

Union for the Protection and Development of Hymettus Mountain (SPAY)



Surface: 8.100 ha

Numer of municipalities: 12 member Municipalities: Agia Paraskevi, Papagou-Cholargos, Zografou, Kaisariani, Vyronas, Ilioupoli, Elliniko-Argiroupoli, Glyfada, Vari-Voula-Vouliagmeni, Paiania, Koropi and Dafni-Hymettos.

Population: 1,2 millions of inhabitants

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The Union for the Protection and Development of Hymettus Mountain (SPAY) was founded in 1992, with the aim to protect the forest of Hymettus from both natural and human threats. Hymettus is the closest mountain and suburban forest to the city of Athens.

Due to the value of forest habitats, Mount Hymettus is subject to a protection regime pursuant to European Directive 92/43/EEC "On the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora" and its respective amendments, and has been incorporated to the NATURA 2000 network under the title "OROS YMITTOS" (GR 3000015), Law 3937/31-03-2011.

SPAY is a Public Entity, governed by the laws for Local Authorities. SPAY is administered by an Executive Committee (5 members) and a Board of Directors (33 members). All are elected Municipal Councillors or Mayors. The President of SPAY serves a two-year tenure. Nikos Hardalias, Mayor of Vyronas, is President of the Union since 2003.

Natural heritage

More than 600 species and sub-species of plants can be found on Hymettus, a very high number compared to the surface of the mountain. Among them, 54 are endemic to Greece, while 59 are protected by Greek and international legislation or are listed as endangered species.

Among the flowers there are 44 species of wild orchids which, combined to the surface of the mountain, is considered to be the highest density in Europe.

Hymettus also hosts some of the most important mammals and plenty of reptiles, amphibians and insects. Moreover, Hymettus is full of caves. The most famous is "Koutouki", Peania's cave. The Lake of Vouliagmeni is another interesting geological phenomenon at the boundaries of the mountain.

Historical heritage

Human presence on Mount Hymettus dates from prehistoric times.

Its most famous monuments are the ancient temple of Apollo Zoster, in Vouliagmeni at the southern end of the mountain, the medieval tower of Koula at the boundaries of Papagou-Holargos and Kaisariani municipalities, as well as its monasteries from the Byzantine Period, such as the Monastery Agiou Ioannou Kareia, the Monastery of Kaisariani and the Monastery Taxiarchon – Asteriou.

Main activities

SPAY realises studies and puts in place projects of reforestation, pruning & stump grinding, weeds cleaning, flood protection and rubbish removal.

The Union buys and supplies forest protection equipment -such as water tanks and hydraulic systems- to the municipalities. Moreover, it supports municipal voluntary forest fire protection groups, providing those with cars, other equipment and a camera monitoring system of the forest.

SPAY also tries to increase citizens' awareness on environmental issues, emphasising on younger ages. The Union participates in European environmental research projects such as LIFE08/NAT/GR/000539 AMIBIO project, www.amibio-project.eu/en (2010-2013), and «New Skills for New Jobs in the Forest Sector (DRYMOS)», a Lifelong Learning Program - Leonardo da Vinci - Transfer of Innovation project (2012-2014).

