

**1st Seminar on Protected Natural Areas and Mountain Sports**

The 1st Seminar on Protected National Areas and Mountain Sports was held from the 3rd to 6th September on the island of Tenerife, organised by the Canary Islands Mountaineering Federation (Federación Canaria de Montañismo), the Canary Islands local government and the Ministry of the Environment. Gathering for the event were representatives from the Regional Organisation of National Parks (Organismo Autónomo Parques Nacionales), the Spanish Federation for Mountaineering and Climbing Sports or FEDME (its Spanish acronym standing for Federación Española de Deportes de Montaña y Escalada) (comprising 14 regional federations), the Civil Guard and Ecologists in Action.

The only paper presented was by the FEDME, which ended with the following conclusions:

1. We reaffirm the spirit of Article 19 of the Constitution: "*Spaniards have the right to freely choose their place of residence and to move about within the national territory*".
2. We declare our conformity with the spirit of Article 8 of the 1984 Use and Management Master Plan (P.R.U.G.- Spanish acronym standing for "Plan Rector de Uso y Gestión") for Teide National Park: "*The regulation of the activity of mountaineering shall receive special attention since it is a sport that is traditionally practised in the park and particularly in keeping with the type of recreation aimed for*".
3. We reaffirm our wish for involvement and participation in the management of Protected Areas.
4. We reaffirm our wish for the Autonomous Communities and the State to agree on basic regulations for all Protected Areas with the participation of the Spanish and Regional Federations.
5. We declare our willingness to reach agreement on standards and regulations, to be drawn up in positive terms, that is to say, generally permitting the use of such areas and the practice of sports activities, with specific, reasonable exceptions, but not vice versa.

Those attending the seminar gathered in various workgroups to reach agreement on the following conclusions:

**GROUP 1: Use of mountain sports infrastructure available in natural areas: trails, shelters, roads, climbing schools, etc.**

1. Shelters are designed to fulfil the role of sports infrastructure. They should be located at a safe distance from roadways for motor vehicles and also from the fragile area surrounding the mountain peaks. They should be incorporated in safety plans for protected areas.
2. Regulations governing the operation of these facilities should conform to their use as a sports infrastructure and to safety requirements. In every case, the type of service provided, the provision of equipment and the activities to be promoted should be compatible with the specifications of the planning tools for Protected Natural Areas (PNAs).
3. The promotion of new infrastructure (shelters) in PNAs should conform to the specifications set out in programmes for public use. In Natural Protected Areas these facilities should be as required to preserve the level of ecological integrity set out in the principles underpinning these Areas. Where appropriate, priority will be given to the restoration of existing buildings and respect for the type of traditional architecture of the area in question.
4. Preferably, management of the shelters should be the responsibility of the Mountain Federations so as to ensure that they are used in keeping with the principles underpinning general public interest.
5. It is proposed that a working committee should be set up with the participation of the Environmental Bodies and the Mountain Federations for the purpose of examining such matters in greater depth and drawing up detailed criteria for their planning and management.

6. The PNAs should define their Trail Network within their Public Use Programme. This may include a main Network, duly signposted and publicised, along with those trails that require prior permission before they can be used.
7. The signposting of the trails forming part of the Main Network should include the signposting typical of the European Trail Network, together with the specific symbol for each Area.
8. The Mountain Federation of the appropriate Autonomous Community shall play an active role in defining the Trail Network.
9. The Trail Network should include circuits that are suitable for all kinds of visit.
10. Rather than banning any specific activities, it is proposed to regulate climbing by following the "zoning" criterion.

**GROUP Nº2: Mountain sports and the master plan for Protected Natural Areas (PNAs).**

1. Restrictions and limitations in PNAs are not due to their use for sport but for overcrowding in these areas.
2. In PNAs it is necessary to distinguish between the two kinds of user: members of sports federations and the general public.
3. As a strategy to protect such areas an effort should be made to enhance natural barriers to block entry to motor vehicles.
4. Likewise, another protection strategy should be the design of infrastructure and itineraries for tourists in less sensitive areas.
5. One way to recognise the idiosyncrasies of these sports activities would be for sports federations to sign agreements with the competent administrative bodies on the subject of use.
6. The restrictions for use should be based on and supported by objective, authoritative studies that reflect the planning of the use of the PNAs.
7. Each PNA requires its own analysis, without extrapolating the rules from one area to another.
8. In drawing up the P.O.R.N. and P.R.U.G., effective, real participation is needed on the part of the sports federations affected by the measures for public use throughout all phases of the process so as to achieve a consensus concerning regulation.
9. Provision should be made for the revision of the Plans, anticipating periodical revisions, when the situations change that gave rise to prohibitions and limitations.
10. Any trails, ravines, climbing paths, shelters, etc. forming the mountaineering area should be considered as natural sports facilities.
11. Traditional trails form part of the cultural heritage, which needs to be preserved. An attempt should be made to standardise the signposting used on the trails.
12. The composition of the Regulating Bodies and Sponsors of the PNAs should cover the specific presentation of the sports federations affected.

**GROUP 3: Contributions from the Mountaineering Federation to the conservation of natural areas.**

1. Considering that the history of the mountaineering federations is useful, in that it provides examples of conservation for specific places.
2. Recognising mountaineering to be one of the major allies in conserving the PNAs, due to the need to keep a mountain area in a wilder or more natural state.
3. Promoting or fostering environmental education at school level to mountaineering amateurs and young people in general.
4. Proposing that the Spanish Federation for Mountaineering and Climbing Sports should draw up a Decalogue of behaviour for treating the mountain with respect, and should be issued on an annual basis together with the federation license.
5. Collaborating and participating with the administration in all conservation tasks deemed to be of benefit for PNAs.
6. Supporting mountaineering as an environmentally friendly activity, which contributes towards the sustainable development of the surrounding towns and villages.
7. Encouraging organisations for public participation in the PNAs to carry out, through their representatives, those projects that will have effects that are considered to be suitable by the federations.

**GROUP 4: The practice of mountain sports in the PNAs and their environmental impact.**

1. An attempt will be made to offer environmental training courses run by the regional and national Spanish mountaineering federations.
2. The visitor to the PNAs will be informed of the impact on the environment that might be caused by their visit.
3. In most cases, this impact can be put down to ignorance.
4. To minimise the impacts on the PNAs, all action possible will be taken by the administration and the regional mountaineering federations concerning equipment on climbing routes or signposting for trails, with the possibility of heeding the advice of other groups that are more aware of the problems.
5. We accept that intense use by the general public has an impact on PNAs, leading to the need for responsible supervision of the use and enjoyment of such areas.
6. The administration will promote a study of the various levels of impact, which will enjoy the support of the mountaineering federations.
7. It is proposed that guides that carry out their activities in a professional capacity in the PNAs should be offered accreditation facilities.

**GROUP 5: Mountain sports and action taken by the Civil Guard in PNAs.**

1. Requesting a clear, rational and logical set of regulations with the involvement of the environmental and mountain sports institutions.
2. Encouraging the collaboration of the Civil Guard with personnel in the various PNAs. Setting up SEPRONA offices in National Parks. Encouraging surveillance in other PNAs, in collaboration with the various administrative bodies, and being receptive to proposals put forward by the various mountaineering federations and other interested organisations.
3. Placing emphasis on prevention through publicity campaigns and public awareness-raising activities.
4. Ensuring that the Civil Guard do not use the term "mountaineer" as a general term when writing up reports.
5. Involving the regional authorities in the provision of facilities for the Civil Guard to enable them to carry out their duties to monitor the PNA and mountain sports, as well as rescue operations.
6. In telephone calls to the emergency number "112" for rescue operations, the Mountain Units of the Civil Guard should also be informed at the same time, particularly where technical difficulties are envisaged.
7. Promoting training courses at all levels.
8. Encouraging the presence of the Civil Guard attached to SEPRONA (Spanish acronym for Servicio de Protección de la Naturaleza, the Nature Conservation Department of the Spanish Civil Guard) and the Mountain Unit in well-traversed regions within the National Parks and other PNAs.