



Creation of new protected areas in the public forests of La Réunion and Mayotte

This project enabled the creation of three new biological reserves, Bois de Couleur des Bas, Littoral de Saint Philippe and Tamarinaies des Hauts Sous le Vent in the public forests of La Reunion. It developed a strategy for the creation of protected areas in La Réunion and set up a regional coordination with Mayotte focusing on the creation of protected areas in the public forests of Mayotte.



Project achievements

The BEST project 'Creation of new protected areas in the public forests of La Réunion and Mayotte' coordinated by the 'Office National des Forêts' aimed first of all to elaborate a strategy to create reserves taking into consideration already existing protected areas. A methodology to prioritise the zones of ecological interest was established, which allowed to determine in a participatory and justified manner the sites to be designated as reserves in the public forests. This procedure can also be used for other areas and this prioritisation of natural sites is a good follow up to the first conclusions of the REDOM strategy - towards an ecological network in the Outermost regions - , which corresponds to the SCAP - strategy for the creation of protected areas - in the Outermost regions. This procedure could also be of interest for others organisations or island countries which would like to create protected areas on public lands.



In a very concrete manner the second part of the project included the creation of three new biological reserves in the zones which had been the most prioritised during the first phase. The management plans for the reserves, which also serve as the supporting documents for the creation of the reserves, have been developed. This answers a request expressed by the forest agents, who are usually generalists on forestry matters; they wanted a management plan specific to the zones of high patrimonial value to enable them to program pertinent actions appropriate to the issues at stake. These management plans are carried out using European Rural Development Funds (ERDF) and the co-financing of the Department of La Réunion. There are also other funding instruments such as the 'MIG Biodiversité' (General Interest Mission – Biodiversity) of the Ministry of Environment to ensure the implementation of the actions and the management of these reserves. In La Réunion, a big part of the action programme is focussed on the control of invasive alien species, like in most isolated ocean islands. The project also funded educational signs, for example at the entrance to the new biological reserve 'Littoral de St. Philippe' (reserve also pictured in cover photo).



Finally the important third component of this BEST project consists of setting up a regional collaboration with Mayotte for the creation and the management of protected areas on that island, which has become a French overseas department since 2011 and is situated in the South West Indian Ocean. Technicians from Mayotte visited the protected areas which had been created in La Réunion and a cooperation mission to Mayotte was organised. A joint project has grown from these fruitful exchanges. It aims to create in the near future a big reserve on the mountains tops of Mayotte, which host the last remaining relicts of primary forest on the island. Following the mission, the planning for the reserve creation has started.



La Réunion and Mayotte are characterized by a terrestrial biodiversity both exceptional and very threatened. They belong to the same biodiversity hotspot, with other islands of the South West Indian Ocean, and are designated by scientists as being of global priority for nature conservation.

CONTACTS

Julien Triolo
julien.triolo@onf.fr

