration that might be necessary).
- Study and restoration work of the alluvial habitats.
- Alluvial habitat discovery area and information sheet for the public.
- Communication and exchange of experiences.

Territorial Alpine policies: The Cohennoz Watershed

The main issue dealt with concerning this watershed was how to optimize forest exploitation within a context of high instability and sharp slopes subject to important hydrological resurgences. Risk prevention is the topmost priority in mountainous regions where the roads are directly threatened by the consequences of erosion (falling rocks, earth slides.....) Although these policies do not currently apply to river contracts, they could serve as an excellent reference for future river contracts in alpine zones which would have for objective the responsibility of tackling the problems upstream from the watershed.

The policies presented in the LIFE project are as follows:

- The expected revision of the development of the Cohennoz public forest, creating an analysis model and management choice for the issues exposed.
- « Cohennoz Martellodrôme » training sessions open to all water agents so to increase awareness of this method of Alpine forest management.
- Discovery footpath exposing water and forest problems in this watershed.

Territorial Mediterranean policies: The Ouvèze watershed.

The main issue dealt with concerning this watershed was how to optimise the plant cover management with the aim of limiting the transit of solid materials, plus how to alleviate the rise in water levels which can lead to dramatic consequences downstream.

The policies presented in the LIFE project are as follows:

- Study of the plant cover around the watershed and of the geomorphology so as to identify :
 - a) similar zones from the point of view of erosion risk / vegetation state and
 - b) to define the most pertinent management strategies for the issues here discussed.
- Establishment of a monitoring system showing the development of plant cover (permanent markers), land erosion indicators (markers to measure erosion followed by pedological analysis) and a method to analyse the transit of solid materials in the river and how this changes over time, with the possibility of extrapolation on the watershed.
- Establishment of two biological indicators (ornithological and entomological) to show the ecological quality of the area, whilst researching for a correlation with other indicators in the area (especially that of the quality of water).
- Carrying out ecological engineering work (brushwood, plantations...) with the aim of curbing the transit of solid materials in the river caused by runoffs.
- Development of an internet site to serve as both an information point and dialogue forum with the general population concerning the policies applied to the watershed.

Territorial Mediterranean policies : The Drôme watershed

The main issue tackled concerning this watershed was how to improve the Drômes' sedimentary recharge whilst freeing-up the production sites hindered by the vegetation. The goal is to not only avoid the localised accumulations and their undesirable consequences (cultivated fields, threatened infrastructures) but to also help bring back a balanced equilibrium to the downstream regions that have been greatly affected by the heavy consequences of the Drôme's incisions (loosening of infrastructures...).

The policies put forward in the LIFE project are as follows:

- Preliminary studies (including land studies) followed by the implementing of the work needed to clear the blocked material in the small tributaries of the watershed, downstream from the production zones.
- Establishment of monitoring methods to track the impact of this work (CNRS/CEMAGREF plans and topographic observation post CCVD).
- Research into a generalised scenario of this type of intervention on the Drome watershed downstream from the "Claps de Luc en Diois" showing the estimated impact on the re-absorption of the currently deficient sediment (including the prospective accompanying land use policies).
- Carry out a public awareness campaign with the aim of informing the population on the problems of the deficit in sedimentary recharge of the Drôme and to give them concrete opportunities to participate in policy making: this is a "building of a technical culture" pilot scheme within the heart of the population itself, which also perfectly meets the local participation objectives laid down in the Water Directive. In light of the exemplary nature of these steps, additional efforts to inform people of this experience are expected in the policy.

Transversal policies

These policies concern all the agents involved in the project. They constitute a decisive portion of the LIFE project especially for the European Union:

- The general management of the project: specific work carried out by the technical and administrative ONF staff is at the disposition of the project to ensure coordination and accountability to the Swedish partner and Europe. This includes the secretarial work for the regional and local committees set up for the steering of the project.
- The participation of the group of experts established to support the LIFE project.
- Review and diffusion of information concerning the DCE as well as the elaboration of propositions put forward at regional and national levels to be applied in forest areas.
- The organisation of an international and national colloquium.

Added to this were:

- A policy suggested by the Regional Union for Forestry Communities (URACOFRA) which aims to increase awareness of forestry and water management policies in this strategic demographic. This target audience covers all forestry groups including private forest owners.
- Training sessions for forest Managers and other interested agents, covering the most important concepts of water management policies and their application in the Alpine-Rhone context : Water laws- water police -MISE, river contracts- SAGE, AEP perimeters, how the hydro system functions, riverbank vegetation and ecosystems management.....
- A study into the issues of forest management and the preservation of drinking water resources: this study has just been substituted for a policy on the same theme conceived by the municipality of Roanne but which could not be completed within the deadline. For the general balance of the project, it seemed reasonable to maintain a modest appendix of sorts, on this theme within the French Component of the project. The details of this policy will be given during the course of the project in conjunction with the scientific partners.

Presentation of policies within the LIFE project framework

The LIFE-project document lists 10 action items, in which the policies described ahead can be found:

1. The european advisory experts group.
 - Composed of scientific experts, (The French component being represented by H Piégay - CNRS), this group's principal objective is to validate the main technical options selected and to bring a European perspective to the project.
 - This group will visit, at least once, every site on the project giving the French partners as many opportunities for discussion.
2. Public participation.
 - This is the main axis of the European Directive for Water and European policies in general within the domain of the environment (Sustainability criteria).
 - The organisation into local committees, regional steering committees, national reference groups and the group of European experts, is aimed to promote dialogue at all levels and guarantees coherence and the effectiveness of the reforms made at these different levels.
 - The specific polices applied to the Drôme are significative this policy's importance for the LIFE project in general.

3. The development and refining of methods aimed at preparing for the Directive's application.
 - All information shall be reviewed with the aim of discussing the public policies concerned by this project.
 - During this initial ground work stage, other propositions of development will be suggested.
 - This project will also help others appreciate the considerable differences of context experienced by the various components of the project : The Atlantic and Boreal forests are first and foremost concerned by the chemical quality of the water (leaching problems resulting from the accumulation of organic matter in the earth) whilst the Alpine and Mediterranean forests are more concerned by the hydrological function of water basins (essentially a problem of mountain forest floor stability).
 - Important teaching and guideline skills concerning these issues should result from this action plan.
4. Setting up monitoring policies.
 - Systematic monitoring (ie evaluating the impact of actions and polices) is an essential aspect of the Water Framework Directive.
 - Sweden and the UK have a shared past concerning this theme within the LIFE-project. Together they will develop various methodologies as well as carrying out research on each site, whilst the French Component will concentrate on establishing an adapted monitoring system for the territorial policies applied.
 - It should be noted that methodical, precise and pragmatic thinking is needed in order to come up with the best suited monitoring methods adapted for each individual case: this can go from studying photographs to advanced scientific protocols not forgetting opinion polls.
5. Planning policies for forest design and management.
 - When dealing with interactions between water and land management, strategic policies are required not only for traditional forestry policies (development of forestland-use, drawn from experience gained in Cohennoz) but also for water management ones (taking into consideration the plant cover in the river contracts, drawn from experience in the Arve, Drôme and Ouvèze).
6. Management of alluvial and riverbank forests
 - The work required on the Arve and the Drome were classified into this category.
7. Management of vegetal cover on the watershed.
 - The work required on the Ouvèze was classified into this category.
8. Capacity building.
 - This includes training policies as well as the intended guide dealing with the forestry sector's participation in the implementation of the water framework directive.
 - For this second action, it would be very useful to solicit the national reference group's help.
9. Communication.
 - A part of this will be directly taken on by the common component of the project under Sweden's responsibility.
 - The French component will be responsible for the organisation of the first international "state of the art" seminar in June 2004.
 - The communication policies are ambitious and were for a large part responsible for the project's selection.
10. The running of the project
 - The ONF is responsible for the coordination of the French component and works closely with the Swedish coordinator for the entire project.

Whichever presentation style is chosen, the coherence for the entire project can be shown in the following table :

Coherency France – Sweden - UK – Europe				
Review of issues for the application of the WFD in forestry areas and the elaboration of propositions on a national and / or European level				
Coherency of regional partners				
Mediterranean Zone	Ouvèze-vive Union		Arve Union	
	Start of the River Contract Erosion-vegetation links in the watershed		Revival of the environment appendix of the River Contract Restoration of remaining alluvial areas	
Alpine Zone	CC Val de Drôme		Municipality of Cohennoz (val d'Arly)	
	SAGE and River Contract Links between the Drôme and the vegetation of its tributaries		Forest management and steep slope stability links.	
Scientific partnerships : global and for each individual site : application of the WFD, monitoring tools...				
Communication , release results, exchange experiences...				
Building of “water and forest” capacities : training, guides...				

