



Parcs Nationaux de France

The national parks of France: reference areas

France is now home to nine flagship areas which set a global example.

These areas serve to underline and highlight the exceptional quality of the country's regions and landscapes, its desire to safeguard biodiversity and its commitment to ensuring sustainable development. These unique natural gems are France's national parks with the extraordinary diversity they display: the mountain landscapes of Vanoise, Ecrins, Mercantour and the Pyrenees, the marine environment of Port-Cros, the highlands of Cévennes, the tropical setting of Guadeloupe, and the Amazonian forest of French Guiana and Réunion.

At a time when the concept of nationhood is being reawakened in the French national consciousness, it is impossible to ignore that our landscape is just as important a part of this as our language and our history. This is because the educational pioneers of the French Republic taught us, showed us, and celebrated natural wonders such as the peaks of the Alps, Gavarnie, the Tarn gorges, the Mediterranean and the Piton de la Fournaise, and the fact that we are proud to be French, or rather, that we have a sense of shared ownership of and responsibility for a natural environment that belongs to everyone who loves it.

The world has seen many changes since the law establishing our national parks was introduced in 1960. The administration of French territory has been revolutionised by a process of decentralisation. The reduction in working hours, increased life expectancy and technological innovations have given rise to new leisure opportunities, and our unique natural landscapes are a popular place to enjoy this new-found leisure. Above all, the French people have an ongoing desire to participate, to play a part in their own history, to be actively involved instead of simply witnessing, and this is gradually giving rise to a commitment to ecology where the need to protect is compounded by a need to share.

The act which came into force in April 2006 aimed to introduce more democracy to the running of the national parks, more coherence in the definition of their scope, and more respect for the preservation of local traditions and customs.

Above and beyond the actual wording, the fundamental principles we will be presenting describe the spirit of the law. Terms like 'core zone', 'partnership zone' and 'national park charter' will soon be part of your vocabulary. It is now up to you to develop these concepts as you see fit but with due respect for the intentions of the law to produce an end result which is appropriate to the identity of each of France's nine national parks.

Jean Pierre Giran *Chairman of the Board of Administration of the public institution Parc Nationaux de France,
Law Reporter to the National Assembly for the act of 2006*

The national park: a reference area

UNIQUELY FRENCH

A national park is an area with many outstanding characteristics, a remarkable combination at national or international level of geology, biodiversity, the dynamics of ecosystems, human activity and landscapes. In these areas, the state establishes an organisation whose aim is to achieve excellence in the preservation and management of the area.

The classification of an area as a national park indicates a political will to make the area clearly stand out at national and international level, to implement an exemplary, integrated policy of conservation and management, and also to educate people about nature, provide recreational opportunities, and to preserve our heritage for future generations.

The character of a national park is often inseparable from the communities who have left their footprint on the biodiversity and landscape of the area, particularly in the form of pastoralism and forest management, and have contributed to creating a genuine balance.

The creation of a national park requires a regional development project founded on a shared, integrated and vibrant vision of the value of natural environments and landscapes:

- A shared vision because the aim of creating a national park is to shape the future of an area in a partnership involving the state and local communities;
- An integrated vision because the areas in question constitute a coherent whole, a geographical and ecological unit, and the project highlights ecological interdependencies. This is why each national park consists of a core zone and a partnership zone with different but complementary management concepts;
- A vibrant vision because this regional development project must be vested with dynamism. It involves all concerned parties in the management of the park. The charter, the management document of the national park, represents shared governance and a shared vision.



THE CHARTER

The charter establishes a regional development project, a collaborative effort between the state and local communities, after consultation with those involved. The charter links the 'core' zone or zones of the park and local communities invited to join the partnership zone in different ways and in line with the principle of ecological solidarity. For the core zone it defines the conservation objectives for the natural, cultural and landscape heritage of the area, and for the partnership zone it sets out guidelines for conservation, enhancement and sustainable development. The key aim is to take account of ecological continuity while preserving a living space and place for sustainable development. This is a new concept of a national park, based on a shared, integrated and vibrant vision of an area composed of different parts but forming a coherent whole, requiring a new kind of governance.

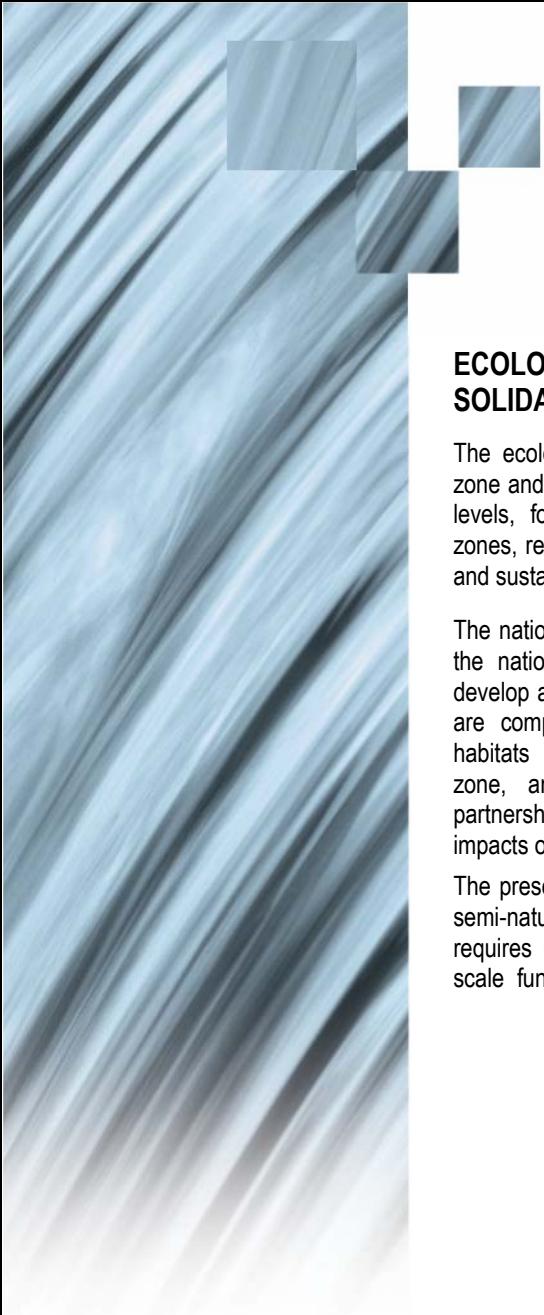
By committing themselves to the charter, the parties involved acknowledge the exceptional value of the core zone of the national park and choose to give preference to conservation-based management. They commit themselves to providing

the means to consolidate the ecological, economic, social and cultural solidarity that exists between this zone and the surrounding areas, based on a concept of sustainable development.

The national park charter, drawn up in a collaborative process and adopted after public consultation, is intended to set out the 'regional development project' of the national park as a whole and to structure the policy of this public institution.

The fact that activities and facilities are taken into consideration means that, occasionally, some objectives are in conflict with others – which means that choices have to be made. Different choices may be made depending on local circumstances. Thus, even in the core zone, further subdivision of the area is justified whereby emphasis can be put on different needs according to a set of priorities specific to each zone.

This is particularly true of wilderness areas, which can be established in the core zone to protect particularly important reference areas.



ECOLOGICAL SOLIDARITY

The ecological solidarity between the core zone and the partnership zone exists on two levels, for the mutual benefit of the two zones, reflecting the reality of a living space and sustainable development.

The national park as a public institution and the national park charter are intended to develop and enhance forms of land use that are compatible with conservation, natural habitats and species residing in the core zone, and to a lesser extent in the partnership zone, and to prevent negative impacts on the core zone.

The preservation or restoration of natural or semi-natural environments in the core zone requires us to take into account the large-scale functioning ecological units they are

part of, together with certain environments, comparable or not, in the partnership zone.

Conservation management of the core zone often serves to reinforce and preserve the natural resources in the partnership zone, in terms of quality and quantity, such as water, certain game, or the increase in numbers of animals that spend the summer in the core zone. The proximity to a rich natural, cultural and landscape heritage improves the quality of life for residents in the partnership zone, making the area around the core zone more attractive. High demand for visitor access to national park core zones is favourable to the development of tourism, the management of which is an aid to sustainable development for the partnership zone.

The national park core zone: an area of high standards

THE CHARACTER OF A NATIONAL PARK

The core zone constitutes a vital part of the character of a national park. This character is based on physical aspects, such as a rich natural, cultural and landscape heritage which can be concretely and objectively described, but also non-physical aspects: everything that stirs human emotion, respect, inspiration, or an opportunity for personal reflection. It comes down to the spirit of a place, the fascination of the whole represented by the core zone of the national park, and its particular attraction. This character is deeply rooted in the history of the region, yields many different interpretations of the area, and continues to assert itself during the course of natural, economic and social changes. The charter identifies the key elements that make up the character of a national park.

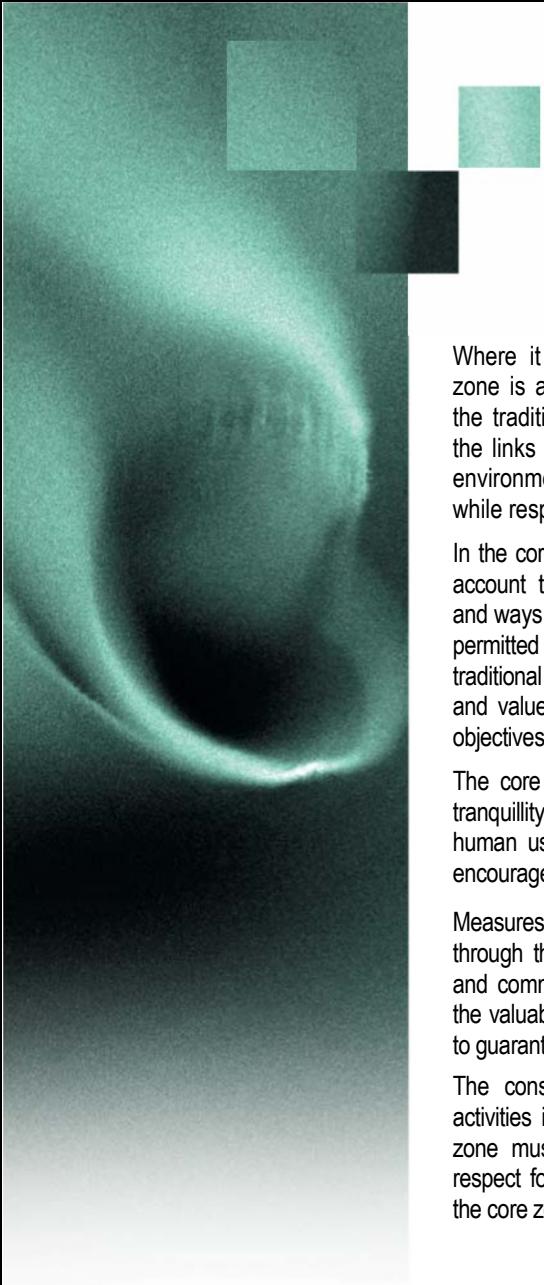
MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES

The core zone of a national park is an area of excellence in conservation management.

This approach to management aims to preserve, develop or restore ecological functions and avoid the fragmentation of natural environments. In certain cases, particularly wilderness areas, all human activity is prohibited in order to allow ecological processes to take place without any kind of interference.

The core zone is a reference area which must allow us to study long-term developments, for example in relation to major issues such as climate change or by comparison with neighbouring areas which are in 'ecological decline'.

In the core zone, long-term conservation efforts must guarantee the survival of our natural heritage, biodiversity, the dynamism of land-based and marine ecosystems, our cultural and landscape heritage, the character of the national park and regional identity.



Where it is inhabited by people, the core zone is also a reference area for recording the traditional practices of local people and the links they have forged with their natural environment in order to satisfy their needs, while respecting the need for conservation.

In the core zone, management must take into account the presence of traditional activities and ways of life. These traditional activities are permitted by special dispensations, and traditional skills and knowledge are recognised and valued while respecting the conservation objectives of the park's core zone.

The core zone is also a place of discovery, tranquillity, reflection and inspiration, where human use of the landscape is controlled. It encourages the values of respect and sharing.

Measures taken in the partnership zone through the charter must enable local bodies and communities to make appropriate use of the valuable heritage of the core zone in order to guarantee long-term protection.

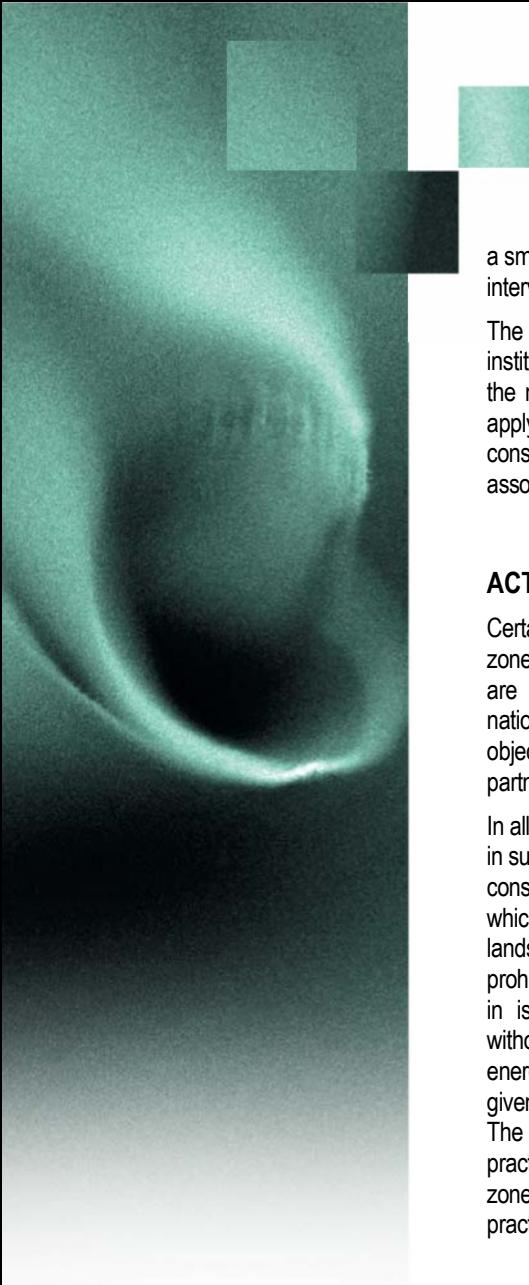
The consequences of certain facilities and activities in the partnership zone for the core zone must be carefully managed, with due respect for ecological solidarity to ensure that the core zone is not affected.

MANAGEMENT APPROACHES

In the core zone, the national park as a public institution has a responsibility to ensure compliance with regulations and implementation of the management objectives set out in the act passed on 14 April 2006, the decree of application of 28 July 2006 and the individual decree of each park. This is how the public institution ensures the management and development of the area. The practical implementation of management objectives is ensured by different parties, the public institution being charged with overall steering without directly influencing the process, unless it is tasked with doing so by the owner, or is itself the owner.

Measures relating to the natural environment and biodiversity are intended to preserve our natural heritage in the diversity of its different components. This protection is dynamic, and the free development of ecosystems is one of the key objectives of a national park. In national parks where forestry, farming and pastoralism are practised, it is appropriate to select management approaches and measures that encourage biodiversity and avoid the decline of the landscape.

Management interventions in the core zone must preserve the diversity of ecosystems and landscapes, taking as a reference a detailed, global analysis developed on



a small scale and drawing on a whole range of intervention measures.

The various state services and public institutions must contribute to the objectives of the national park, support the regulations that apply in the core zone and accept any consequences – particularly financial ones – associated with their actions.

ACTIVITIES

Certain activities are permitted within the core zone, under certain conditions, because they are compatible with the objectives of the national park or even converge with these objectives. Thus, the parties involved are partners in the protection policy.

In all cases, human activities must be managed in such a way that they do not result in negative consequences for our heritage. Any activities which would harm the natural, cultural or landscape heritage of the core zone must be prohibited. Accommodation and visitor facilities in isolated areas must continue to function without road access and with independent energy supplies, with strong preference being given to renewable energies.

The charter will define the framework and good practice for projects undertaken in the core zone of a national park. Good environmental practice

relates primarily to agricultural, pastoral and forestry activities. Facilities considered for approval must take into account quality requirements and also the issues of integration, reversibility or rehabilitation. Regional identity is reinforced by aesthetic considerations, which also apply to artistic works. Techniques and materials are selected to harmonise with the natural and cultural heritage. Preference is given to traditional customs applied in a contemporary context.

The charter must pay special attention to pressures, pollution and various nuisances which would rob the natural environment of its beauty. Particular emphasis will be given to projects initiated by multiple parties in the region, which, taken individually, would seem to involve little effect on the landscape and environment but taken together, if uncontrolled, would significantly alter the character and quality of the protected heritage in the core zone.

Where a core zone is home to communities which traditionally make their living from forests, the charter must pay particular attention to the protection of their culture, traditional ways of life and activities, and must involve the customary authorities in the development of those aspects of the charter which affect them.

The partnership zone: an area of commitment

THE CHARTER

The national park charter is based on an analysis and common vision of key challenges affecting the region, shared by the state and the various parties involved. In the partnership zone, it describes in concrete terms the aims of protection and sustainable development. It benefits and contributes to the value of the heritage in the core zone.

It is developed in a collaborative process consisting of numerous discussions, consultations and repeated phases enabling progressive acceptance by local communities and the provision of detailed information.

It is implemented and evaluated by regional bodies, the most important of which is the national park as a public institution.

The partnership zone is an area of coherence and partnership. It offers local communities a framework for exemplary, harmonious and sustainable local development.

For the partnership zone, the aim of those involved in implementing the charter, with a solidarity and shared responsibility, is to safeguard the fragile, dynamic balance between nature, culture and landscape and to contribute to the harmonious development of

these areas. They are committed

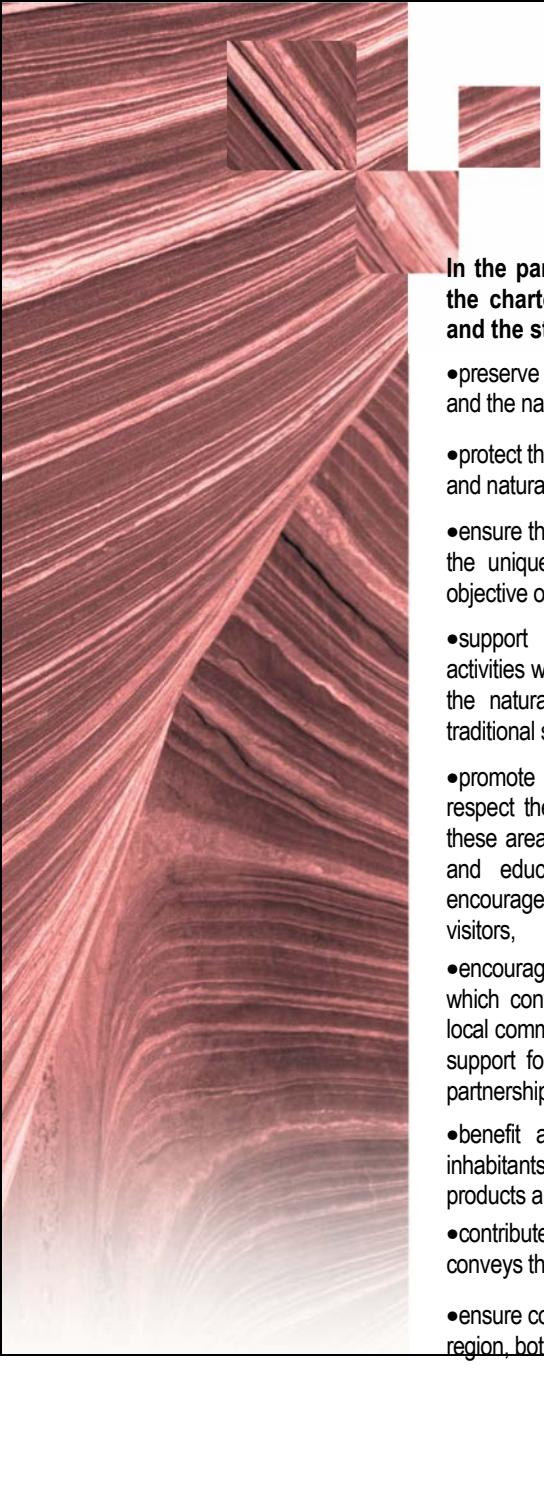
to an ambitious regional development project based on the principles of sustainable development and drawing on the ecological solidarity between the core zone and surrounding areas.

MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES

The partnership zone is an area of sustainable development based on the preservation and enhancement of the natural, cultural and landscape heritage. The preservation of harmonious interactions between people and the environment, and the diversity of landscapes, ecosystems and the species who live in them are a vital aspect.

The partnership zone is an area of coherence and partnership which offers local communities a framework for harmonious development.

Facilities and activities in the partnership zone must reflect the aims of the national park as a whole. They must not have a negative impact on the protective measures established in the core zone of the park. Decisions relating to development in the partnership zone must be coherent with the policy observed in the core zone.



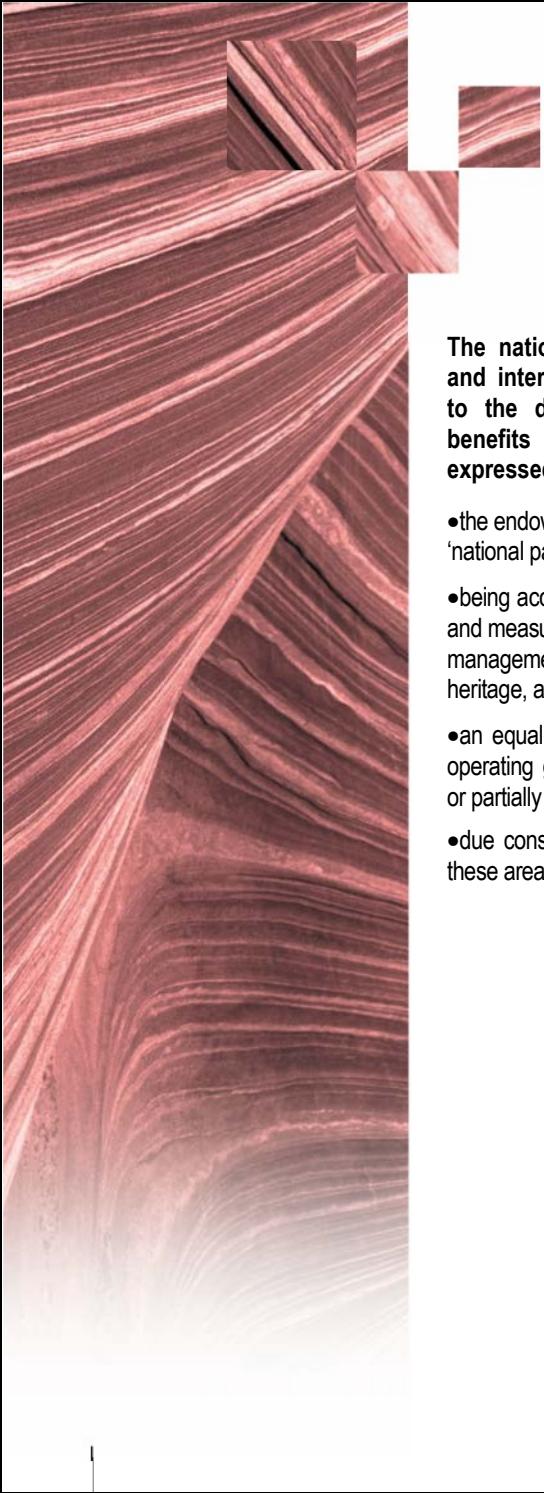
In the partnership zone of a national park, the charter offers both local communities and the state an opportunity to:

- preserve harmony between human activities and the natural environment,
- protect the quality and diversity of landscapes and natural habitats,
- ensure the compatibility of human activities with the unique character of these areas and the objective of protection of the core zone,
- support lifestyles and promote economic activities which are in harmony with the quality of the natural and cultural heritage, as well as traditional social and cultural events,
- promote tourism and leisure activities which respect the essential qualities and character of these areas, encourage people to explore them and educate them about the environment, encourage responsible behaviour on the part of visitors,
- encourage scientific and educational activities which contribute to the long-term well-being of local communities and the development of public support for environmental protection within the partnership zone,
- benefit and contribute to the well-being of inhabitants by promoting natural and cultural products and services,
- contribute to a new identity which strongly conveys the unity of the region,
- ensure coherence between policies in the region, both in and between communities.

NATIONAL SOLIDARITY

The partnership zone is an area of solidarity. The charter expresses the collaborative choice in favour of enhancing the natural and cultural heritage of the region concerned.

Based on the concept of ecological solidarity, communities in the partnership zone can benefit from national solidarity in exchange for their voluntary cooperation with conservation efforts and their commitment to the implementation of the charter to which they have freely subscribed. They can benefit from technical assistance from the national park as a public institution. Their projects, as described in the charter, will be specifically provided for in contracts for state regional projects, and they can benefit from the protected designation of 'national park community'.



The national park benefits from national and international recognition, contributes to the development of the region and benefits from national solidarity, expressed by:

- the endowing of the prestigious label of 'national park';
- being accorded due consideration in guidelines and measures defined by the state relating to the management of the area, natural and cultural heritage, and regional planning;
- an equal contribution in addition to the global operating grant for communities situated wholly or partially within the core zone;
- due consideration of the particular features of these areas in state financial programming;

The creation of a national park is also based on a collaborative process which consists of:

- the awarding of subsidies by the national public institution to projects that contribute to the implementation of the charter;
- technical assistance from the national public institution;
- the option of using a collective national park brand designed to enhance products and services that come within the scope of an ecological process, particularly in terms of the preservation or restoration of flora and fauna;
- tax incentives for individuals and organisations who subscribe to management commitments and are based in the partnership zone or core zone of the national park.



Ministry of Ecology and Sustainable Planning and Development

ORDER OF 23 FEBRUARY 2007 ENACTING THE FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES APPLICABLE TO ALL NATIONAL PARKS

The legislation introduced on 14 April 2006 declares that “each part of the national park charter comprises a general aspect relating to the fundamental principles applicable to all national parks by virtue of their great heritage value, and an aspect specific to each national park consisting of objectives or guidelines and measures determined on the basis of its particular regional, ecological, economic, social and cultural circumstances” (extract from article L 331-3 of the Environmental Code).

In accordance with article R.331-1 of the Environmental Code, the fundamental principles applicable to all national parks were finalised on 23 February 2007 by the Ministry of Ecology and Sustainable Development following the approval of the Board of Administration of Parcs Nationaux de France.

The Ministry of Ecology and Sustainable Development, Having regard to resolutions 713 and 810 of the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations of 22 April 1959 and 24 April 1961 relating to national parks;

Having regard to the Convention on Biological Diversity adopted in Rio de Janeiro on 22 May 1992, published by decree no. 95-140 of 6 February 1995, particularly decisions V/6 and VII/28 of the Conferences of the Parties;

Having regard to the European Landscape Convention, adopted in Florence on 20 October 2000 and published by decree no. 2006-1643 of 20 December 2006;

Having regard to the International Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, adopted in Paris on 17 October 2003 and approved by law no. 2006-791 of 5 July 2006;

Having regard to the Environmental Code, notably article R. 331-1 thereof;

Having regard to the guidelines on management categories for protected areas defined by the World Conservation Union in 1994;

Having regard to the report entitled ‘Fundamental principles applicable to all national parks’, approved by the Board of Administration of the public institution Parcs Nationaux de France on 5 December 2006; Having regard to the opinion of the Inter-Ministerial Committee on National Parks of 15 January 2007; Having regard to the opinion of the National Nature Protection Council of 16 January 2007;

Having regard to the opinion of the Board of Administration of the public institution of Parcs Nationaux de France of 24 January 2007;

Considering that the emblematic policy of national parks falls within the scope of an ethic of responsibility and relates to the implementation of the constitutional environmental charter;

Considering that the international recognition of national parks in France depends on the compatibility of the fundamental principles which apply to them with the guidelines on management categories for protected areas defined by the World Conservation Union;

Considering that the promotion by the state of local governance of national parks in relation to regional development projects, designed on the basis of areas requiring protection, must be reconciled with a respect for international commitments relating to the protection of natural and cultural heritage and international standards for national parks of which it is the guarantor, Has adopted:

Art. 1. “The creation of a national park is intended to protect an outstanding natural, cultural and landscape heritage, the composition of which is determined in part by certain human activities

which are compatible with the natural spaces that contribute to the park's character, taking into account the ecological continuity between the protected areas in the core zone and surrounding areas affected by a policy of protection, value enhancement and sustainable development. The state undertakes to provide exemplary integrated protection and collaborative management on the basis of a regional development project in order to guarantee natural, economic and social development compatible with the character of the park.

Art. 2. "The charter of the national park represents a regional development project for the core zone and the area belonging to those communities invited to subscribe to the national park charter in accordance with different frameworks for these two different areas. It takes into account large-scale functioning ecological units in order to define for this living space a concerted, exemplary policy of protection and sustainable development, in a shared vision adapted to the

classified areas, to be adapted in the course of periodic evaluations. It promotes forms of land use which are compatible with the protection of landscapes, natural habitats, flora and fauna, and cultural heritage, and prevent negative impacts on the heritage of the core zone of the park. It defines zones, their aim and their management priorities by evaluating the impact of each form of use on our heritage. It also provides a structure for the policy of the national park as a public institution.

Art. 3. "The core zone of the national park constitutes a protected area and a scientific reference area, of national and international interest, providing an opportunity to monitor the progress of natural processes, particularly in the context of monitoring biodiversity and climate change. It is also an area where people can learn more about nature and enjoy personal reflection and tranquillity. The conservation of physical and non-physical aspects of the park's character, and particularly, in this context, the conservation of fauna, flora, geological formations, the

cultural heritage of the core zone and the preservation of the associated plurality of perceptions and values offers present and future generations a source of inspiration, culture and well-being protected by the state.

Art. 4. "The conservation-based management of the heritage of the core zone is intended to maintain, in particular, a good state of conservation of natural habitats, fauna and flora, ecological functions and the dynamism of ecosystems, to avoid a fragmentation of natural environments and to guarantee the preservation of a regional identity. The control of human activities, including tourism, must be sufficient to guarantee the protection of the heritage in the park's core zone and to guarantee the conservation of its character. In this context, the national park charter must more particularly:

- 1o Identify the main aspects that make up the character of the national park;
- 2o Identify important natural reference areas in the core zone which could be classified as wilderness areas;
- 3o Limit activities to ensure that they are compliant or

compatible with the objectives of protecting the heritage of the core zone, promoting respectful treatment of the natural environment;

4o Define and enhance good environmental practice conducive to the maintenance of biodiversity, particularly in the agricultural, pastoral and forestry sectors;

5o Define aesthetic regulations in the core zone in accordance with the cultural and physical heritage;

6o Prevent any significant impact upon the heritage of the core zone, consisting of an alteration in the character of the park by the cumulative effect of individual authorisations;

7o Take into account, as necessary, the culture, traditional ways of life, activities and needs of local communities residing in the core zone and traditionally making their living from natural environments, particularly forests. The national park as a public institution undertakes to practise conservation-based management of the core zone of the park and organises its implementation with the collaboration of the parties concerned.. It is

responsible for implementing the objectives of protection and the regulation of human activities. The state and its public institutions contribute to the implementation of the objectives of protecting the heritage of the core zone, through scientific, technical and (if necessary) financial involvement.

Art. 5. "The involvement of a deliberating body from a community in the guidelines and measures relating to protection, enhancement and sustainable development defined in the national park charter for communities invited to subscribe to the national park charter is intended to maintain harmonious interaction between nature and culture, preserving the natural landscape and guaranteeing the preservation of traditional land uses and construction

methods, as well as the expression of sociocultural circumstances. It is also intended to contribute to the protection of the fragile, dynamic natural balances in the core zone and the local communities invited to subscribe to the national park charter which defines, particularly for the partnership zone, both quantitatively and qualitatively, the maintenance and improvement of the standard of living and natural resources. In joining the partnership zone, a community:

1. Commits to ensure that activities planned within the local area are compatible with the regional development project defined by the charter and to take into account the key impacts of these activities on the heritage of the core zone;

2. Benefits from the protected designation of 'national park community', associated with a wealth of heritage of international importance, thus enhancing the value of the local area and the products and services that come within the scope of an ecological process participating in the preservation or restoration of natural habitats, fauna and flora;

3. Benefits from technical assistance and subsidies from the national park as a public institution for the implementation of actions designed to put into practice the guidelines and measures set out in the charter;

4. Benefits from special consideration of the partnership zone status in state financial programming, particularly with regard to contracts for state regional projects;

5. Entitles individuals and organisations based in the local area and involved in good environmental practice to certain tax incentives.

Art. 6. "The partnership zone, by reason of its geographical continuity and ecological solidarity with the core zone, contributes to the protection of the core zone, while enjoying the option of being an exemplary area in terms of sustainable development.

Art. 7. "The Nature and Environment Director is charged with the execution of this order, which will be published in the official journal of the French Republic.

Paris, 23 February 2007

NELLY OLIN

