



## A.C.C.O.B.: Association Against the Quarries in Oloron-Sainte-Marie and the Bager (France)

IN THE SOUTH-WEST OF FRANCE (ATLANTIC PYRENEES), STUDIES ARE UNDERWAY FOR THE INSTALLATION OF A NUMBER OF QUARRIES IN OLORON-SAINTE-MARIE - ALONG THE "ROUTE DES CRÊTES" AND IN THE BAGER FOREST

## ***261 hectares/650 acres of forest in danger!***

*(equivalent to the area of 400 rugby pitches)*

### **The Oloron- Sainte –Marie (Oloron) quarry projects:**

At its meeting on 31 July 2014, the Oloron Town Council agreed to the studies for the installation of a number of quarries in the Oloron area, to be undertaken by the company "Granulat Carrières Conseil" based in the Gard region of France.

A.C.C.O.B. first became aware of these quarry projects one year later, in August 2015.

### **Scope of the Projects :**

- In Soeix-Eysus , the quarrying of schist « pierre de bidache ».
- In the Bager forest, extraction of the existing volcanic material.
- Excavations to a depth of 100 metres.
- Authorisation initially for 30 years, renewable for potentially a maximum of 120 years.
- Surface areas: 57 hectares/140 acres in Soeix-Eysus; 191 hectares/472 acres in the Bager forest; and 13.5 hectares/34 acres in Escout.
- Factory units in Soeix and the Bager forest, to include a geothermal system (potentially excavations to a depth of 1000 metres) and a micro-electric centre at the source of the Lourtau river. *(A population of 20 000 depend on this river for drinking water)*

The Bager forest is situated on the north versant of the "Mailh Arrouy" and the "Escurets". On the south side it is bordered by the Lourtau river which flows into the River Aspe and the River Ossau in the north.

The official Oloron local urbanisation plan qualifies the forest as a classified protected area.

## **Consequences :**

- Destruction of the Bager forest, described by the Departmental Tourist Board as a « Cathedral Forest » and the « Little Amazon of the Pyrenees ».
- Destruction of fauna and flora.
- Risk to the salmon breeding grounds in the river along the Bager forest.
- Serious consequences for the Agricultural college in Soeix, which is already losing agricultural land to a new housing estate and the construction of the Oloron bypass road (Gabarn-Gurmençon). A total of 20 hectares/50 acres will be lost, including land taken over by the quarry projects;
- Impact on agricultural land in Soeix and the Bager areas.
- Impact on the housing estate adjoining the areas under study.
- Destruction of tourist routes set up by the Oloron Town Hall, including walking and biking trails and a national reserve for hunting and wild animals.
- Impact on the potential re-opening of the Spa in Lurbe-Saint-Christau (employment opportunities) in terms of water quality and lorry traffic.
- Impact on the neighbourhood surrounding the quarries, including noise pollution, air pollution, an intense flow of lorry traffic, the risk of road accidents and danger to the local population.
- Reduction in local house values (already 20% due to the quarry project).

***In August 2015, we decided to establish an association to intervene and prevent the installation of these quarries in Oloron-Sainte-Marie and the Bager”.***

**(A.C.C.O.B. : « L'Association Contre Les Carrières d'Oloron et du Bager »)**

## **Our actions :**

- Creation of a facebook page and website.
- Installation of information panels in the Bager forest.
- In Autumn 2015, meetings in Soeix (100 participants) and Oloron (200 participants), and over 100 participants at the Association’s Annual General Meeting in March 2016.
- 3 walking tours of the Bager forest – beech groves, volcanic areas, geology ...120 participants for the first tour; the second was a special request for 15 participants from Pau; 80 participants for the third.

- Presence at the indoor climbing competition in Oloron provided an opportunity to inform the public and resulted in the collection of an additional 1000 signatures for our petition.
- Installation of 50 panels on the houses in Soeix to demonstrate their rejection of the quarries.
- A number of newspaper articles in “La République des Pyrénées” and the “Sud Ouest”.
- Radio interviews on “Radio Oloron”, “France Bleue Béarn” and “Radio Pais”.
- Distribution of 15000 information pamphlets in the Oloron area and Arudy.
- Participation in a number of meetings to inform various local and national associations which could be impacted by the quarry projects, e.g. the Fishing Federation 64, salmon fishing organizations, based in Sauveterre de Béarn.

**Our aim :** is to inform the public at large about these quarry projects, so that our common heritage will be respected and protected, as well as our quality of life. With that in mind, we ask for your support in communicating this information to as many people as possible.

**You will find all the information you need on our facebook page and our website:**

<https://www.facebook.com/non.carrieres.forets.baqer.oloron>

<http://www.foret-baqer>.

**ACCOB** proposes guided tours of the forest. Come and join us.



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