

Fundación Cepsa launches roundtable series to mark 20th anniversary of Laguna Primera de Palos restoration project

- **From October 6 to 27, four meetings will be held to analyze the importance of biodiversity conservation and protection, coexistence between activity sectors, and environmental awareness.**
- **Speakers include representatives from local and provincial administrations, Ramsar, Adena, and experts from different Spanish universities.**

On June 28, 2001, Cepsa, together with the Regional Government of Andalusia, unveiled the Laguna Primera de Palos restoration project. For this reason, tomorrow Fundación Cepsa and the University of Huelva will launch a series of four roundtables, to be held throughout the month of October, to analyze and discuss the importance of conserving vital spaces such as wetlands.

The first of the sessions, scheduled for tomorrow and entitled “Ramsar, more than just an international convention: The reason for a wetland,” will feature José Enrique Borrallo, Sustainable Development delegate; Carmelo Romero, Mayor of Palos; Juan Carlos Rubio, PhD in Biology and former director of Doñana National Park; Tobias Salathé, Ramsar deputy for Europe, and Lucia Santolaria, head of environmental protection at Cepsa.

The second is entitled “Wetland conservation and restoration: the case of Laguna Primera de Palos,” and will examine this success story in greater detail. The third will address the importance of coexistence between activity sectors, with expert opinions from agriculture, tourism, and industry. To conclude the cycle, the final roundtable will discuss the future with sustainability experts from universities in Madrid, Seville, Cordoba and Huelva.

A project and national milestone

The Laguna Primera de Palos, a wetland near the Cepsa facilities in Palos de la Frontera, is part of the *Lagunas de Palos y Las Madres Natural Preserve*. Due to its growing value after its restoration, it was designated in 2006 as a “Site of Community Importance” and declared a “Wetland of International Importance” (Ramsar Area). The restoration and enhancement works were approached from a threefold perspective: ecological recovery, landscape restoration and environmental awareness.

In the first, special emphasis was placed on recovering shallow flooded areas, which had been greatly reduced in the lagoon in prior decades and were essential for the

reproduction of numerous waterfowl. Another priority was the recovery of the coastal forest (coastal pine forests) and riparian forest, which play a fundamental role in the breeding and refuge of fauna, as well in limiting erosion and siltation of the lagoon. For this purpose, only native species were used (up to 98), many of which had disappeared from the site, including a total of 17 endangered flora species that had to be grown in nearby environments and successfully reintroduced. In addition, fruit-bearing wild species were favored to attract and sustain the birds.

At the same time, the landscape quality of this natural space was improved, given that it was surrounded by a highly anthropized area. To achieve this, the company modified the topography and created meticulous vegetation screens that isolate the enclave from the surrounding infrastructure (agricultural, industrial, and communications), favoring privacy and tranquility for the species that inhabit it and also for visitors.

The third focus of activity was environmental education and enhancement of the lagoon as an educational resource, bringing it closer to the surrounding community. An infrastructure was created for public use (botanical itinerary, bird observatories recreating traditional architecture, interpretive signage, etc.), and various informative and educational materials were developed. Since 2001, nearly 90,000 people have visited the site thanks to the various programs implemented by Cepsa and its Foundation: *Energy Campus* and *World Wetlands Day*, Annual Open Days, Ringing Days, and programs for private and general tours for interest groups from Andalusia.

At the same time, and until today, research (on flora, insects, amphibians, reptiles, mammals, migratory birds, limnology) and monitoring work have deepened the company's knowledge of the area, allowing it to complete an inventory of species and identify a total of 78 endangered species. Progress has also been made towards understanding its ecology and problems, making it easier to prioritize and take more effective actions to ensure the conservation of this unique and valuable area.

Fundación Cepsa is a general interest, nonprofit entity whose aim is to carry out initiatives that serve the needs and priorities of the local communities where its founder, Compañía Española de Petróleos S.A. (Cepsa), conducts its business. The areas of action for Fundación Cepsa are social, environmental and scientific-educational.

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