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CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF EUROPEAN WILDLIFE
AND NATURAL HABITATS

Standing Committee

32nd meeting
Strasbourg, 27-30 November 2012

**Implementation of Recommendation No. 66 (1998)
on the conservation status of some nesting beaches for
marine turtles in Turkey**

REPORT BY THE NGO

*Document prepared by
MEDASSET - the Mediterranean Association to Save the Sea Turtles*

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UPDATE REPORT BY THE NGO

Marine Turtle Conservation in the Mediterranean UPDATE ON LOGGERHEAD SEA TURTLE (*CARETTA CARETTA*) CONSERVATION MONITORING IN FETHIYE, TURKEY

SEPTEMBER 2012

*Document presented by
MEDASSET - the Mediterranean Association to Save the Sea Turtles*

*for the 32nd Standing Committee Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Convention on
the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (Bern Convention)*

MEDASSET submitted a complaint to the Bern Convention in August 2009 regarding the severe degradation of the nesting beaches at Fethiye, Turkey, due to unplanned construction and developments to accommodate tourism, resulting in a severe decline of nest number¹. Fethiye is a Specially Protected Area (SPA) and among the 12 most important loggerhead sea turtle (*Caretta caretta*) nesting beaches in Turkey².

In 2010, the issue was discussed at the 30th Standing Committee of the Contracting Parties of the Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (Bern Convention) in relation to Recommendation No. 66 (1998) on the conservation status of some nesting beaches for marine turtles in Turkey.

In 2011, some valuable steps were made to protect the loggerhead nesting areas at Fethiye SPA³. **Unfortunately, several of these measures were not sustained in 2012, despite commitments of the Turkish authorities in 2010. Additionally, one new beachfront hotel has been built, destroying the last section of the remaining wetland; one new wooden hut and a concrete patio have been installed directly onto the nesting beach. Recommendation No. 66 specifically states that remaining unbuilt beach plots should be secured against development.**

We therefore request that the application of Recommendation No. 66 be kept under scrutiny by the Standing Committee, and that a detailed report is requested from the Turkish Authorities regarding the conservation and management measures that shall be applied in Fethiye SPA before and during the 2013 nesting season.

DETAILED ASSESSMENT OF CONSERVATION MEASURES IN 2012

Following MEDASSET's complaint and the potentially ongoing negative environmental conditions in Fethiye SPA, MEDASSET briefly visited the area in late July/early August 2012 to assess and document the conservation situation on the nesting beaches. An assessment of the conservation measures, the most serious problems identified and a list of recommendations are presented below.

The assessment is made in continuation to the update reports submitted by MEDASSET to the Bureau Meetings in 2011 and with reference to document T-PVS(2010)25E "Report of the 30th Meeting of the Standing Committee", the management measures listed in document T-PVS/Files(2010)23E "Report by the Government" and letter B.18.1.OÇK.0.07.00.01.230.99 of the former Environmental Protection Agency for Special Areas (EPASA) (see Annex 1).

¹ Ilgaz *et al* 2007

² Margaritoulis *et al.* 2003

³ Published without a T-PVS reference: Update on Loggerhead sea turtle (*Caretta caretta*) Conservation Monitoring in Fethiye, Turkey. Document presented by MEDASSET. December 2011.

A. Monitoring and conservation

To our knowledge beach management, nest monitoring and protection started late in the nesting season (approximately early July), as has been the case in the past.

B. Beach Furniture and equipment

As in 2011, FETAB (Fethiye Turizm Altyapı Birliği) was responsible for the implementation of beach furniture management measures.

In Çalış nesting beach (see Fig. 1 for map):

- Along Section A (nesting beach section lined by promenade), only one line of beach furniture was placed near the waterline; pairs of sunbeds were spaced so as to allow adult turtles to pass through and nest. Unlike 2011, a successful effort was made to turn all sunbeds on their sides each night, in order to not obstruct the passage of nesting females; these were then returned to their normal position early in the morning. However, the remaining beach area, where umbrellas and sunbeds were prohibited, was not kept clear on many occasions: many beach guests placed their personal umbrellas and tents (Fig. 2). Showers and changing cabins were erected on the nesting beach. Water from these showers ran off directly onto the beach; this can alter the moisture and temperature of nearby nests (Fig. 3).
- Along Section B (nesting beach section not lined by promenade) multiple rows of densely spaced beach furniture were positioned by a number of restaurants/bars, similar to 2011 (Fig. 4). Sunbeds were not removed, stacked or re-arranged at night. In addition, the new complex “Jiva Beach Resort” placed dense beach furniture on the nesting beach (Fig. 5). False carpeting was once again placed on the beach around the “Surf Cafe” area and in front of a newly erected wooden hut (Fig. 6-9).

In Yanıklar (see Fig. 1 for map), similar to 2011, both major hotels (Lykia Botanika and Majesty Club Tuana), placed two rows of beach furniture and arranged them so as to not to occupy the entire width of the beach. However, sunbeds of both hotels are situated at the upper part of the beach and are not removed or repositioned during the night, thus hindering potential nesting.

C. Signage

At Çalış nesting beach, two of the information signs erected in 2011 remain in place, but are situated at inappropriate locations⁴ (Fig. 10). Lack of effectively located information signs at Section A of Çalış nesting beach remains a problem: only two of the approximately two dozen beach entrances⁵ are equipped with a sign, hence the vast majority of users are unaware that the beach is a sea turtle nesting site and of the appropriate code of conduct.

The two wooden information signs erected at Yanıklar and Akgöl nesting beaches in 2011 were no longer present in 2012 (Fig. 11-12). The only sign providing information to beach users was placed in the beach area in front of hotel Lykia Botanika Sun & Fun Club (Fig. 13).

D. Beach access

People accessed the beaches at night during prohibited hours and bonfires were lit on some occasions (Fig. 14).

Vehicle access continues to be a severe threat. In 2011, in Section B of Çalış nesting beach, huge ditches were dug using an excavator, with the aim to impede vehicle access to the beach – a highly inappropriate and destructive management method⁶. Most of the ditches had been filled up in 2012; those that remained were full of garbage. Vehicle access directly onto the beach was frequent (Fig. 15-18).

⁴ Published without a T-PVS reference: Update on Loggerhead sea turtle (*Caretta caretta*) Conservation Monitoring in Fethiye, Turkey. Document presented by MEDASSET. December 2011.

⁵ i.e. steps leading from the promenade to the nesting beach

⁶ Published without a T-PVS reference: Update on Loggerhead sea turtle (*Caretta caretta*) Conservation Monitoring in Fethiye, Turkey. Document presented by MEDASSET. December 2011.

Vehicle ruts were also recorded on Yanıklar and Akgöl nesting beaches. The wooden stakes installed at Akgöl nesting beach in 2011 to hinder vehicle access had all been removed and had not been reinstalled. The extensive removal of vegetation in 2011 has further simplified vehicular access to the beach.

E. Light pollution

In Yanıklar, both major hotels (Lykia Botanika and Majesty Club Tuana) turned off their pier lights after midnight. To minimise light pollution, the parts of the lights shining onto the nesting beach have been painted black by one of the hotels. This light pollution mitigation measure would be effective if all lights in the area were shaded in order to prevent hatchling disorientation.

Public lights at Çalış Section A (promenade section) have been screened, however the businesses that line the beach have not shaded their numerous lights; hatchling disorientation therefore continues to be a severe problem in the area.

F. Litter

All nesting beaches of Fethiye SPA were littered.

Along Çalış Section A, waste containers were installed at regular intervals at the mid-beach level. Most of the garbage generated by beach users accumulates in these sections and was collected early in the morning. However, the waste left behind by users elsewhere attracted dogs and birds, which increases the predation threat to hatchlings. The litter itself poses a major and lethal threat to hatchlings that are entrapped in debris on their way to the sea.

G. Buildings, development and structures

At Çalış, a new beachfront holiday apartment complex, “Jiva Beach Resort”, was built next to Sunset Apartments, destroying the last remaining section of this former wetland area. Additionally, a new large wooden hut for storing surf equipment was erected on the beach (Fig. 9). A new cement patio was built on the nesting beach, near “Surf Cafe” (Fig. 19). This is a new extension of one of the beach huts reported in T-PVS(2010)08E. The hut was built on stilts in 2010 and was later moved further back and replaced by a hut on wheels.

At Yanıklar, similar to 2011, the Lykia Botanika Hotel volleyball pitch was not removed from the nesting beach (Fig. 20).

H. Plantations

Acacia trees (an introduced species) and bushes planted in 2001 and 2010 in Section B of Çalış nesting beach have not been removed. Their shadow and the dense network of roots of the first lines of planted trees, has made sea turtle nesting nearly impossible on the remaining thin strip of sandy beach between the pebble zone and the vegetation. In addition, the new beachfront complex “Jiva Beach Resort” at Çalış planted new bushes at the upper part of the nesting beach (Fig. 21).

I. Motorized water sports

Water sport activities directly off Yanıklar nesting beach continued. This is particularly the case between Lykia Botanika and Majesty Club Tuana hotels where there is continuous speedboat traffic (due to the fact that these hotels have installed private piers).

The former EPASA reported that the boats’ propellers would be substituted with a propulsion system (see Annex 1). This is an improvement if it has been materialised and should be applied to all boats operating in the area.

J. Shipyard/Drydock

No news has been received regarding the results of the Environmental Impact Assessment or on the decision regarding this project.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Guarding** needs to be reinforced and the number of guards increased to enable correct implementation of management and conservation measures (control of beach access, correct beach zone use by visitors, recording and acting upon violations, etc). Guarding should commence at the start of the nesting season.
- **Monitoring and nest protection** should commence at the start of the nesting season. With the current system, a considerable proportion of the total annual nests remains unprotected and is only discovered once hatchlings emerge, after the research teams commence their work.
- **Sunbeds** should be removed from the beach at night, or rearranged in an upright position and secured or hung on the umbrellas. The number of sunbeds and umbrellas should not increase. In all cases, sunbeds should not be placed in the sections of the beaches that serve as prime nesting areas. Multiple rows of dense sunbeds and umbrellas need to be rearranged and reduced to permit nesting turtles to access the beach and hatchlings to return to the sea unhindered.
- **False carpeting, acacia trees and planted bushes** should be removed from the nesting beach.
- Water from **beach showers** should be channelled to not directly run off onto the nesting beach, or beach showers should be relocated away from the beach.
- **Information sign** location should be corrected and additional signs should be installed at the start of the nesting season at all major entry points to the beaches.
- **Access problems** need to be tackled effectively. Fencing, that cannot be removed, should be installed and be complemented by effective wardening, signage at the points of entry, and education of locals and visitors by wardens and volunteers
- **Parking space:** appropriate areas that would not involve the flattening of dunes and removal of natural vegetation should be chosen. Damaged sand dunes and vegetated areas should be restored.
- A code of conduct that will regulate fishing and motorised water sport **activities in the marine area** should be adopted and communicated to the local businesses and community.
- **Lights:** local business owners should be required to screen or paint with dark colours all lights shining onto the beach. This does not incur a high cost and is feasible along the entire Fethiye coastline.
- **Litter:** a coordinated effort can be pursued so that beach clean-ups combined with awareness raising among locals can be conducted at the start of the nesting season and at the end of hatching season. Rubbish collection should be done manually and not with the use of heavy machinery (e.g. bulldozers). Daily litter collection could be combined with beach furniture collection/re-arrangement at the end of the day.

DOCUMENTS SUBMITTED

December 2011. Published without a T-PVS reference: Update on Loggerhead sea turtle (*Caretta caretta*) Conservation Monitoring in Fethiye, Turkey. Document presented by MEDASSET. Available online at:

<http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/cultureheritage/nature/Bern/Institutions/Documents/2012/MEDASSET%20Update%20Report%20to%20Bern%20Convention-%20December%202011-%20%20FETHIYE%20SPA.pdf>

April 2011. Published without a T-PVS reference: Destruction of Sea Turtle Nesting Beaches in Fethiye SPA, Turkey - MEDASSET Report. Available online at:

http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/cultureheritage/nature/bern/institutions/Documents/042011_MEDASSET_Report_en.pdf

March 2011. Published without a T-PVS reference: Update on Loggerhead sea turtle (*Caretta caretta*) Conservation Monitoring in Fethiye, Turkey. Available online at:

<https://wcd.coe.int/wcd/com.instranet.InstraServlet?command=com.instranet.CmdBlobGet&InstranetImage=1788142&SecMode=1&DocId=1709842&Usage=2>

September & March 2010. T-PVS(2010)08E: Implementation of Recommendation No. 66 (1998) on the conservation status of some nesting beaches for marine turtles in Turkey - Report by the NGO Available online at:

<https://wcd.coe.int/wcd/com.instranet.InstraServlet?command=com.instranet.CmdBlobGet&InstranetImage=1677304&SecMode=1&DocId=1644202&Usage=2>

September 2009. Complaint to the Bern Convention addressing the threats facing the loggerhead sea turtle (*Caretta caretta*) nesting beaches in Fethiye, Muğla province of Turkey.

Available online at:

http://www.medasset.org/cms/index.php?option=com_docman&task=doc_download&gid=176&Itemid=85&lang=en

September 2008. Published without a T-PVS reference: Sea turtle nesting beach degradation in Çirali and Fethiye, Turkey. Available online at:

http://www.medasset.org/cms/index.php?option=com_docman&task=doc_download&gid=153&Itemid=85&lang=en

RELEVANT RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE:

Recommendation No. 66 (1998) on the conservation status of some nesting beaches for marine turtles in Turkey. Available online at: <https://wcd.coe.int/wcd/ViewDoc.jsp?id=1487927&Site=COE>

MAPS AND PHOTOGRAPHS

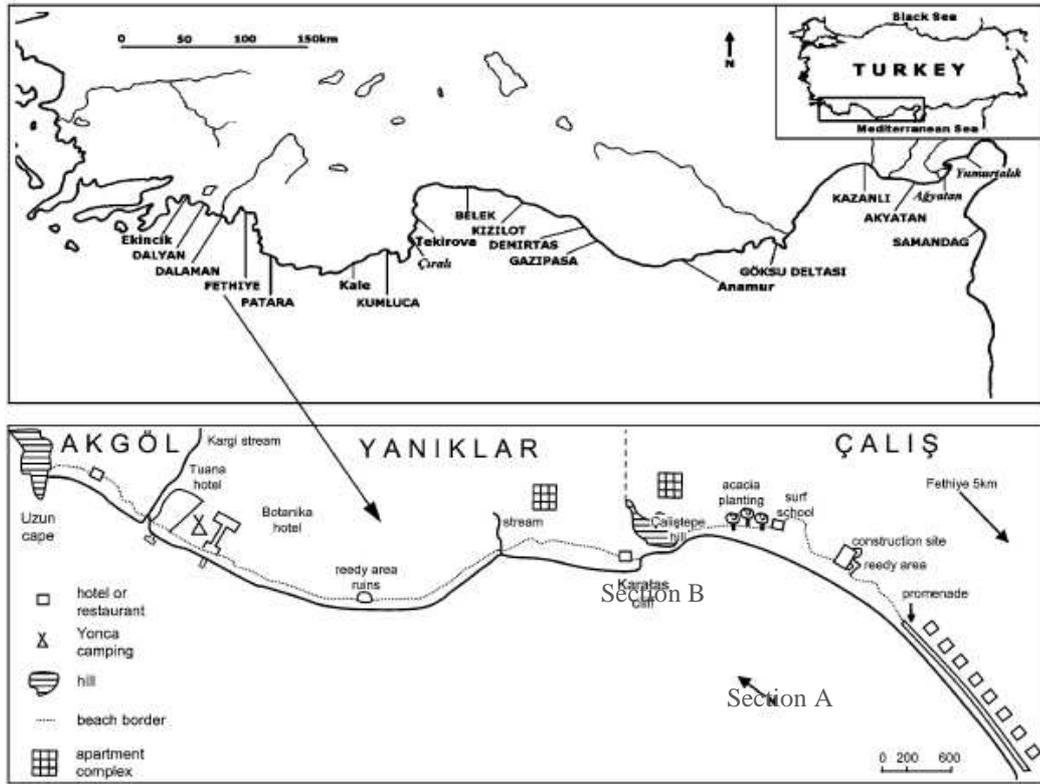


Fig. 1. Fethiye SPA map showing nesting beach subsections. Adapted from Ilgaz et al., 2007



Fig. 2. August 2012. Fethiye, SPA. Çalış. Section A. The nesting area where umbrellas and sunbeds were prohibited was not kept clear on several occasions: beach users placed personal umbrellas and tents.



Fig. 3. August 2012. Fethiye, SPA. Çalış. Section A. Water run-off directly onto the nesting beach from newly erected showers.



Fig. 4. August 2012. Fethiye, SPA. Çalış. Section B. Rows of densely spaced beach furniture, carpeting and bean bags on nesting beach.



Fig. 5. August 2012. Fethiye, SPA. Çalış. Section B. Newly built “Jiva Beach Resort” installed beach equipment onto the nesting beach; note dense rows of sunbeds.



Fig. 6. August 2012. Fethiye, SPA. Çalış. Section B. False carpeting was once again placed on the nesting beach, around the “Surf Cafe” until the water’s edge. Also note dense beach furniture.



Fig. 7-8. August 2012. Fethiye, SPA. Çalış. Section B. Carpeting was placed on the nesting beach in front of the new storage hut (see below), until the water’s edge.



Fig. 9. August 2012. Fethiye, SPA. Çalış. Section B. Newly erected hut on nesting beach for surf equipment storage, with false carpeting placed in front of it.



Fig. 10. August 2012. Fethiye, SPA. Çalış. Only 2 of the signs erected in 2011 are still in place.



Fig. 11. August 2012. Fethiye, SPA. Akgöl. Wooden sign erected in 2011 in desolate condition.



Fig. 12. August 2012. Fethiye, SPA. Yanıklar. Remains of the wooden sign erected in 2011.



Fig. 13. August 2012. Fethiye, SPA. Yanıklar. Information sign at beachfront hotel "Lykia Botanika Sun & Fun Club". This is the only sign in the entire Yanıklar and Akgöl nesting beach area.

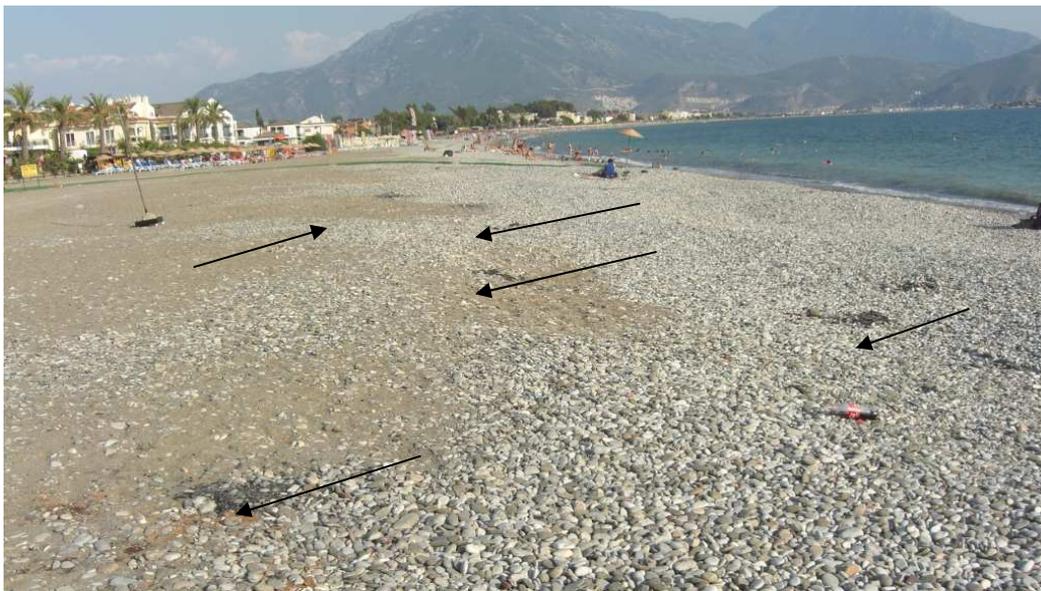


Fig. 14. August 2012. Fethiye, SPA. Çalış. Section B. People accessed the nesting beaches at night and lit bonfires; note remains of fires.

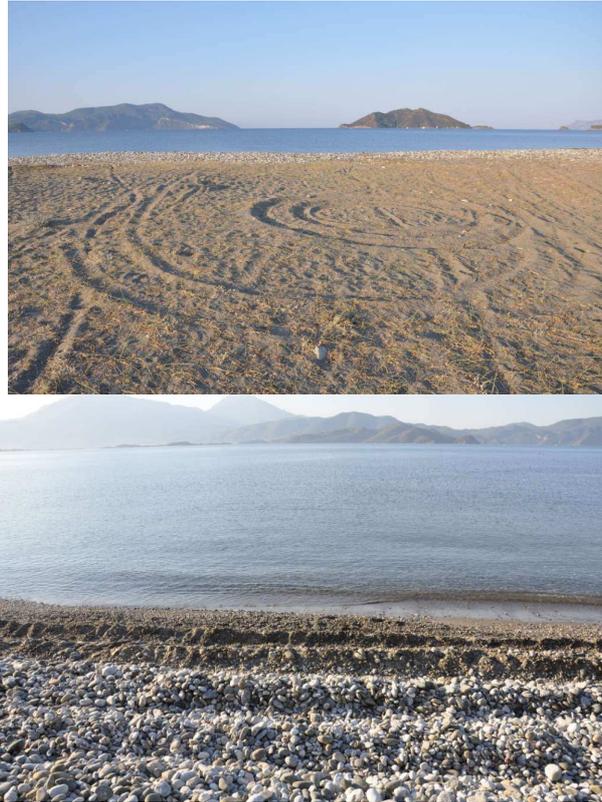


Fig. 15-17. August 2012. Fethiye, SPA. Yanıklar. Vehicle access remains a severe problem; note deep car and tractor ruts on nesting beach.



Fig. 18. August 2012. Fethiye, SPA. Çalış. Section B. Cars parked at upper part of nesting beach.



Fig. 19. August 2012. Fethiye, SPA. Yanıklar. Volleyball court on nesting beach (Lykia Botanika Hotel).



Fig. 20. August 2012. Fethiye, SPA. Çalış. Section B. New cement patio on the nesting beach; this is an extension of the wooden hut (in the background) which was reported in 2010.



Fig. 21. August 2012. Fethiye, SPA. Çalış. Section B. Recently planted bushes by newly built beachfront hotel "Jiva Beach Resort".

ANNEX 1: EPASA REPLY TO MEDASSET



**TURKISH REPUBLIC
MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTRY
ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
FOR SPECIAL AREAS**

No : B.18.1.OÇK.0.07.00.01.230.99/

27/06/2011

Subject : Sea Turtles on Fethiye beaches

MEDITERRANEAN ASSOCIATION TO SAVE THE SEA TURTLES (MEDASSET)

This letter is written as a reply to your electronic mail dated May 16, 2011 addressing the problems related to sea turtles on Fethiye beach.

Please find the below information on the issues you have raised in your letter.

1. "Monitoring and Conservation Project for Population of Sea Turtles (*Caretta caretta*, *Chelonia mydas*) and Soft-shelled Nile Turtles (*Trionyx triunguis*) in Beaches of Fethiye-Göcek Special Environmental Protected Area" has been continuing since 1989, as one of the continuous projects of our Agency in the 8.3 km length beach located within Fethiye-Göcek Special Environmental Protected Area (SEPA), and we are also financing the project in 2011 in accordance with the "Action Plan" and terms of references prepared by our Agency last year.
2. As we do respect the suggestions and comments of the both national and international Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO) such as MEDASSET, we have been financing this year project and we have already contracted to, as a result of the auctioning procedure, Turkish Association for the Conservation of Nature (www.tkder.org.tr), which is a NGO and an IUCN member. The contract officially signed on 16th of June 2011.
3. Our local office staffs have been controlling the beach as part of the "Action Plan" and taking necessary steps for the implementation prior the nesting season. On the one hand this process while in progress, two persons (1 biologist and another person responsible for the public awareness) started monitoring the beach and turtle activities since the beginning of June 2011. At the moment, there are 20 nests recorded. The project teams now officially consists of 4 people and between 5 and 15 national and international University students, as volunteers, are going to join to the beach monitoring for turtle activities.
4. Our regional Office had two pre-nesting season meetings with all relevant Governmental officers, representatives of the regional NGOs and all other stakeholders. The NGOs are collaborating with us on these projects are working with the academicians from Universities. This year, the project will be directed by Assoc. Prof Dr. Yakup KASKA, an expert on sea turtles from Pamukkale University, and his team. He is also the director of the Sea Turtle Research, Rescue and Rehabilitation center (DEKAMER) on Dalyan beach. The monitoring and conservation studies are both continuously controlled by our central Agency and local office staffs. Our conservation and monitoring studies are open to observations of the local, national and international NGOs.

5. The dockyard plan on Akgol region is still under the consideration with related laws for the Environmental Impact Assessments.

The utilization of the umbrellas and beach-chairs on the beach and other improvements carried out by our Agency are summarized below.

1. There are only two rows of the beach umbrellas allowed on Çalış beach. The first row is at the back, within the 3 meters from the wall behind the beach. The second row is near the sea and within the five meters from sea. All the beach-chairs, in this second row, are taken to the back row at nights. The beach zone between these two rows of umbrellas is closed to the usage of umbrellas and/or beach chairs. This zone, designated as nesting zone, is also closed for the sunbathing and between 4 and 10 staffs are patrolling the beach and making the necessary warnings (Figure 1a,b).
2. All the carpets and wood walkways are removed in the nesting zones all along the beach.
3. Only two rows of the beach umbrellas and beach-chairs are allowed at the back of the beach, at the hotels on Yanıklar beach. No umbrellas and beach-chairs allowed in the nesting zone.
4. The cages were put on the nests recorded in the touristic zones for public awareness and for the protection of the nest.
5. The Sea Turtle Information Office on Çalış beach is open every night in order to give information to the both local and foreign tourists. The project team is also going to organize monthly meetings with all the stakeholders of the beach and their personnel and tourists and gave information to them about the sea turtles.
6. The engine type of the water sport boats acting in the region is started to transfer to water pushing model as holding a protective cage around the propellers. The transferring of this model for the remaining water sport boats are also in progress and it has been under our consideration as an Agency.
7. All the visible lights of the hotels and restaurants from the beaches are removed, screened and/or painted as black. The project team is also informing to our regional office if they discover any light affecting the turtles and we ask the managers in an official way to remove, filter and permanently turn it off during the turtle nesting season.
8. A coordination team has been formed as consist of the representative members of the of NGOs, related governmental offices and hoteliers at the beginning of 2011. Our regional office is running the secretary of this coordination team and seeking solutions with the involvement of the stakeholders for the problems raised.
9. The information signs were put on Çalış, Yanıklar and Kargı beaches (Figure 2a,b).
10. The volleyball pitches on Kargı and Yanıklar beaches are removed (Figure 3).

We believe that we need to provide you more information about our Agency's monitoring and conservation studies. We would like to provide you this information and show our efforts on site and get your feedback and suggestions when it is convenient for you.

I would be very happy to see you in our Country to see these projects on site.

Sincerely Yours,

Ahmet ÖZYANIK
Head of Agency