



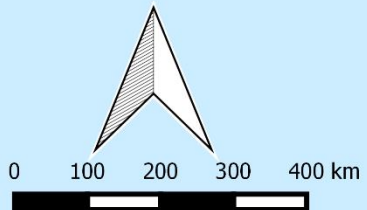
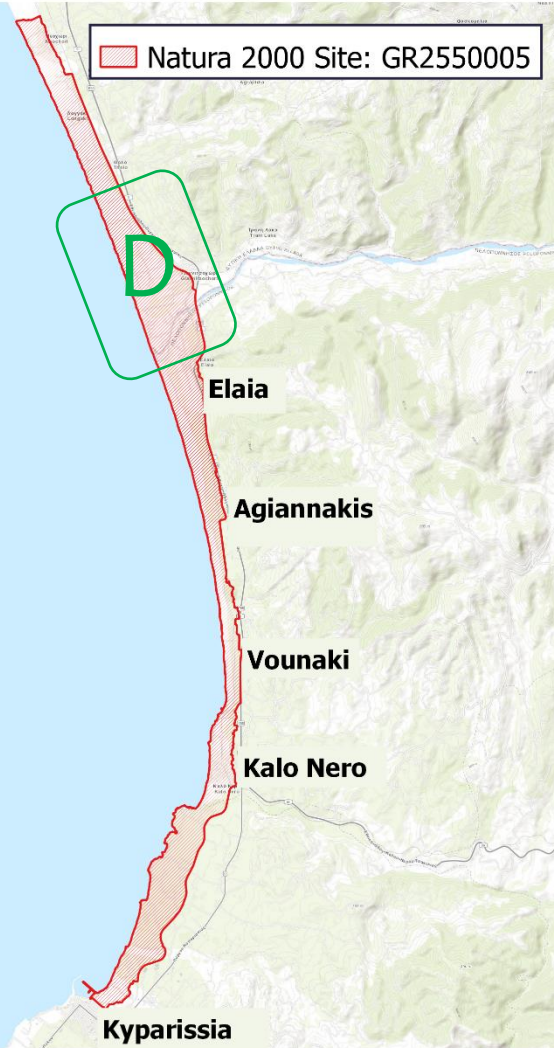
Agenda Item 6.1: Files opened

Greece: Threats to Marine Turtles in Thines Kiparissias

44th Meeting of the Standing Committee
Bern Convention

2 December - 6 December 2024

Habitat Degradation due to Uncontrolled Development in a Protected Sea Turtle Nesting Area

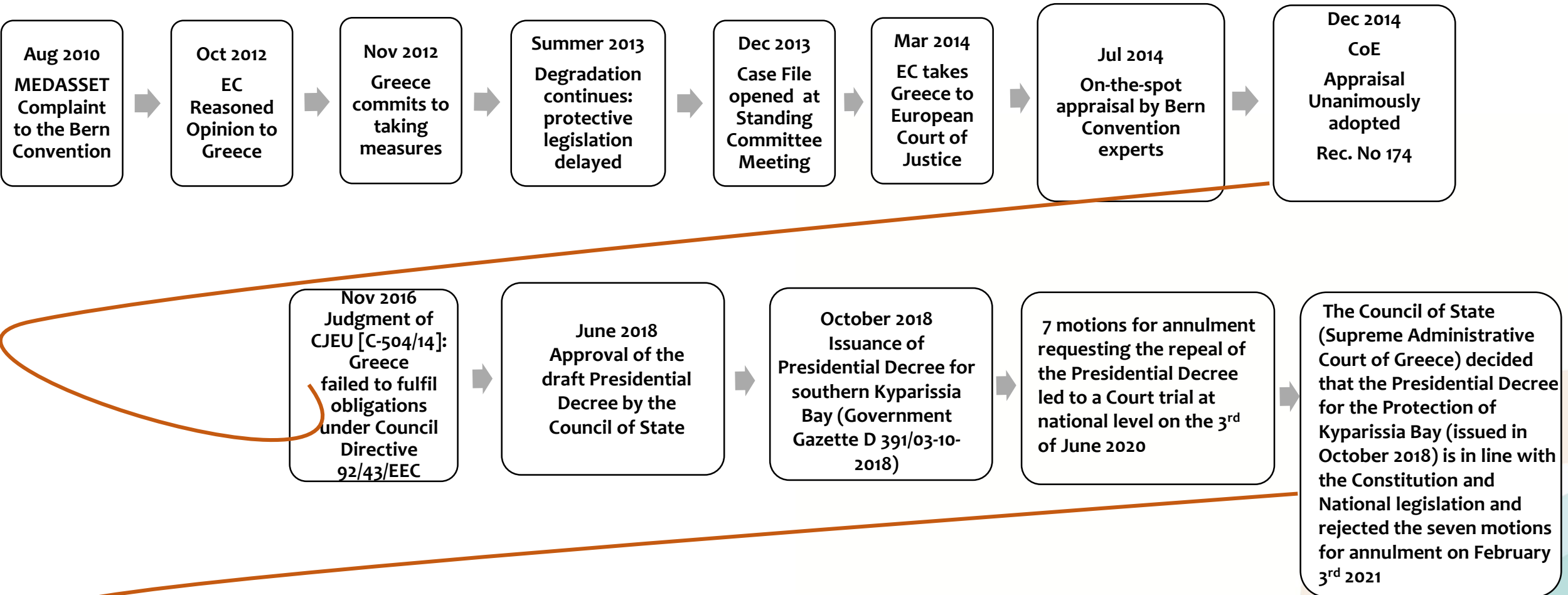


- A **NATURA 2000 site**: GR2550005 “Thines Kyparissias: Neochori – Kyparissia”
- Extensive sand **dunes** system with *Juniperus spp.*
- The **largest reproductive population across the Mediterranean** for the protected loggerhead sea turtle (*Caretta caretta*). During the 2023 nesting season over 6,700* nests were recorded in the nesting core area (from Neda to Arkadikos River which spans 9,5 km)
- 1,200 nests in Sector D

*preliminary data given from ARCHELON

The issuance of the Presidential Decree

Overview



The Presidential Decree however does not address several conservation issues. These are expected to be resolved by the Management Plan which is however delayed for over 6 years

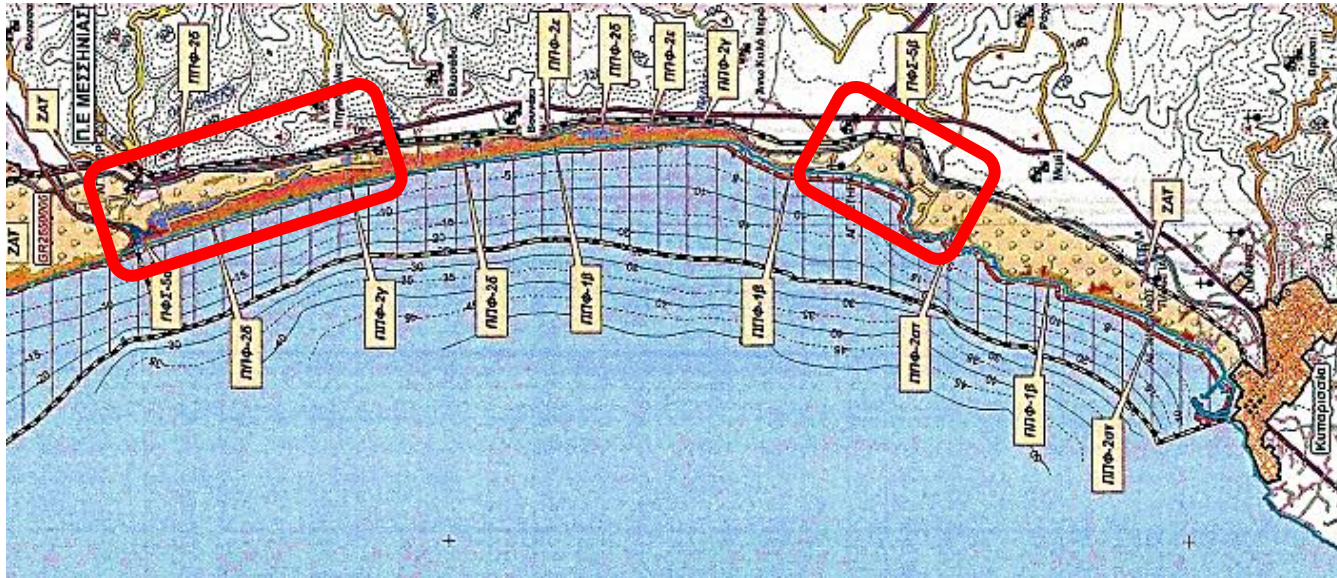
Rec. No 174. Measure No 1:

Appropriate Protection status

Presidential Decree (PD) a positive step but not ensuring adequate protection

No buffer zone between Nature Protection Area & Agricultural Landscape Zone

Presidential Decree designates Kyparissia Bay as a Nature Protected Area NOT as a National Park



- Adjacent areas to the Nature Protection Areas, are designated as Agricultural Landscape Zones, where a multitude of land uses is permitted, including the construction of buildings. Yet there is no appropriate impact assessment regarding their cumulative impact on both sea turtles and the sand dunes.
- Part of the coastal area behind the core nesting beaches (red rectangles) is designated as Agricultural Landscape Zones, putting in extreme danger the reproduction of sea turtles and the adequate protection of the habitat. A buffer zone between the Nature Protection Zones and the Agricultural Landscape Zones should be foreseen.

Rec. No 174. Measure No 2: **Permanent Prohibition of Construction (buildings, roads, etc.)**

Presidential Decree fails to adequately protect Kyparissia Bay from constructions



Vounaki. September & October 2024 – Construction of 2 new houses within the NPZ-2c.

- Several houses in the sand dune area, built before the issuance of the PD permanently alter and degrade the natural sand dune zone and are indicative of the pressure that the habitat faces due to coastal building
- Even after the issue of the PD in 2018, 2 houses (one in Agiannakis and one in Vounaki) were built from 2019 to 2023 (will be shown later on slide 13)
- Unfortunately, in 2024 another 2 new houses were being constructed in Vounaki, within a Nature Protection Zone (NPZ-2c), where building is not permitted. According to information from the competent Management Unit, the building permits for those 2 new houses are in direct contradiction with the PD's provisions. It is notable that in all plots of land where buildings exist, alien vegetation has been planted.

Rec. No 174. Measure No 3: Prevent cars & caravans from reaching the proximity of the nesting beaches

Presidential Decree fails to adequately protect Kyparissia Bay from constructions



★ Google earth, 28th July 2023.
Asterisk depicts the blockades that can be easily detoured, see below.



Core nesting area, Agiannakis to Elaia, 4th of July 2024. The five illegal roads are not restored yet. Blockades placed by the Ministry of Environment and Energy fail to prevent vehicles accessing the beach, vehicles can easily detour the barriers, as seen in the photos, with a car behind the barriers on the side leading to the beach.

Rec. No 174. Measure No 3:

Prevent cars & caravans from reaching the proximity of the nesting beaches



Agiannakis core nesting areas, 4th July 2024. Signs of heavy vehicle traffic in front of the houses.



Kalo Nero core nesting area 3rd July 2024. 15 Caravans parked (red circles for the caravans) for camping directly behind the core nesting area. No management measures exist to prevent cars and caravans parking in close proximity to the nesting beach.



Core nesting area between Agiannakis and Elaia village, 4th July 2024. Camping directly behind the core nesting area.

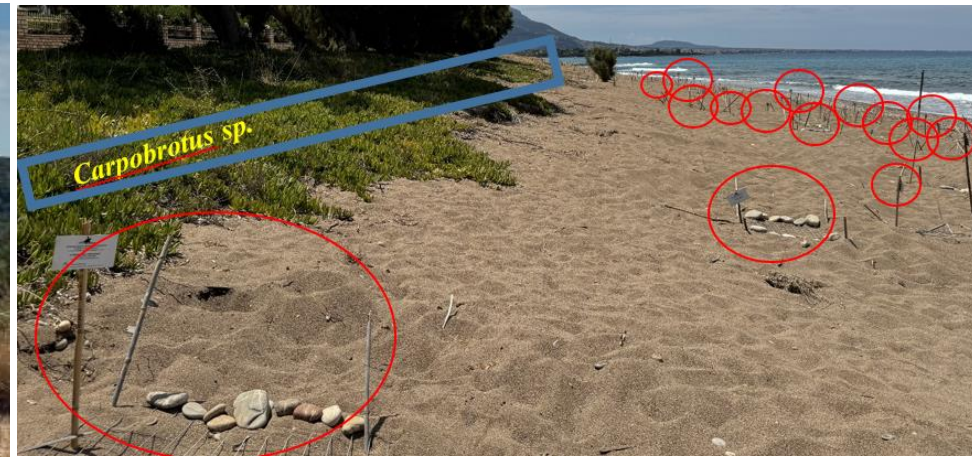


Rec. No 174. Measure No 4:

Adjustments to existing buildings & Restoration of Original Dune and Forest Habitat



Agiannakis core nesting area, 4th July 2024. House constructed on the protected sand dunes, and alien plant species planted around the properties.



Kalo Nero, 4th July 2024. Cultivation of invasive species *Carpobrotus* sp. encroaching onto the nesting area of the beach from Kalo Nero to Vounaki, nests in red circle.



Vounaki core nesting area, 4th July 2024. House constructed in 2021, on the protected sand dunes, and ongoing plating of alien species around the properties.



Rec. No 174. Measure No 5: No agriculture on public land & the dune area



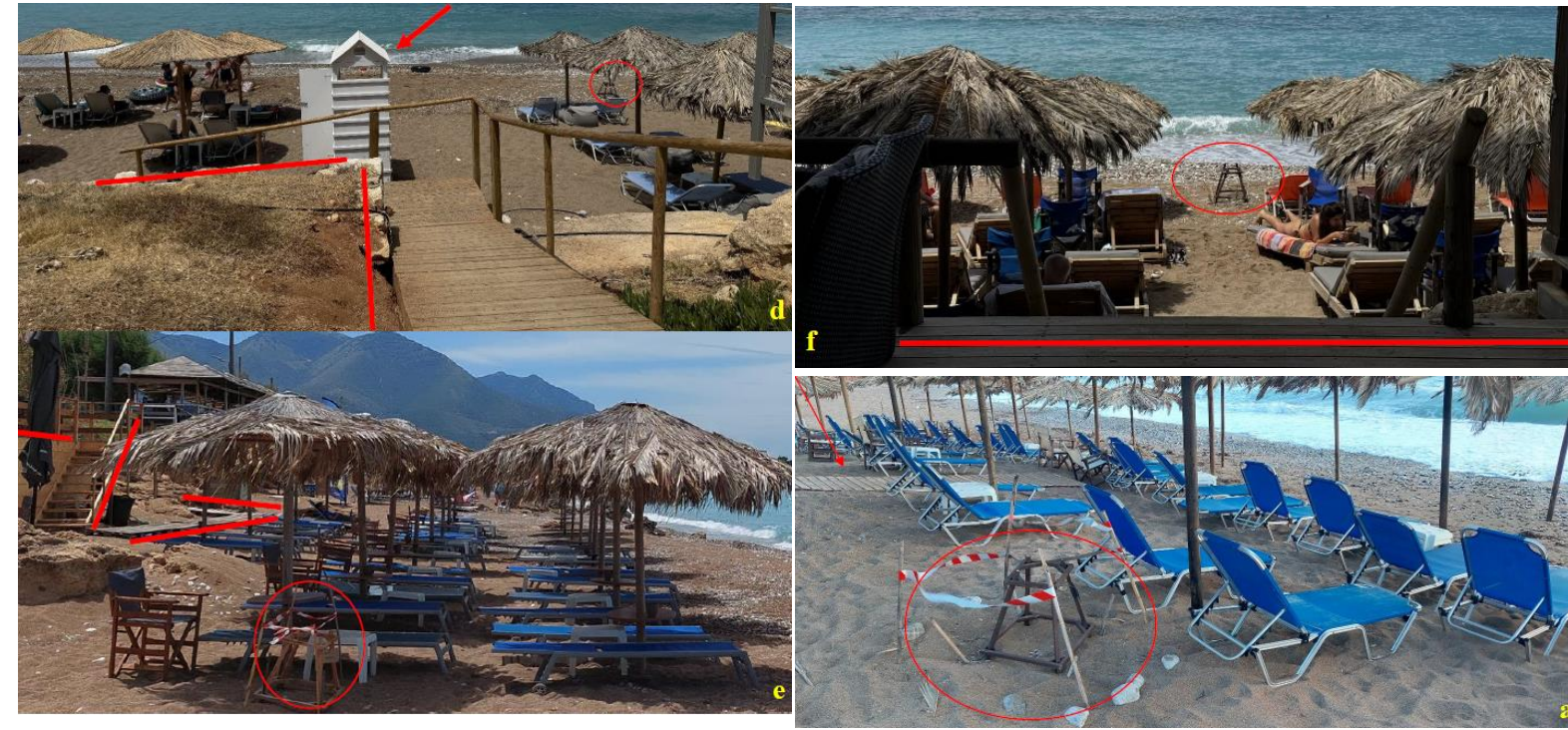
Behind the core nesting areas of Vounaki and Agiannaki, 4th July 2024. Sand dune destruction due to agricultural use; ongoing watermelon cultivation.

Rec. No 174. Measure No 6: Light Pollution reduction



**Kalo Nero core nesting area, 3rd July 2024.
Light pollution emitted from the beach
bars/restaurants. Beach furniture not
removed during the night, causing
obstacles and limiting the availability of
nesting space.**

Rec. No 174. Measure No 7: Beach Equipment management



Beach furniture not removed during the night, causing obstacles and limiting the availability of nesting space

Kalo Nero core nesting area 4th July 2024. Photos a, d, e, f: Illegal wooden walkways (red lines) placed by local businesses not removed and no enforcement of demolition protocols. No beach management exists to provide a safe distance between visitors and sea turtle nests (red circles). b: A dog on to the nesting beach in between the nests. d, f: illegal wooden platform with stairs leading to the nesting beach and heavy wooden beach furniture on to the nesting beach. The wooden walkways are indeed on the coast! They have just flattened the area!

Rec. No 174. Measure No 8:

Prohibits any sand & gravel extraction or any new structures near the sea



We did not observe a sand or gravel extraction but a new practice of manual sand raking and flattening was adopted in 2024 by 2 businesses. This practice, performed in the early morning hours, resulted in instances where sea turtle tracks were wiped before ARCHELON researchers could record them, thus causing some nests to be impossible to be identified and protected. Sand has been manually flattened between the sunbeds.

Rec. No 174. Measure No 9:

Further construction outside the urban-planning areas

Disregard to the Presidential Decree's prohibition of the expansion of settlements and buildings in the Nature Protections Areas, newly constructed house as recorded during 2023 and 2024 survey



Vounaki core nesting areas, 4th July 2024.

Agiannakis core nesting areas, 4th July 2024.
Photos a and b showing new ongoing constructions to the already illegal building as shown in photo c (construction complete in 2021). Green arrows showing ongoing constructions.



Kalo Nero, September 2024. Fishing with nets at a very closed distance from the shore is a constant threat to the nesting females, as they may get entangled and injured in their attempt to reach the beach for nesting

Fisheries regulations are not addressed by the Presidential Decree – Urgent need of a Management Plan

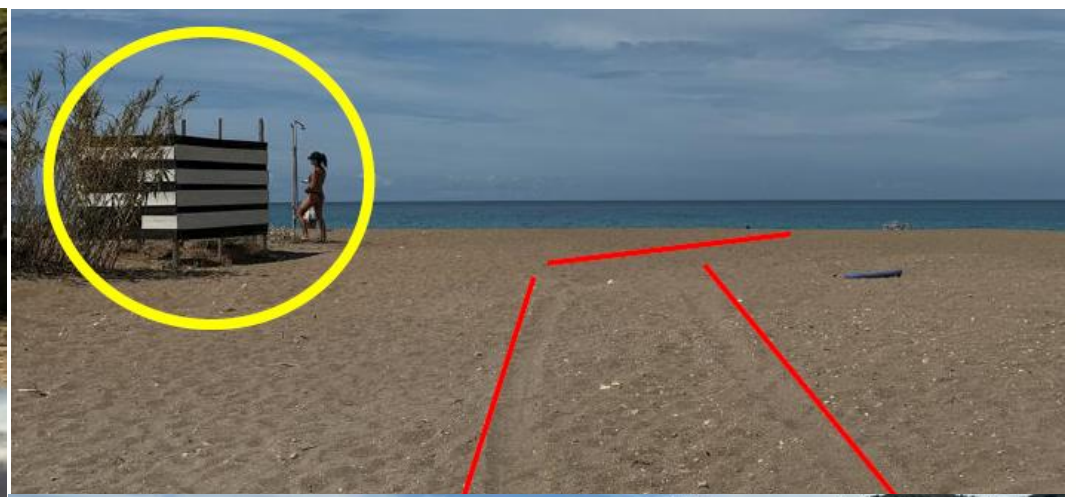
The Regulation of fishing activities are not considered in the Presidential Decree. This significant threat is supposed to be addressed in the Management Plan which is yet to be developed!

Urgent action is needed to reduce/ eliminate this threat. ARCHELON recorded 12 dead and 1 injured sea turtle. An additional 16 stranded turtles (15 dead and 1 injured) were recorded by the competent Coast Guard stations bringing the total to 29 stranded sea turtles.

The 2 injured animals were transferred to the ARCHELON's Rescue Centre.

The cause appeared to be attributed to interaction with fisheries and deliberate injuries from humans.

Rec. No 174. Measure No 11: Human presence on the nesting beach



Agiannakis core nesting area, 3rd & 4th July 2024. Beach bar during the night and day. Shower (yellow circle) runoff flows on the protected nesting beach and marks of vehicles in red lines.

Rec. No 174. Measure No 11: Human presence on the nesting beach



Core nesting area between Agiannakis and Elaia village, 4th July 2024. Camping directly behind the core nesting area. Bottom photo depicting a construction of a small wood burning oven in the protected forestry area! (red circle) No action is taken by the authorities to prevent it.

Rec. No 174. Measure No 11: Human presence on the nesting beach



Kalo Nero core nesting area 4th July 2024. b:
A dog on to the nesting beach in between the nests. Tourists setting their umbrellas and chairs among the nests.



D Sector. 4th August 2024 – Private equipment on the beach entrapped hatchling.

Rec. No 174. Measure No 11: Human presence on the nesting beach



D Sector. 4th of August 2024 – A festival with loud music and bright floodlights took place just behind the nesting beach



Kalo Nero. 5th of August 2024 – A festival with loud music and bright headlights is taking place just behind the nesting beach

Rec. No 174. Measure No 11:
Human presence on the nesting beach



Kalo Nero core nesting area. A poster calling for horse riding at Elaia nesting beach 4th July 2024 (top), picture taken from the official <https://www.instagram.com/elea.horse.riding/> account posted 5th of July 2024.

Rec. No 174. Measure No 11:

Control feral dogs as they have proved to attack and hurt many nesting sea turtles



MEDASSET
Mediterranean Association
to Save the Sea Turtles

No feral dogs attacks were recorded this year.

Conclusions



Rec. No 174 has not been fully implemented

- The ongoing projects for carrying out Special Environmental Studies for the issuance of Presidential Decrees and Management Plans for all Natura 2000 sites in Greece is fraught with delays and implementation problems. There are serious concerns about the process and the expected outcomes. These studies were supposed to have been concluded by Oct. 2021 (i.e. currently delayed by 3+ years).
- Note that after the project's conclusion, an additional period of 2-3 years is needed for issuing/ updating the Presidential Decrees. In particular, the Study including the Thines Kiparissias site, has not even reached the public consultation stage yet, meaning that it most certainly will be one of the most delayed studies, negatively affecting the final approval of the much needed management plan as well.
- Contracts signed for the exploration and potential extraction of hydrocarbons in the adjacent marine protected areas constitute a new significant additional threat

Calls upon the Authorities to:

- Safeguard and enforce implementation of the Presidential Decree (PD) regulations
- Urgently issue and implement a Management Plan in collaboration with the Protected Areas Management Unit, which will also cover unresolved issues not addressed in the PD (e.g. fishing activities and nighttime beach use and operation of beach bars)
- Management Unit to collaborate with local authorities and stakeholders for the effective protection of the area
- Implement the national action plan for the *Caretta caretta*
- Impose fines and penalties in order to stop all threats and illegal activities and restore the protected habitats
- Keep the Standing Committee informed about progress in the implementation of the above Recommendations

Calls upon the Bern Convention Standing Committee to:

- Encourage authorities to provide further information to the Standing Committee, as requested above
- Urge authorities to implement Recommendation No.174 (2014)
- Discuss the case file at the 44th Meeting of the Standing Committee
- Bring the issue to the European Commission as part of the infringement process for noncompliance with CJEU's judgment C-504/14



Thank you for your attention!