

PST35 - De-urbanizing and recovering the ecological functioning of the Mediterranean coastal salt marsh of La Pletera (NE Iberian Peninsula)

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In La Pletera salt marsh, located at the mouth of the Ter river (NE Iberian Peninsula), there are a set of confined coastal wetlands with strong salinity fluctuations and with the presence of the Iberian toothcarp (*Aphanius iberus*). This salt marsh suffered in the late 80s incomplete urbanization, which was abandoned in the 90s, leaving the saltmarsh interrupted by levees, access, a promenade and piles of rubble. Since 2014 we are developing a Life Nature project (LIFE-Pletera, LIFE13 NAT/ES/001001) with the aim to carry out a definitive restoration of the salt marsh, in order to recover its ecological functioning that was altered by the building works. LIFE-Pletera main actions include the excavation and removal of the manmade elements currently covering the salt marsh and its replacement by a coastal lagoon system with flooded zones surrounded by their corresponding wetland flood belts and a well-preserved dune front. The restored marsh will have a space design arranged in bands according to the typical structure of coastal habitats in the Mediterranean shore: a first band of coastal dunes, a second band of gradient, consisting of a mixture of sands and clay substrates, a third band of lagoons and a fourth band of salt marsh vegetation. To check the effects of restoration, monitoring of physical and chemical water conditions, phytoplankton, aquatic fauna and terrestrial vegetation is being carried out before, during and after restoration actuations. The project aims to demonstrate that, despite the severe environmental deterioration suffered by the Mediterranean coast, it is still possible to reverse the process and turn damaged areas back into fully functioning natural ecosystems.