

The **Conservation Actions** are the core actions of the project and include:

Demarcation and fencing part of habitat *1520, for eliminating trampling and destruction from visitors.



Removal of competitive vegetation (mostly acacias) with environmentally friendly methods for the reduction of competition for growing space and resources (water, light, nutrients).

Production of saplings of the characteristic species of habitat type *5220 and their planting in specific Park areas, for the restoration and enhancement of the habitat *5220.



Dispersal of seeds of the characteristic species of habitat type *1520 in specific Park areas for the enhancement of the habitat *1520.

Implementation of measures for the reduction of fire risk (e.g. firebreaks).



Improving the conservation status of the priority habitat types *1520 and *5220 at the Rizoelia National Forest Park



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The project LIFE-RIZOELIA aims at improving the conservation status of the two priority habitat types “*5220 - Arboreescent matorrals with Ziziphus” and “*1520 - Gypsum steppes (Gypsophiletalia)”, in Rizoelia National Forest Park.

For **continuous updates** on the progress of the project, please visit the project website and/or subscribe to the group on Facebook.



www.life-rizoelia.eu



Improving the conservation status of the priority habitat types *1520 & *5220



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The project

The project LIFE-RIZOELIA started in September 2013 and will be completed by February 2017. It is co-funded by the European Commission within the framework of the LIFE+ programme. The partners of the project are two departments of the Ministry of Agriculture, Natural Resources and Environment, the Department of Forests (coordinating beneficiary) and the Department of Environment and two academic institutions, Frederick University and Open University of Cyprus.

Rizoelia National Forest Park (NFP)

It is located in Larnaca District. It is a green area near the urban environment and a place for sport and recreation for local people. The management and protection of the Park is under the responsibility of the Department of Forests.

The area was declared as a National Forest Park in 1997. The vegetation found within the Park is partly a result of plantations of Calabrian pine (*Pinus brutia*, indigenous) and Stone pine (*Pinus pinea*, alien), cypresses (*Cupressus sempervirens*) and acacias (*Acacia saligna*, alien-invasive). However, the Park also has four important natural habitat types (types of vegetation). These are:

1. *1520 - Gypsum steppes (*Gypsophiletalia*)
2. *5220 - Arborescent matorral with *Ziziphus*
3. 5420 - *Sarcopoterium spinosum phrygana*
4. *6220 - Pseudo-steppe with grasses and annuals (Thero - *Brachypodietea*)

All the above habitat types are under the protection of the European Directive 92/43/EEC (Habitats Directive). Three of them are characterised as "priority" habitats (marked with an asterisk) meaning they are threatened with extinction and it is considered necessary to take immediate measures for their conservation.

Due to the importance of its habitat types, the Park was included in the European Network of Natura 2000 sites. The Natura 2000 network is the centrepiece of European policy for the protection of nature and biodiversity and it was established under the European Directive 92/43/EEC.

Characteristic Gypsophytes



Gypsophila linearifolia



Campanula fastigiata



*5220 - Arborescent matorrals with *Ziziphus*

Shrubland which is characterised by the presence of *Ziziphus lotus* (jujube). The jujube is a deciduous, spiny shrub with edible fruits, usually about 2 m high. The habitat also includes the species *Asparagus horridus* (asparagus), *Noaea mucronata* (thorny saltwort) and *Thymbra capitata* (thyme).



Habitat *5220 - Arborescent matorrals with *Ziziphus*

*1520 - Gypsum steppes (*Gypsophiletalia*)

Special habitat type which occurs on gypsum soils. The characteristic species which compose this habitat are restricted on gypsum; due to this specialisation they are called gypsophytes (gypsum plants). The characteristic gypsophytes are *Campanula fastigiata* and *Gypsophila linearifolia*. Other species participating in the composition of the habitat are *Herniaria hemistemon*, *Thymbra capitata* (thyme), *Teucrium micropodioides* (germander), *Phagnalon rupestre* (African fleabane) and *Fumana thymifolia*.



Habitat *1520 - Gypsum steppes (*Gypsophiletalia*)

Actions of the project

For the sound conservation of the targeted habitat types, the available knowledge regarding these habitats has to be improved. Therefore, it was necessary to implement specific preparatory actions, such as:

- Detailed mapping and determination of the distribution of the two targeted habitat types within Rizoelia NFP.
- Sampling of the vegetation for the study of the composition of habitat *1520 in Cyprus.
- Inventory of the characteristic gypsophytes (*Campanula fastigiata*, *Gypsophila linearifolia*) for determining their population size.
- Preparation of Monitoring Plans and Management Plans for the monitoring and the implementation of sound conservation measures.
- Preparation of Action Plans with guidelines for the restoration of the targeted habitat types.