Destination name, Country: **Noja, Spain**

Author, organization/affiliation: **Silvia Ochoa, Noja municipality.**

Title of Good Practice Story: **Noja restores the coastal path and surroundings of Punta de la Mesa.**

Submission for the following Awards (several possible): **Best of Nature & ecotourism**.

**Issues faced: What was the problem/issue that was solved with the Good Practice? Why was it a problem?**

The City Council of Noja (Spain) is finalizing the environmental restoration of the coastal path and the surroundings of Punta de la Mesa, near the beach of Trengandín de la Villa. The project is aimed at improving the state of conservation of this natural area that, due to the presence of a great number of visitors, has suffered erosion, soil loss and consequent degradation of the vegetation cover.

This impact has resulted in a multiplicity of the paths and high levels of trampling that avoid vegetation to fully develop. Besides, there are several species of invasive flora that have occupied the place, such as the pampas grass, the sea myrtle and the Japanese pittosporum.

**Methods / steps / tools used: How was the good practice implemented?**

In order to achieve recovery, information and management actions have been implemented to contribute to reducing this trampling, as well as passive restoration actions aimed at controlling erosive processes and regenerating soil and vegetation.

Specifically, the project is structured in three differentiated actions. The first one has been the installation of panels and informational signs. On one side, three information panels of 1.2 x 0.8 meters have been placed at the beginning of the access paths, to inform users about the environmental values of the place and the purposes of the project. On the other, 15 signals of 25 x 30 centimetres have been distributed along the route to warn and ask for the collaboration of users to respect the protection measures.

The second action is focused on conservation and restoration and has consisted of the installation of passive sand collectors in the areas where the dune has lost its morphology. They have been arranged in separate alignments between 6 and 8 meters, with a density of 3 kg/ml.

Likewise, dune vegetation has been planted, aimed at regenerating the vegetation of the trampled areas that have been closed to the public. The plants come from the Loredo nursery, from the Coastal Demarcation of Cantabria. This action has also included the manual removal of invasive flora.

The last of these actions consist of protective measures such as the closure of areas where the collectors have been installed, mainly at the Punta de la Mesa, to

prevent user access. The fencing has been made with wooden posts arranged every 2 / 2.5 ml.

To this are added other dissuasive closures to prevent walkers from accessing the areas under restoration and so the path can be conserved. It is a wooden fence 0.5 meters high formed by wooden posts 12 centimetres diameter.

**Specific/measurable results, importance of the good practice.**

The area where these works have been carried out has a sandy substrate settled on the underlying rock. This is one of the best examples that exist in Cantabria of a dune field on top of a cliff.

The dune field occupies a great part of the coastline between the Ris and Tregandín sandy areas, at least in its northernmost part, forming a belt of deposits on top of the underlying secondary era limestones. The presence of these sands is related to important wind dynamics in this sector of the coast, associated with the existence of a low elevation cliff coast.

The balance established between sand deposits and transport generates a highly characteristic dune profile in which the sands are settled on the rocky bed at a certain distance from the edge of the cliff, inwards. The origin of this dune field is linked to the Holocenic sub-period, the most recent.

This dune is consolidated as an area of sediment accumulation in the westernmost area of the sandy area; it brings diversity and the ability to generate new habitats within it, so it is considered of great environmental importance.

From the habitats point of view, the dominant ones in these dunes are the white or secondary dune and the grey dune.

Among the most representative species of the secondary dune are the European marram grass, the sea holly, sea daffodil and the field bindweed, while the tertiary dune is more diversified, with species such as sea thrift, hare's-tail, various species of the genera *Agrostis* or *Festuca* or the shore medick.

**Lessons learned: what problems/issues did the implementers of the good practice face, and how have they overcome any problems or challenges in the implementation of the practice?**

The main problems we have faced is the processing of authorizations with the competent bodies, such as the Demarcation of Coasts and the Dirección General del Medio Natural, that caused a delay in the start of the works. This delay made the works start in bad weather conditions (of storms and strong winds) that have partially hindered the works, such as the placement of the panels. We also did not know if the collectors would endure these adverse conditions, but luckily, they have endured without any problems. To overcome these problems, an extension was requested for

the completion of the work, and we extended the deadline by two months, sufficient time for the completion of the work in an appropriate manner.

**Specific/additional (web) references: links to further information, Youtube video, images, documents**

The total budget for the project, so that neighbours and visitors can enjoy the area in a more sustainable way, amounts to 29,603.86 euros (amount of the subsidy granted by the Dirección General del Medio Natural, de la Consejería de Medio Rural, Pesca y Alimentación, complying with the requirements established in Order MED / 37/2016, of June 20, which establishes the regulatory bases for the granting of subsidies in the Network of Natural Protected Areas of Cantabria.

For more information, see the uploaded document "*Memoria Valorada*".

**Key success factors (how did you overcome the issues, resume in 3 points):**

1. Commitment of the City Council of Noja with the conservation and protection of the natural values of the municipality;
2. Drafting of a good report and action plan, in this case done by Seo / BirdLife, with extensive experience in this type of projects, since it is a protected and highly sensitive area;
3. Collaboration and involvement of Seo / BirdLife in the management of the building works resulted in the achievement of very good results.

We also consider fundamental, the placement of small warning and respect panels for roads and dune areas, to make citizens and visitors aware of the importance of respecting this sensitive area.

Green Destinations and ITB Berlin are authorized to disseminate this good practice story with pictures.