

# Spain pledges 350M euros to save Doñana wetlands

December 1 2022, by Joseph Wilson

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The Matalascañas town is seen in the horizon surrounded by the Doñana national park, southwest Spain, Wednesday, Oct. 19, 2022. Climate change hit Spain with record-high temperatures and a prolonged drought this year. Credit: AP Photo/Bernat Armangue

Spain's government pledged to invest 350 million euros (\$368 million) in

the country's Doñana wetlands, a UNESCO world heritage site that [ecologists say is dying](#) due to the misuse of water and climate change.

Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez announced the pledge Thursday during a visit to the Doñana National Park in southern Spain.

A European Union court ruled last year that Spanish authorities had failed in their duty to protect the wetlands, and the government faces a hefty fine unless takes actions to preserve the ecosystem.

Sitting on an estuary where the Guadalquivir River meets the Atlantic Ocean, the wetlands cover 74,000 hectares (182,000 acres). They are a wintering site for a half-million waterfowl and a stopover spot for millions of other birds that migrate from Africa to northern Europe.

But the [national park](#)'s lagoons and marshes have dried up under a prolonged drought and decades of agriculture and a nearby beach town draining the aquifer underlying the area. The area surrounding the park is plagued by hundreds of unauthorized wells that illegally pump out water to feed crops, mostly red berries that are exported across Europe.

The Spanish government said the 350 million euros would go toward recovering "this emblematic space and reverting the situation of environmental degradation."



A water meter stands in a dry wetland in Doñana natural park, southwest Spain, Wednesday, Oct. 19, 2022. Farming and tourism had already drained the aquifer feeding Doñana. Then climate change hit Spain with record-high temperatures and a prolonged drought this year. Credit: AP Photo/Bernat Armangue



Cracks in the mud are visible in a dry wetland in Doñana natural park, southwest Spain, Wednesday, Oct. 19, 2022. Farming and tourism had already drained the aquifer feeding Doñana. Then climate change hit Spain with record-high temperatures and a prolonged drought this year. Credit: AP Photo/Bernat Armangue

Measures to save the park will include "the reduction of extractions from underground water sources and the recovery of surface water," the [government](#) said in a statement.

The World Wildlife Fund applauded the action by central authorities but demanded that regional authorities do more to control the illegal extraction of water.

"We consider this a great step," the conservation organization said.  
"(But) we believe that the priority is to close down all the farms using illegal irrigation in the area around Doñana."

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Citation: Spain pledges 350M euros to save Doñana wetlands (2022, December 1) retrieved 26 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2022-12-spain-pledges-350m-euros-doana.html>

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