

# The Conservatoire of the Coast



▲ Plage de Berck, Harry Gruyaert

The meaning of the Conservatoire of the Coast's work is clearly stated in the name itself. If left alone, the natural areas on this magical but narrow strip between land and sea disappear become commonplace through Man's greed and with the development of human activities. The Conservatoire's remit is to intervene with all the means of a public land agent in order to protect the areas for the future.

This work meets the fundamental issues of society: to prevent irreversible loss of biological, aesthetic and cultural capital by constituting a protected and inalienable heritage year by year; to permit the restoration

and development of landscapes, seascapes and ecosystems; to authorise free access to the shorelines for everyone; to contribute to research and the sharing of scientific knowledge required for the changes undertaken.

Finally, this work can be neither limited nor isolated. It depends on a common vision and long-term partnership with public authorities, associations, public bodies, foundations and companies which support this great cause not only on a national level but which also has a planetary dimension.

On 1st December, **152,000 hectares** on nearly **800 sites** in mainland France and its overseas territories are under the protection of the Conservatoire and its partners; 85,175 hectares of these are the result of acquisition. This land and marine area represents nearly 1500 km of shoreline, **12,3 % of which is on the coast.**

*The Conservatoire is a nationwide, public organisation created by the law of 10th July 1975. Its remit is to protect the natural areas of biological and landscape interest on the coast or lake shores in partnership with public authorities. Its aim by 2050 is to guarantee to pass on to future generations a natural heritage, both land and marine, representing the « wild third» of the shorelines of mainland France and its overseas territories.*

## The organisation of the Conservatoire and its resources

The Administrative Council (Conseil d'administration), half of which is made up of elected members and half representatives from the ministries concerned and qualified personalities, deliberates the Conservatoire's general orientations and authorises its projects.

Nine Shoreline Councils (Conseils de rivages) organised by main coastal façade and made up of elected members designated by the regions and departments, give advice on restoration and development programmes as well as on projected partnerships. A Scientific Council (Conseil scientifique) which is mul-

ti-disciplinary in composition, provides appraisal and expertise. It is consulted for advice on important projects undertaken and the foreseeable developments. The Conservatoire's headquarters are at the Corderie Royale in Rochefort (Charente-Maritime). It has offices in Paris and relies on 10 local offices. The Conservatoire has less than 150 officers, about 30 of whom are on secondment from its local or national partners.

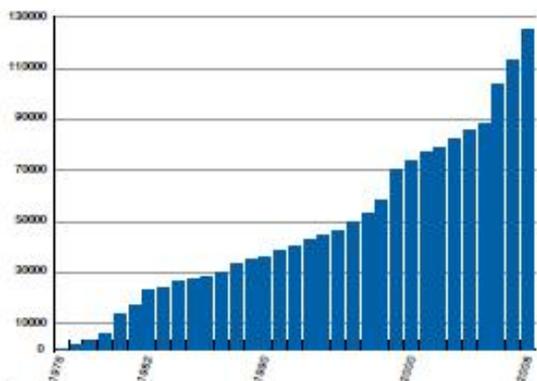
The Conservatoire's budget for 2011 was 50 million euros, most of which (37 million euros) was from shipping and French registration rights which have been allocated to the Conservatoire by the state since

1st January 2006. Additional financial support comes from public authorities, the European Union and the water agencies. The Conservatoire also benefits from support by company patronage, particularly concerning education, communication and scientific studies: the Procter & Gamble Foundation for the Coastline (Fondation Procter & Gamble pour la protection du littoral), Fondation EDF, Fondation Total, Fondation Gecina, le Petit Marseillais, Veolia Environnement. Finally, the Conservatoire receives numerous cash donations from individuals as well as land given as a donation in lieu of inheritance or wealth tax.

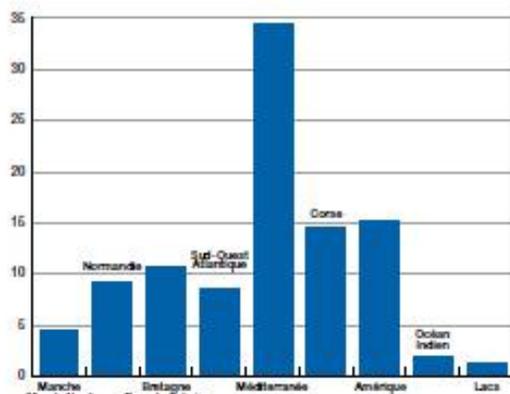


▲ Mayotte, Aldo Soares

The Conservatoire's land and marine areas on 31st December 2008.



Distribution of the Conservatoire's land by Shoreline Council on 31st December 2008 (as a % of the total).



*A land policy concerns not only the purchase of land. The Conservatoire, in daily contact with other players on the coast and sea, combines various activities: acquiring sites by private agreement, by pre-emption or exceptionally by expropriation, or receiving them by allocation or donation; to ensure their restoration and development by recognising their state and their potential; overseeing the monitoring and evaluating the management of land which receives more than 30 million visitors each year; and finally, by proposing useful measures to the administrations and authorities responsible for carrying out its remit.*



▲ L'Agriate, Alain Ceccaroli

## When does the Conservatoire intervene?

The Conservatoire cannot pretend to act everywhere and to buy everything.

Within mapped geographical areas which are listed in order of priority, the following four criteria are upheld:

- when an area of natural heritage interest, despite laws of protection, is undergoing constant pressure which threatens its character (building of huts or mobile homes for leisure purposes, repeated requests for building permits or revision of planning documents, etc.);
- when a natural area on land or sea loses its character and becomes commonplace (disorganised traffic of cars and boats, uncontrolled quarrying of natural resources, etc.) and when, in order to restore the ecological wealth and aesthetic beauty of the place, access and land use have to be organised;
- when a site which is recognised as emblematic, is inaccessible to the public and where it would seem appropriate to open it to the public or to prevent its closure;
- and finally, when state control of the land is the only answer to ensure the sustainability of traditional, economic activities, particularly grazing, which manage vast, open spaces and help to maintain the diversity of landscapes and biology along the coast (extensive farming in wetland areas, winegrowing in the Mediterranean areas susceptible to fire, etc.).

It is interesting to note that all these criteria more or less call for measures of restoration and development of the sites following their acquisition by, or allocation to, the Conservatoire. Therefore the real meaning of land intervention appears to be: to acquire or receive an allocation and not to forbid, that is the role of regulations, but more to control the activities or authorise sustainable, environmentally-friendly land use.

## What for and who with?

As provided by law, the Conservatoire carries out its responsibilities as landowner (or as representative of the state as landowner) in close partnership with: public authorities (communes or groups of communes, departments and the regions) who are primarily entrusted with the management

of the land; public bodies like the Port-Cros National Park or, for the state-owned foreshore, the Agency for Protected Marine Areas (Agence des aires marines protégées); and finally, the approved associations such as the League for the Protection of Birds (Ligue pour la protection des Oiseaux) or the National Society for the Protection of Nature (Société nationale pour la protection de la nature). At present, nearly 600 wardens and coastal officers under the managers' responsibility, ensure the monitoring, maintenance and activities on the sites.

In this way the Conservatoire's natural heritage on both land and sea, is managed according to a philosophy of active participation inspired by:

- the conviction of the practical and theoretical interest of a multi-disciplinary and multi-partnership approach based on a common recognition of the natural, cultural and social wealth of the areas, including their intangible or 'poetic' character expressed as «the spirit of the places». In this way, the Conservatoire has signed nearly a thousand land use agreements with small farmers, stockbreeders, shellfish farmers, salt workers, etc. who continue or renew traditional activities which are considered not as a thing of the past, but as contemporary, living activities;
- the necessity, on an increasingly frequented coastline, to avoid that what now belongs to everyone appears to belong to nobody. This necessary «taking over» depends on the creation of a management plan, or any other document conceived as an overall, spatial project, which takes into account the dynamics of the biodiversity as well as the sensitive and historical character of the landscapes and buildings for each bio-geographical area.

Restoration and development works carefully studied in this way should have quantifiable, reversible and, as far as possible, inconspicuous effects. Their long lasting nature relies mostly on the public freely supporting the values of responsibility and sharing which the Conservatoire is keen to encourage.



▲ La Pointe du Raz, Aldo Soares

## Code of the Environment

Extract from the texts constituting the Conservatoire du littoral

### Article L. 322-1

I- The Conservatoire of the Coastal Area and Lake Shores (Conservatoire de l'espace littoral et des rivages lacustres) is a public, state body of administrative character which, following the advice of the interested municipal councils and in partnership with public authorities, has as its remit to lead a land conservation policy in the coastal areas that respects the natural sites and the ecological balance:

II- It can make any suggestions to the public authorities relating to its remit. It can propose the actual measures to avoid any construction on the land adjacent to the state-owned foreshore.

In order to promote a more integrated management of the coastal areas, the Conservatoire of Coastal Areas and Lake Shores (Conservatoire de l'espace littoral et des rivages lacustres) can also carry out its remit on the state-owned foreshore which has been handed over or entrusted to it.

### Article L.322-9

The buildings in the areas under the responsibility of the Conservatoire of Coastal Areas and Lake Shores (Conservatoire de l'espace littoral et des rivages lacustres) can be managed by the local authorities or their groupings, public bodies, foundations or approved, specialised associations which will be responsible for them and will receive the resulting products. If it is requested, priority is given to the local authorities of the area on which the buildings are situated. The agreements signed between the Conservatoire and the managers to this end specifically state the use to be made of the land, this land use must adhere to the objectives defined in article L.322-1.

### Articles R322-26 and R322-37 modified

The Administrative Council (Conseil d'administration) deliberates on the measures proposed to the competent authorities concerning the management of the marine biodiversity, public access, navigation and the mooring of ships on the maritime parts of the Conservatoire's domain and the maritime areas adjacent, up to a limit of one nautical mile from low-water mark.

The director of the Conservatoire carries out the responsibilities conferred on the Administrative Council on behalf of the Administrative Council and after consultation with the interested Shoreline Councils (Conseils de rivages).

# The Conservatoire of the Coast

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