

MOTIVATION

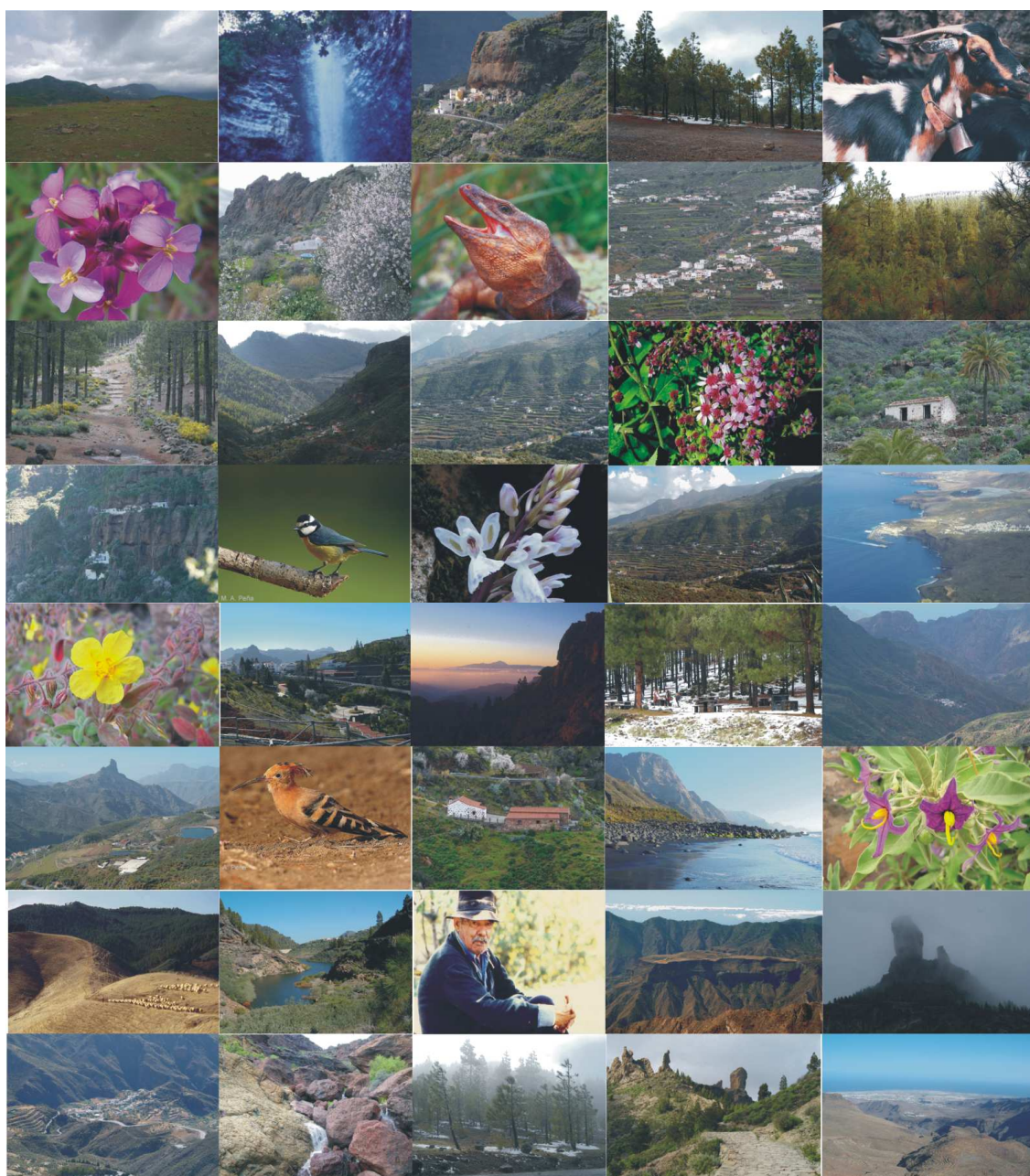
In its process of elaboration this proposal has been based on the natural, scenic and cultural values of Gran Canaria that co-exist in harmony with major built up areas and highly mechanised agricultural activities.

Gran Canaria is proud of its capacity to support a population of 790,000 people and at the same time to preserve in a renewable state its natural resources. Despite the island being inhabited for over 2,000 years it still has invaluable, almost exclusive, natural and landscape resources that have been integrated, in a well balanced way, into an agro-natural system which dominates the natural and economic processes of a large part of the island.



The south-western sector of Gran Canaria has been maintained, despite a series of historic processes, in its almost intact, original natural state. In fact, some of the best pine forests of Canaries and other relictual plant communities are to be found in this sector. Human activities have been integrated into this landscape complex in such a way that it is difficult to distinguish the elements that have been introduced by man from the natural ones.

The results of the interaction of traditional activities with the natural landscape are revealed in a mosaic worthy of conservation and development to guarantee its enjoyment by future generations.



OBJECTIVES

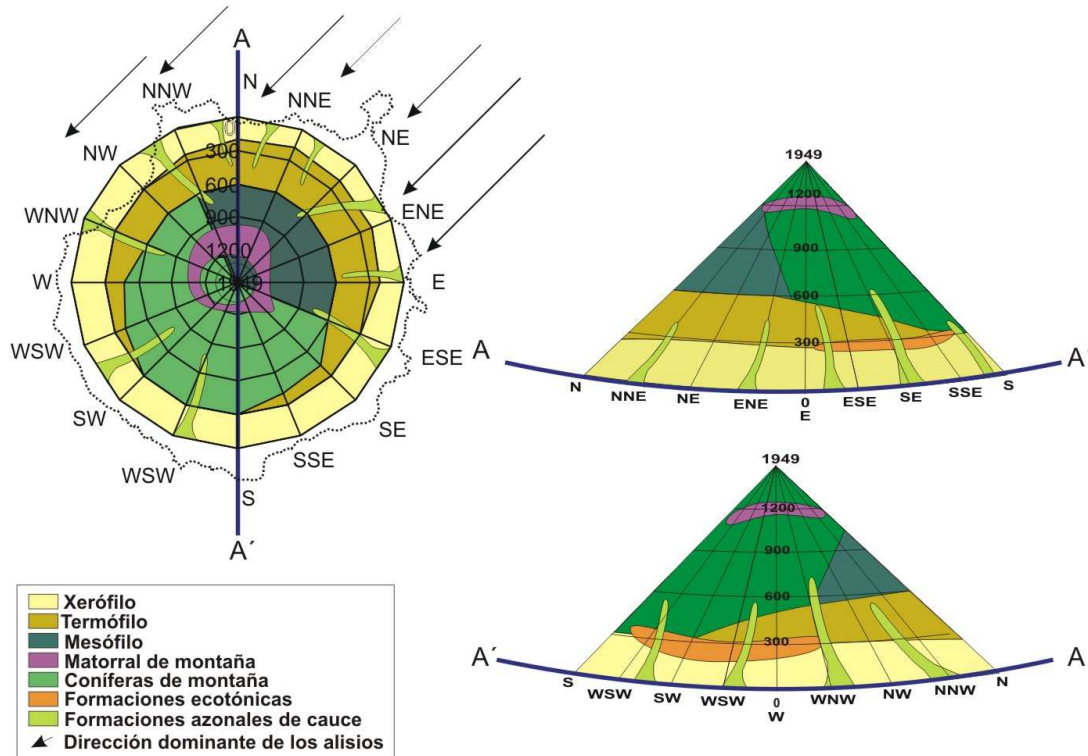
- To promote a strategy of sustainable development for the population of Gran Canaria.
- To guarantee the conservation of the agro-natural system in such a way as to allow the renovation of the renewable natural resources and the continuity of the non-renewable ones.
- To satisfy the aspirations of a large percentage of the Gran Canaria population, who show a highly receptive attitude towards initiatives aimed at improving the environmental conditions of their surroundings.
- To stimulate sustainable development models among Canary Islanders in general, and among the population of Gran Canaria in particular, including the urban centres.
- To offer a model of harmony and mutual synergies between two interconnected areas existing side by side; one of enormous natural and cultural values, and another, highly urbanised and densely populated, which can be extrapolated to the international community.

CHARACTERISTICS

The island of Gran Canaria, is part of the Canarian Archipelago and together with the neighbouring island of Tenerife, forms the capital of the Archipelago. Not without reason, it is the most highly populated of all the Canary Islands, both in absolute terms and in relation to its surface area. As a consequence of its central position with respect to the Archipelago, and, indeed to the whole of Macaronesia, it is the island that probably presents greatest diversity of environments.

Its appreciable elevation (1.949 m) and the complexity of its relief make it possible to identify multiple bio-climatic zones and micro-climates that facilitate the existence of a wide variety of habitats. Thus, all the most representative vegetation types of the Macaronesian bio-geographic complex are to be found on the island.

ESQUEMA BIOGEOGRÁFICO DE GRAN CANARIA



The mountain peaks and southern slopes are covered by forests of Canary Island pines; the north facing slopes shelter relicts of laurel forest and tree heath and wax-myrtle scrub, while the thermophile belt extends all around the island in the lowlands/foothills. The coastal strip, up to an altitude of 300 metres, is dominated by arid or hyper-arid environments, with succulent spurges as the predominant elements. The bottoms of the ravines and valley habitats are covered in palm groves and other non-habitat specific vegetation types.



The littoral belt, given the striking contrasts of the coastal environment with broad submerged deltas, submarine volcanic lava flows, high cliffs and interconnected sand banks, provides shelter for a considerable amount of biodiversity. Furthermore, it includes highly productive zones that support populations of loggerhead turtles, a wide range of cetaceans, including bottle nosed dolphins and a large colony of short fin pilot whales. One of the island's main natural attractions lies in its geo-morphological configuration. An immense caldera, and its associated cone complex of dykes (Caldera de Tejeda), dominates the centre of the island, providing a rain water drainage network that radiates outwardly, spoke-like, from the edge of the caldera.



In general, the southern sector of the island is, in lithological terms, older than the northern sector; the latter being dotted with a multitude of recent lava flows and volcanic cones, whose craters and calderas are almost intact. The spectacular appearance of these volcanic features and the dominant verticality of the scarps of the main ravines make the island an outstanding place with fascinating and unique landscapes and topographical features.



Human settlements in this area are scattered, in small groups of traditional houses, or in sets of artificial residential caves. Traditional activities are limited to smallholdings growing enough crops for their own consumption, extensive livestock rearing, controlled use of plant resources and cottage industries.

In contrast with the general population density of 484 inhabitants/km² for the whole of Gran Canaria, the 46% (100,459 Ha) of the island's surface area proposed as a Biosphere Reserve has a population density of 18,2 i/km² (18,322 inhabitants in absolute terms).

ZONING

In line with the hierarchy established for the system of Canary Island Natural Areas, the Biosphere Reserve proposal is developed around two core zones, the ***Inagua Integral Nature Reserve*** and the ***Güigüi Special Nature Reserve***, which cover sufficient area of land to fulfil the characteristic functions of core zones, and they have been given the highest level of protection afforded by the Canary Island Protected Natural Areas Act.

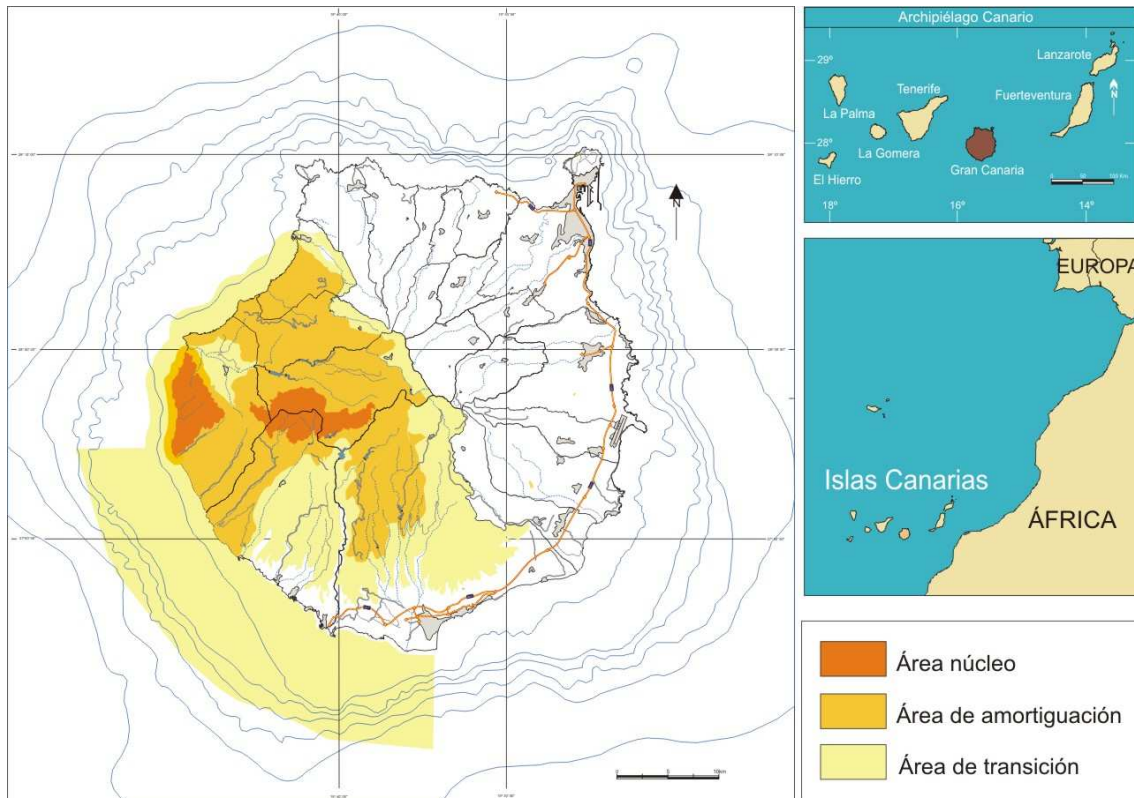
These two zones are surrounded by a common buffer zone (El Nublo Rural Park), plus the ***Tamadaba and Pilacones Nature Parks***, both of which form part of the Canary Island network of Protected Natural Areas provided for by Law.

The area included as the transition zone is the area within the Leader Plus boundaries in the municipal districts with areas within the aforementioned Protected Areas, plus the entire area of the ***Tauro Natural Monument, Fataga Protected Landscape and the Riscos de Tirajana Natural Monument*** Protected Natural Areas.

A 200 m strip of buffer zone is provided for between the coastal core zone (Güigüi Special Nature Reserve) and the sea, which runs south with a marine transition zone that includes the Franja Marina de Mogan Site of Scientific Interest (Sector II), and to the north with another marine transition zone 2.5 km wide (Sector I).

The marine zones included in this proposal do not include core zones, but the Cabildo of Gran Canaria (Island Government) intends to propose such zones when the corresponding planning documents are drawn up (Mogan Marine Belt Management Plan and others), which are currently in the preliminary study phase.

The reasons for declaring this sector an SSI include the fact that they contain sea grass meadows of the species *Cymodocea nodosa*, colonies of bottle nosed dolphins (*Tursiops truncatus*) and loggerhead turtles (*Caretta caretta*).



FUNCTIONS

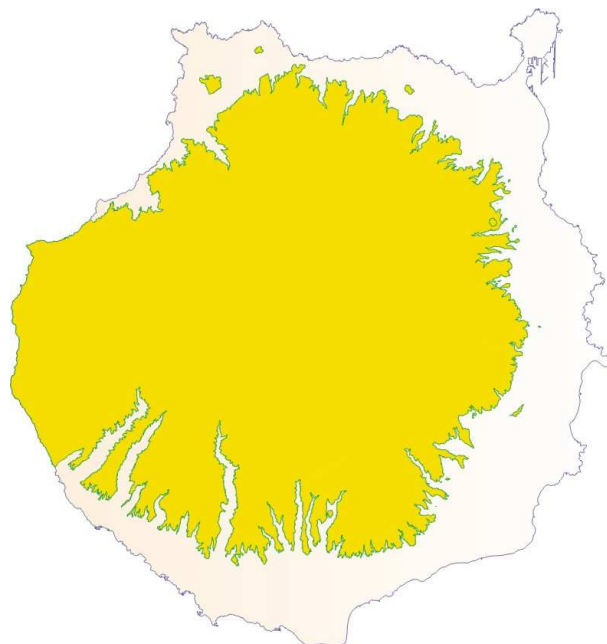
Conservation

The Modified Text of the Canary Island Territory and Natural Areas Planning Act guarantees the protection and conservation of these core zones, as they are Nature Reserves, the maximum category of protection provided for in the aforementioned Act. Conservation is also guaranteed in the remaining territory covered by the protection of the same law.

Part of the Reserve also comes under the cover of the guidelines of the Natura 2000 Network (EU).

Sustainable development

The Leader Plus Rural Development of the Foothills and Highlands of Gran Canaria Programme, and other strategic programmes of the Gran Canaria Cabildo encompass most of the area proposed, with a view to fostering the local economies, taking the conservation and reinforcement of their natural and cultural values as a basis.



Logistics

Experiences, research, solutions, information and services will be shared with all the other Reserves that form part of the World Network. Furthermore, the reserve will be the subject of a range of lines of work by academic, cultural and economic institutions (University of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, Forestry Plan, Institute of Marine Sciences, Jardin Botanico “Viera y Clavijo”, Chamber of Commerce, etc).

The added value of the Gran Canaria Biosphere Reserve is in its capacity to demonstrate the viability and mutual synergies of an area of high natural and cultural value next to, and interacting with, another highly urbanised and technically advanced area.

MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

A management body is provided for, with the active participation of the promoter of this proposal, the Gran Canaria Cabildo and all the stakeholders with a presence in the area, from the local authorities of the districts involved in the proposal to all the other social and economic participants.



PLAN OF ACTION

An Action Plan has been provided for, with a time horizon covering the next 10 years (2006-2015). Contextualised objectives have been set for each of the sectors of activity and measures have been established in the form of a specific set of actions leading to the fulfilment of the functions of a Biosphere Reserve.

