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Title of presentation: An operational pilot network of 7 therapeutical forests in Girona Province (Catalonia - Spain)

Abstract: Justification: “Forest bathing” benefits our health and wellbeing, lowering our potential stress, depression, anger and fatigue, and generally improving our relaxation. The realization of these benefits is moving people out of urban areas and back to nature, and therapeutical forests can play an important role as reconnection points. Sèlvans, in collaboration with associated partners, has implemented an operational pilot network of 7 therapeutical forests in the province of Girona (Catalonia - Spain).

Methodology: The Costa Brava Girona Tourism Board and the Girona Province regional government asked Associació Sèlvans to deploy a pilot network of 7 therapeutical forests. The aim was protecting the most mature and high natural value forests as well as putting on the market a new health-ecotourism service for society and especially tourism visiting the Costa Brava and eastern Pyrenees areas.

The 7 therapeutical forests are located in the following municipalities: Can Fornaca (Caldes de Malavella), Palau-sacosta (Girona), Torrenteres (Vidrà), de Salvador Grau i Tort (Les Preses), Serra d’Heures (Sant Hilari Sacalm), Requesens (La Jonquera), and Sant Grau (Tossa de Mar).

All therapeutical forests comply with the seven pillars of the Selvans methodology: quality of the forest, conservation and stewardship of the forest with the respective forest owner, a specifically designed track and infrastructure, synergies with local stakeholders, a professional guidance, and an associated scientific research program.

Results: All 7 therapeutical forests have been implemented, pilot visits in groups to up to 14 people have been carried out, local tourism agents are getting to know the project and potentially including it in their service offer. Sèlvans has carried out a university training which has formed 25 Sèlvans



forest bathing guides, 7 of which have been ascribed to each of the 7 forests both as their steward as well as dynamizing agent for forest bathing activities.

In conclusion: the existence and operation of a network of forests aimed at hosting a therapeutical activity can be an excellent way to promote forest bathing as a new health-ecotourism service, as well as means to reconnect people with nature.