

From Spain: Update on RedMontañas Activities
Redmontañas



"Not a single mountain without protection". Photo: RedMontanas

Last spring (2007) a "Mountain T-shirt Solidary Project" was launched as a way of sharing the common purpose of caring for the mountains with many small conservation groups from all over Spain and Portugal. Three thousand T-shirts were made with a design that tries to express unity in diversity in six different languages: Castellano, Catalán, Euskera, Gallego/Asturiano, Portuguese and French. Coupled with a small leaflet featuring the values of mountains and the importance of protecting them, the T-shirts were distributed to 14 groups at cost price, so that they could be sold for fundraising as well raising social awareness about mountains.

Just before the summer, a second "multi-summit, national-scale action" was started. Using web and e-mail contacts for spreading the campaign, over a thousand people climbed 225 summits all over Spain on a single weekend, expressing the common claim "Not a single mountain without protection" with banners in the four official languages of Spain. Banners were created as digital documents in three different sizes for people to download from RedMontañas' website. A photo gallery was set up on the web, that classified the mountain ranges and autonomous regions, and automatically counted and registered ascents as a testimony for politicians and society. The photographs, with comments about the dangers and risks that lurk in all of these beautiful mountains, can be seen in the "Galería Montañas en Red" in www.redmontanas.org.

Photographs and other graphical material were used to make "Juego Limpio para las Montañas" (Fairplay For Our Mountains), a video aimed at educating and making everybody aware, especially young people, of the value of mountains, the need to protect them and importance of lobbying and telling politicians and decision-makers that they must listen to people. It is necessary to understand the huge ecological, social and economic role of mountains to effectively protect these last refuges of nature and wildlife against the many pressures that are threatening them.

Last autumn, the Ministry of Environment was persuaded to sponsor a workshop on 'Mountain Areas and Mountain Biosphere Reserves', that analysed the environmental benefits derived from mountain ecosystems and sustainable practises. There was also a focus on ways to support local mountain people to ensure their wellbeing can be made compatible with the preservation of biodiversity and landscapes. The workshop was held in December 2007 and formed a meeting point for conservationists, mountain dwellers, scientists, academics and environmental managers from all over the country. It formed a melting pot for many different expectations, perceived needs, hopes and ways of devising sustainable ways of life and environmental preservation.

The ministerial sponsors were so impressed by the positive results of the workshop that the National Parks Department agreed to fund 500 DVDs of RedMontañas' "Fairplay for Our Mountains" video, which was then sent to over 250 high schools and universities and to more than 200 mountaineering associations all over the country. DVDs and a copy of the document "Conclusions and Recommendations for Mountain Preservation" that was produced in the

workshop were sent to the main political parties in the country to take the recommendations into account in their environmental programmes while they are working out their approaching national electoral campaign due in March 2008.

From the recommendations made in the workshop, in the following three months, RedMontañas was busy creating a “Program for Awareness, Support and Promotion” aimed at the Ministry of Environment for the conservation of Spanish mountain areas. This is intended to define main objectives and strategic priorities, and to agree all levels of the national administrative structure, the measures, involved departments, institutions and stakeholders, legal and organisative instruments and financial sources for each purpose.

Rosa F.Arroyo is the President of RedMontañas and can be contacted at coordinacion@redmontanas.org. RedMontañas www.redmontanas.org is a national level Spanish association aimed to unify, organise and keep in contact with local groups and individual efforts to form a single, solid voice to protect Spanish mountains. Its primary mission is to promote the creation and enforcement of a sound political and legal framework to enhance the protection of mountains, conservation of biodiversity and landscapes, and promote the equitable and sustainable wellbeing of mountain inhabitants.