

Special fund from the Region for the areas affected by fires

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“The Region is ready to create a special fund in the Budget Act soon to be approved, to support all of the necessary actions, in the short term and in the coming months, after the fire emergency that struck a number of provinces in Lombardy.” This is what the President Lombardy Region President, **Roberto Maroni**, announced this morning, in Brinzio, near Varese, one of the areas affected by the fires, at the end of the closed meeting held in the office of the “Campo dei Fiori” Park, in the presence of the Prefect of Varese, **Giorgio Zanzi**, the Mayor of Varese, **Davide Galimberti**, and of Luvinata, **Alessandro Boriani**, the Chairman of the Park, **Giuseppe Barra**, the heads and volunteers of the Civil Defence and the Firemen.

“WE CAN’T SKIMP ON SAFETY”

“We can tell the people we’re calm, because we’re going to do everything necessary, without skimping on resources,” Maroni guaranteed, “because safety is in danger, and we can’t skimp on safety. We have to understand what resources are necessary and how to use them rapidly.” For Lombardy Region, there was the CEO of DG Security, Civil Defence and Immigration, **Fabrizio Cristalli**, and the Director of Varese’s Regional and Territorial Office, **Augusto Conti**. “What we have to do immediately is make the area affected by the fires safe,” Maroni explained, before meeting the mayors of the municipalities in the Park, the leaders of the Mountain Community and of the Province, and everyone who helped, first, to contain the fire, and then, to put it out. “Immediately after, we have to make the valleys safe, to prevent the fire emergency from becoming a flood emergency, with the movement also of the debris caused by the fire. In the spring, we’ll have to continue the

reforestation to put the territory in order again.”

COORDINATION AND RESOURCES

“To do all of this, we need coordination, which will be headed by the Regional and Territorial Office of Varese, who, together with the Park, will coordinate all of these initiatives, with all of the mayors involved, who will appoint a coordinator, creating the team work we saw during the emergency. The Park will also be involved, with also our regional organisation, ERSAF; everyone must be ready, if necessary, to get involved and do his bit.

“It will also take resources to do all of this, and we’ve already allocated some in the Regional Development Plan. I’ve asked the Chairman of the Park to determine, as soon as possible, the order of magnitude, to making the area safe, and then replant; if it’s not enough, in the 2018-20 Budget Act, which we’re approving at the end of November, we’ll create a special fund, because this was an extraordinary emergency, so we’re going to find the resources to do everything; we must find them.”

A REGIONAL DECISION ON HUNTING

“We’re also evaluating the question of hunting,” Maroni added. “We’re trying to understand if we should accept the request that some environmental organisations and even some mayors have made, to put a ban on hunting not only in the area involved, where it’s already suspended until 16 November, but also in the areas around it. This is an evaluation we are making; there are pros and cons, such as the wild boars that procreate and then create other types of damage.”

ALL THE DATA ABOUT THE FIRES

From 25 October to 3 November, the northern part of the region was affected by severe, particularly intense and extended fires, **involving 1160 hectares of woodland**, from the east to the west of Lombardy, to the borders with Piedmont and Trentino. The actual area covered by the fire was estimated at **350 hectares for Varese Province**, about 220 hectares for Brescia Province, about 452 hectares for Como Province, about 135 hectares for Sondrio Province, and about 2 hectares for Pavia Province.

In Varese Province, in particular, there were 2 fires between 25 October and 3 November. The first, which began on 25 October and resumed on the 27th, in the Campo dei Fiori Park, then extended into the valley and westwards on the 29th, threatening the inhabitants of Luvinata, Barasso and Comerio. The second fire began on the 28th in Rasa, near Varese, and work to make it safe has continued since 1 November. The fires burned for 8 days and it took two more to put them out completely. Four municipalities were affected: Varese, Luvinata, Barasso and Comerio. More than 500 hectares of woods caught fire. Fifty people were evacuated from Luvinata and Barasso, all have returned now. The numbers of people involved in putting out the fires: 544 Woodland Fire Brigade volunteers and 86 firefighters. Airplanes used for extinguishing operations: 10 regional helicopters and 11 COAU (Canadair) planes.

Since 1 January, 2017, the region has been struck by 235 fires, with a total surface area of 4604 hectares, including 2334 hectares of wooded area and 2261 of pasture land. The average area covered by the fire has been about 19 hectares.

Overall, the people employed in putting the fires out: 3768 woodland fire volunteers and 1538 firefighters. Airplanes used for extinguishing activities: 404 regional helicopters and 78 COAU (Canadair) planes. The municipalities most affected were in Brescia Province (Bovegno, Tignale and Tremosine), followed by Como Province (Garzeno, Tavernerio, Velese, Sorico and Montemezzo) and Varese (Varese, Barasso, Comerio, Brinzio and Luvinata).

di Translated by Lettini & Tognoli (Reviewed by Prof. Rolf Cook)