



FROM THE INTERNATIONAL FRATERNITY OF THE WAY OF SANTIAGO (FICS)

TO PILGRIMS AND PEOPLE OF GOOD WILL AROUND THE WORLD. A MANIFESTO in DEFENSE OF THE CAMINO SANTIAGO, AGAINST THE MACROCELLULOSE PROJECT IN THE ULLOA REGION OF THE FRENCH ROAD TO SANTIAGO.

The Camino Frances to Santiago, declared a European Cultural Itinerary by the Council of Europe in 1987 and a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1993, is facing an attack that will forever change its face, its environment, and its reason for being.

The Portuguese corporation “Altri,” and “Greenfiber SL,” its ad-hoc alter ego in Galicia, are set to build a massive cellulose processing plant on the Ulloa River valley, the heartland of the French Way in Galicia. Its environmental effects will be seen, heard, and smelled in French Camino towns like Palas de Rei and Melide, and in Toques on the Camino Primitivo – which is also a World Heritage site. The macro-factory will cover more than 300 hectares (about 700 acres) of countryside within 2 kilometers of the Camino de Santiago trail. A cellulose plant is a polluting monster, and building it so near to a beloved ancient pilgrimage trail is incomprehensible. The company’s own Environmental Impact study shows a “high-impact area” with a five-kilometer radius – the Camino de Santiago runs through it. The macrofactory will each day use as much water as the entire province of Lugo.

The plan includes a 75-meter-tall smokestack, and buildings more than fifty meters tall, structures completely incongruous in what is now an environmentally delicate rural landscape. Heavy truck traffic, with access routes along the Camino road, pollution to the air and waterways, damage to the visual outlook and landscape, are all part of the proposal. Dropping an industrial bomb into a green heartland is unthinkable in any civilized country. The Camino is not a bubble hemmed-in by “30-meter protection strips” on each side. The concepts of modern landscapes and “viewsheds,” identified by the Council of Europe (Convention European Landscape Council, Florence, ratified by the Spanish State on November 6, 2007) are absolutely ignored by this barbarity.

The silence (if not the absolute complicity) of the Public Administration in this affair is thunderous. Institutions that were created precisely to ensure the integrity of World Heritage sites like this one, are “looking the other way” while this macro-factory is rammed through the permitting process. Spurious interests, foreign to the spirit and reason for the pilgrimage, show an absolute disregard for the historic, social, economic significance of this invaluable cultural asset. Civilized people around the world, and throughout the district are staggered at this cynical attack on a universal good.



UNESCO says the Camino de Santiago “is part of the priceless assets not only of each nation, but of all humanity.” It is of “exceptional universal value,” and for that reason “the Spanish state assumes the obligation to identify, protect, conserve, evaluate, and pass it on to future generations.”

The Spanish government is absolutely responsible for its protection.

For all these reasons, the International Fraternity of the Camino de Santiago (FICS) rejects, denounces, and declares that we will stand against this project with all our strength and conviction. We hereby inform those individuals and institutions that support this proposal that the Camino is not their property, nor is it for sale. The Way has marked the hearts of thousands of pilgrims who’ve headed to Compostela through more than twelve hundred years. It’s made us its own, and all of us, right down to the most humble pilgrim, will stand up to defend it.

WHAT NEXT?: we request that every pilgrims, Jacobean association, and

institution linked to the Camino de Santiago express their support by signing and sharing this

manifesto.

ULTREIA AND SUSEIA!

The president, board of directors and members of the INTERNATIONAL FRATERNITY OF THE WAY OF SANTIAGO (FICS)

In Santiago de Compostela on April 15, 2024.