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**Presumed degradation of nesting beaches in Fethiye SPA
(Türkiye)**

- COMPLAINANT REPORT -

Document prepared by MEDASSET

**Update for Autumn Bureau Meeting
31 July 2026**

UPDATE REPORT BY THE NGO

Marine Turtle Conservation in the Mediterranean

LOGGERHEAD SEA TURTLE (*CARETTA CARETTA*) CONSERVATION MONITORING IN FETHIYE AND PATARA SPAs, TÜRKİYE

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

*for the 46th Standing Committee Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Convention on
the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (Bern Convention)*

MEDASSET hereby submits an update report to the 3rd Bureau Meeting of the Bern Convention (22-24 September 2026) on the conservation status of sea turtle nesting beaches in Fethiye and Patara Specially Protected Areas (SPAs) in Türkiye.

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SUMMARY

MEDASSET visited Patara and Fethiye SPAs in June and July 2026 to assess and document the conservation status of the nesting beaches. The survey was funded by Aktionsgemeinschaft Artenschutz (AGA), www.aga-artenschutz.de. The following presents the survey findings in relation to each of the measures under Recommendation No. 183 and 182 (2015).

Fethiye Specially Protected Area: Recommendation No. 183 (2015)

The loggerhead sea turtle (*Caretta caretta*) nesting beaches in Fethiye (Muğla Province, Türkiye) rank among the 12 most important nesting sites in the country. These beaches lie within the Fethiye-Göcek Special Environmental Protection Area (SPA), established in 1988. Scientific studies indicate a continuing decline in nest numbers at Fethiye.

MEDASSET carried out a site visit in June and July 2026 to assess the management and conservation status of the nesting beach within the Fethiye SPA. To establish a baseline for the reporting process, a four-day field study was conducted, covering both daytime and nighttime monitoring.

Recommendation No. 183 (2015) remains largely disregarded.

Points 1, 2, 4–7, 11, and 15 have not been implemented. New permanent structures continue to be built, including lifeguard towers, water sport facilities with associated storage, and a boat hauling and mooring site at the State Hydraulic Works (DSİ) canal between Karataş Beach and the main section of Yanıklar. Canal "restoration" works at Çalış Hill have altered the river's flow dynamics, and new parking facilities have appeared at Akmaz Beach, among other developments detailed in our full report.

New landscaping and planting beyond the beaches' natural vegetation has also taken place. These efforts rely on exotic, non-native species and require regular irrigation, which increases artificial moisture in the sand and exerts adverse ecological pressure on sensitive nesting zones.

Beach management remains woefully inadequate. Sunbed and umbrella zones have expanded in Section A of Çalış Beach and in the hotel district of Yanıklar Beach, while the relevant ministry has allocated new areas on Karaot Beach. This expansion has significantly narrowed the sensitive nesting zone and increased human pressure on it. Visitor traffic has risen sharply on Akgöl (Karaot) Beach, a site of high-density nesting, where an active campsite and an unregulated caravan parking area have also emerged. There is a complete absence of monitoring or enforcement.

Light pollution remains a critical problem, particularly in the Çalış and Yanıklar sectors of the SPA. Street lamps along the pedestrian walkway lack standardized angling, and most are positioned to shine directly onto the nesting beach.

Point 8 has been only partially implemented: while vehicle access barriers have been installed in several locations, access to the beach remains largely unregulated. We observed vehicles and vehicle tracks in numerous areas, including pristine nesting zones.

Points 13 and 14 have not been implemented. No guards were observed anywhere in the protected area, and enforcement of conservation rules remains entirely absent.

Points 10 and 16 have not been implemented, or only partially so. No monitoring protocol compliant with international standards is currently in place on the Fethiye nesting beach. Only a limited number of prism-type protective cages were recorded on Çalış Beach, though they were more widely deployed elsewhere across the SPA. Human resources remain insufficient relative to the length of coastline and the density of nesting, and the field team observed lacks adequate experience. Monitoring and conservation work of this kind must be led by scientific teams with demonstrated expertise and extensive field experience.

Conclusion

Eleven years after the adoption of Recommendation No. 183 (2015), the overwhelming majority of its measures remain unimplemented. The situation at Fethiye is not one of gradual, partial progress but of sustained neglect: new infrastructure and tourism development have continued to encroach on nesting habitat even as the underlying protections called for in 2015 were never put in place. This represents a serious and continuing failure to comply with the Bern Convention, with measurable consequences for loggerhead sea turtles and the critical habitat on which their survival depends.

The handful of partial measures taken — limited barrier installation, sporadic use of protective cages — fall far short of reversing the cumulative damage already done, and cannot substitute for a functioning system of monitoring, enforcement, and habitat protection. MEDASSET urges the Standing Committee to treat this case as a priority for follow-up, and calls for the immediate and full implementation of all outstanding measures under Recommendation No. 183 (2015), accompanied by a clear timeline and independent verification of compliance.

Patara Specially Protected Area: Recommendation No. 182 (2015)

MEDASSET conducted a site visit to the Patara SPA in July 2026 to evaluate and document the management and conservation status of the nesting beach. The four sub-sections of the beach — Özden, Letoon, Çayağzı, and the Patara Main Beach — were assessed over three days of fieldwork, encompassing both daytime and nighttime monitoring.

As of 2026, the situation at Patara SPA shows only isolated improvements, while the majority of the area remains inadequately protected.

Recommendation Point 1 is partially implemented. Management continues to be concentrated almost exclusively on the Main Beach, leaving the northern and river-mouth sections of the SPA — Özden, Letoon, and Çayağzı — without comparable oversight. It remains imperative that protective and management measures be urgently extended across the full nesting habitat, not just its most visible section.

Multiple issues persist across the area: unauthorized vehicle access, horse riding and evidence of ATV use, construction pressure behind the beach, unregulated beach furniture, and various forms of litter pollution were all documented again this year. The Ministry of Environment, Urbanization and Climate Change's newly announced action plan for Patara anticipates further increases in tourism and residential pressure in the region, reinforcing the need for stronger management intervention rather than incremental fixes.

Recommendation Point 2 is partially implemented. The Patara Main Beach — also an archaeological site — remains accessible to the public day and night, with night access to the ruins restricted only under the "night museum" scheme. Security presence remains thin: gendarmerie issued warnings to sunset crowds gathered on the dunes on only a single day of the monitoring period, despite 24/7 camera surveillance being in place. Local residents report that tent camping continues at several points along the beach, with patrols growing less frequent. While conditions on the Main Beach have not deteriorated, the same standard of management is still absent at the other beach entrances.

At Çayağzı Beach, a second surveillance camera creates an appearance of control that is not matched in practice: illegal vehicle access and active tent camping were both recorded during nighttime inspections, and resident gatherings continue to contribute to noise and light pollution.

Around the Eşen River mouth, campers at Letoon Beach have begun installing boundary fencing around their sites — a development MEDASSET flagged as a risk in previous years and one that now raises concrete concern about semi-permanent settlement. Abandoned wooden structures at the Letoon entrance have been fully cleared, though winter floods have since deposited a significant volume of driftwood and debris on the beach. At Özden Beach,

the Green Park facility remains derelict and unaddressed. No dune restoration has taken place, though no further degradation was recorded either; erosion in the northern section of South Beach, however, has become markedly worse, likely linked to river dynamics and disrupted dune systems.

Horse riding and motor-vehicle tracks were recorded across every sub-section of the beach except the Main Beach itself, with commercial horseback riding confirmed as an ongoing activity (Rec. Point 2(vi)). No net fishing or recreational angling was observed at the Eşen delta this year, though continued inspection remains essential to sustain that outcome (Rec. Point 2(iv)).

Recommendation Points 3, 4, 8 and 9 are not implemented or are partially implemented at best. Staffing remains the report's most consistent constraint. Despite experienced academic and professional teams, human resources are insufficient to monitor the full beach network, and funding restructuring is again recommended to support recruitment. Outside the Main Beach, nest monitoring and protection remain minimal, and predated nests were recorded even within the actively monitored Main Beach sector. North Beach in particular still lacks any zoning, marking, or protection, and the specific topography of South Beach continues to be inadequately reflected in current zoning (Rec. Points 3, 8).

Access barriers remain in place only at the Patara Archaeological Site and near the Green Park facility; the Letoon and Çayağzı entrances, both at the mouth of the Eşen River, remain unrestricted despite camera surveillance — and at Letoon, one camera has since been removed and the other appears inactive (Rec. Points 4, 7, 8, 9).

Conclusion

Recommendation No. 182 (2015) remains only partially implemented, and progress since our previous report is marginal at best. The Main Beach continues to show the benefit of sustained attention, but this has not been extended to the rest of the SPA — a pattern that, eleven years on, points to a structural gap in management rather than a temporary shortfall. Emerging risks, particularly the semi-permanent camp structures at Letoon and the accelerating erosion on South Beach, suggest that inaction is beginning to compound rather than merely persist.

Patara retains real potential to become a regional model for conservation, comparable to the nearby Dalyan SPA (İztuzu Beach). Realizing that potential, however, requires extending the standard already achieved on the Main Beach across the full nesting habitat — through adequate staffing, consistent enforcement at all beach entrances, and timely resolution of the outstanding zoning and settlement issues — without further delay.

Based on the above findings, MEDASSET calls upon the Turkish authorities to:

- Urgently and fully implement Recommendations No. 182 and 183 (2015) through a comprehensive and updated action plan.
- Establish a functioning enforcement and monitoring mechanism for both SPAs, including a permanent field presence, standardized nesting-beach monitoring protocols compliant with international standards, and sufficiently staffed, experienced

conservation teams — resourced in proportion to the length of coastline and nesting density involved.

Regarding Fethiye:

- Provide an official map clearly outlining the beach and adjacent land areas under dispute, as well as zones permitted for development.
- In accordance with Measure 1 of the Recommendations, impose a building moratorium to halt all further development (e.g. hotels, jetties, lifeguard towers, water sport facilities, boat mooring sites) on or directly behind the nesting beaches.
- Correct existing zoning errors to ensure proper protection of these areas.
- Reverse the expansion of sunbed and umbrella zones at Çalış Beach (Section A), Yanıklar Beach, and Karaot Beach, and restrict beach furniture and irrigated non-native landscaping from encroaching on nesting zones.
- Install and enforce standardized, shielded street lighting along the Çalış and Yanıklar pedestrian walkways to eliminate direct illumination of the nesting beach.
- Ensure vehicle access barriers are installed at all relevant entry points and actively enforced, and regulate the unauthorized camping and caravan parking currently taking place on Akgöl (Karaot) Beach.
- Deploy trained guards with a genuine enforcement mandate across the SPA, including areas currently left entirely unmonitored.
- Allocate adequate resources to ensure the effective protection and management of the beach.

Regarding Patara:

- Guarantee that the entire nesting beach (both North and South sections), nearby marine areas, and the full extent of sand dunes are correctly zoned and protected from any further development.
- Address the concerns outlined in MEDASSET's complaint regarding the now largely completed summer house construction project — specifically its scale, environmental impacts, and the absence of both an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and a carrying capacity study.
- Provide detailed information on additional houses built outside the scope of the main summer house project.
- Extend the level of protection and monitoring currently applied to the Main Beach to the Özden, Letoon, and Çayağzı sections, including consistent guard presence and functioning, actively monitored security cameras.
- Enforce existing prohibitions on horse riding, ATV use, and unauthorized vehicle access, which continue to be recorded across all sub-sections of the beach outside the Main Beach.
- Prevent the semi-permanent camping structures forming at the Eşen River delta and Letoon Beach from becoming permanent settlements, and remove accumulated debris and abandoned structures, including the derelict Green Park facility.
- Undertake dune restoration and erosion mitigation, particularly in the northern section of South Beach where erosion has become increasingly severe.
- Reinstate and maintain clear nesting-zone signage across all beach sections, and restore the sea turtle information cabin to its intended educational function.
- Regulate the unrestricted expansion of personal umbrella use on the Main Beach.

MEDASSET respectfully calls upon the Bern Convention Standing Committee to:

- Include the case files in the agenda of the 46th Meeting of the Standing Committee for discussion.
- Maintain the case files open to ensure continued monitoring and follow-up.
- Urge the Turkish authorities to promptly and fully implement all provisions of Recommendations No. 182 and 183 (2015).

Annex 1: MEDASSET - The Mediterranean Association to Save the Sea Turtles**REPORT OF 2026 FOR FETHİYE SPA, TURKEY**

Description of the Nesting Beach (Figure 1): The 8 km long nesting beach is divided into three main sections: Çalış, Yanıklar, and Akgöl. The Çalış section, which is 2.5 km in length, is further subdivided into:

Çalış A (Küçük Çalış – southern section): A beach strip surrounded by tourist infrastructure and bordered by historical walls.

Çalış B (Koca Çalış – northern section): A relatively more natural and less developed stretch of coastline.

Çalış Hill marks the end of the Çalış area and the beginning of what is also referred to as the "small beach" (Karataş Beach), and it also marks the start of the Yanıklar section, which extends northward for approximately 4.5 km.

Kargı Stream forms the natural boundary between Yanıklar and Akgöl and includes the approximately 1 km stretch known as Karaot Beach. For more detailed information on these nesting beaches, refer to MEDASSET 2009: Fethiye Special Environmental Protection Area Report.

MEDASSET conducted a site visit in June and July 2026 to evaluate and document the management and conservation status of the nesting beach located within the Fethiye Special Protection Area (SPA). To establish a baseline for the reporting process, a four-day field study was carried out, encompassing both daytime and nighttime monitoring.

A monitoring protocol compliant with international standards is not being implemented on the Fethiye nesting beach. Although the General Directorate for Preservation of Natural Heritage of the Ministry of Environment, Urbanization, and Climate Change has assigned field personnel for nest detection and protective caging activities, the existing human resources are deemed insufficient given the length of the coastline and the nesting density. Consequently, it is scientifically imperative that monitoring and conservation activities are carried out by expert and experienced scientific teams.

Sunbed and umbrella zones have been expanded in Section A of Çalış Beach and in the hotel district of Yanıklar Beach, while new areas on Karaot Beach have been allocated by the relevant ministry. This expansion has caused the sensitive nesting zone to narrow significantly and has increased anthropogenic usage pressure.

Observations regarding the current status of the site have been categorized and reported under specific headings. All concerns raised in written statements submitted by both complainant and defense parties were observed and verified on-site. Below, the survey findings for each measure under Recommendation No. 182 (2015) are presented.

1. Stop any further development of permanent structures (buildings, roads, shipyard, jetties/docks, etc.) along the entire coast of the nesting site complex, in order not to reduce further the nesting habitat;

Çalış Beach Section A: Water sports activity zones in this area have been expanded, with numerous new equipment platforms and flags installed along the shore. A new lifeguard tower has been erected approximately every 100 meters, alongside newly designated storage areas for beach furniture next to these towers. In addition to the narrowing of the nesting zone by sunbeds and umbrellas, this anthropogenic pressure has been further exacerbated by these additional structures.

Karataş Beach and Yanıklar Sector: Following the diversion of the State Hydraulic Works (DSİ) canal running between Karataş Beach and the main section of Yanıklar, this canal has begun to be utilized as a new boat hauling and mooring site. Only a small fraction of the remaining beach in this area has been left as a public beach; furthermore, the locations of the warning signs and the boundary stakes marking the nesting zone have been altered. The commercial facility, which was under construction last year, is now fully operational, completely blocking the beach strip with outdoor furniture and wooden walkways. Trees and landscape vegetation have been planted across multiple points of the establishment, and it is anticipated that this boundary line will eventually be fully enclosed, completely obstructing public access to the beach.

Yanıklar Eastern (Hotels) Sector: The hotel zone at the eastern end has been replenished with imported sand, a practice repeated annually. Several new lifeguard towers have been constructed. Hotel Signa has introduced new decorative, beach-themed installations (such as swings and mirrors) directly onto the sand. At Hotel Fabay, the shelving system for water sports equipment and the rail track running perpendicular to the shoreline remain in place. Landscape plants installed at various points by the hotels are regularly irrigated, resulting in freshwater runoff seeping directly onto the nesting beach.

Tuana Beach Club Vicinity: The restoration works carried out last year on the canal adjacent to Tuana Beach Club were modified and rearranged this year. This intervention is expected to alter the river's flow dynamics. In particular, extending the river mouth into an arc shape is anticipated to cause severe coastal erosion along the beach in the coming years. Sand replenishment over the landfill initiated by the hotel last year has enabled motorized vehicles to drive directly down to the shoreline, causing vehicle headlights to shine directly onto the sea at night and significantly increasing vehicular traffic in the area.

Akmaz Beach: The municipality has constructed a parking lot at the entrance of Akmaz Beach, establishing partially controlled access. However, no physical barriers or enforcement measures exist to prevent beach utilization during nighttime hours. Notably, the municipal facility continues to use white spotlights to illuminate the beach, with the light spill directed toward the sea.

Nesting and General Assessment: Prism cages were encountered more frequently in the hotel sector and within the high-density nesting areas of Akgöl Beach. However, due to the severe lack of informational signage, visitors were observed displaying careless and unaware behaviors toward the nesting sites.

It is highly evident that the previously submitted recommendations regarding construction activities have been largely ignored. There is an urgent need for the fully compliant implementation of all recommended conservation measures and immediate management interventions on-site.

- 2. Remove any structure (wooden paths, wooden pavilions, bars, platforms, showers, carpets, patios, etc.) from sand zones, including those to be restored, especially in areas with relatively narrow beach width and/or in tracts with narrow sandy strips; and restore the sandy areas;**
- 5. Map the whole Fethiye coast using long-term data, maps and imagery to identify the past, current and potential most suitable zones for sea turtle nesting, and set a maximum percentage limit of sandy tracts where touristic structures are allowed on the nesting beach and define (A) coastal tracts less suitable for turtle nesting, where beach furniture is allowed at appropriate densities and (B) coastal tracts adequate for turtle nesting, where beach furniture and access at night are not allowed. Enforce beach furniture removal/stacking at night along the entire nesting beach complex during the nesting/hatching season;**

We hereby report on both of the above measures jointly (No.2 and No.5) in order to better reflect the updated situation of nesting beaches after new arrangements in 2021.

Showers and cleaning hoses have been installed at all beach entrances in Çalış Section A. Due to the direct runoff and seepage from these hoses onto the sand, invasive vegetation growth driven by artificial moisture has been observed in several areas. Physical degradation of the beach and its immediate hinterland remains ongoing. While new pavilions have been installed in Section B in a manner that narrows the sensitive nesting zone, new concrete foundation works and permanent construction activities were recorded in Section A. A cabin/booth has been placed directly in front of the wooden walkway at Dodo Cafe, and numerous new showers, changing cabins, sunbeds, and umbrella zones have been added to the beach.

Several informational signs installed in previous years remain neglected and non-functional. Although the municipal social facility in Section B officially operates between 08:00 and 20:00, the beach is actively and unregulatedly used by visitors throughout the night, and warning signs are entirely ignored. The outdated signs only state the operating hours and lack any restrictive warnings or enforcement notices. Recreational activities such as walking, picnicking, and entertainment continue uninterrupted around the clock.

In Section A, no establishments stack or remove their sunbeds from the beach at night; they only remove the cushions. Although most boundary stakes marking the nesting zone remain intact, several pavilions are located directly on the nesting line. Notably, direct interviews with staff at the Sundia Hotel revealed that certain establishments regularly direct powerful white spotlights onto the beach at night under the pretext of sunbed security, which severely disrupts the nesting and emergence behaviors of sea turtles. Furthermore, remnants of unauthorized beach bonfires were recorded at various points along Çalış Section B, the historical site in Yanıklar, and Akgöl beaches. Across all monitored beaches, both perpendicular and parallel wooden pedestrian walkways have been expanded, with carpeted paths additionally deployed on the sand within the hotel fronts.

It was observed that shower cabins in Çalış Section A drain directly onto the beach, nesting zone boundary stakes have been placed haphazardly in several locations, and beach furniture has been positioned directly in front of or behind these markings. Specifically, the outdoor furniture of Jiva Beach Club Hotel completely obstructs the nesting zone. Jiva Beach Club has expanded its beach occupancy with new sunbeds and gazebos, and an adjacent beach volleyball court poses a severe physical barrier to sea turtles. No educational or awareness-raising installations were found on the beach. No direct informational campaigns have been conducted targeting hotels, and it is crucial to emphasize that hotel staff must strictly avoid using white lights along the shoreline.

The public beach section of Karataş Beach in the Yanıklar region has been converted into a private beach for a newly completed hotel. The nesting zone has been covered with wooden decking, and the nesting boundary stakes have been pushed back, narrowing the protected area. Although a very small fraction of the beach remains open for public use, it is anticipated that public access to this area will be completely restricted in the near future. As a result of these interventions, the narrow beach strip in question is considered to be losing its suitability as a nesting habitat for sea turtles. Access to Yanıklar Beach is currently provided through a pathway passing directly through the newly constructed hotel. The hotel's water sports cabin and promotional flags are positioned at the beach entrance. Furthermore, a floating pier has been installed in the sea, connected by a newly added wooden walkway. The practice of pushing back nesting zone stakes, previously observed at Fabay Hotel, has been repeated, and the rocky shoreline has been artificially replenished with imported sand. The runoff of this artificial sand toward the natural beach during rain and wave action is expected to cause severe structural damage to this section of Yanıklar Beach.

Following the restriction of public access to neighboring beaches, visitor density at Akmaz Beach has increased significantly. Despite this high density, no nesting zone boundary stakes or informational signs were present. No visible coastal erosion was recorded. Club Tuana and Lykia Botanica have constructed water sports ramps, carpeted walkways, and piers, and have added fixed canopy structures over their sunbed zones. This section is almost completely covered with beach furniture and water sports equipment. Notably, Club Tuana has planted landscape vegetation around its pavilions and extended the bed of the adjacent Kargı Creek, disrupting its delta structure. This hydrological intervention is projected to cause significant morphologic alterations to the beach structure in the coming years.

The southern section of Akgöl (Karaot) Beach continues to be occupied as a caravan park. In the central section, a commercial establishment named "Lila Beach-Camp" has established an illegal, small-scale caravan park. New volleyball courts, sunbed-umbrella setups, and pavilion extensions were observed, with wooden walkways installed to facilitate access. Although the municipal facility has constructed high curbs to prevent vehicle access, new pavilions added to its frontage have narrowed the nesting zone. Directly behind the municipal establishment, an illegal caravan park has been opened inside the sensitive Liquidambar (sweetgum) forest. Due to the lack of regular waste control at these caravan sites, the pollution load of Kargı Creek is expected to rise, leading to unsustainable levels of visitor pressure on the beach. Despite the presence of a vehicle ban sign and physical barriers at the entrance of the road leading to the northern end of the beach, vehicular entries continue. Although this area is the highest-density nesting zone on the beach, no restrictions have been placed on visitors' use of personal umbrellas; furthermore, the ministry has installed additional public umbrellas in this sensitive zone. Local sources have confirmed rumors that the leasing of this ecologically critical area to private enterprises is currently on the agenda for coming years.

3. Stop sand extraction and ensure the application of deterrent penalties for these illegal activities;

No sand extraction or unauthorized sand transport activities were observed along the beaches during the monitoring period. However, in order to preserve the sensitive local ecosystem and coastal morphology, it is urgently required to halt all anthropogenic interventions in the riverbeds immediately.

4. Remove planted vegetation, acacia in particular, with a view to restore the remaining sandy beach;

It was observed that commercial establishments operating within the boundaries of the Fethiye SPA have introduced new landscaping and planting activities beyond the existing natural vegetation. These planting efforts, which utilize exotic species non-native to the natural habitat, coupled with their regular irrigation, increase artificial beach moisture and exert an ecologically adverse pressure on the sensitive nesting zones.

6. Prohibit the use of beach furniture and other structures or facilities on the sandy zones of Akgöl beach, regulate use of the core nesting area in the sandy northern end of the beach, and carryout the necessary controls to check enforcement;

It was observed that visitor traffic has significantly increased on Akgöl (Karaot) Beach, where high-density nesting occurs, and this density has exponentially surged following the commencement of school holidays. Consequently, anthropogenic interventions by beachgoers have escalated, with findings indicating that nearly every visitor drives personal umbrellas directly into the sensitive nesting zone. Although no tent pitching or overnight camping activities were recorded during the initial site visits of the season, subsequent monitoring conducted after the closing of educational institutions revealed that this situation has completely reversed.

The sensitive sector corresponding to the frontal section of Akgöl Beach, which is officially closed to vehicular access, has effectively turned into an active camping site and an unregulated parking zone for caravans. It is highly evident that there is an absolute lack of any monitoring or enforcement mechanism in the high-density nesting areas where Lila Beach and the municipal facility are located, directly facilitating the continuous physical expansion and encroachment of these commercial entities onto the beach.

7. Reduce light pollution to a minimum along the whole coast during the nesting/hatching season: (i) remove all lights not strictly necessary, (ii) reduce the number of lights allowed for each business company, (iii) all lights considered as strictly necessary should be reduced in power and (iv) be red or orange-yellow, (v) all lights should be shaded in the direction of the beach. Further reduce lights after a certain time in the night, for not less than 50% of the dark time. Where possible, reduce height of lights, use motion sensors and native bushes/plants as light buffers on roads and properties. Prohibit light show equipment use;

Throughout the field investigations, light pollution has remained a critical ecological concern in the Çalış and Yanıklar sectors of the Fethiye SPA, particularly within the hotel zones. The angles of the street lamps illuminating the pedestrian walkway lack standardization, and most are positioned to directly illuminate the nesting beach. The light intensity emitted by a large promotional LED screen installed on the eastern flank of Çalış Beach is high enough to be visible across the entire beach line. This screen must be completely removed from the beachfront, and similar signs generating light pollution must be strictly reassessed and modified.

At night, visitors walking or sitting on the beach were observed intensively using mobile phone flashes and various colored light-emitting equipment. Furthermore, staff at Sundia Hotel and Jiva Beach Club were recorded directing powerful white spotlights directly onto the beach at regular intervals. When interviewed regarding the ecological impacts of this artificial lighting, Sundia Hotel personnel stated that the practice is strictly for security purposes, assuming it poses no significant threat to the sea turtles, and confirmed they had received no prior training or environmental awareness on the matter. Although the removal of all temporary structures in Çalış Section B has successfully mitigated light pollution in that sector, visitors continue to engage in unregulated nocturnal activities in these dark zones.

On the small beach at the eastern end of the Yanıklar sector, a commercial facility associated with the newly built XO Cape Arena Hotel has commenced operations, actively illuminating the beach with intense spotlights. Additionally, the lighting from an older establishment constructed on a previously non-sandy rocky area directly reflects onto the marine environment. Even if the emergence and sea-finding success rate of hatchlings on this small beach is theoretically calculated at nearly 100% under natural conditions, these artificial reflections are projected to disorient the hatchlings, attracting them toward landward light sources.

Across the Yanıklar sector, hotel light shows and newly installed security lights continue to exert severe pressure on the beach. The newly constructed XO Cape Arena Hotel has added beach lighting for its water sports area, along with illuminated buoys in the sea. Although Hotel Signa has redirected its DJ booth, located right at the edge of the nesting zone, away from the beach, this adjustment has resulted in only a marginal decrease in the ambient sound levels reaching the shore. Although the light fixtures positioned perpendicular to the beach remain in place, they were not active during inspection hours; however, their usage during unmonitored hours remains unknown. Two powerful searchlights mounted on the lifeguard tower of the TUI Hotel were found to be casting light directly onto the beach. Additionally, the blue-illuminated buoys deployed by this hotel in the sea constitute another prominent source of light pollution.

In the Akmaz sector, white spotlights belonging to the municipal facility continue to illuminate the beach. Although a physical barrier was added to the parking lot entrance to restrict vehicle access, entry remains unimpeded during nighttime hours. Consequently, visitors accessing the area at night were found to be using mobile phone lights intensively.

Conversely, the use of red-light street lamps, initiated last year in the Akgöl (Karaot) sector, has begun to expand across other sections of the Fethiye beaches. However, the sporadic

coexistence of old white lights and new red lights has created an inconsistent and highly disruptive visual environment. Conducting such infrastructure renovations strictly during the off-season will minimize the adverse impacts on nesting sea turtles. While the closure of the municipal facility on Karaot Beach at 20:00 successfully encourages visitors to leave the beach prior to the onset of nocturnal nesting, the illegal caravan park opened directly behind the facility is projected to sustain and lock in anthropogenic pressure during the night.

8. Build permanent barriers (not ditches) on the roads to prevent vehicles from accessing the beach, designate parking spaces and official picnic areas away from the beach;

Although physical barriers and elevated curbs have been constructed along the entirety of Çalış Beach to prevent vehicular access, and trenches have been excavated in the Çalıştepe direction of Çalış Section B to block caravan passage, unregulated parking availability along the highway running parallel to the beach remains an active issue.

In the Yanıklar sector, despite the initial impression that vehicular access had been completely restricted following the construction of the new hotel, a hard-packed dirt road extending across the frontal section of the hotel was identified. Although no active vehicular movement was recorded during the field surveys, the compacted structure of the ground strongly indicates that this path is periodically utilized by motor vehicles. While access to the beach from the ancient city section of Yanıklar remains physically possible, visitors were observed refraining from driving standard passenger vehicles onto the shore. However, fresh tire tracks identified during the monitoring sessions confirm that off-road vehicles, particularly ATVs, regularly penetrate this protected area.

Similarly, on Akgöl (Karaot) Beach, despite the presence of vehicle-blocking barriers at several strategic points, it was observed that caravans can still access and park directly adjacent to the municipal facility. To prevent vehicular access to non-commercialized sensitive sectors, the barrier network has been extended and warning signage has been installed. Nevertheless, an active caravan park and camping ground have been established right next to the Lila Beach facility. Furthermore, prominent motorized vehicle tracks were detected directly within the critical nesting zone where sea turtle spawning activity is at its highest density.

9. Regulate maritime traffic during the nesting/hatching season, by prohibiting any motorised traffic at appropriate distances near the coast, by setting speed limits and foreseeing marked corridors from the beach to open waters;

During the field surveys and on-site observations, speedboats and fishing boats were recorded operating at multiple points along the shoreline. It was observed that the marine boundary and safety zones were demarcated using buoys and ropes.

10. Set up long-term research and conservation programs conducted by a permanent team recruited on a long-term perspective. This team should have adequate manpower to monitor the entire beach and protect all nests if necessary during the entire nesting/hatching season. The team should also assess across the years and using the same comparable methods: (i) the disorienting effects of photo-pollution on hatchlings, (ii) disturbance of nesting females, and (iii) predation of nests (or attempts);

Although the General Directorate for Preservation of Natural Heritage of the Ministry of Environment, Urbanization, and Climate Change has assigned field personnel for nest detection and protective caging activities, the existing human resources are deemed quantitatively insufficient given the extensive length of the coastline and the nesting density. Furthermore, it was observed that the field personnel currently operating on-site lack adequate technical experience and fail to conduct systematic monitoring across the entire beach line. Addressing these operational deficiencies is of critical importance for the future of the sea turtle population. Consequently, it is scientifically imperative that monitoring and conservation activities are managed and executed by scientific teams possessing proven expertise and extensive field experience in the relevant domain.

11. Prohibit camping and bonfires and set appropriate time limits for the operation of beach bars at night during the nesting and hatching season;

Along the beach corridor, campers and caravan users were found to be concentrated in specific designated zones, with no other unregulated or sporadic camping activities recorded. However, remnants of active beach bonfires were observed at several points along Akgöl and Yanıklar beaches. In Çalış Section A, certain commercial establishments continued to operate past 00:00, while hotel light shows remained active as late as 01:30. Pursuant to Environment Law No. 2872 and the Circular on the Protection of Sea Turtles, maintaining absolute silence and darkness in sensitive nesting habitats between 20:00 and 08:00 is a statutory requirement. Under these regulations, hotels in the Yanıklar sector are strictly prohibited from broadcasting high-volume music, organizing animations, or hosting beach parties at their shoreline bars, restaurants, or open-air event spaces during these hours.

Nevertheless, it was observed that certain establishments in Çalış Section A are granted "noise exemption certifications" by the local municipality in exchange for a specific fee. This exemption practice, which entirely lacks any legislative basis or scientific alignment with conservation biology, directly facilitates regulatory violations in protected habitats and renders local enforcement mechanisms completely obsolete. The failure of the designated field team to intervene against such explicit violations further underscores a severe lack of scientific competence and professional oversight on-site. This revenue-driven licensing practice by the municipality constitutes a direct breach of environmental protection laws, effectively commercializing unauthorized acoustic disturbances on protected nesting beaches under the guise of official permits.

12. Take measures to clean the beach and empty appropriately located bins on a daily basis, and ensure sewage is not discharged into the sea;

Solid waste and litter accumulation remains a persistent issue across the entire beach. In the Yanıklar sector, horse manure resulting from commercial horseback riding activities along the shoreline has been found to accumulate directly on the nesting sand, degrading both the sanitary and ecological quality of the habitat.

Furthermore, on-site investigations in Yanıklar confirmed the ongoing liquid waste discharges into the adjacent canal connected to the newly constructed hotel and its operations. Driven by the high organic load of this unauthorized discharge, an anthropogenic eutrophication process has occurred within the canal, leading to dense algal blooms stimulated by domestic wastewater nutrients. This ecological degradation directly threatens the aquatic ecosystem of the canal and the receiving marine environment.

13. Set up adequate regulations and enforcement for the measures above, including regular day and night controls along the entire coast. Define and enforce fines for noncompliance with above regulations;

During the on-site investigations and field audits, no evidence was found to indicate that any administrative sanctions were being enforced against regulatory violations, nor was there any indication of an active, systematic, or regular monitoring and enforcement mechanism on the protected beaches.

14. Ensure that adequate financial and human resources are allocated to the control and management of the beaches;

While the exact number of field personnel requested by the Ministry for the current operational period remains unknown, it has been determined that the financial allocation provided under the project is highly insufficient to cover basic accommodation, transportation, and catering expenses. In addition to these budgetary constraints, the administrative structure of the monitoring and conservation project—characterized by a single project coordinator managing geographically separate and highly sensitive nesting sites simultaneously—leads to significant operational fragmentation. In the absence of a permanent, scientifically and technically trained local field coordination team stationed at the Fethiye beaches, monitoring efforts rely almost exclusively on the initiatives of volunteers lacking sufficient technical experience. This structural gap directly accounts for the complete absence of systematic nocturnal surveys and renders a reliable assessment regarding the project's localized operational capacity and overall efficiency impossible.

15. Improve information to local community and tourists about sea turtle nesting and sustainable use of the beach. This should include effective communication of regulations (incl. Regulations implementing the Recommendation) by the authorities to stakeholders and businesses, signs at all major beach entry points, and awareness campaigns aimed to the guests of the big resorts, in collaboration with the owners and managers. Encourage beach hotels and businesses to support scientific teams and involve the local community in the protection and management of the protected area;

The information cabin reported to be located in Çalış Section A could not be physically located, despite interviews conducted with the local population and comprehensive sweeps carried out throughout the field surveys. Although the older information cabin, which had been active in previous years, remains positioned in the area, it was observed to be utilized entirely outside its intended ecological and public-awareness purposes. Similarly, the second information cabin located on Akgöl (Karaot) Beach was found to be occupied and used as a storage unit by the municipal facility.

The absence of regular administrative audits in the region and the lack of visibility of the conservation team have reinforced a perception among commercial establishments and hotels that no effective conservation or monitoring program is being executed within the Fethiye SPA. This lack of authority directly encourages an increase in regulatory violations and ecological degradation across the beaches; hence, enhancing the constant physical presence and visibility of the monitoring team is imperative. No new or updated official information signs have been deployed across the region, while the existing signs are either obscured by vegetation, rendering them invisible, or are physically damaged. Although certain new signs have been installed by the local non-governmental organization Çalış-Der, their content and guidance was found to be inadequate and inconsistent with the established standards of sea turtle conservation biology.

16. Continue to protect all nests with cages, until the different conditions obtained through the other measures above will allow again a more natural process;

Although only a limited number of prism-type protective cages were recorded across Çalış Beach, these cages were found to be more widely deployed throughout the rest of the Fethiye SPA. In the resort zone of Yanıklar Beach, it was observed that each hotel facility had independently positioned its own prism cages on the shoreline within their respective property boundaries. While a few hotels had affixed informative or precautionary labels to these cages, the vast majority of the prism cages across the sector lacked any form of informative or warning signage.

Furthermore, a portion of the recorded nests was protected using flat (ground-level) cages; however, these fixtures were observed to be structurally fragile, flimsy, and highly vulnerable to external physical disruptions and predator intrusion. This lack of standardization in caging methodologies and the technical inadequacy of the protective equipment pose a direct risk to nest security.

1. Stop any further development of permanent structures (buildings, roads, shipyard, jetties/docks, etc.) along the entire coast of the nesting site complex, in order not to reduce further the nesting habitat;



The new water sports area added to Çalış Section A in June 2025 (top) and its current status/presence as of June 2026 (bottom).



Comparative view of the beach in June 2025 (top) and June 2026 (bottom): The newly constructed commercial establishment has become operational, resulting in a narrowed active beach zone due to beach furniture and wooden walkways, the relocation of the warning sign, and the introduction of landscaped vegetation plantings.



Installation of new decorative elements (swings, mirrors, and other beach-themed structures) on the beach.





The Hotel Fabay has installed perpendicular boat rails on the beach.





The state of the restoration and rehabilitation works carried out in June 2025 (top) at the Kargı Stream adjacent to the Tuana Beach Hotel, and the current situation this year showing the extended and re-graded delta mouth structure.



Visitors use the prismatic cages as markers to keep track of their belongings.

2. Remove any structure (wooden paths, wooden pavilions, bars, platforms, showers, carpets, patios, etc.) from sand zones, including those to be restored, especially in areas with relatively narrow beach width and/or in tracts with narrow sandy strips; and restore the sandy areas

5. Map the whole Fethiye coast using long-term data, maps and imagery to identify the past, current and potential most suitable zones for sea turtle nesting, and set a maximum percentage limit of sandy tracts where touristic structures are allowed on the nesting beach and define (A) coastal tracts less suitable for turtle nesting, where beach furniture is allowed at appropriate densities and (B) coastal tracts adequate for turtle nesting, where beach furniture and access at night are not allowed. Enforce beach furniture removal/stacking at night along the entire nesting beach complex during the nesting/hatching season;



Due to the direct seepage of water from hoses onto the beach, vegetation growth caused by moisture has been observed in some areas.



Drainage from the shower stalls flows directly into the nesting beach.



Businesses expanded sun lounge area and pavilions that surpass other businesses' nesting bands (yellow arrows).



It was observed that none of the businesses removed the deck chairs by stacking them.



Wooden and plastic walkways have been added in hotel areas and Jiva Hotels Volleyball Court.



There are some informational signs in the area.



The section of Karataş Beach converted into a private beach by the newly constructed hotel, where the nesting zone has been covered with wooden decking and equipped with beach furniture.



Floating piers installed at several points along the beach and the Yanıklar Hotels zone, which is gradually narrowing the sea turtle nesting belt.



Public use and pressure observed on Akmaz Public Beach.



The newly added pavilions and the designated water sports equipment area installed on the beach by Tuana Beach Club Hotel.



The areas on Karaot Beach where visitors park their vehicles and utilize the newly installed free umbrellas, the new umbrella zone which is currently slated for leasing to a private business, and the general view of the promotional billboard for the new caravan park opened behind the municipal facility.



Traces of fires lit in various areas on the beach.



No information or awareness-raising points were found on the beach.

Figure 4. Remove planted vegetation, acacia in particular, with a view to restore the remaining sandy beach





Otel Signa continue to plant new trees.



From top to bottom: The general view of landscape vegetation, either planned to be planted or already planted to demarcate property boundaries on the beach, in front of Tuana Beach Hotel, Jiva Hotel, and XO Cape Arinna Hotel, respectively.



The general view of landscape plants, trees, and the installed irrigation systems established on the beach by the new business operating in front of the XO Cape Arena Hotel.

Figure 6. Prohibit the use of beach furniture and other structures or facilities on the sandy zones of Akgöl beach, regulate use of the core nesting area in the sandy northern end of the beach, and carryout the necessary controls to check enforcement;



The sensitive ecological zone located at the forefront of Akgöl Beach, observed to have turned into an area entirely occupied by tents and uncontrollably parked caravans.

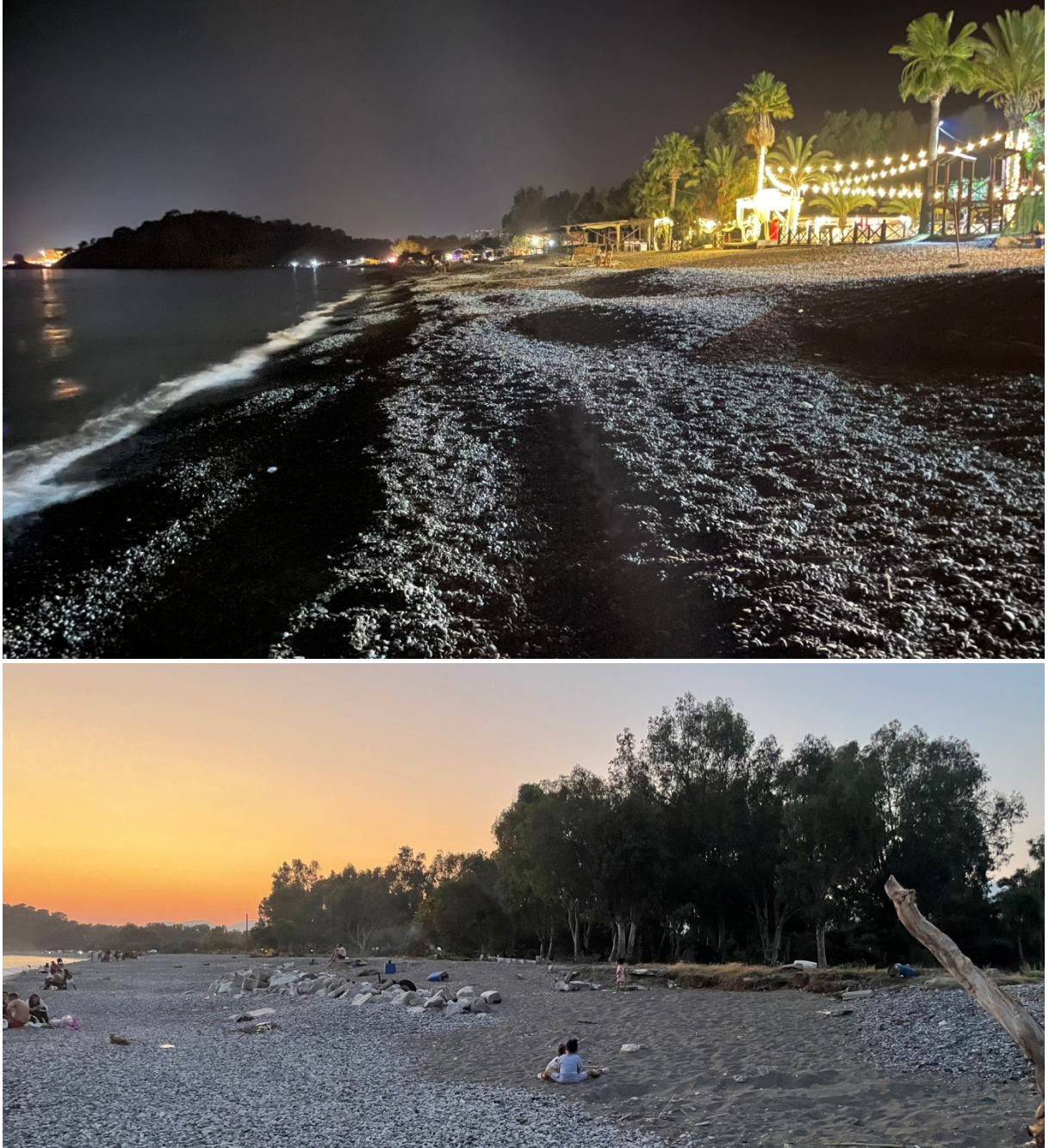
Figure 7. Reduce light pollution to a minimum along the whole coast during the nesting/hatching season: (i) remove all lights not strictly necessary, (ii) reduce the number of lights allowed for each business company, (iii) all lights considered as strictly necessary should be reduced in power and (iv) be red or orange-yellow, (v) all lights should be shaded in the direction of the beach. Further reduce lights after a certain time in the night, for not less than 50% of the dark time. Where possible, reduce height of lights, use motion sensors and native bushes/plants as light buffers on roads and properties. Prohibit light show equipment use;



It was observed that the high-intensity light emitted by the large commercial LED screen installed on Çalış Beach is visible along the entire coastline, creating a widespread light impact across the area.



It was observed that visitors on the beach during the night make intensive use of mobile phone flashes and spend time on the shore utilizing various colorful and illuminated equipment.



Artificial light emissions from the wedding venue in Çalış Section B (June 2025, top) and the current status of the area in July 2026 following the removal of these structures (bottom).



Panoramic view of the area following the removal of structures to mitigate anthropogenic pressure on the beach in Çalış Section B.



Temporal change of the inverted DJ booth belonging to Hotel Signa, which was not observed to be in active use during the field surveys; its status in June 2025 (top) and its current status in July 2026 (bottom).



It was observed that additional beach lighting units have been installed by XOCape Arena Hotel for the designated water sports area.



It was observed that artificial light from the old establishment, built in previous years on a rocky area lacking beach characteristics in Yanıklar, reflects directly onto the sea surface.



The lighting fixtures on Karataş Beach.



Blue buoys deployed in the sea and the lifeguard tower floodlights at the TUI Hotel.



Overall view of Akmaz Beach municipal facilities illuminated by white spotlights at night in June 2025 (top) and their current status in June 2026 (bottom).



Lila beach lights at Akgöl beach.



The modification made to the Kargı Delta, rendering the area accessible for vehicle parking and the resulting light pollution, alongside the pavilion lighting and pier light reflections of Tuana Beach Hotel, and the blue-red buoys deployed in the sea.



The uncontrolled artificial light impact and resulting photopollution caused during the night by caravans positioned on Karaot Beach.

Figure 8. Build permanent barriers (not ditches) on the roads to prevent vehicles from accessing the beach, designate parking spaces and official picnic areas away from the beach;



It was observed that caravan and vehicle access has been largely blocked by trenches excavated in the section of Çalış Section B facing Çalıştepe.



Although no active vehicle passage was encountered during the field surveys, the soil compaction and track patterns clearly indicate that this area is periodically accessed by motorized vehicles at Yanıklar Hotels.



Motor vehicle wire tracks and Caravan parking areas on the Karaot beach.

Figure 9. Regulate maritime traffic during the nesting/hatching season, by prohibiting any motorised traffic at appropriate distances near the coast, by setting speed limits and foreseeing marked corridors from the beach to open waters;



Speedboats were spotted at many points.

Figure 10. Set up long-term research and conservation programs conducted by a permanent team recruited on a long-term perspective. This team should have adequate manpower to monitor the entire beach and protect all nests if necessary during the entire nesting/hatching season. The team should also assess across the years and using the same comparable methods: (i) the disorienting effects of photo-pollution on hatchlings, (ii) disturbance of nesting females, and (iii) predation of nests (or attempts);



Inconsistencies and deficiencies identified on the informational signs of nests with prism cages, and cases where protective prism cages were missing despite flat cages being present at certain nests.

Figure 11. Prohibit camping and bonfires and set appropriate time limits for the operation of beach bars at night during the nesting and hatching season



Traces of a camp firepit and a vehicle entering the building were detected.

Figure 12. Take measures to clean the beach and empty appropriately located bins on a daily basis, and ensure sewage is not discharged into the sea



Although no horses were directly observed during the field surveys, horseshoe tracks and droppings detected across the beach surface.



The new hotel's discharge into the canal (yellow arrows) has resulted in algal growth (yellow ellipses).

Figure 15. Improve information to local community and tourists about sea turtle nesting and sustainable use of the beach. This should include effective communication of regulations (incl. Regulations implementing the Recommendation) by the authorities to stakeholders and businesses, signs at all major beach entry points, and awareness campaigns aimed to the guests of the big resorts, in collaboration with the owners and managers. Encourage beach hotels and businesses to support scientific teams and involve the local community in the protection and management of the protected area;



During individual interviews with local residents, it was learned that there was no information kiosk and that the information kiosk in Akgöl was being used as a warehouse.

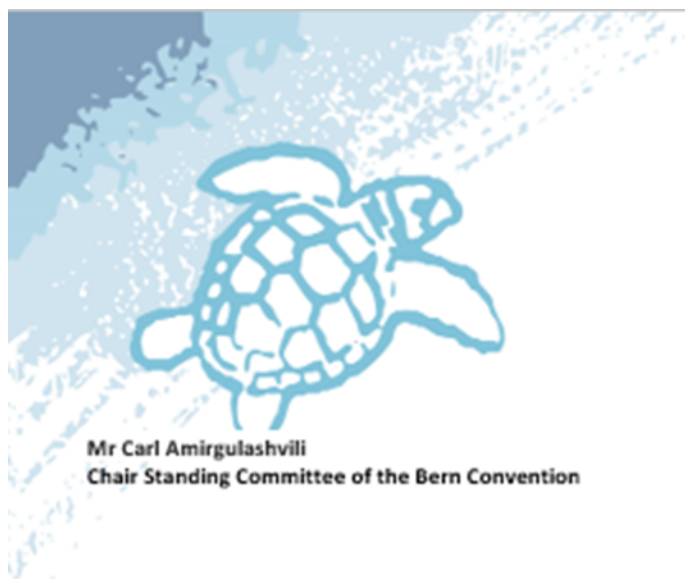


Warning signs in front of establishments in Çalış Section A instruct visitors not to light fires, play loud music, access the beach at night, or touch the protective iron cages of turtle nests, while notices in front of certain hotels state "Do not move the sun loungers beyond this point" to restrict the movement of beach furniture.

Figure 16. Continue to protect all nests with cages, until the different conditions obtained through the other measures above will allow again a more natural process



It was observed that there is no information provided regarding the prism cages on-site, and some of them have been displaced. Furthermore, the existing surface cages were found to be structurally weak and inadequate.



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Mr Carl Amirgulashvili
Chair Standing Committee of the Bern Convention

11 February 2026
Our Ref. 07.2026

Re: Update regarding Recommendations No. 95, 182, 183, and 226 (Kazanli, Patara, Fethiye, and Mersin Anamur, Turkey)

Dear Mr. Amirgulashvili,

MEDASSET wishes to provide a brief status update regarding the aforementioned recommendations.

At this time, there are no significant new on-the-ground developments to report. However, we would like to highlight our continued readiness to support the implementation of these conservation measures.

In a recent meeting with the IUCN Mediterranean (IUCN-Med) representative, we formally expressed our commitment to participate in the upcoming protection and implementation processes for **Patara (Recommendation No. 182)**. We look forward to contributing our expertise once the mission and subsequent actions are organized.

We remain at your disposal for any further information and will continue to monitor these files closely.

Yours sincerely,

Yours sincerely,

Lily Venizelos

MEDASSET President

Member of IUCN-Species Survival Commission: Marine Turtle Specialist Group |

CC:

Bern Convention, Council of Europe:

Ms. Alessandra SIINO, Secretary of the Bern Convention

Mr. Marc HORY, Project Manager - European Diploma for Protected Areas and Emerald Network

Ms. Marta MEDLINSKA, Programme Manager