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CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF EUROPEAN WILDLIFE  
AND NATURAL HABITATS

**Standing Committee**

35<sup>th</sup> meeting  
Strasbourg, 1-4 December 2015

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**Specific Site - File open**

**Threats to marine turtles in Thines Kiparissias  
(Greece)**

**REPORT BY THE GOVERNMENT**

*Document prepared by  
The Ministry of Reconstruction of Production, Environment & Energy of Greece*

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**URGENT****HELLENIC REPUBLIC****MINISTRY of RECONSTRUCTION OF PRODUCTION, ENVIRONMENT & ENERGY  
DIRECTORATE GENERAL OF ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY**

**Directorate of Biodiversity Protection,  
Soil and Waste Management  
Biodiversity & Protected Areas Department**  
147, Patission St, GR 112 51 ATHENS  
tel: +30 210 8645125, fax: +30 210 8662024

Inf: O. Gogousos

Athens, 10/8/2015

Our ref: 3134/133

To: The Bern Convention Secretariat  
Biodiversity Unit  
F-67075 Strasbourg Cedex

CC: 1. Minister's Cabinet  
2. Alternate Minister's cabinet  
3. Secretary General  
4. International and EC Affairs Department  
5. Perm. Rep. of Greece to the CoE,  
Strasbourg  
6. Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Directorate D5

**Subject: Response to the Recommendation 174 (2014) of the Standing Committee of Bern Convention on the conservation of the loggerhead sea turtle *Caretta caretta* and of the natural environment in the sand dunes area in Kyparissia**

**Related documents:** Letter of Permanent Representation to the Council of Europe with ref. no Φ. 6734/2/ΑΣ 54 of 21-1-2015, attaching the letter of the Secretariat of the Council of Europe of 21-1-2015, transmitting Recommendation 174 (2014) of the Standing Committee of Bern Convention (ref. no of BPSWM 3134/133/22-1-15).

In response to your letter of 21-1-2015 and the Recommendation 174 (2014) concerning threats to the protection and conservation of the loggerhead sea turtle *Caretta caretta* and the sand dunes in Southern Kyparissia Bay, we would like to inform you about the following:

**A. SHORT INTRODUCTION**

The importance and the ecological significance of Southern Kyparissia Bay is mainly connected to the sand dune systems of the area, the egg laying of the loggerhead sea turtle *Caretta caretta* on the sand beach front and its corresponding designation as a Natura 2000 site.

The wider marine and terrestrial area includes three (3) Special Areas of Conservation (SAC):

- a) GR2550005 "Thines Kyparissias (Neochori – Kyparissia)"
- b) GR2330005 "Thines kai Paraliako Dasos Zacharos, Limni Kaiafa, Strofylia, Kakovatos"
- c) GR2330008 "Thalassia periochi Kolpou Kyparissias: Akr. Katakolo - Kyparissia "

From the available data, which are fully confirmed by the monitoring programmes of the spawning of *Caretta caretta* (run by the NGO “Archelon”), it is noted that there is a continuous increase in the number of nests, which rose in 2014 to 1450 (a number more than double compared to the initially recorded one). This fact is also mentioned in Recommendation 174 (2014).

As the area is under human pressure, by applying the prevention and precautionary approach and aiming to the avoidance of possible negative effects, the attempts for implementation of measures in line with Recommendation 174/2014 have been intensified. These measures are presented concisely below.

We would like to also note that we are keeping a reservation to present possible additional elements (according to the constant developments of the case) at the next meeting of the Standing Committee (1-4 December 2015).

## **B. MEASURES FOR THE CONSERVATION OF THE AREA**

- I. In Southern Kyparissia Bay the current legal frame that is efficiently implemented and ensures a system of strict protection comprises:
  - a) the general provisions for the conservation of Natura 2000 sites,
  - b) the general provisions for the conservation of seashore and beach (L. 2971/2001-A'285),
  - c) the general provisions for sand and gravel extraction,
  - d) the specific legislation for the protection of the loggerhead sea turtle *Caretta caretta* (P.D. 617/1980)
  - e) the additional provisions and measures (mentioned in detail in paragraph 5) for the suspension of issuing of new building permissions and the prohibition of a series of building and other works (last decision 19422-OJ 130/AΑΠ/29-6-2015),
  - f) the additional very strict terms (mentioned in detail in paragraph 4) for licensing of installations for bathers on the beaches of the area for summer 2015 (Decision 20925/946/27-5-2015) and
  - g) the legislated precise procedures for the “appropriate assessment” of plans and projects (L. 4014/2011-A' 209).

In order for the wider area (marine and terrestrial) covered by the three SAC: GR2330005, GR2330008 and GR2550005 to be the object of a unified and integrated approach, a Presidential Decree has been drafted, as described in paragraph 2. The fact that the Greek Authorities are introducing for approval a draft Presidential Decree does not in any way mean that the above mentioned general provisions do not constitute an effective system of strict protection.

- II. Aiming to the codification / unification of all the above mentioned provisions at one text, as well as to the updating of the data available for the area and the creation of a unified legal protection framework for all three SAC (GR2330005, GR2330008 και GR2550005), according to the approved in 2014 Specific Environmental Study (SES), a draft Presidential Decree was introduced at the Council of State. Until the Presidential Decree is issued, all the above mentioned protection provisions are applied. Additionally, the content of the approved Specific Environmental Study is obligatorily taken into consideration for all projects and activities within the areas studied under the SES (para 5c of article 6 of L. 3937/2011).
- III. In April 2015, the draft Presidential Decree was returned from the Council of State because it was not “legally introduced”, as the substantial procedural norm was not kept for the opinion giving of “Natura 2000 Committee” (according to para 1 of article 6 of L. 3937/2011, the opinion of the “Natura 2000 Committee” is required for the introduction of relevant Presidential Decrees). Remarks on the provisions of draft Decree are also indicated by the Council of State. At present, ways of incorporation of

these remarks are being examined, so that the modified Presidential Decree will be resubmitted and accepted.

- IV. Every year, for the summer / touristic period (which is the egg laying period of *Caretta caretta*), a Ministerial Decision of the Minister of Reconstruction of Production, Environment and Energy is being edited, determining under strict criteria the terms, measures and restrictions for the placement of installation for bathers on the beaches of the area. The placement of the installation is done under the suggestions and supervision of NGO “Archelon”. For the summer period 2015 Decision 20925 / 946 / 27-5-2015 was issued and relevant decisions were issued at the previous years.

This Decision foresees, among others, the following:

- a) Umbrellas shall be placed in fixed points and in axes vertical to the seashore, in a way that distance of three (3) meters or more is kept between them. Placement will be made under collaboration with “Archelon”.
- b) Sand between umbrellas and sun beds shall not be covered by wooden passageways.
- c) A free zone of approximately five (5) meters width shall be secured at the crest of the beach, where turtles can create their nests.
- d) The washing of sun beds shall be made outside the beach.
- e) Sun beds shall be gathered by the sunset at a pace outside the sand beach or at the back place of the beach and be placed back in the morning. Carrying by dragging on the sand is prohibited. Specifically for umbrellas and because of their solid base, it is not recommended to be daily moved but to be closed so that the restriction of shading is possible in case of a nest nearby.
- f) Cleaning of beach shall be made by hand during the nesting period of the turtles (1/5 to 31/10). Cleaning machines can only be used before the beginning (before 1<sup>st</sup> of May) and after the end of nesting period (after 31<sup>st</sup> October).
- g) Avoidance of light pollution and securing that there is no light leakage from private and public light sources to the beach, so that the hatchlings are not disorientated.

Note that in this year’s Decision, as in Decisions of 2013 and 2014, the installation of equipment for bathers was not approved for the beaches Vounaki and Elaia-Agiannaki, which are the main nesting beaches.

- V. Under Decision no 28353/23-5-2013 (OJ 180 TAAΠΘ/24.5.2013), edited by the Alternate Minister of Environment, Energy and Climate Change, the issuing of building permits and the execution of construction and all kind of works, including the cultivations was suspended. This suspension concerned (and still is) not only the egg laying zone (where building or other constructions is not allowed) but also its surrounding terrestrial area. The duration of this suspension was extended under the Decision with ref. no 24407/16-5-2014 (OJ 175 TAAΠΘ/28.5.2014), the Decision with ref. no 55913/22.12.2014 (OJ 396 TAAΠΘ/24.12.2014) and the Decision with ref. no 19422/29.6.15 (OJ 130 TAAΠΘ/29.6.15), until the issuance of the Presidential Decree for the protection of the area.

More specifically, under these Decisions, the following actions are suspended:

- a) Issuing of building permits,
- β) Approval of small scale works concerning: trial soil cuts and excavations, building of warehouses in newly cultivated farms, pumping stations and buildings, water drillings,
- c) Performance of works based on 48 hour information concerning: fencing of plots, construction of simple wooden pergolas and platforms in open areas, as well as small scale soil formations,

- d) Performance of works and “interferences” like agriculture in the areas between the seashore and the pine forest, sand extraction, opening and paving of roads, mechanical cleaning of the beach, placement of pedestrian passageways, drainage works of cultivated areas and, in general, works that harm the environment and the integrity of the area under protection.

cc Division  
NEM Section  
O. Gogousos

Yours sincerely,

N. MANALIS  
Director General of Environmental Policy