

PILOT MPA “KATIC” Petrovac, Montenegro

Emerald Network map for Montenegro



PILOT-MPA IN THE REPUBLIC OF MONTENEGRO

Montenegro remains one of the last countries in the Mediterranean which has not yet introduced Marine Protected Areas as an internationally recognized tool in the preservation of marine environment.

Increasing tourism industry development in Montenegro, as well as the fact that its natural beauty and high biodiversity have been recognized as its Unique Selling Point, emphasizes the necessity for the preservation of the country's natural assets. According to UNDP,¹ Montenegro is categorized by Conservation International as a biodiversity "hotspot" in the Mediterranean Basin.

However, also according to UNDP, this beauty is in great jeopardy, due to significant pressures this development boom has had on biodiversity. In a grim situation such as the one described by the UNDP, the draft National Biodiversity Strategy (NBS) causes even more alarm, as it warns that marine flora and fauna are the most endangered ecosystems in Montenegro.² Lack of systematized information about marine biodiversity and fish exploitation in Montenegro remains incomplete, while bad practices in illegal fishing and low level of overall environmental awareness remain deep-rooted.

According to the current dynamics, the introduction of a pilot-MPA is scheduled to take place during 2011. This should be accomplished under the framework of National Strategy for Sustainable Development and in line with the Management Plan presented to the Ministry of Tourism and Spatial Planning at the end of December 2010. This Plan had been financed by the Italian Ministry of Environment, Land and Sea, in line with the bilateral agreement between the two countries. The plan had been developed by Italian Consultancy Firm DFS.

Pilot MPA stretches between the Cliff of Skodjevojka and the Cape Crno Brdo, taking up some 20 kilometers of coastline in the Municipalities of Budva and Bar. Islands of Katic and Sveta Nedjelja, located some 800m away from the coastal town of Petrovac, are in the center of this MPA.

Findings of the Italian team, which conducted research on the spot in the company of local experts from the Institute for Marine Biology from Kotor, suggest the following:

- On the average, seawater quality is good, with no heavy impact from pollution sources.
- Overall good status of sea-grass meadows in the whole study area, with evidence of degradation processes in some areas.

¹

<http://www.undp.org.me/home/archive/bonn/GTK%20COP9%20Speech%20Bonn%2027%20May%2008%20ENG.pdf>

² <http://www.gov.me/files/1244447058.pdf>; page 45

- The negative impacts on ecosystems are showing up in low number of fish species and low consistency of fish populations
- High impact of unsustainable and illegal practices, such as trawler fishing near the coast, date-mussels harvesting, fishing with explosives, spare fishing with tanks, construction waste dumping.
- Evident lack of enforcement of existing rules and effective control of safety issues in nautical traffic, water sports, swimming and bathing zones. Lack of management capacity of institutions results with systematic occurrence of illegal activities.
- There is a good potential for low impact traditional activities and tourism³

Strategic documents described bellow (National Strategy for Sustainable Development) envisage two more locations for future MPAs – Bay of Platamuni and Stari Ulcinj Island.⁴

Introduction of the pilot-MPA and possible successful introduction of functioning network of MPAs might prove to be of crucial importance for raising the public wareness on the necessity to preserve marine ecosystems in the Republic of Montenegro.

HISTORY OF COASTAL PROTECTION IN MONTENEGRO

First protected areas in Montenegro date back to late 19th century, when King Nikola introduced hunting bans for certain areas. King Nikola also protected underwater wells at Skadar Lake, through introducing seasonal fishing bans on these locations.

In certain areas of the coastline, fishermen traditionally respected hatching periods in order to preserve population of fish. This practice, however, got mostly lost over the past 60 years. There are still reported cases of fishing with dynamite on the coastline –just to name the most extreme practice that is present - although more aggressive activities to put an end to bad fishing habits have been announced recently.

In 1968, Montenegro’s Nature Protection Institute proclaimed ornithology reserves at Lake Skadar and certain beaches on Montenegrin coastline. These also included three beaches within the boundaries of the current pilot-MPA “Katic”, which had been placed under the nominal protection as ‘monuments of nature’ ever since: Percin and Lucice beach and Buljarica Bay.

For decades, despite protection decrees, not much had been done to preserve the valuable ecosystems and biodiversity in Montenegro’s waters. Total existing share of protected areas in the coastal zone is very low and it refers to three categories:

- monuments of nature (includes communities of Bosnian pine *Pinus heldraichii* on Orjen, Lovcen and Rumija, some 20 beaches along the entire coast, botanical

³ Screenplay for DFS documentary film, produced by NGO MedCEM.

⁴ Please see the map enclosed.

garden near Risan and three town parks – in Herceg Novi, Tivat and Bar – Topolica);

- areas with special natural characteristics (hill Spas above Budva, peninsula Ratac with Zukotrlica, and Old Ulcinj island); and
- areas protected by municipal decisions (Kotor – Risan Bay with total surface of around 15,000 ha).

Tivat Saltpans have been declared a protected area in 2007, but the management regime has not been established yet.

There are four areas in the coastal zone of Montenegro that have been recognised as Important Bird Areas according to the criteria of relevant EU legislation: Bojana River Delta, Mount Rumija, Buljarica Bay and Tivat Saltpans.

Areas of Special Conservation Interest in the coastal area have also been identified under the Emerald project, which sets out preconditions for establishment of Natura 2000 network in Montenegro.

PROTECTED SITES WITHIN THE PILOT-MPA

As noted above, three beaches located within the boundaries of pilot-MPA – Buljarice, Percin and Lucice – have already been placed under protection since 1968. Although neither had been subjected to rapid tourism devastation – at least according to the local standards and in comparison with the rest of the coastline – strategic tourism development documents envisage their intensive development (Lucice) and building of “hotel-cities” (Buljarice).

Buljarice Bay, which is one of the longest beaches in Montenegro with its 2,000 meters, has also been recognized as Important Plant and Important Bird Area (2007). Montenegrin ornithologists maintain that three out of nine preconditions for its proclamation as a Ramsar site are being met.

Furthermore, Special Purpose Spatial Plan for the Coast suggests that certain, though not specified, level of protection would also be assigned to the islands of Katic and Sveta Nedjelja opposite to Petrovac.

Percin, Buljarica, as well Katic and Sveta Nedjelja Islands have also been placed on the Montenegrin Emerald List, which means they are potential Natura 2000 sites.

MPAs – THE LEGISLATIVE BASIS

The sea of Montenegro includes the interior waters and the territorial sea up to 12 nautical miles off the shore, while the coastal zone covers some 300 km of the coast and the towns and settlements within six Montenegrin municipalities (coastal region). Morsko dobro (Public Maritime Domain) is defined as a special purpose area covering the narrow coastal belt along the whole coast (the land area of some 60 km²) and the area of the territorial sea of some 2,500 km².

Internationally, Republic of Montenegro recognized the necessity to proclaim such zones thorough its ratification of **UN Convention on Biological Diversity (2003)**, adoption of **Bern** and **Barcelona Conventions (2008)** and EU's standards defined in **Marine Strategy Framework Directive**, which is a part of Montenegro's *acquis communautaire* obligations as a candidate-country. These international obligations are being increasingly recognized by the national legislation, development strategies and action plans, with apparent difficulties with their actual implementation.

Law on Natural Protection defines protected natural assets as “areas with distinguished biological, geological, ecosystem or landscape diversity.” It recognizes protected areas in form of “strict and special nature reserve”, “natural park”, “regional and nature park”, “monument of nature”, “protected habitats” and “landscapes with outstanding features.”

As types of natural values to be protected, Law defines “forest ecosystems, natural and cultural landscapes, important habitat types - habitats in danger of disappearance in their natural range, habitats giving a small natural range following their regression or by reason of their intrinsically restricted areas, habitats representing outstanding examples of typical characteristics of one or more biogeographic regions (Alpine, Continental and Mediterranean).”

Furthermore, as ecologically significant areas, Law defines conserved areas with outstanding biological diversity and of international importance, areas essentially contributing to the conservation of biological and landscape biodiversity; areas of habitat types that are considered to be endangered and rare in Montenegro, Europe and the World; habitats of wild species of plants, animals and fungi, which are endangered in Montenegro, Europe and the World; habitats of wild species of plants, animals and fungi; areas significantly contributing to the interconnections between populations of biological species of wild plants, animals and fungi (ecological corridors); migratory routes, resting-places of animals and natural breeding sites; conserved forest units.

Law also maintains that international ecologically significant area is an “area considered significant for the protection of wild species of plants, animals or fungi and their habitats at international level.

As far as categorization is concerned, Law recognizes three levels: Category I – protected natural asset of exceptional importance; Category II – active protection; Category III – important protected natural asset.

In terms of protection regimes, Law recognizes three degrees: special protection, active protection, sustainable use and buffer zones.

Law also addresses the issue of managers of protected natural assets, forsee the fee for the use of this asses and obliges the manager to submit annual report to the Ministry of Environment.

National Sustainable Development Strategy (2007) recognizes it is essential to “put a stop to further degradation of the space in the coastal zone by the application of adequate spatial planning documents, ensure the protection of coastal wetlands (Ulcinj, Buljarica, and Tivat’s Solila) and other particularly valuable coastal ecosystems, and establish Marine Protected Areas (MPA) to protect marine ecosystems and biodiversity.”

This document also sets out the as one of Montenegro’s priority objectives “to protect at least 10% of the coastal zone by 2009.” It also announces forming of a new “managing bodies” to run these areas, which, in my view, suggest it’ll be public enterprises, as is the case with existing terrestrial National Parks. This document also states that the system for managing nature protected areas should be “harmonized with the IUCN management categories and provide for participatory approach to management.” (p:37)

Strategy also recognizes there is significant degradation of the coastal zone, adding that “an important source of pressures on resources and quality of marine and coastal environment are unresolved issues of waste disposal and wastewater treatment, while other sources of pressures also include ports and other maritime infrastructure, and to and to a lesser extent fishery, mariculture, agriculture and industry.

This Strategy also quotes The Tourism Master Plan for the coastal region, which “envisages 100,000 hotel beds and a total number of more than 200,000 beds in all the types of tourist facilities by the year 2020. The spatial planning documents also envisage a significant increase of tourist capacities, the increase of beach space and the development of nautical tourism facilities in the area of *morsko dobro*.

Furthermore, it states that “the current coastal zone management system is characterised by sectoral competencies (which frequently overlap), lack of co-ordination, poor enforcement of legislation and lack of capacities of the relevant institutions.”

National Strategy on Integrated Coastal Zone Management reaffirms the use of IUCN methodology in the proclamation of MPAs, naming three locations as designated MPAs and placing their introduction them among government’s strategic goals. Years 2010. and 2011. are designated for the development of management plans, in line with IUCN stipulations.

All strategic documents – National biodiversity Strategy, National Strategy for ICZM and National Strategy for Sustainable Development - warn of the widening gap between the adopted legislation and its actual implementation. Capacities for this remain limited at both national and local level. Nevertheless, sustainable development is endorsed as a predominant interest, although, in reality, there are still many issues to be resolved (uncontrolled urbanization, still non-existent waste-water and communal waste treatment, bad fishing/nature protection practices, etc).

COMPETENCES

Ministry of Sustainable Development and Tourism is the one which has ‘taken over’ environmental protection sector.

Ministry of Economy used to supervise “Maritime Domain” (?)

Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development holds the sector for Fisheries.

Environmental Protection Agency has the mandate to conduct inspections and law enforcement for activities regulated under environmental legislation

Both local governments in the area of interest for the pilot-MPA have employees dealing with sector for environmental protection.

Nature Protection Institute performs biodiversity monitoring and keeps an inventory of protected areas. It has a mandate to preserve protected objects of nature (which include natural attractions or monuments of nature, nature reserves and protected animal and plant species), propose protection measures, conduct research and prepare plans and programmes for nature (protected objects of nature).

Institute for Marine Biology is carrying out monitoring and research programmes on the biological resources of the shelf and continental slope of the Montenegrin coast.

Public Enterprise “Maritime Domain” is in charge of a “special purpose area covering narrow coastal belt along the entire seashore. It is from the incomes deriving from its mandate.

Hydrometeorological Institute monitors the air and water quality.

LOCAL STAKEHOLDERS

Hence, institutions, businesses and individuals which would be affected and/or could contribute in MPAs establishment and proper and sustainable management include (this is a draft list):

Ministry of Tourism and Sustainable Development

Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (Fisheries Department)

Ministry of Education and Sports

Public Enterprise “Maritime Domain”

Ports/marinas of Bar and Budva

A representative of the European Commission Delegation/other international organizations (UNIDO, GTZ?)

Coastal guard/Maritime Police

Harbor Patrols Budva/Bar

Maritime Safety Department of Montenegro

Municipality of Budva

Municipality of Bar

Municipality of Ulcinj (designated MPA, to be proclaimed soon after the pilot-MPA)

National/local Tourist Organization

Institute for Marine Biology

Institute for Nature Protection

University of Podgorica, Department of Biology, Department of Environmental Protection

Environmental Protection Agency

National/local scuba diving associations/clubs/diving centers

Local Fishermen Associations

Education system – directors of local schools/kindergartens, biology teachers, representatives of Ministry of Education ?

NGOs

Documents used:

“CAMP Montenegro – Feasibility Study”

<http://www.pap-thecoastcentre.org/pdfs/CAMP%20MN%20Feas%20Study%20FINAL.pdf>

“Emerald Network in Montenegro”

http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/cultureheritage/nature/econetworks/News/Prepa_Biogeoseminar_2011/ppt/Montenegro_Emerald.pdf

“National Biodiversity Strategy”

<http://www.gov.me/files/1244447058.pdf>

“National Strategy of Sustainable Development of Montenegro”

<http://www.gov.me/files/1207655097.pdf>

“Emerald Network in Montenegro”

http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/cultureheritage/nature/econetworks/News/Prepa_Biogeoseminar_2011/ppt/Montenegro_Emerald.pdf

Screenplay for the Documentary on the pilot-MPA, commissioned by DFS and shot by MedCEM