

Post-wildfire Emergency Intervention in Portugal: an Analysis of Public Reports and Policy

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Abstract - Wildfires have been rising both in number and size, which is turning post-fire forest management into an ever more relevant topic. Often governments are the ones to first respond in case of a wildfire, as well as assess all the impacts that need to be mitigated. For this reason, public reporting and transparency play a vital role, as they are not only a legal requirement but also a tool for interacting with stakeholders. In Portugal, after a wildfire, the Institute for Nature Conservation and Forests (ICNF) assesses the main environmental impacts identified and proposes emergency stabilization measures, according to the guidelines presented in the Order No. 9716-A/2017, from the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development. In this context, the objective of the present study is to analyse the content and characterize the main environmental impacts identified in the 122 emergency stabilization reports, currently available at ICNF's website, in terms of the ecosystem services they disrupt. Also, their accordance with Order No. 9716-A/2017 is verified. Next, these impacts are compared to the ones identified in three technical reports that propose mitigation measures for a longer time period. Lastly, suggestions for possible improvements in the reporting process are made regarding other fire-related environmental impacts that could be included in future assessments. Overall, the reports seem to be in accordance with the content legally required, and a few even address more impacts than the minimum. In the long-term, flora recovery appears to be the main issue to be addressed. However, some fire-related impacts such as the loss of climate regulation capacity have not yet been addressed by the reports, and there is likely an opportunity for collaboration with the academic community, which has an important role in pioneering impact assessment efforts.

Keywords: Wildfire; Content Analysis; Fire Reports; Fire Policies; Emergency Interventions