XIV European Mountain CONVENTION

30 June - 2 July 2026 | Sallanches

EUROMONTANA

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Protecting the biodiversity of Lombardy's mountain pastures through the implementation of grazing plans

ERSAF

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Cofinanziato dall'Unione europea

LIFE NatConnect 2030

NATURA 2000

ERSAF ENTE REGIONALE PER I SERVIZI ALL'AGRICOLTURA E ALLE FORESTE

T.4.3 Drafting and implementation of 10 grazing plans

In the context of Life NatConnect 2030, Task 4.3 provides for the drafting and subsequent application of 10 grazing plans on as many mountain pastures in Lombardy with the objectives of:

- **Providing a tool to protect grassland and peatland habitats in 10 grazing areas in the Lombardy Region.**
- **Raising awareness among shepherds and area managers of the importance of protecting biodiversity in mountain pastures.**
- **Monitoring the conservation status of habitats and species.**
- **Providing a useful tool for maintaining farms economically sustainable.**
- **Fostering generational renewal to increase awareness of biodiversity protection.**

T.4.3 Drafting and implementation of 10 grazing plans

Which Habitats and how to save them: grassland habitats

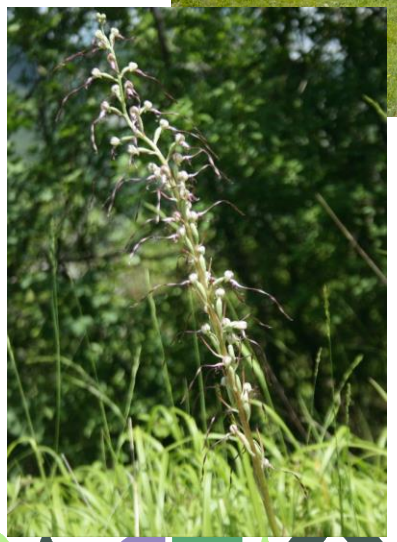
Habitat 6230





Habitat 6150







Habitat 6210

T.4.3 Drafting and implementation of 10 grazing plans

Which Habitats and how to save them: grassland habitats

Possible threats and negative effects

- Abandonment of pasture or excessively low stocking levels, causing overgrowth.
- Excessive stocking levels, leading to the spread of nitrophilous and ruderal species.
- Excessive growth of tufted grasses, reducing space for other species.

Conservation measures

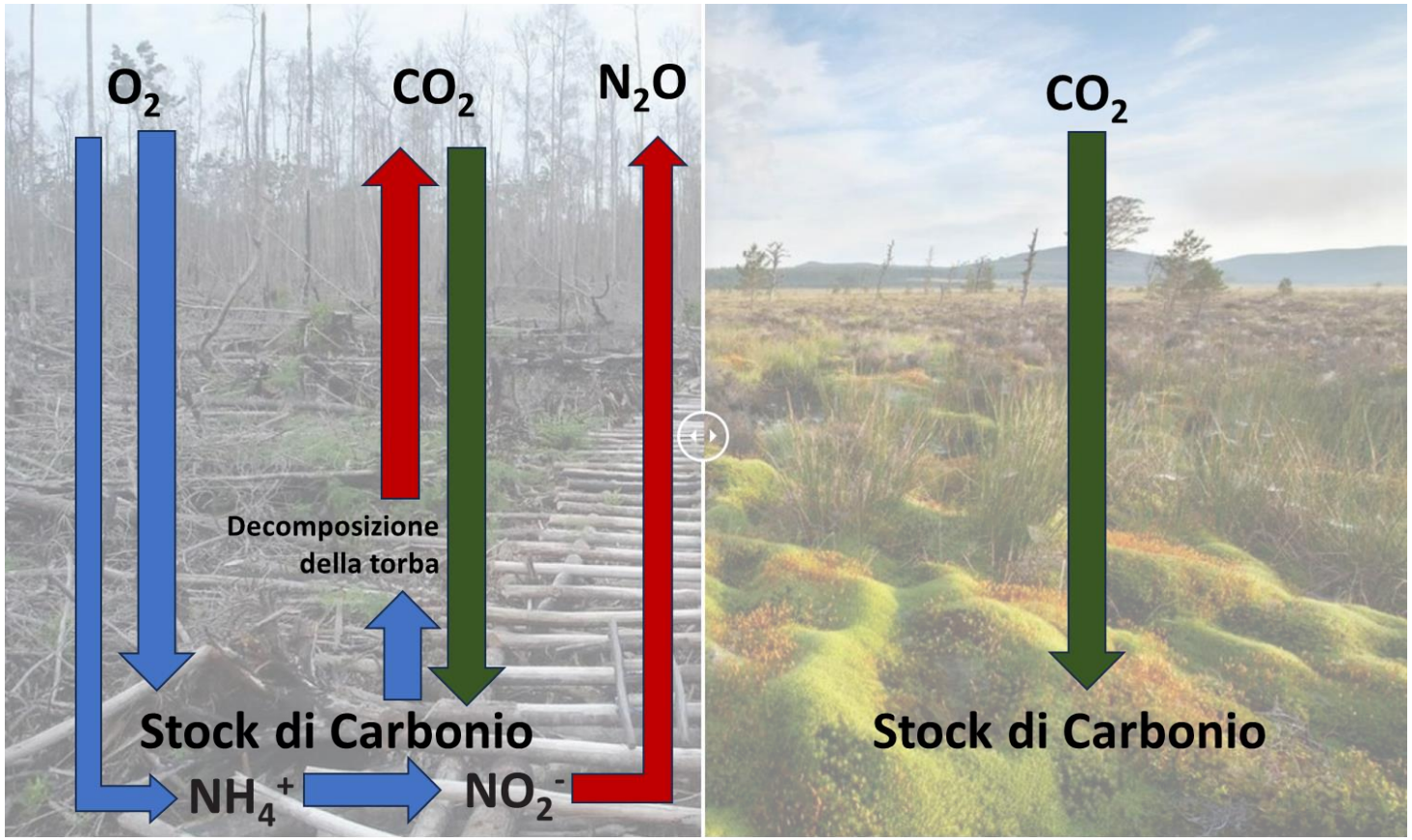
- Mowing and extensive grazing (especially sheep, goats, and horses);
- Late mowing between mid-July and August (for orchid fruiting and nesting of bird species such as the tawny loon and rock partridge)

- Reduction in livestock numbers (rapid appearance of shrub cover)
- Overgrazing (spread of nitrophilous and ruderal species); floristic impoverishment with further expansion of spikenard

- Grazing should be moderately intensive, preventing it from evolving into heathland or coniferous forest.
- Mosaic mowing can help increase the number of species present in the stand.

T.4.3 Drafting and implementation of 10 grazing plans

Which Habitats and how to save them: peatland habitats



T.4.3 Drafting and implementation of 10 grazing plans

Which Habitats and how to save them: peatland habitats

Possible threats and negative effects

- Intensive grazing or overgrazing by livestock.
- Uncontrolled tourism resulting in excessive trampling.
- Changes in hydrological flow.
- Natural succession resulting in changes in species composition.
- Droughts and decreased precipitation due to climate change.

Conservation measures

- Regulate tourist flow.
- Avoid any form of surface water drainage.
- Exclude discharge of water from domestic activities.
- Strengthen perimeters and restrict access for both tourists and livestock.

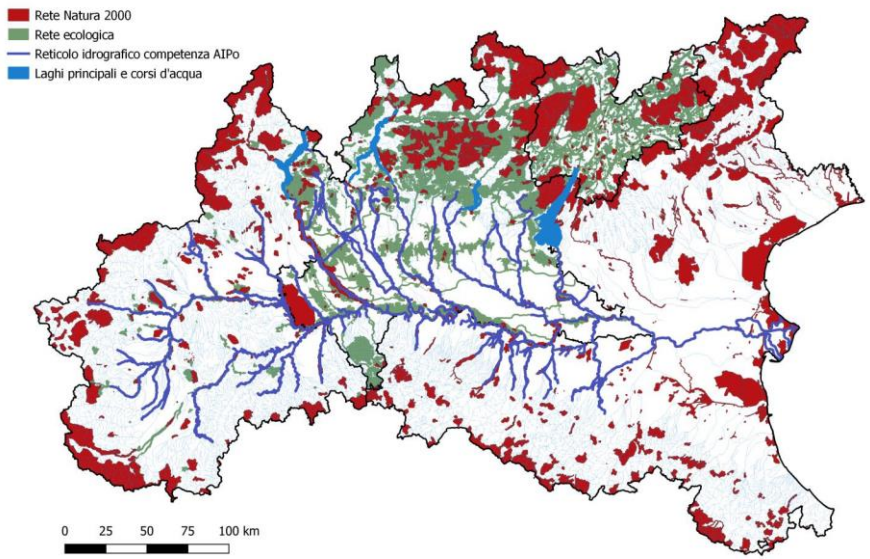
LIFE NATCONNECT2030

NATURAL CONNECTION FOR NATURA2000 IN NORTHERN ITALY TO 2030

This is a large, multi-year project involving most of Northern Italy, of which 4.3 is just one of many Tasks aimed at safeguarding biodiversity.

2024-2032

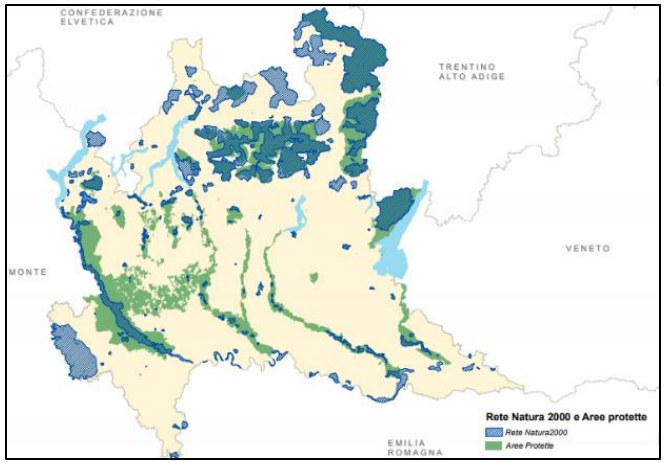
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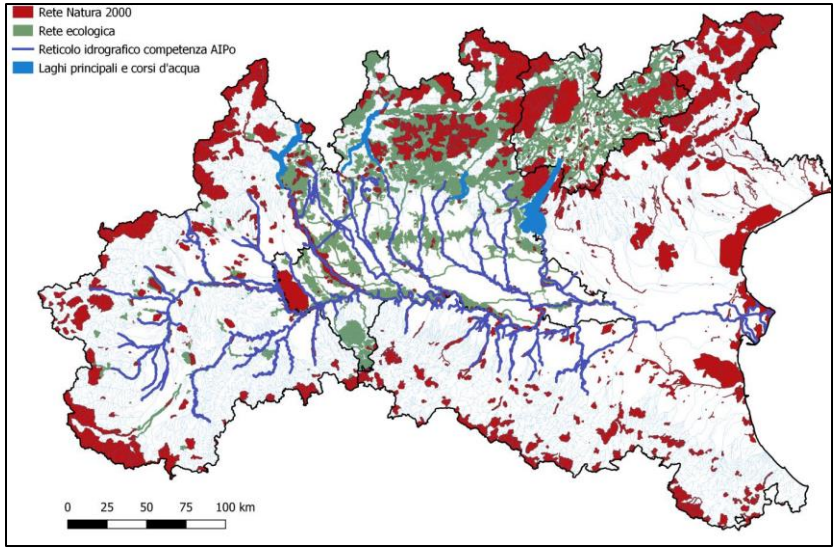
LIFE NATCONNECT2030

NATURAL CONNECTION FOR NATURA2000 IN NORTHERN ITALY TO 2030

Task 4.3 of Life NatConnect 2030 draws on the experience gained during the implementation and implementation of grazing plans through Action A 17 of Life IP Gestire 2020, a project concluded approximately 2 years ago.



Gestire2020
from 2016 to 2023

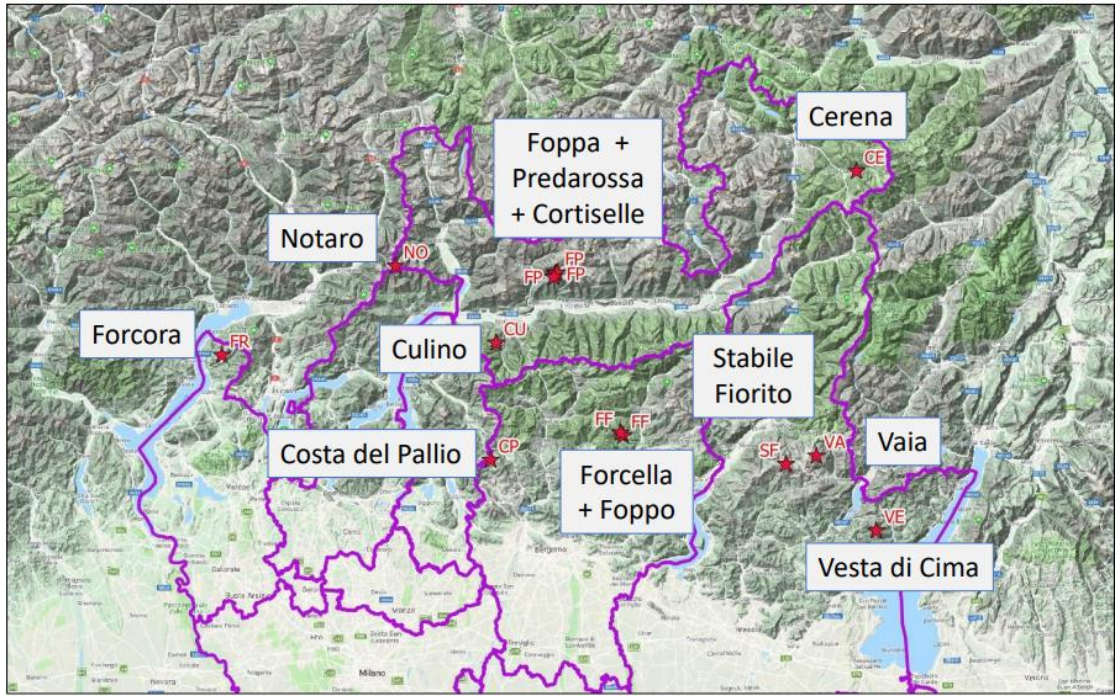


NatConnect2030
from 2024 to 2032

T.4.3 Drafting and implementation of 10 grazing plans

The experience of A17 inside Life IP Gestire 2020

- The key phases of the activity involved:



1 Choice of pastures

2. Field analysis of vegetation resources

3. Analysis of current and past management

4. Evaluation of pastoral potential

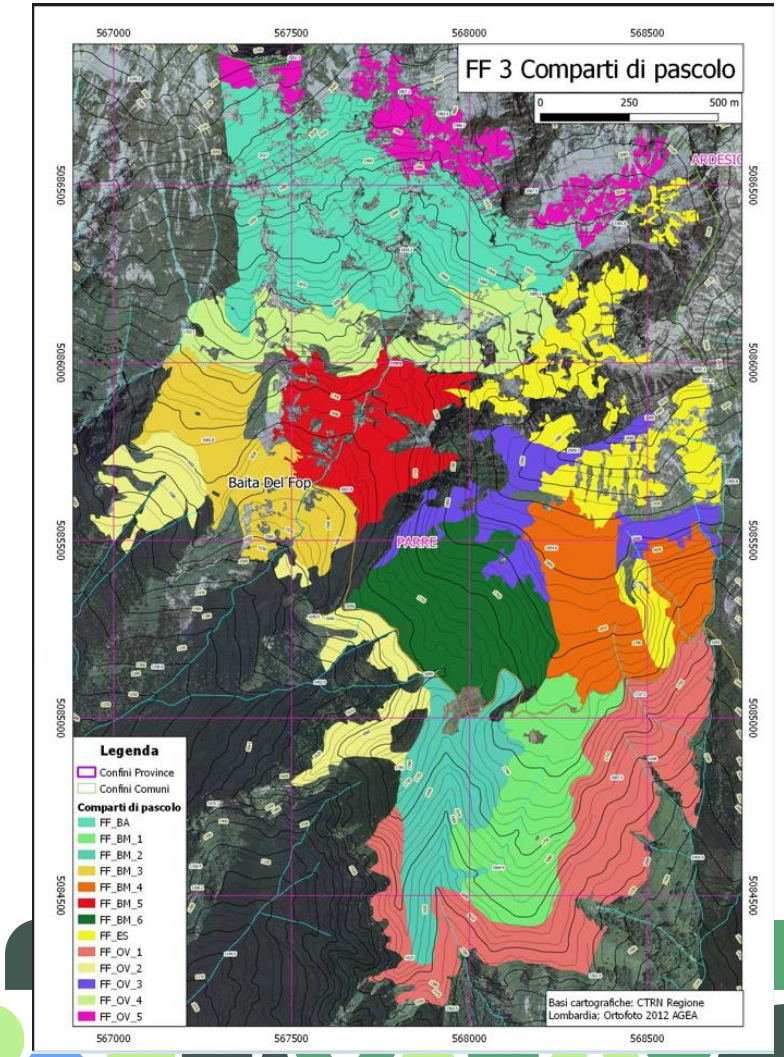
5. Identification of management proposals

6. Application in concession contracts

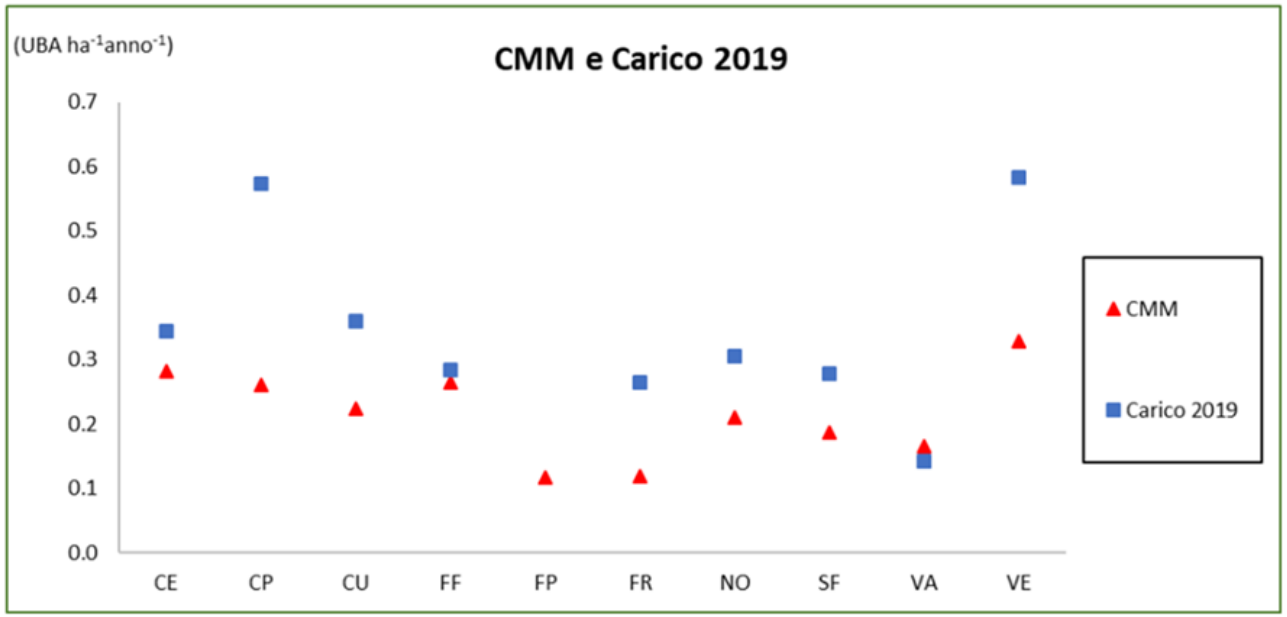
7. Ex-post analysis of the health status of the investigated habitats

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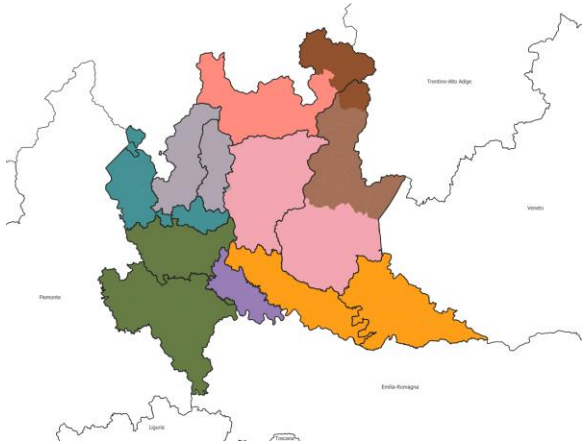
The experience of A17 inside Life IP Gestire 2020



The study of the current situation, the past situation, and the characteristics of the pasture allowed for the division into **compartments** with specific indications to be respected and the definition of the **Maximum Maintainable Load** for each compartment and for the entire pasture.



Large Carnivores Prevention Intervention Units



- Teams are active to intervene in support of farmers.
- Teams made up of expert.
- Technical and physical support.
- Provide preventive materials on loan for use and support for the management of livestock guarding dogs.





T.4.3 DRAFTING AND IMPLEMENTATION OF 10 GRAZING PLANS

Key Findings

1. Although all located in the Lombardy Alpine region, **the 10 mountain pastures have characteristics of location, use, altitude, stocking, habitat, and size that are too heterogeneous** to allow the identification of a trend regarding the health of Lombardy's mountain pastures.

2. Some **ex-post monitoring** has been conducted, **highlighting a substantial maintenance of the habitat's health.**

3. This result may indicate the **potential success of policies related to the implementation of grazing plans**. However, **external factors** such as climate and those related to the different practices used by mountain herders year after year **represent important variables with effects that are difficult to identify.**

4. One factor of certain success is the **reduction of under- and over-stocked areas** (both situations present in the 10 mountain pastures, sometimes even simultaneously in the same mountain pasture).

5. A second positive aspect is the **increased awareness of both mountain shepherds and other public and private stakeholders regarding the importance of protecting these environments.**

T.4.3 DRAFTING AND IMPLEMENTATION OF 10 GRAZING PLANS

Observations based on the experiences

1. **Financial instruments** to support this type of activity **are absent, scarce, or sporadic.**

2. A possible incentive could be a **reward mechanism within CSR applications for companies that implement them.**

3. Public opinion is increasingly aware of the role of mountain pastures as an **ecosystem service**, but their **proper remuneration remains an unresolved and perhaps unsolvable issue.**

4. The experience of the Life IP Gestire 2020 project has demonstrated how **difficult** their **implementation** is **outside of areas not directly managed by the agency that promotes them.**

5. The effectiveness of a grazing plan depends on the quality of the surveys and the relevance of the information provided, but also on **the actual applicability of measures, which are often not binding.**



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MERCI

DE VOTRE ATTENTION !

THANK YOU

FOR YOUR ATTENTION!

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