



Key points

Declaration of Vjosa WRNP

Vlora International Airport

Shushica River Case

Revision of the PAs

Conclusions



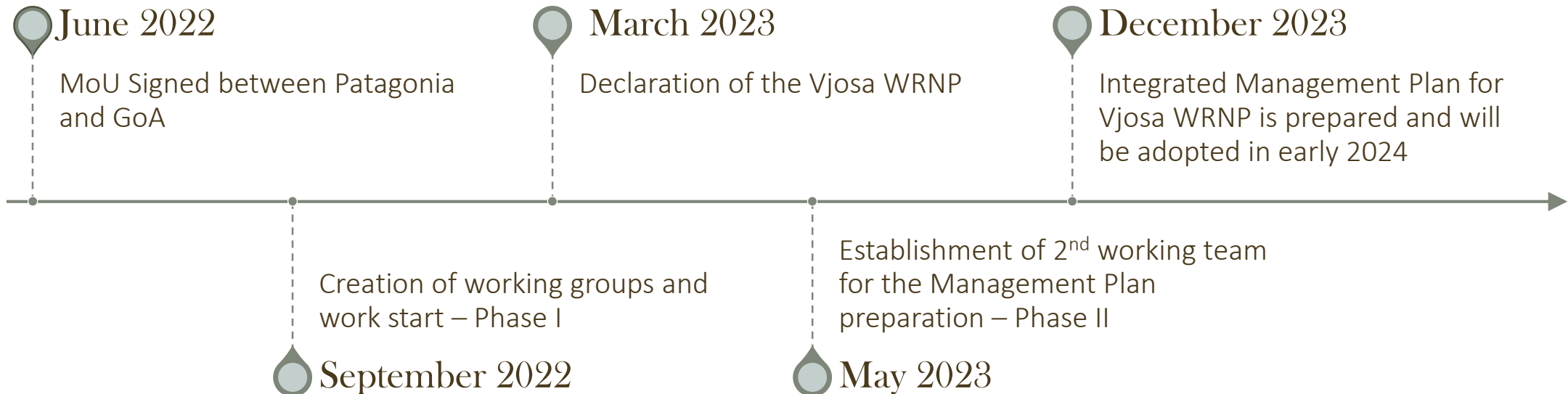
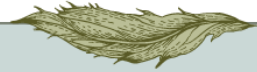
Vjosa Wild River National Park

On March 2023, a big milestone for civil society, local communities, scientists, artists and governmental institutions was achieved with the declaration of the Vjosa River and its free-flowing tributaries (Bënça, Shushica, Drino, Kardhiqi) a national park (cat. II).

A huge achievement for nature protection and blue-print model for river protection as one river system.



Vjosa WRNP - Process





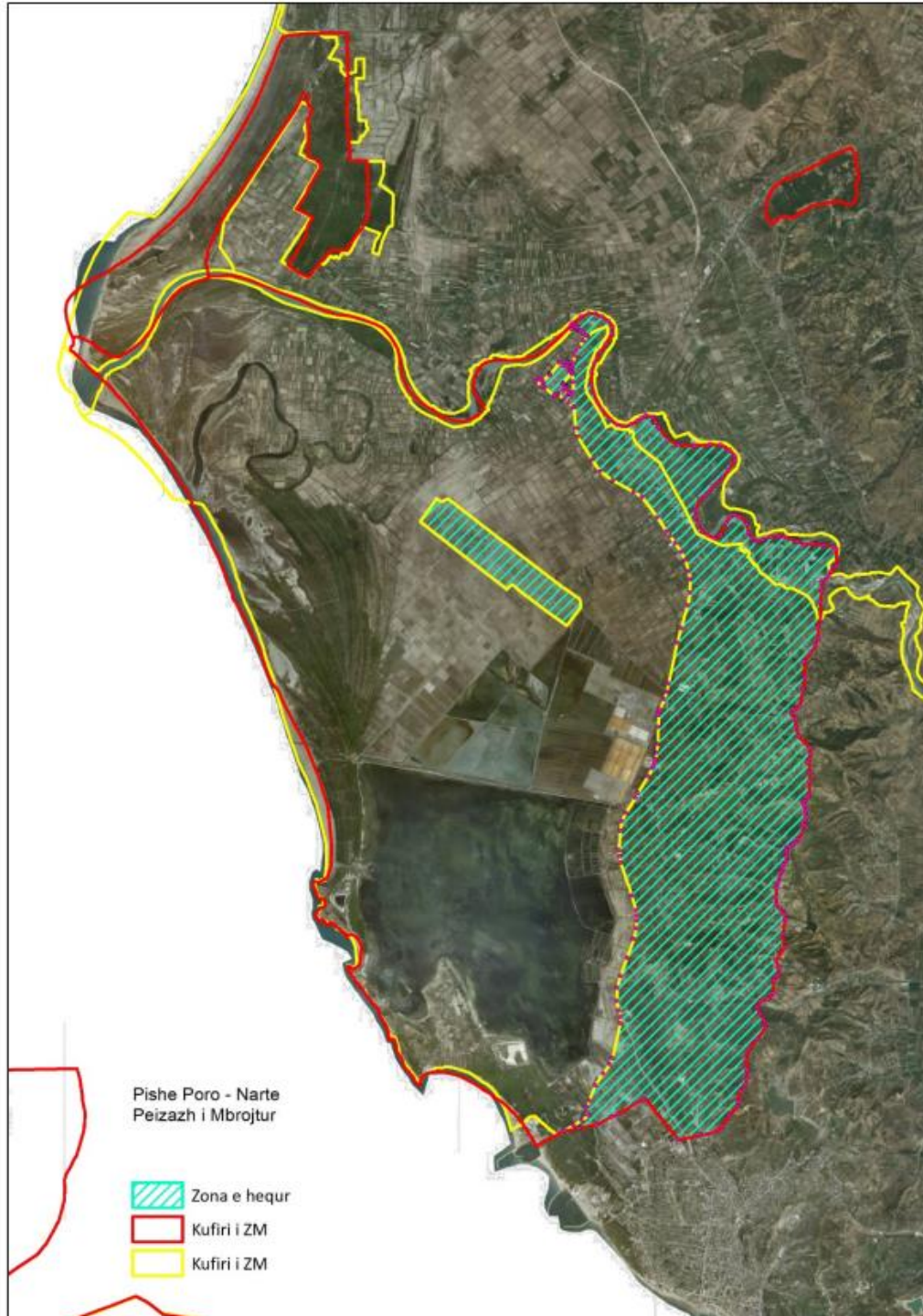
Vlora International Airport

An airport that is being built in the Protected Area



Vlora International Airport

- Construction of the airport in within the Vjosa-Narta Protected Landscape ongoing.
- Important Bird Area (**IBA**); Key Biodiversity Area (**KBA**); Emerald Site Candidate; potential Natura 2000 site; along the Adriatic Migration Flyway; fulfills the criteria for Ramsar Site
- **Nov 2021** - inauguration ceremony, the start of construction work (without a construction permit until February 2023).
- **Nov-Dec 2022**, Local organizations (PPNEA & AOS), legally opposing the EIA process and the Environmental Declaration, as well as the decision for the revision of the borders of the Vjosa-Narta protected area (including the removal of the actual airport site, 309h).







Shushica River Case

A water diversion project that spoils the vision of Vjosa WRNP



Shushica River Case

- Shushica river is one of the main tributaries to the Vjosa river and part of the newly established national park.
- For years it has been under the pressure of the **hydropower projects** where there were plans to build 4 HPPs. EcoAlbania is following the case to the court in Al.
- In addition, there is another project that will divert a significant amount of the water (**60 % more than the yearly average**), from one of the main sources of the Shushica river.
- The project is run by the Municipality of Himare and Albanian Government (In 2020-2022, they approved the project for the construction of the aqueduct for Himara municipality).
- The construction **started in early 2023** and **are being carried out within the Vjosa NP area**.
- The project is being opposed by the local community of about 30 villages along the river.
- EcoAlbania will follow the litigation process for the above project as well.







Revision of PAN

A dangerous precedent that opens the way for utilization of PAs



Revision of PAs



- The process for the revision of the Protected areas Network, started in 2019 with no proper consultation process.
- Since 2019 until January 2022 (when the decision was made), the process and decision-making has been criticized and opposed by the civil society organizations and academia.
- 12 national NGOs have started the litigation process which is in an advanced stage. The court has approved the legal standing to their claim and the process is ongoing.
- It is expected that in 2024, the Administrative Court of Appeal takes the decision for the case.
- If the decision-making process of the government is overruled by the court, it will be a great achievement for the civil society and nature in Albania.



Conclusions & Claims

On Vjosa WRNP

- EcoAlbania will continue to follow and contribute to the process of the proclamation of the Vjosa WR NP and the Management Plan of the NP.
- In addition EcoAlbania and its partners are closely following the process of the Vjosa River Basin Management Plan and supporting it for a better informed decision-making and management.

On Vlora International Airport

- EcoAlbania will closely follow the litigation process initiated by other CSOs regarding the Vlora International Airprt.

On Shushica River Case

- EcoAlbania will continue the litigation process regarding the HPPs in Shushica river.
- And will follow the water diversion project and file a lawsuit in the Albanian Administrative Court.



Summary

We ask to the Standing Committee to urge the Albanian Government to:

- 1) To suspend the construction of the Vlora Airport within the protected area until a proper environmental assessment.
- 2) To Immediately halt the Himara water abstraction project, prepare a proper EIA, consult with local communities and assess alternative water sources from outside the newly established Vjosa Wild River National Park
- 3) To revise the protected areas in Albania through an inclusive and transparent process





Thank you



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