MISSION 6

Fire fighters - Sicily

August 2026

Impact Update Year Three

Question 1:
How has the ecosystem changed since the Planet Wild mission?

Across the Sicilian landscape, where wildfires have historically been a significant driver, a powerful transformation is taking root. While the past three years have seen substantial challenges with fires across Italy, this period has also ignited a profound movement for ecological restoration.

As we face the realities of a changing climate and drier landscapes, the people of Sicily are rising to meet the moment with renewed purpose, turning complex environmental hurdles into opportunities for collective action and landscape renewal.

However, indomitable villagers, small pockets of land and their communities manage to protect their area from flames and ashes. The simple lack of fire for some years allows vegetation to recover, form more resilient landscapes, restore soil life and the return of birds, small mammals and grazers helps restocking and diversifying the ecosystem's living seed bank. Standing up against the wildfire regime in Sicily is not a sprint, it’s a marathon, and we’re all in for the long run.



Fire communicated by a resident in a local alert group

Question 2:
What specific (ecological) results can you share after three years?

The resilience of our project areas is truly inspiring. Despite facing fire threats, the habitats we manage have shown incredible recovery; many areas experienced lower-intensity burns that preserved vital soil life. Today, we see the vibrant return of native oak forests and thriving animal communities. A particularly joyful sight is the local bird population, led by industrious jays, who are actively helping to replant the forest by spreading acorns, accelerating the natural healing process.

Our community is now better equipped than ever, with specialized water backpacks and high-potency pumps that empower residents to protect their homes safely. The most rewarding achievement, however, is the spirit of unity that has emerged. We have fostered a vigilant, connected neighborhood community that communicates instantly to intervene at the first sign of fire. This proactive cooperation is the ultimate key to minimizing damage and safeguarding our shared landscape.



Anti-wildfire-backpacks at home ready for fire season

Question 3:
What key challenges emerged, and how did you adapt the strategy?

While the challenges of the wildfire regime are significant, they have served as a catalyst for unprecedented solidarity. In the face of environmental grief, we have found a deep well of collective strength. The skepticism of the past is being replaced by a shared motivation to create lasting change, proving that even the most difficult circumstances can bring a community closer together in pursuit of a common goal.

But change is well under way: local communities from coast to coast are chipping in buying their own equipment and setting up neighbourhood groups, dialogue between civilians and institutions is happening, outcries and protests even in urban areas are happening, and several citizen science projects to map, show and hold accountable are mushrooming up all over the island. Not quite a strategy, but a movement.



Fire that has been contained by local communities

Question 4:
What is the long-term vision for this project / ecosystem?

Our long-term vision is a flourishing, integrated landscape across the mountains of Palermo. We are restoring natural processes to help nature bounce back stronger, including the expansion of native oak woods and the return of majestic birds of prey like griffon vultures. This vision places people at the center of a thriving nature-based economy, supporting eco-tourism and traditional food production. Most importantly, we are inviting the next generation to rediscover their land, repairing the bond between people and nature for years to come.

Question 5:
Did the visibility of the mission help unlock additional funding, partnerships, etc. ?

Oh yes! The Planet Wild mission led to the very foundation of our non-profit organisation "Collettivo Rewild Sicily" which back then was in its early stages. Today, we are 15 people ranging from ecologists, anthropologists, designers, theater composers, finance gurus, barmen to engineers, working on making Sicily a wilder place while building a professional life in a challenging land and context. And we are well on our way to take on a land exceeding 300 hectares creating a model project applying different ways of fire prevention, emergency responses and activating rewilding processes.



Picture: team photo of Collettivo Rewild Sicily