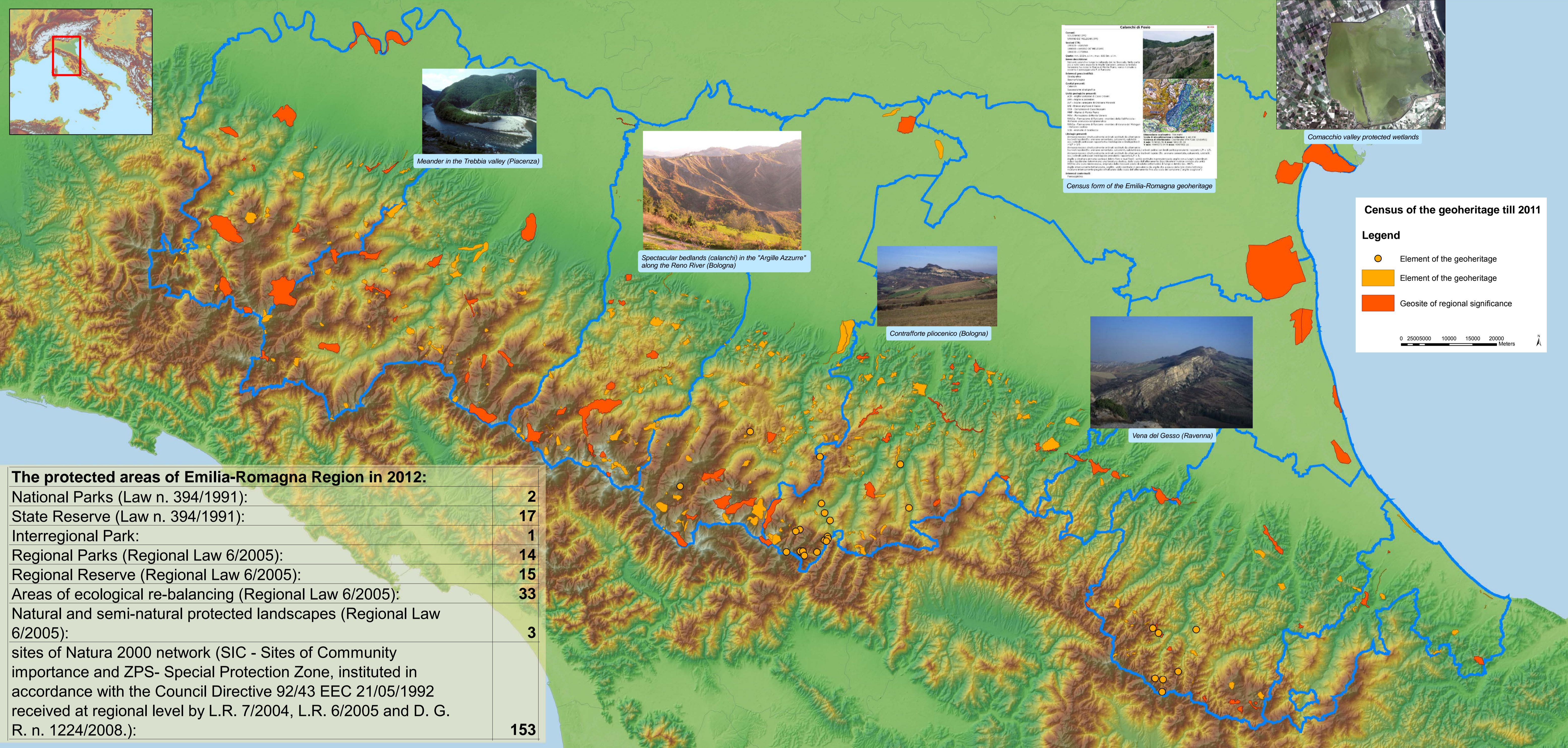


# THE PROTECTION OF THE GEOLOGICAL HERITAGE OF EMILIA-ROMAGNA: A PRELIMINARY OVERVIEW

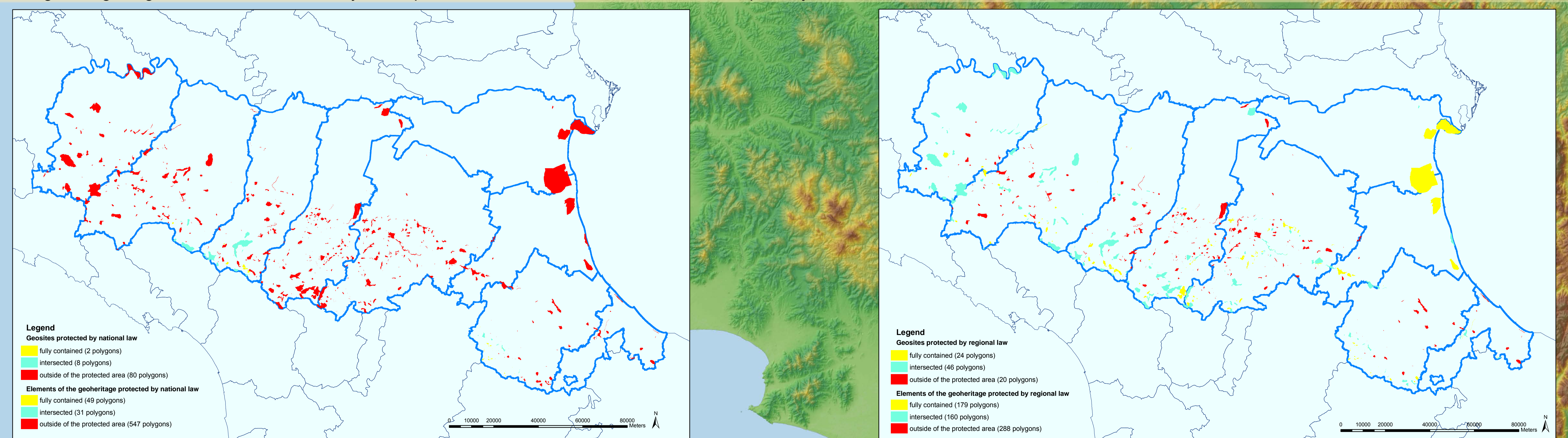
Maria Carla Centineo (1), Giulio Ercolessi(1), Maria Angela Cazzoli(1), Giovanna Daniele(1), Antonella Lizzani and Marco Pattuelli (2)

(1) Servizio Geologico Sismico e dei Suoli (SGSS), Regione Emilia-Romagna, (2) Servizio Parchi e risorse forestali, Regione Emilia-Romagna

The Geological Seismic and Soil Survey (SGSS) of the Emilia-Romagna Region set up the census of the geoheritage in 1998. The census is a work in progress both for the contents and for the number of the sites scheduled. At present, SGSS has identified 717 "elements of the geoheritage". The territorial extension of the scheduled sites is about 53.000 hectare, which represents 2,5% of the regional territory. The census led to the identification and selection of about 90 sites which represent "geosites of regional significance". In 2006 Emilia-Romagna Region approved a regional legislation on the protection of the geodiversity (9/2006). This legislation set up the cadaster of the geosites, which includes the natural hypogean geosites, because it recognizes the public interest of the regional geodiversity and the geoheritage as repository of scientific, environmental, cultural and touristic-recreational values. The legislation states the difference between geosite and element of the geoheritage and it defines the procedure for the formal institution of a geosite. Furthermore, the legislation provides that the cadaster of the geosites be included in the framework of the cognitive tools for land and urban planning. This legislation has certainly encouraged the activities relating to the promotion of the geological heritage but has not yet led to the definition of criteria and standards for its conservation, protection and management. To ensure the full implementation of the legislation, the Region has still to provide the guidance document on the conservation and enhancement of geodiversity in Emilia-Romagna. At present, no geosite has been officially instituted. For this reason, the protection of the geoheritage in Emilia-Romagna is strictly connected with other forms of territorial protection and, in particular, those in act for the natural heritage. In other words, the Emilia-Romagna's geoheritage is under protection only if it is included in the existing protected area (national and regional parks, regional reserve, etc.).



Integrating data on geoheritage within the data provided by the colleagues of the Park Survey has made it possible to define the consistency of the geoheritage which enjoy some form of protection. In the areas protected by the national law n. 394/1991 (National Parks and State Reserve) are comprised 10 geosites and 80 elements of the geoheritage. In the areas protected by the regional law n. 6/2005 (the rest of the protected areas listed before) are comprised 70 geosites and 339 elements of the geoheritage. These estimates were made considering both the polygons and/or points of geological heritage and geological sites which fall entirely within protected areas and those who cross them partially.



Define the priority criteria for the establishment of geosites means finding the way to identify which of the selected geosites are at higher risk of damage or loss as a function of their state of preservation, the risk of degradation to which they are exposed and the state of the protection to which they are subjected. The state of preservation and the risk of degradation are two elements evaluated by the census of the Emilia-Romagna geosites. The state of the protection is the subject of this first study. Starting from the previous evaluation on the status of geoheritage protection in Emilia-Romagna, it becomes clear that even if a great part of this heritage benefit from some form of protection the rest is totally lacking. For the latter therefore there is an urgent need to provide for their formal recognition as required by the regional law. For the geosites placed out of the protected area we aforementioned, the law establishes the form of protection defined by the instruments of urban and territorial planning. It is now necessary to verify in which way the geoheritage is included in the main instruments of regional territorial planning of Emilia-Romagna (Regional Territorial Plan –PTR; Regional Territorial and Landscape Plane –PTPR; Provincial Territorial Coordination Plans –PTCP). At present, every provincial administration has requested to the SGSS of the Emilia-Romagna Region the census of geosites for inclusion in their Provincial Territorial Coordination Plans. On this side, with the Province of Reggio-Emilia we started a very fruitful process of sharing data that brought to the acquisition of all elements of the Geological heritage in the Provincial Territorial Coordination Plans.

**We believe that the delivery to the provincial governments is the best tool so far identified to achieve the protection and enhancement of all areas identified in the Geoheritage Project of the SGSS. At the local level, all elements of the geological heritage are an important part of the territorial tissue who deserve to be treated, as the others, as it has been done in the Province of Reggio-Emilia.**