

**VISITOR FEE
IMPLEMENTATION
SCOPING PHASE**

**KARABURUN-SAZAN
NATIONAL MARINE PARK
ALBANIA**



**BLUE
SEEDS**

This report was prepared in the framework of BlueSeeds one year **support program** to set up visitor fees in the Marine Protected Areas of the Mediterranean.

Through a call for proposal for MPA managers, released in the Spring of 2021, BlueSeeds objective was to transform the steps presented in the “Guide on self-financing mechanisms for MPA managers” into concrete actions in the field and to support MPA managers in following the process of implementation.

Karaburun-Sazan MPA was selected among the applicants as one of the pilots. In collaboration with the Regional Administration of Protected Areas of Vlorë (RAPA Vlorë), as the managers of the Park, regular meetings, surveys and follow-up with stakeholders involved at different times of implementation were conducted during the year of support.



TABLE OF CONTENT

PART 1

Context of Karaburun-Sazan National Marine Park

General context	2
Geographical scope	2
Environmental characteristics	4
Environmental issues	5
Conservation objectives	6
Restrictions	6
Resources	7
Stakeholders	7

PRESENTATION OF THE VISITOR FEES SYSTEM	8
--	----------

PART 2

Tourism and visitor fee potential in Karaburun-Sazan National Marine Park

Tourism characteristics	9
Touristic offer and tourism operators	9
Ecosystems services	11
Legal framework	13
Willingness-to-pay survey results	14

PART 3

Recommendations

Solution 1: Setting up a visitor fee	18
Solution 2: Implement a licence for tourist boats to operate in the area	19



PART I

CONTEXT OF KARABURUN-SAZAN NATIONAL MARINE PARK

General context

Name of the MPA: Karaburun Sazan National Marine Park

Date of implementation: 28 April 2010

Status: National Marine Park, 2nd Category

Related law -DCM NO.289 date 28.04.2010/ LAW NO: 81/2017 "On Protected Areas"

Geographical scope



The total area of Karaburun-Sazan National Marine Park is 12,428 ha, with the marine area around Karaburun Peninsula having 9,706.08 ha and the marine area near Sazani island having 2,721.87 ha, divided into 4 different zones:

1. Core zone (CZ) where the first level of protection is applied
2. Effective management zone (EMZ), where the second level of protection is applied
3. Recreation Zone (RZ), where the third level of protection is applied
4. Sustainable Development Zone (SDZ), where the third level of protection is applied

Karaburun Peninsula itself is a Managed Nature Reserve while Sazan Island is a military zone in Albania.



Entrance access

- **Vlora Harbour**

The port of Vlora is the departure point for most tourist boats (currently 16 boats with a capacity of over 30 people).

- **Marina of Orikum**

Orikum marina is the main departure point for private yachts and boats. It provides all the necessary services including power, water supply, and fuel, as well as specialized assistance.

- **Dhermi And Palasa Villages**

Provide an entrance to the south of the park. The main destination is Grama and Saint Andrew Bay.

- **Departure from Fishery port in Radhima (next to the Visitor Centre)**

It is suitable for small tourist boats with a capacity of up to 10 people, as well as for fishing boats and small personal boats.

- **Terrestrial Military Base (military checkpoint)**

Another entry point to the MPA is the military base, located near the village of Orikum.

To use this entrance, a permit must be issued by the Durres port authorities.

- **Uncontrolled departures from the Beach Bars, restaurants, and hotels along the coast.**

Significant anthropic areas

- **City of Vlora**

The city has a population of 104,827 and a total area of 647.94 km². It has a large seaport and a commercial centre. Its economic activity is mainly based on fishing and industry, with the surrounding area producing oil, natural gas, bitumen, and salt. The city also has important Albanian naval facilities. It has grown in importance as an agricultural centre with a very large-scale olive and fruit tree plantation, and as a centre for food processing, oil, and bitumen export industries.

- **Orikum City**

Coastal tourist town with 4 villages.

The population of about 12,000. Mainly tourist and agricultural areas.

- **Palasa village**

Exclusive resort area along the coast at the southern edge of the park.

- **Pashaliman Military area and Sazan Island**

The Pashaliman military base has a ship repair and a construction factory. The island is a guarded military zone, used for military training.

Touristic departures ports

- **Vlora Harbour**

The main port can accommodate up to 20 boats. 16 tourist operators operating in the MPA depart from this port.

- **Marina of Orikum**

There is also a private marina of Orikum, mainly for yacht and private boats.

- **Radhima Fishing Port**

About 15 boats leave from the fishing port of Radhima for the MPA.

Environmental characteristics

Biocenosis of the lower mediolittoral rocks

The mediolittoral is characterized by calcareous algae of *Lithophyllum* sp., which are good biological indicators of superficial pollution and fluctuant sea levels. *Lithophyllum byssoides* is present in both Sazani island and Karaburuni peninsula.

Biocenosis of mediolittoral caves

There are several of mediolateral caves along the western side of peninsula, where species like *Catenella caespitosa*, *Hildenbrandia prototypus*, *Phymatolithon lenormandii*, etc. grow.

Biocenosis of the *Posidonia oceanica* meadow

Patches of *Posidonia oceanica* meadows occur at 6-10m depth and deeper in sheltered sites of the rocky coastline of Rreza e Kanalit-Karaburuni and Sazani island. On the eastern side of the island, *Posidonia* beds are found closer to the coast at shallower depths. On the western coast, *Posidonia oceanica* grows generally on rocky substrates and rarely on sandy seabeds, in front of small beaches. On the western side of Sazani island, a rocky substrate is found prolonging the island, some patches of *Posidonia oceanica* are located in sheltered areas where the depth does not increase as much as along Karaburuni.

Biocenosis of infralittoral algae

In the hard beds and rocks of the infralittoral, perennial brown algae are dominant over extensive parts of shallow hard substrata in the western side of Karaburun and Sazan. The most important group is that of the brown algae *Cystoseira*.

Rare, endangered and threatened species

At national scale, about 75% of endangered species of marine animals, mostly benthic macro invertebrates, which belong to the Red List of Albanian Fauna (2007), have been recorded in Karaburun-Sazan area. The most important and sensitive species and biocenosis in the area Karaburuni peninsula – Sazani island are: Red coral, Date mussel, Dusky grouper, Starfish, Coralligenous biocenosis, Biocenosis of *Posidonia oceanica* meadows, Biocenosis dominated by *Lithophyllum byssoides*, Biocenosis of infralittoral algae – *Cystoseira* communities, Monk seal, Short-beaked common dolphin, and Loggerhead turtle.





Degradation of Posidonia meadows

Posidonia meadows are impacted by anchoring, invasive species (e.g. *Caulerpa racemosa*), pollution, fishing above meadows, climate change, etc. There have been declines in the population of *P. oceanica* due to mechanical damage from trawling and boats, coastal development, and eutrophication. Posidonia meadows, as breeding grounds of many species, have also deteriorated because of changes in the structure of the fishing fleet. More than 50% of fishing boats have small power motors (100 HP) and hence are able to apply deep fishing techniques (trawling) in shallow areas since they are unable to fish in zones more than 50 meters deep.

Degradation of coralligenous communities

Coralligenous communities are threatened by illegal fishing and diving, anchoring, invasive species, pollution, climate change, etc. The greatest cause for degradation of the commercially valuable red coral is illegal harvesting by divers but also trawling, net fishing, boat anchoring, pollution, and increased global warming.

Decreased fish stocks and harvesting of marine invertebrates

Intensive aquaculture in the buferic area

The intensity of fishing effort and its effect on local populations of target and by-catch species remains unknown. However, fishermen report that local fisheries resources are limited, and that their revenue is decreasing. For example, population of a very sensitive species, the dusky grouper *Epinephelus marginatus*, distributed along all the Karaburuni peninsula and Sazani island coast shows strong declines because of overexploitation.

Fish stocks in the area have been decreased due to illegal fishing and weak law enforcement. Fishers would like to see more controls and improved law enforcement. There are illegal fishing activities in the rocky areas of both sides of Karaburuni peninsula and sometimes in the western side of Sazani island (illegal collection of the date mussel *Lithophaga lithophaga* and the lobsters *Palinurus elephas* and *Homarus gammarus*, two protected species in the Mediterranean). Diving and illegal fishing with lights



and spear guns is also practiced, such as for fishing the grouper *Epinephelus* sp. Uncontrolled fishing in the coast may directly damage not only fishery resources, but also indirectly affects the bird species and mammals feeding on fish. As mentioned above, the breeding grounds of *Posidonia oceanica* have also severely deteriorated because of changes in the structure of the fishing fleet, which also causes a decrease in fish stocks.

Pollution

The coastal settlement (towns and villages) of the Vlora area may have potential negative impacts on the MPA if current modes of development activities are left unchanged. Vessels include those transiting to and from Vlora harbour, fishing boats entering Vlora or other small ports, as well as excursion boats and sailing boats entering the MPA for recreational activities. These vessels can also spill oil and discard solid waste. Anti-fouling paints (bottom paints) also represent a concern. The risk of a major pollution event due to an accidental oil spill in the MPA is high given the volume of commercial shipping that passes through the area. An oil spill in or adjacent to the MPA would not only have detrimental effects on water quality but could also have significant ecological impacts on birds and intertidal assemblages in the MPA.

Invasive species

-The AIS of the port of Vlora, which regularly receives vessels from regional and international harbours, could conceivably spread into adjacent waters. Alien species of marine fauna are also used in mariculture in various parts of the Mediterranean. A threat to marine biodiversity is that of invasive species *Caulerpa racemosa* var. *cylindracea* that is widely dispersed in the Mediterranean basin, including Vlora bay and the eastern side of Karaburuni peninsula (Kashta et al., 2005). In Vlora bay there is also *Halophila stipulacea*, which originates from the Indian Ocean and is an invasive species in the Mediterranean (Kashta, 1992).

Climate Change Effects

There have been no dedicated studies to monitor the effects of climate change in the park. There is a need to focus more on impact assessment and adaptation.

Conservation objectives

Surveillance

Reduce illegal fishing, as well as by-catch in the area, by increasing the ranger and inspection patrols at sea.

Reduce degradation and maintain the size and status of Posidonia meadows in front of beaches (western part) during the management plan timeframe (10 years):

- Habitat mapping and then monitoring of Posidonia status
- Regulate and monitor the number of boats in the MPA
- Regulate and monitor the intensity of aquaculture: research impact of aquaculture and monitor it
- Set up mooring buoys: assessment, design, and deployment
- Assessment of the status, repair, and maintenance of existing 2-3 docks

Stop degradation and maintain the status of coralligenous communities and other vulnerable marine habitats during management plan timeframe (10 years):

- Habitat mapping and then monitoring of coralligenous status
- Conduct research on the distribution, composition, and vulnerability of marine habitats

Serve favourable status of endangered and protected marine species and ensure safe passage of charismatic species (marine turtles, monk seals, dolphins, and whales) through corridor during management plan timeframe (10 years):

- Collaboration of fishermen and military on monitoring (sightings) of charismatic species (large marine vertebrates - marine turtles, dolphins, whales, and monk seals)
- Development and implementation of the code of conduct for wildlife watching in cooperation with tour operators
- Conducting research on the distribution and endangerment of endangered and protected marine species

Restrictions

No-take zone

Both Core Zone and Effective Management Zone are No-take zones, 75% of the MPA.

Fishing restrictions

The restrictions were changed recently by a new bylaw of the Minister of Agriculture.

Tourism activities restrictions

No tourism activities are allowed in the Core Zone. Activities allowed or Regulated in the other areas include diving, swimming, and snorkeling (beaches and sunbathing); Visitation; Wildlife watching Boating (excursions) Sailing; Kayaking Water sports.

Military zone

Military activities are prohibited within the park.

Activities prohibited

Aquaculture; mineral extraction; a collection of plants, minerals, stones, paleontological findings, Maritime traffic.

Anchoring and mooring

Anchoring is allowed in RZ and SDZ. Prohibited in CZ and EMZ. Mooring is Prohibited in CZ, Regulated in EMZ and Allowed in RZ and SDZ.

Scientific Research and Monitoring

Regulated, prior permission required from the park authority.

Resources



The Karaburun-Sazan National Marine Park employs **six full-time staff**.

The manager will be responsible for the supervision and reporting of the visitor fee. In addition, the MPA employs two part-time rangers who will be responsible for collecting the fee during the high season.



Stakeholders

Military base in Pashaliman, Orikum

Association of diving clubs

Fishing cooperative of town "Responsible fisherman"

Fishing cooperative of town "OMP Vlora"

National MPA agency

Ministry of environment

Municipality of Vlora

Governorate of Vlora

Club of hotel owners of the region of Vlora

Teuta Boat

Boarder police

2 representatives of the local community are part of the park management committee. Fishermen, tour boats, educational institutions, and other tourism operators are invited and participate in activities organized by the park. Local and national NGOs implement projects and activities in collaboration with the park authority.

PRESENTATION OF THE VISITOR FEES SYSTEM

With more than 320 million tourists visiting the Mediterranean basin each year and more than 340 billion euros generated by the tourism industry in the region, the implementation of a visitor fee system appears to be one of the most relevant and appropriate financing mechanisms for Mediterranean MPAs. However, this self-financing system is largely underestimated by MPAs.

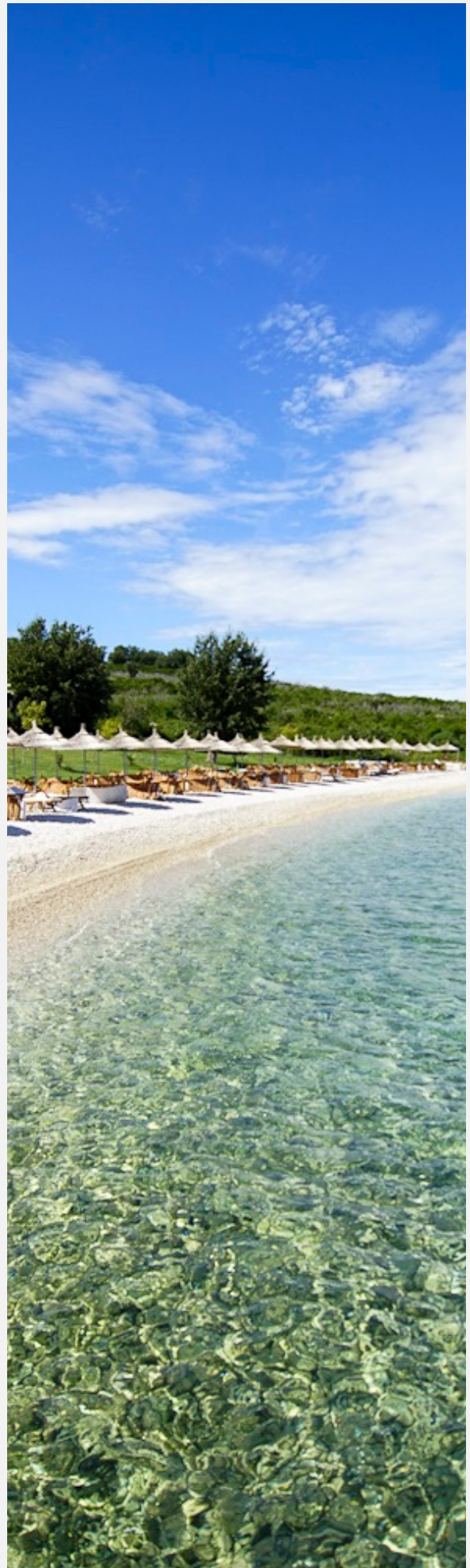
The implementation of a visitor fee can take different forms: it can be an **entrance** fee, a **boat** fee, a **mooring** fee, but also fees linked to specific activities offered by the MPA, such as diving or **fishing** fees, etc.

These fees can be collected directly by MPA agents or by a third party, such as a tourist operator, which collects the money and then transfers it to the MPA.

The benefits of such a mechanism are numerous:

- Easy system to implement.
- Ensures a regular flow of income for the MPA.
- Possibility to finance new conservation activities or increase the financing of existing activities in the MPA (scientific research, beach cleaning...).
- Better management of the number of visitors.
- Greater involvement of visitors in conservation efforts.
- Encourages the manager to make infrastructure improvements.

As a reminder, the implementation of a visitor fee is not intended to cover all the financial needs of a MPA. It is a solution that can be added to other funding mechanisms with the overall objective of diversifying the MPA's sources of funding.





PART II

TOURISM AND VISITOR FEE POTENTIAL IN KARABURUN SAZAN MPA

Tourism characteristics

The MPA usually receives about 70 000 tourists each year (excluding circumstantial reasons likely to impact the number of tourists). The maximum number of visitors was 79,274. 99% of the tourists come during the high season (from 15 May to 15 September). In view of this proportion, it, therefore, seems extremely relevant to set up a funding mechanism (concession fee or visitor fee) during this period.

Touristic offer & tourism operators

Daily boat tours

16 tour operators offer day boat tours in the Karaburun-Sazan National Marine Park. Their boats can accommodate between 35 and 80 people and can take up to 250 tourists per day during the high season for an average price of 20 euros per person. It is therefore the most attractive and profitable activity of the MPA (around 1 200 000 potential revenues each year).

Speedboat tour

This activity is offered by 80 operators for an average price of 150 euros.

Scuba diving

3 diving clubs operate in the MPA for an average price of 50 euros per person. No data is available on the average number of tourists doing this activity each year.

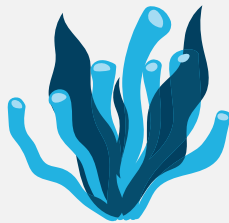
Recreational fishing

No data is available on the average price of the activity and the average number of tourists doing this activity each year.

Ecosystems services

Here, the aim is to identify existing or potential commercial activities (fisheries, aquaculture, seaweed farming, or mooring management) that directly benefit from ecosystem services provided by the MPA, and which could be subject to a concession fee.

Thus, apart from services supporting the tourism economy locally, the MPA provides 13 other ecosystem services:



Fish, shellfish, algae, and their outputs used for food

Fishing is prohibited within the MPA (see law no: 64/2012). Only recreational fishing is allowed.

Bioremediation by organisms

Lifecycle maintenance, habitat, and gene pool protection

The Karaburun-Sazan National Marine Park management plan includes in its objectives the protection of Posidonia meadow habitats, cystoseira and coralligenous communities as well as the establishment of no-take zones to protect nursery areas.

Decomposition and fixing processes

Posidonia oceanica meadows play a part in stabilizing seabeds, breaking swells and waves, and encouraging the deposit of sedimentary particles. Posidonia leaves also form compact and resistant structures along shores that provide very effective protection against erosion.

Chemical condition of water

Recently, water quality monitoring has been strengthened in the MPA to monitor pollution-related changes in water quality.

Climate regulation (by reduction of greenhouse gas concentration)

Experimental and physical use

- **Swimming:** Karaburuni has several clean beaches which serve as tourist spots for all users. Among them: Grama Bay; St. Andrew's Bay; Laurel Bay; St. Basil's beach; Zhabovel beach.
- **Diving:** Three associations offer diving courses with guides and equipment. Their capacity varies from 3-4 divers to 10 divers. These centres are located in Vlora, Orikum and Radhime. They cooperate with diving centres in Italy. The most popular dive sites are Kepi i Gjuhezes, the western part of the island of Sazani and the western part of the Karaburuni peninsula. Tourists contact these diving associations through travel agencies or hotels in the area. Vlora Bay and Karaburun Sazan MPA offer a number of interesting sites to observe: sunken boats, underwater caves...
- **Water sports:** The Bay of Vlora, due to its geographical position, favours the development of sailing activities: a sailing school was established near the port of Vlora two years ago. Jet-skis are not allowed in the whole MPA. Other water sports are allowed in the recreational area.

Scientific interactions

In the National Marine Park, a series of controls are carried out on Posidonia meadows, cystoseira, Monacha seals, lithophaga lithophaga, sea turtles, whose presence is important for the park and the aquatic ecosystem services. The MPA is also a habitat for a population of dolphins, but these are not monitored.

Educational interactions

Through the Marine Park Visitor Centre, a series of educational activities are organised with the town's schools to raise awareness of the importance of the Marine Park for the local communities and for the preservation of biodiversity.

Heritage interactions

- Approximately 150 families depend on artisanal fishing in Vlora Bay as their sole source of income. Since 2017, artisanal and professional fishing inside the MPA is not allowed. Around the park, professional fishing takes place mostly in the western and northwestern part of Karaburuni, outside Vlora Bay and the area between Sazani Island and the mouth of the Vjosa River. These are the areas most frequented by fishing boats, mainly trawlers.
- Grama bay is situated in the south-western coast of Karaburuni peninsula; it is a former famous harbour since antiquity. On the rocks of Grama bay there are abundant inscriptions in old Greek and Latin languages, dating more than 2000 years that have made this bay to be considered as the richest “rocky diary” in the Mediterranean.
- Underwater of Karaburuni holds a considerable number of sunken ships and many archaeological objects, which confirm the links between this area and other civilizations of the Greek and Roman periods. There are numerous shipwrecks, mainly on the western coast (including from the two World Wars), as well as amphorae close to cape Shën Nikolla on the eastern coast of Sazani island. Three shipwrecks in Vlora bay and two ancient quarries (one located north of Pasha Liman has sculptured red heads from the classical period) on the eastern coast have been reported in the area.



Entertainment interactions

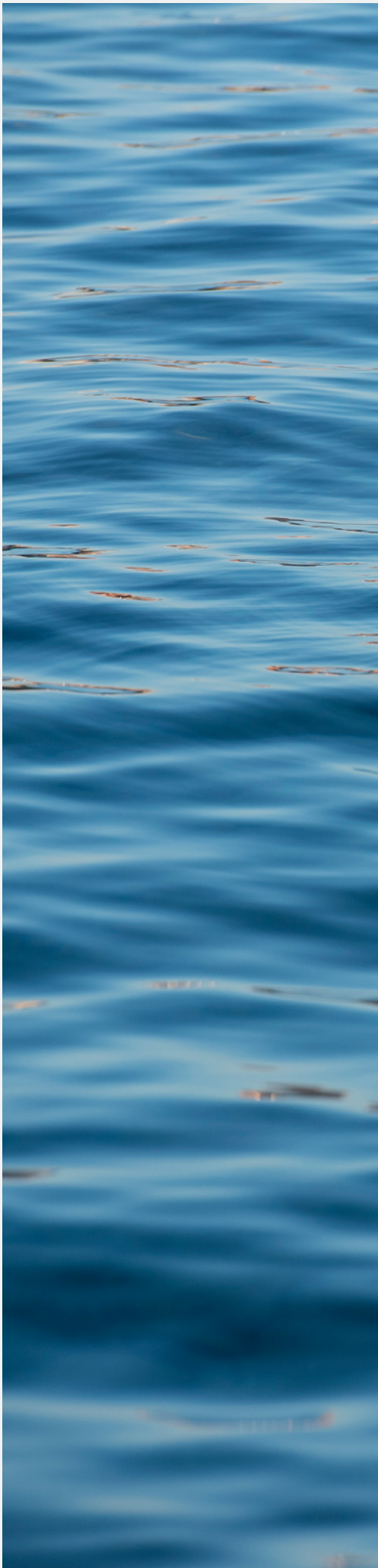
- Many **caves** can be seen in the park, the most important one being **Haxhi Ali**. In the underwater area between Galloveci cape and Gjuheza cape (especially close to Moli i Veriut), there are at least 5 shipwrecks. The area has many **historical and cultural values**.
- There are several **diving sites** identified in this area: 1) diving site at Moli i Veriut next to Haxhi Ali cave; 2) diving site between Gjuheza cape and Moli i Jugut; 3) diving site at Bristani bay next to Water cave; 4) diving site at Inglizi bay; and 5) diving site at San Andrea Bay at the southern end of the park. This area includes an observation point for whales, dolphins, and marine turtles about 4 km south of Gjuheza cape. Wildlife watching of these animals is allowed with certain restrictions (code of conduct: swimming with animals and feeding them is not allowed; animals should not be approach from front, but from behind; boat should approach them slowly and sail in parallel to them, engine should be turned off; they should not be approached more than 50 m – enough space has to be left for them; maximum time to stay with them is 30 minutes).
- Also, this zone includes **several small beaches**, such as: Shën Vasili cape, Shën Jani cape, Bristani bay (3 km north of the bay), Llovizi bay and Grama bay. Next to Shen Vasili Cape and Shen Jani cape there are several small docks and tourism business services that can be used for anchoring and servicing of small visitor boats.

Aesthetic interactions

Landscape conservation is about building a collective conversation and concomitant action on how we wish to shape our relationship with the land we live on and that is vital to sustaining us and all future generations.

Symbolic, sacred, and/ or religious values

- The Castle of Gjon Boçari in Tragjas, the Tower of Dervish Aliu in Dukat, the Church of Marmiro in Orikum and the Cave of Haxhi Ali in Karaburuni attract many visitors in the area. However, only the last one is located in the MPA.
- The Cave of Haxhi Ali is the most beautiful place of the Sazan Karaburun National Park. In addition to a tourist attraction, this cave has an amazing view as well as geological value since it contains stalactite formations that have been created over the centuries and centuries. The only way to visit this place is the sea-going vessels.
- According to sea lore, GramaBay was a quarry from where stones that were used to construt entire Illyrian cities were extracted. As a result, it is generally thought that the rock inscriptions were left by the sailors and the quarry workers.



Legal Framework

In 2015, the Albanian government establishes the National Agency for Protected Areas (NAPA) as a public entity of the state budget subordinated to the Ministry of Tourism and Environment.

At the regional level, NAPA is represented by the Regional Protected Areas Administrations (RAPAs). Together, NAPA and the RAPAs represent the management authority of the Albanian protected area network and are directly responsible for their management, protection, development, and expansion.

RAPAs are therefore legally part of NAPA. In the Vlorë region, RAPA Vlorë is responsible for the management of the Karaburun Sazan MPA as well as 5 other protected areas.

More specifically, the establishment of financing mechanisms in an MPA is subject to the Law No. 81/2017 of 05.04.2017 on Protected Areas and the Decision of the Council of Ministries No. 1156 of 24.12.2020 "On the determination of revenues generated from fees paid in protected areas, the extent and criteria for their use".

These revenues include:

"The revenues from the fees paid for performing economic, social, tourist, and research activities in the protected areas; fees paid by transportation to their territories; and fees paid by visitors and tourists visiting such areas"

The law then defines for each type of fee the exact amount to be applied.

Moreover, concerning the management of these revenues, the law states that:

"Revenues generated from annual fees shall be managed by the National Agency of Protected Areas (NAPA); [...] The coming year plan of investments for all types of activities in the EPA, funded by revenues generated from fees, shall be proposed by the regional administration of protected areas and shall be approved by NAPA"

Legal Framework

The revenues generated by the MPA are thus sent directly to NAPA, which centralizes the revenues of all MPAs in the country. NAPA then manages these revenues according to the following criteria and conditions:

“Revenues generated from fees shall be used by NAPA to the extent of:

a) 60% in:

- investments in protected areas;
- drafting management plans for the environmental protected areas (hereinafter EPA); forest and pasture inventory; and monitoring of wild flora and fauna;
- afforestation projects, improvements, fight against erosion, trails in protected areas, habitat rehabilitation and landscaping, clearing and managing invasive alien species;
- measures to prevent and protect against fires;
- construction and maintenance of infrastructure inside the protected areas in terms of communication, mountain dams, fences, visitors' buildings and centers (hereinafter VC);
- publications, general public awareness-raising, education and information;

b) 40% in:

- measures to prevent and fight erosion;
- fighting diseases and pests;
- breeding, food and provision of living conditions for the wildlife;
- purchases of means of communication and transport; furnishing and improving the working conditions of regional administrations of protected areas (hereinafter RAPA) and field work;
- covering seasonal employment costs for the activities inside the protected areas;
- supporting local communities' traditional activities.”

To sum up, all financial activities and related procedures are carried out centrally, within the NAPA. It is therefore **legally possible** to set up funding mechanisms: the RAPAs send their needs to NAPA, which then evaluates each proposal (decision criteria are however not known by the MPA). **The final decision to implement a funding mechanism (visitor fee or other) in an MPA, therefore, requires the prior approval of NAPA.**

A visitor fee mechanism has already been implemented in Blue Eye Natural Monument:

Fee amount

50ALL for visitors and 100ALL for vehicles.

Collection process

Use of tickets for money collection and electronic box office (checkpoint).

Authorities involved

NAPA, Ministry of Environment, General directory of forestry 2001

Authorities involved in collecting, managing, and using the revenue collected

NAPA and RAPA Vlora.

The authority receiving money: NAPA

Obstacles, issues, failures: management of cars (lack of parking)

Administrative procedures related with fee management (money deposition/security).

Willingness-to-pay Survey results



A willingness-to-pay survey (WTP) is a tool developed to assess among a sample of visitors the amount of money tourists are willing to give to participate to the protection of the natural site they are visiting. A survey was developed by BlueSeeds and conducted between September and October 2021 in Karaburun Sazan MPA. The WTP was conducted on a random sample.

A total of 103 people were interviewed: 30% were from Albania and 70% were of foreign origin (European, North American, Middle Eastern or North African).



Before starting the analysis, some remarks and clarifications should be made:

Although the sample of visitors answering the survey was low, it provides us with key elements on the priorities to be applied in terms of conservation in the MPA, and therefore deserve to be valued.

A margin of error must be taken into account. A detailed willingness-to-pay report is accessible through BlueSeeds and the RAPA.

Willingness-to-pay Survey results

Finance for marine conservation

87% of visitors would agree to pay for conservation and 85% recognize that the area is made more attractive by the presence of an MPA. The MPA is therefore recognized as a major tourist asset in a region where tourism is essential for the economy.

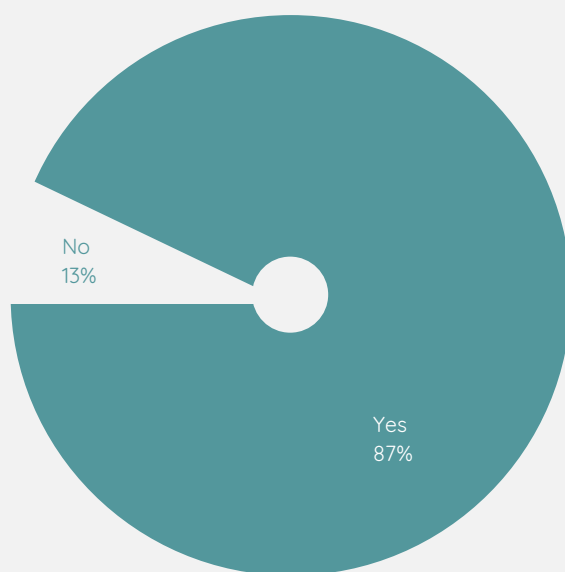


Figure 1 : Percentage of respondents willing to pay for marine conservation, 2021

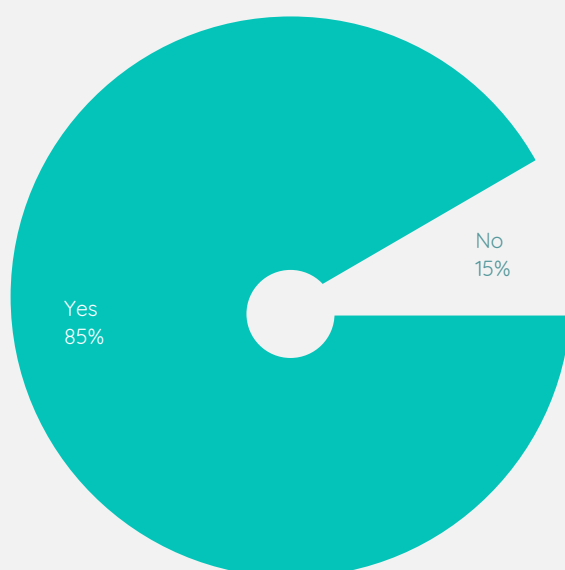


Figure 2 : Percentage of respondents considering the area more attractive thanks to the presence of the Karaburun-Sazan National Marine Park, 2021

Willingness-to-pay Survey results

Amount

2/3 of respondents are therefore willing to pay more than ALL 50 to finance marine conservation activities in Karaburun-Sazan MPA.

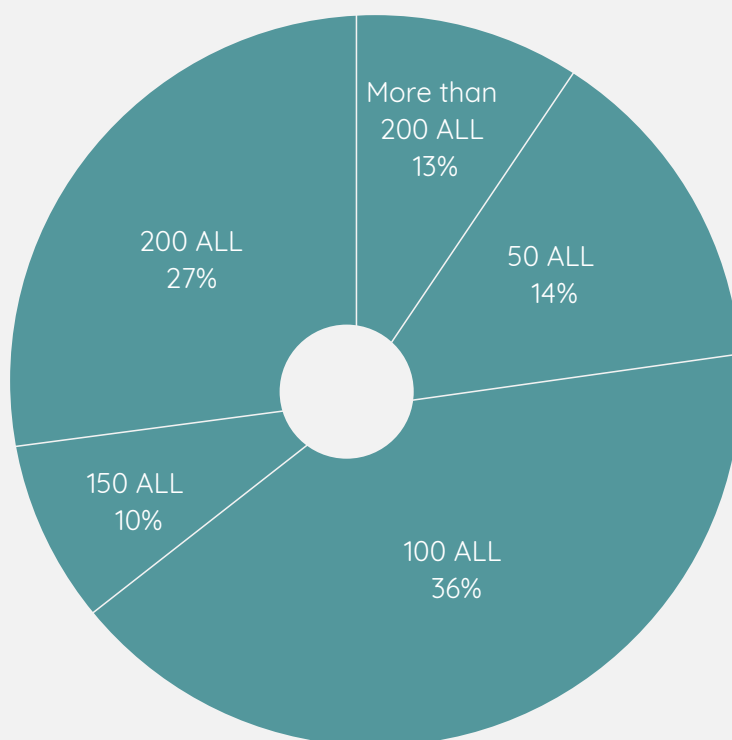


Figure 4 : Amounts respondents are willing to pay to finance marine conservation activities in Karaburun-Sazan National Marine Park, 2021



Reasons for refusing payments:

The main reason people are not interested in participating in conservation finance is that they think their money **will not be used effectively**. There is therefore a need for more **transparency and communication** to reassure visitors about how their money is being used. The following graph helps to identify which activities visitors favour for conservation.

Willingness-to-pay Survey results

Use of the money collected

Tourists would like the money collected to be used for beach cleaning (36%), awareness activities (23%), educational programs (18%), patrolling (15%), scientific monitoring (6%), and to a lesser extent for fire protection, emergencies, and island regulation (3%).

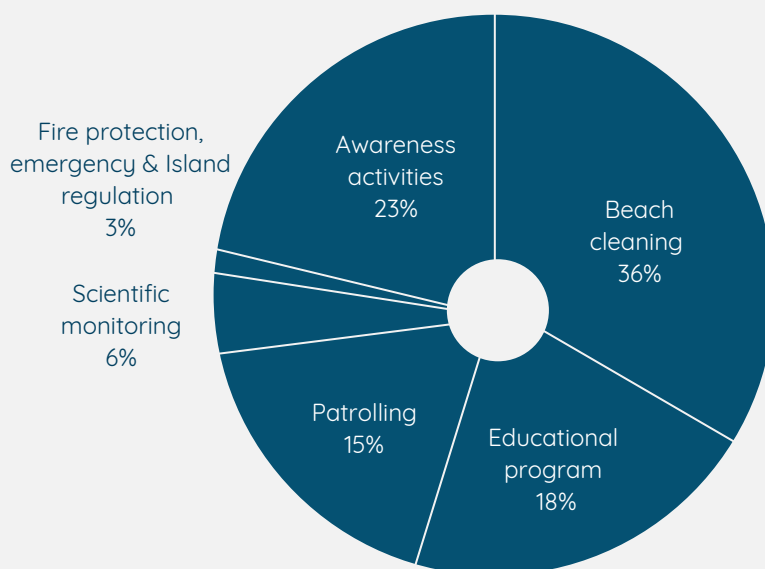


Figure 5 : Best ways of using money collected according to respondents, 2021

Conclusions of the Willingness-to-Pay survey

Not only are tourists willing to pay for conservation activities, but they are also willing to pay a higher price than the currently set. The MPA enhances the value of the site and makes it more attractive to tourists: it is, therefore, a major tourist asset in a region where tourism is essential for the economy.

Moreover, the survey shows that there is a great need for transparency and communication since many tourists believe that their money is not used effectively. Indeed, the centralization of revenues at the national level makes it all the more difficult to get information on how the revenues generated by the MPA are used. For this reason, a communication plan should be developed: this would first allow informing visitors of the activities financed thanks to their contribution, but it would also provide them with other types of information (restrictions in force in the MPA, services at visitor's disposal, the key role of the MPA...).

These communication tools can take different forms: **information panels** placed at various locations in the MPA, a **digital payment tool** for entrance fees that allows visitors to obtain, in addition to the ticket, various information about the MPA, etc.



PART III RECOMMENDATIONS

Several categories of revenue can co-exist in an MPA. It is thus necessary to identify those that are best suited to the context of Karaburun Sazan in the light of the information provided above.

Solution 1: Setting up a visitor fee

Two hypotheses can be envisaged:

- **Charge for entry to a specific site**

A tax could be introduced at the entrance to the Karaburun Sazan caves (example of Haxhi Ali cave), which are very popular sites, attracting many tourists every year. Different payment methods can be envisaged: setting up an electronic control system or mobilization of an agent, setting up an entry fee per person or per boat anchorage, etc.

In the long term, this solution could evolve and be extended to a wider area: it would be a sort of "test site" which would allow the necessary improvements to be made for the implementation of visitor fees on other sites or even the overall MPA.

- **Set up a visitor fee for the whole MPA**

This solution is more difficult to envisage in the short term because the MPA has a large number of entry points; it would therefore be extremely difficult, if not impossible, to control all the accesses. This mechanism would also be particularly costly in terms of human and financial resources. This solution can only be envisaged if an online payment system is put in place, a solution to which Albania does not seem ready to adapt as the main means of payment remains cash.

From a **legal point of view**, the implementation of a visitor fee is strictly regulated by law. The law stipulates that:

"Visitor's entry fee, for visitors and tourists (walking, cycling) who are not local residents, and for their means of transport through specific points of controlled entry to managed parks, is 50 ALL/day/person"

The amount of an entrance fee is thus **limited to 50 ALL per day per person** (about 40 cents). A cost-benefit analysis should therefore be conducted to identify which visitor fee model(s) would generate the most income for conservation activities.

Solution 2: Implement a licence for tourist boats to operate in the area

According to RAPA Vlora, around 80% of tourists visiting Karaburun Sazan go on boat tours, an activity offered by 16 different operators.

As boat tours are the most popular activity in the MPA, this solution would capture a large majority of tourists and the collection of the tax would be relatively easy to implement.

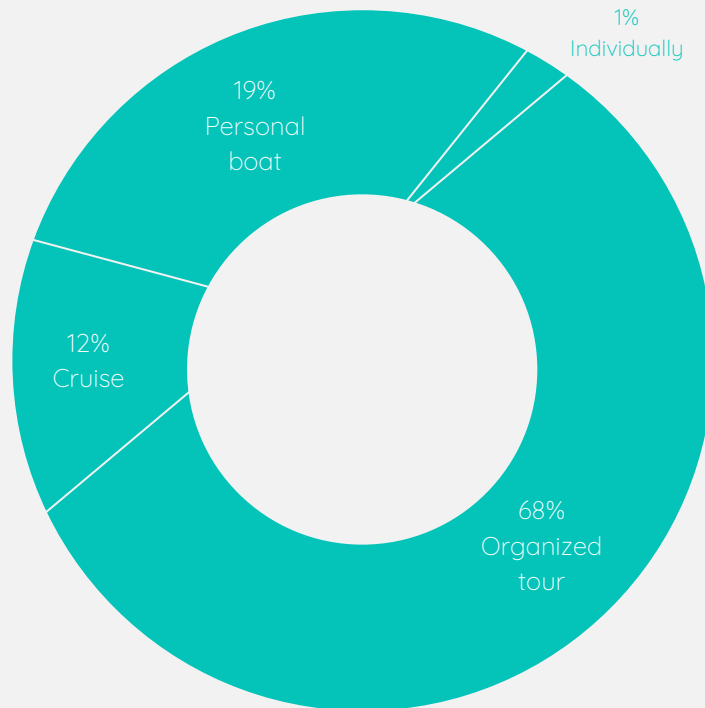


Figure 6: "In what ways did people who came as tourists visit the MPA? 2021"

Several hypotheses can be put forward regarding the implementation of this licence:

- Vary the cost of this licence according to the size of the boat and its capacity to receive tourists

The cost of a licence for an operator who can only receive about ten visitors will not be the same as that for an operator who can receive several hundred people on his boat. Put simply, the larger the capacity of the boat, the higher the licence fee.

- Implement a licence only during the high season

As the period of activity for tourist operators extends from May to October, authorisation to operate in the MPA could be required only during this period. This solution would save money as well as manpower compared to an annual licence.

- Consider different payment formats

The amount of the licence can be defined in a provisional way at the beginning of the season or in a more adjusted way at the end of the season depending on the number of tourists received.

Solution 2: Implement a licence for tourist boats to operate in the area

This solution, therefore, appears to be advantageous for several reasons: simple implementation, control, and collection of the tax, broad capture of tourists, better regulation of boat flows and activities in the MPA.

However, other factors must be taken into account:



What the law allows

The law authorizes the introduction of licenses:

“Fee for service for a) issuance of various authorizations/permits: 5,000 ALL/application”

In other words, this paragraph provides for a service fee of ALL 5,000 for the assessment of all applications for the development of activity in the protected area. In addition to this first tax, a second tax will apply once the permit and the activity are set up, the amount of which will depend on the capacity of the boat:

“Anchoring boats/speedboats and other means of navigation:

- vehicles with a capacity of up to 5 people and water motorbike - 1,300 ALL/day/boat;
- anchoring boats/speedboats with a capacity over 5 people - 2,000 ALL/day/boat;
- anchoring yachts and other vessels of navigation - 13,000 ALL/day/vessel”.

Stakeholders' involvement

Once this legal issue is clarified, the next challenge will be to discuss and negotiate with the tourism operators to convince them of the benefits of implementing such a solution. This negotiation phase is part of phase II of our support program.



BLUE
SEEDS

CONTACT

contact@bluseeds.org

+33 (0)7 88 81 85 58

Darwin Eco-Système
87 Quai des Queyries, 33000
Bordeaux - France

www.bluseeds.org

