

CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF EUROPEAN WILDLIFE AND NATURAL HABITATS

Standing Committee, 43rd meeting, Strasbourg,

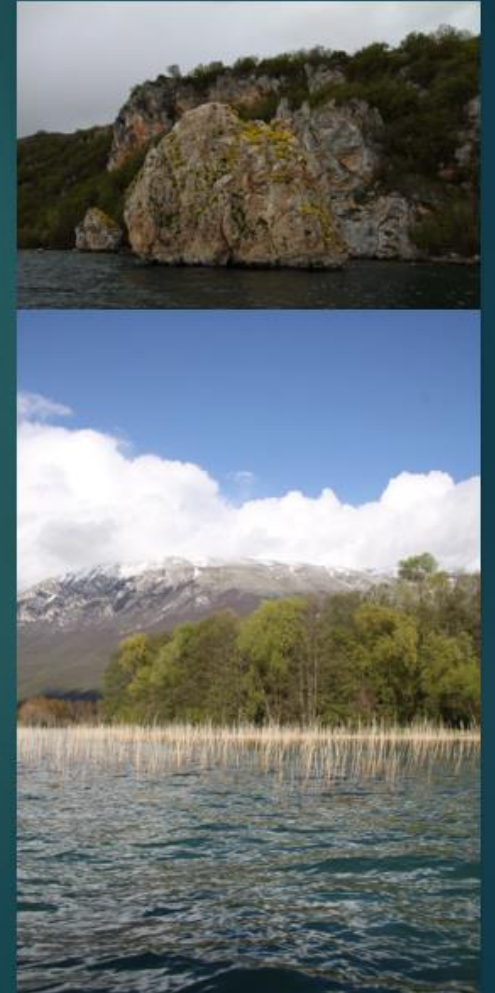
27 November – 1 December 2023

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Alleged negative impacts to Lake Ohrid and Galichica National Park candidate Emerald sites due to infrastructure and urbanisation developments (North Macedonia)

Findings from the OSA, 25-27 April 2023

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Ohrid Lake and Galichica NP candidate Emerald Sites...



Ohrid World Heritage Region

Galichica National park

RAMSAR site

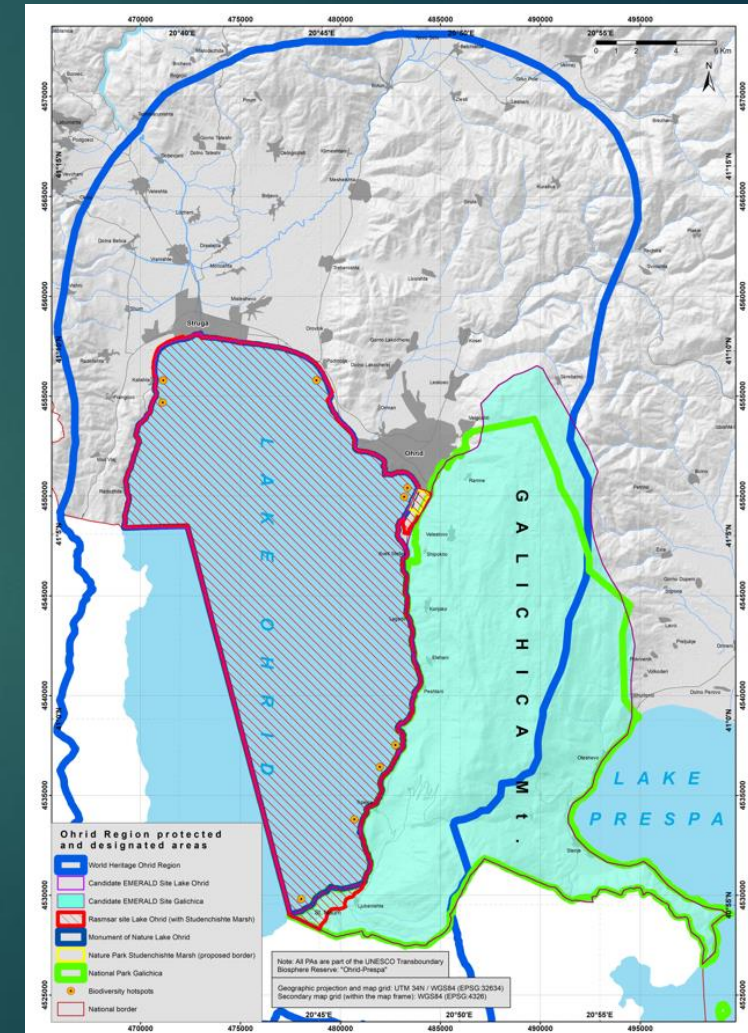
Ohrid Lake Nature Park

Studenchishte Marsh Nature Park

St Naum Springs

Candidate Emerald sites (Ohrid Lake, Galichica NP)

- ▶ ...the oldest lake in Europe, rich biodiversity...
- ▶ ...but seriously threatened...
- ▶ ...although ,flooded‘ with several protection designations...
- ▶ ...ineffectively managed...
- ▶ ...and confronted with new development plans and illegal constructions



DIRECT THREATS /

Level of impact (**devastating**, very strong, strong, **unknown**)

- ▶ **On-site urbanisation and development projects (habitat destruction)**
- ▶ **Infrastructure and industrial development**
- ▶ **Unsustainable tourism**
- ▶ **On-site pollution, impact of chemicals, wastewater**
- ▶ Excessive resource extraction, including HPP
- ▶ **Disconnection between lake water and inland marsh**
- ▶ Inadequate, incompetent protected area and water management actions, processes and resources
- ▶ **Other (invasive aliens species, impacts of the climate change...)**



Urbanization and pollution along the coastal areas of the Ohrid Lake, its 'Biodiversity Hotspots', including the Ramsar site Studenchishte Marsh, new development in Gorica North Area and inside of the Galichica National Park



Studenchishte Marsh (construction inside the Ramsar Site)
&
planned development in Gorica North Area



Illegal construction on the lakeshore
&
inside of the Galichica National Park

Tourism and construction pressures in the St. Naum Complex (=strict protection zone)



Studenchishte Marsh, canal & springs



UNDERLYING CAUSES /

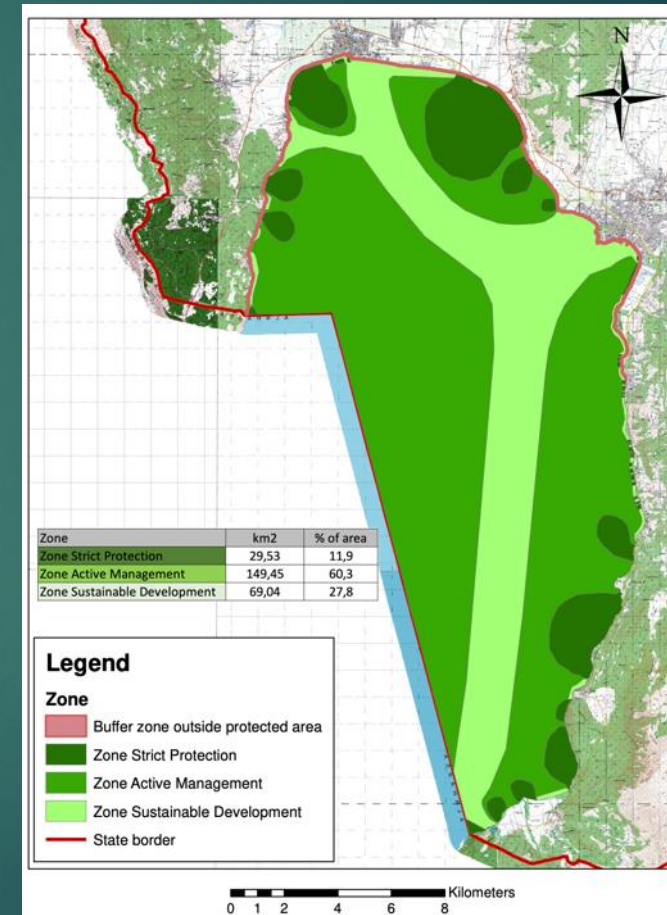
Level of impact (**very strong**, strong, **unknown**)

- ▶ Inadequate legislation and planning documentation, weak enforcement (ineffective inspectorates) and political systems
- ▶ Environmental impact assessments are often inadequate or missing altogether
- ▶ Breakdown or dysfunction of social, cultural or political relations
- ▶ Values and attitudes incompatible with conservation goals
- ▶ Inappropriate governance and management, lack of technical and human capacity, low levels of human resources for protected area management



Inadequate legislation and planning documentation: Example: zoning for the Ohrid Lake Monument of Nature (OLMN)

- The draft Management Plan for OLMN recognizes the pressures of the human impacts...
- ...through tourism:
 - *Use of boats;*
 - *Use of beaches;*
 - *Pollution from urban wastewater;*
 - *Construction directly on or close to the shore; among others, but...*
- ...the proposed zoning concept is not ambitious enough to address the above threats



Summary of the Recommendations:

- ▶ Establish the Ohrid Region World Heritage Site (ORWHS) as an overarching protected area designation with other protected area designations (including the two proposed Emerald Sites) as nested sites.
- ▶ Establish a professional management body for the ORWHS, staffed and empowered to make and implement management decisions.
- ▶ Evaluate key legal, planning and management documents and zoning concepts for protected areas in the Ohrid region, bringing each protected area in line with IUCN standards.
- ▶ Introduce an effective moratorium on all constructions, except those serving basic needs, and introduce and enforce a zero-tolerance policy for all new illegal constructions.
- ▶ Upgrade and expand the wastewater collection, treatment and maintenance system in the entire Lake Ohrid watershed.
- ▶ Conduct thorough monitoring of the most important species.
- ▶ Expediting procedures for the designation and full takeover of Emerald network sites.
- ▶ Ensure that the provisions allowing construction and agricultural use of the Studenchishte marsh are removed from the final version of the protection law for the area.
- ▶ Relocate and redesign the current and planned visitor facilities and restaurants in the St. Naum springs (especially the Ostrovo restaurant).
- ▶ Implementation of an awareness-raising campaign for the natural and cultural heritage of the Ohrid region as a national cultural asset.