



Conservation of the coastal and thermophilous forests of Tenerife

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Report 3 of 3



Report 3

The conservation efforts for the cardonal-tabaibal vegetation and the thermophilous forests on Tenerife are scarce, and there is often a lack of funding and active people to drive them. Additionally, nature conservation is in the hands of the Counsel of Tenerife, which at the same time is earning money from further developing the tourism industry. There are a few ideas on the table to better restore and protect the unique nature of the island.

One idea is the implementation of a tourism tax on the Canary Islands. Tourism taxes are now common in many countries, and in Tenerife, the concept has been discussed for multiple years. With around six million tourists visiting Tenerife each year, a tourism tax could generate a considerable amount of money that could be used for conservation.

Another idea is the reforestation of more abandoned farmland, such as in the LIFE project in the rural park of Teno. Abandoned farmland is increasingly common on Tenerife due to people leaving the hard farm life behind and working in the coastal tourism industry. However, better funding is needed to make reforestation projects more successful. In the LIFE project, funding (75% from the EU and 25% from the Counsel of Tenerife) ran out after just three years. Afterward, the seedlings were not sufficiently watered or cared for. This is far too short compared to the 20 to 30 years needed to see the results of reforestation.

A major issue seems to be a general lack of knowledge among tourists and local residents. When people don't understand why nature is worth protecting, they won't care. It is essential to remind everyone about the natural wonders of Tenerife and show what the coastal ecosystems looked like before human intervention. Therefore, nature education has great potential in Tenerife. During my research, many tourists expressed interest in different forms of nature education. Examples include more informational signs in protected areas, signs marking their boundaries, and offering nature excursions with professional guides.

Another idea is to bring ancient nature closer to people through educational videos, like the ones we made for this project. These videos could also be used in schools as part of environmental education.

The more people get involved, the more power there is to influence political decisions that prioritize conservation. Whether to implement a tourism tax or how to make reforestation financially attractive are political choices. To engage more people, I believe education—using the head, heart, and hands—should lead the way.

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