

LIFE « HERBAGES »

Projet LIFE 11 NAT/BE/001060



First attempt to restore xeric sand calcareous habitats in
the Walloon Region (Belgium)

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Sand habitats in Wallonia

- Continental sand habitats are only present in Wallonia
 - Pioneer habitats:
 - Corynephorous grassland (2330)
 - **Xeric sand calcareous grassland (6120)**
 - Other habitats:
 - Nardus grassland (6230),
 - Dry heatlands (4030)
 - Calcareous grassland (6210)

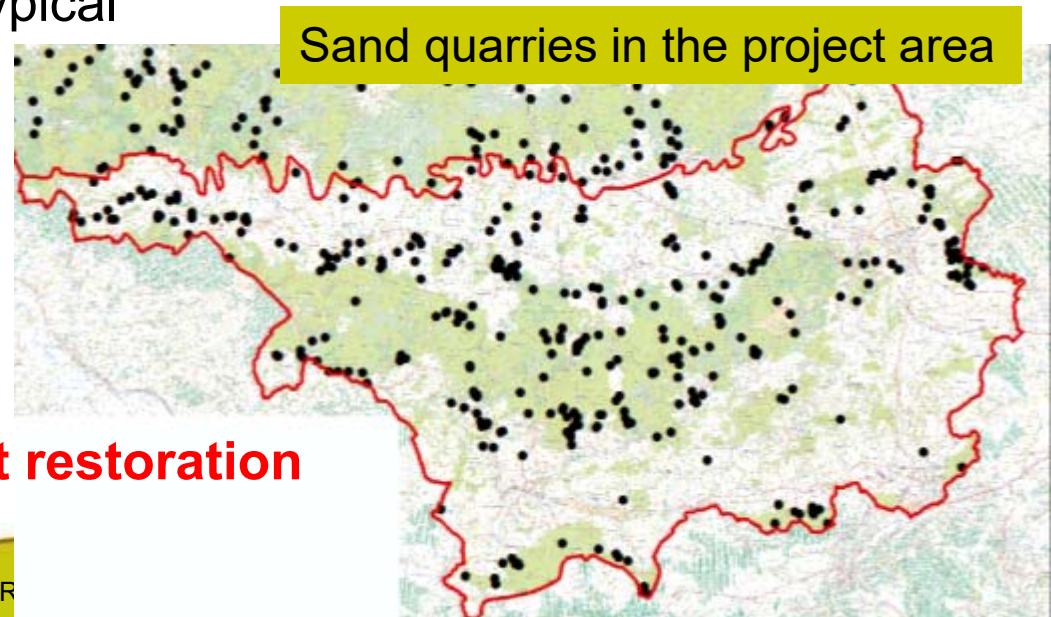


Area of the LIFE Herbages project



Xeric sand calcareous grassland (6120) is highly endangered

- 6120 is assessed “U2 unfavorable – bad” in the continental bio-region
- Only ~ 2 Ha remain in Wallonia
- 6120 was historically linked to sand extraction sites
- 6 sand quarries are still active today but they are too intensive for the development of the typical vegetation



→ Urgent need for habitat restoration



LIFE "Herbages"

7 years (2013-19) - 9,6 M€ - 75% financed by EC



Coordinator : Natagora

A Belgian nature conservation NGO in Brussels and Walloon Region.

Partners / beneficiaries:

- DNF : Nature & Forest Department (Walloon Region)
- DEMNA: Departement Etude du Milieu Naturel et Agricole
- Botanic Garden Meise



Wallonie



Jardin botanique
Meise



Objective of the LIFE « Herbages »: the restoration of 400 hectares

Code	Ha	11 habitats (* priority)		
6510	150	Lowland hay meadows		
6520	5	Mountain hay meadows		
6410	5	<i>Molinia</i> meadows		
6430	60	Hydrophilous tall herb fringe communities		
6120	55	Sand calcareous grasslands*	2 Ha → 55 Ha: first attempt to restore this habitat in Wallonia	
6210	18	Calcareous grasslands*		
6230	65	<i>Nardus</i> grasslands*		
7230	15	Alkaline fens		
7220	2	Petrifying springs*		
91D0	10	Bog woodland*		
91E0	15	Alluvial forests*		
	400			



Restoration of xeric sand calcareous habitats

- **I. Land purchase**

- Parcels usually occupied by exotic plantations (*Picea abies*, *Populus* sp....) and dry slopes (sandy or calcareous).



- **II. Habitat restoration**
 - Deforestation



- **II. Habitat restoration**
 - Top soil removal



- **II. Habitat restoration**
 - Population reinforcement / reintroduction



***Dianthus
deltoides***



***Helichrysum
arenarium***



***Petrorhagia
prolifera***





- **II. Habitat restoration**
 - Spreading of cultivated or harvested seeds





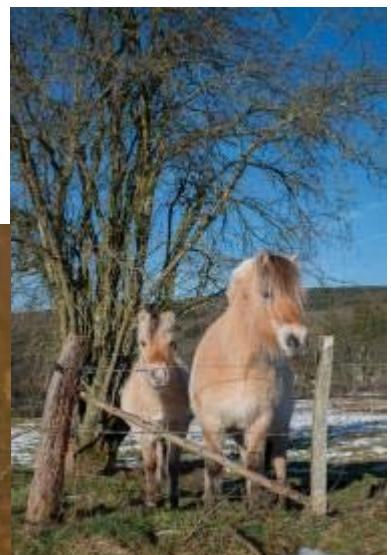
- **III. Habitat management**
 - Grazing by goats to eliminate trees and shrubs
 - Goats can access to sand walls





What should we apply next to maintain pioneer habitat with open sand???

- When and how should we act on the field?
 - How can we replace ancestral sand extraction activities?
 - Trade-off between open sand and rich grassland vegetation?
 - What are the risks for other species (bees, wasps, reptiles...)?
 - Cost of mechanical management (if possible)?
- We are now testing:
 - Grazing by sheeps
 - Winter grazing by horses





Thank you for your attention!

- Do you have any
 - Questions?
 - Recommandations?
 - Suggestions?



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