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AND NATURAL HABITATS

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**Presumed degradation of nesting beaches in Fethiye and Patara
SPAs (Türkiye)**

-GOVERNMENT REPORT-

Document prepared by the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Republic of Türkiye

REPUBLIC OF TÜRKİYE**Ministry of Environment, Urbanization and Climate Change****27.03.2025****Government Report on Follow-up of Recommendations No. 183 (2015) on Presumed degradation of nesting beaches in Fethiye SPA (Türkiye)****Background Information:**

Complaints about the degradation of sea turtle habitat on the nesting beach in Fethiye-Göcek Special Environmental Protection Area (SEPA) have been ongoing for many years. An on-the-spot appraisal (OSA) was carried out by the Standing Committee and Recommendation No.183 was prepared following the OSA. The Turkish authorities continue their efforts to fulfill the relevant recommendations. However, it has been fulfilling the recommendations throughout the process, although delays in implementation have occurred due to situations in the legal status.

FETHİYE-GÖCEK SPECIAL ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AREA AND THE ACTIONS TAKEN AND PLANNED TO BE TAKEN IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE RECOMMENDATION NO. 183 (2015)**1- Determination of Sea Turtles Nesting Areas and Beach Zoning on Fethiye Beach by Placing Wooden Posts**

As mentioned in the previous report, a nesting zone was determined according to the long-term nesting data of sea turtles in Fethiye-Göcek SEPA. This zone is delimited by wooden barriers (Photos1.1-4). In the area between the sea and the nesting zone, human activities, including beach furniture, are prevented. In the upper part of this zone, beach furniture is collected and stacked at night and relocated during the daytime (Photos1.5-6) Sea turtle activities (nest, non-nesting emergence etc) are recorded via GPS. In addition, from 2021 to date, wooden barriers have also been used for determining the nest location.

2- Information and Warning Signs:

There are warning and information signs at many points on the beach. These signs are checked at the beginning of each season. The damaged or collapsed ones are replaced or repaired (Photos 2.1-5). Those that collapse due to various factors (such as weather events) during the nesting season are restored to their original condition.

3- Sea Turtle Monitoring and Conservation Studies:

The research team, supported by The Ministry of Environment, Urbanization and Climate Change, carries out conservation, monitoring and research activities. This year, field studies were started on May 1st in anticipation of the early start of nesting period. Sea turtle population conservation, research and monitoring activities are carried out by a team of 6 staff. All of the research staff are conducting academic studies on sea turtles. They have been in the field full time since the beginning of the project.

Within the scope of the project, not only monitoring of sea turtle activities and conservation of sea turtles but also informing local people, tourists and tourism facilities are realized (Photos 3.1-6). As *in situ* protection, caging of nests and relocation of nests close to the sea are carried out (Photos 3.7-10). The effects of human-induced global climate change are also examined (Photo 3.11). All basic data about the nests are taken (Photos 3.12-13). An information desk also operates in Çaltış, which has a dense tourist population (Photos 3.14-17). The research team, which is permanently present in the field within the nesting season, responds immediately to all kinds of notifications from all over the region.

4- Measures Against Predation:

In the SEPA nesting beach parts, especially in areas where predation is intense, a strict caging effort is carried out. Prism cages are also used to increase awareness in certain areas (Photos 4.1-3). Stray dogs on the beach try to predate more intensively on the prism cages used to increase awareness (Photo 4.4). The use of subsurface straight cages was increased this nesting season to increase protection. The limited number of predations that have occurred so far (6%) have generally occurred during egg laying process.

5- Conservation Management Plan Studies for Fethiye-Göcek Special Environmental Protection Area:

The most important priority of the study has been to ensure the widest participation of stakeholders in the Fethiye-Göcek SEPA Management Planning process and to ensure that all parties contribute to the process by sharing their knowledge and experience at every stage of the process. A total of 2 stakeholder meetings were organized on 14-15-16 December 2022 and 11-12 October 2023 in order to facilitate the active participation and contribution of participating stakeholders in the management plan planning process. Central and local organizations of all relevant public institutions and organizations, governorship, district governorship, relevant municipality, mukhtars, representatives of relevant associations, relevant chambers took part in these meetings.

In the process of preparing the Management Plan, the characteristics that make the area important were identified, ideal (long term) targets for the management plan, factors affecting management, implementation targets and activities that will bring the management to these targets were determined and activity plans were prepared for each activity. As a result of the study, 5 ideal targets, 9 implementation targets and 35 activities that will bring the management to these implementation targets were defined. In order to realize these activities, 44 stakeholder groups supported and contributed to the project. Within the scope of the prepared activities, mutual meetings were held with the relevant institutions on November 21-22, 2023. As a result of the meetings, activity plans were finalized.

IDEAL TARGET-3 is “Ensuring Ecosystem and Habitat Integrity and Sustainability of Biodiversity”. There are three “implementation targets” under this objective.

Implementation Target 3.1: Updating and protecting the Biodiversity data of the region

Implementation Target 3.2: Carrying out sea turtle conservation and monitoring activities

Implementation Target 3.3: Ensuring the management of areas subject to overuse pressure in Fethiye-Göcek SEPA in a way that does not exceed the carrying capacity limit

A total of 14 activities were planned within the scope of the implementation targets. These activities are as follows.

- Activity 3.1.1. To conduct biodiversity inventory studies within Fethiye-Göcek SEPA
- Activity 3.1.2. To carry out regular control and inspection activities to prevent illegal fishing activities
- Activity 3.2.1. Updating the nesting areas for sea turtles on Fethiye Beach
- Activity 3.2.2. To install a sufficient number of Information and Warning Signs to protect sea turtles on the nesting beach and to indicate the importance of the beach.
- Activity 3.2.3. Ensuring that Sea Turtle Conservation and Monitoring Activities are carried out by the same scientific team every year
- Activity 3.2.4. Control and follow-up of tourism-oriented buildings and other coastal structures on the coast of Fethiye-Göcek SEPA within the scope of Circular No. 2009/10 issued for the protection of sea turtles
- Activity 3.2.5. Removal of contrary practices (Wooden Roads, Wooden Cafes, Bars, Platforms, Showers, Carpets, Terraces, etc.) in sea turtle nesting areas
- Activity 3.2.6. Preventing Light Pollution, which is an important obstacle for sea turtles to nest and change direction
- Activity 3.2.7. Construction of Permanent Barriers to Prevent Vehicle Entry to the Beach
- Activity 3.2.8. Compliance with Circular No. 2009/10 in the control of maritime traffic and maritime spatial planning
- Activity 3.2.9. Ensuring that the beach is cleaned at regular intervals during the nesting season

- Activity 3.3.1. To revise the Procedures and Principles for the Protection and Use of Göcek Bay and Göcek- Dalaman Bays within 2 years
- Activity 3.3.2. Conducting regular inspections to prevent illegal practices within the boundaries of the area
- Activity 3.3.3. To update the carrying capacity projects for the Gulf of Fethiye and Gocek bays

6- Actions on Tourism Buildings, Roads, Shipyard, Pier etc. on Fethiye Beach:

Since the declaration of Fethiye-Göcek beaches as a Special Environmental Protection Area, construction on the coast has been prevented. However, construction has occurred in areas with legal rights and official registered properties title deeds acquired before this special status. These structures, which have been built due to their prior rights, are required to be used in a way that does not affect sea turtles.

As stated in the previous report, the requests for a shipyard and a pier to be built in one part was rejected due to its possible effect on the nesting beaches.

Official information and warnings are also provided to all facilities within the SEPA. Finally, the letter sent by the Muğla Governorship Provincial Directorate of Environment, Urbanization and Climate Change on July 11, 2024, is presented as an annex (Appendix2).

7- Actions to Remove All Structures on Fethiye Beach (Wooden Roads, Wooden Cafes, Bars, Platforms, Showers, Carpets, Terraces, etc.):

As stated in the previous report, the court decision on this issue is in force. The process of implementing the decision continues through legal legislation.

8- Sand Extraction:

Since 2010, the sand extraction from beaches has been banned by law throughout Türkiye. This situation is strictly controlled. There are serious penalties for this illegal action.

9- Remove Planted Vegetation, Acacia in Particular, with a View to Restore the Remaining Sandy Beach:

This is an action that is still in progress. The aforementioned trees were planted by the property owners in the above-mentioned areas, whose title deeds extend into the sea, in areas that have remained in their ownership for many years. Since the judicial process has been completed, local organisations have been instructed to remove the trees in these beach areas.

10- Light Pollution:

Facilities and businesses in Fethiye-Göcek SEPA are inspected, and necessary warnings are given about the lighting in the area. The research team is working in cooperation with the local administration for applications regarding the colors and locations of street lighting (Photos 10.1-4). Negotiations are ongoing with the local administration for applications regarding the colors of street lighting. Step-lights are implemented in hotels (Photo 10.5)

All street lighting along Fethiye beach, especially on Çalış beach, is in the form of screens and the light is not reflected on the beach.

11- Barriers for Illegal Vehicle Entrance

Vehicle entrance to beach part is completely blocked in many areas with permanent barriers. The barriers are provided by curbstones, low walls, blocking posts and chain barriers on the roadsides (Photos 11.1-6). However, in the event of illegal entries, the research team directly informs law enforcement (municipal police, gendarme etc.) and ensures that the vehicles are removed.

12- Marine Traffic:

Within the scope of the circular numbered 2009/10 for the protection of sea turtles, water sports are prohibited within 1 mile from the shore towards the sea, and if there is a watercraft within this area, the speed per hour will be below 8 miles per hour.

Our law enforcement officers working in our seas continue to carry out strict inspections in this regard, and criminal proceedings are carried out against those who violate the prohibitions.

13- Beach Clean Up:

The garbage containers on and around the beach are emptied regularly (Photo 13.1). The collected waste is directed to the “Fethiye Solid Waste Landfill” facility. Although beach pollution is partially seen during periods when the number of visitors increases, there is no macro pollution on the beach in general (Photos 13.2-5).

14- Marine Spatial Planning

Within the scope of the Barcelona Convention, legal infrastructure studies have been initiated for spatial planning studies in all Mediterranean waters of Türkiye, especially in protected marine areas.

Appendix: [Site Images - Fethiye](#)

REPUBLIC OF TÜRKİYE**Ministry of Environment, Urbanization and Climate Change****27.03.2025****Government Report on Follow-up of Recommendations No. 182 (2015) on Presumed degradation of nesting beaches in Patara SPA (Türkiye)****ACTIONS TAKEN AND PLANNED TO BE TAKEN REGARDING THE RECOMMENDATIONS ON CONSERVATION OF SEA TURTLE HABITATS IN PATARA SPECIAL ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AREA RECOMMENDATION NO. 182 (2015)****1- Legal Regulations For The Protection Of Beach Area Of Patara Special Environmental Protection Area**

A total of 197.1 km² (marine and coastal zone) area, including Patara beach, was declared as a Special Environmental Protection Area within the scope of law no: 383 in 1990. The region is also protected as a natural protected area and an archaeological protected area within the scope of law no: 2863 (Fig.1).

2- Conservation Management Plan Studies for Patara Special Environmental Protection Area:

Patara Special Environmental Protection Area has been declared as protection areas in line with international conventions (such as the Bern Convention) to which our country is a party, and with the participation of different stakeholders such as official institutions, non-governmental organizations, universities and local people in order to protect the region and ensure its sustainability for all areas. Purposeful management plans studies were initiated in 2022 and 2023, still continue in 2024. In the management plan, special studies are carried out in line with the recommendations made specifically for Patara by the Bern Secretariat.

The biodiversity study, which is the base of the management plans, has been completed. Management plan studies continue rapidly with the participation of non-governmental organizations, local people, public institutions and organizations in order to improve the current situation further in the next 5 years by revealing the ecological, social and cultural values of the region, especially the loss of biodiversity and climate change (Fig.2).

3- Prohibit Further Construction (Including Buildings, Structures, Roads) On The Beach, Remove Illegal Abandoned Facilities, And Ensure Restoration Of Dunes During The Nesting/Hatching Season:

Within the scope of the above-mentioned laws of Türkiye, no construction is allowed in the Patara beach area. The rules on this issue are strict and the implementation is in this direction. The closest settlement to the sea turtle nesting beach is 1.6 km away using air distance, and all kinds of construction is prohibited within this area (Fig.3-6).

4- Situation Of Beach Furniture On The Beach, Regulating Their Use And Ensuring That Items Are Removed From The Nesting Area At Night:

- There is a business on Patara beach to fulfilment of needs people who visit the area, such as eating and drinking. The furniture -such as umbrellas, sun beds- that in front of this business is located in a 250 m area on the 12,000 m long beach.
- This business is open between 08:00 am and 20:00 pm, It does not provide service except of these hours.
- In addition, the business removes its furniture from the area designated for turtles after 20:00 pm.

Against to consisted erosion on the beach during the winter season, necessary arrangements are made before spawning in May (Fig.7-8).

5- Placing Barriers to Prevent Vehicle Entry to the Beach:

Before the 2021 breeding season, barriers and warning signs to prevent vehicle entry were made on the beach at vehicle entry points, including the sand dunes. In 2022, additional barriers and signs were built. In 2023, no vehicle entrances were detected in the beach (Fig.9-13).

6- Prohibit Lighting Of The Beach:

Since the nearest settlement to the beach is 1.6 km away, there is no light source reaching the beach from these settlements.

In addition, since the all human activities on the beach is closed after 20:00 pm, there is no light pollution.

7- Prohibition of Fishing Activities by the Coastal Zone:

Within the scope of the Fisheries law no. 1380 all kinds of fishing activities are prohibited within 1 mile of the marine area in front of sea turtle nesting beaches. In this context, fishing is prohibited at this distance in the Patara marine area.

8- Prohibiting Camping On The Beach And On Riverbanks Overlooking The Beach:

Camping is not allowed at any location on Patara beach, campers are removed from the area by security guard and gendarmerie (Fig.14).

9- Prohibiting Horse Riding And 4x4 Vehicle Safaris On Nesting Beaches:

If people are spotted wandering around by riding horses at the beach, they are removed from the area by security officers. Since the vehicle entrances to the beach were closed with barriers, no vehicle entrances were detected in the beach in 2024.

10- Administrative Sanctions And Imposed Penalties For Non-Compliance With The Above Regulations:

The laws of the Republic of Türkiye contain significant penalties in this regard. Environmental Law No. 2872 is specifically regulated concerning this issue. Penalties for those who damage biodiversity and ecosystems are regulated by this law.

11- Ensuring That Sufficient Financial And Human Resources Are Allocated For Control, Management And Enforcement Of Regulations

The Republic of Türkiye allocates a budget for the protection of sea turtle nesting beaches, such as renewing the existing information and warning signs in the area, ensuring regular cleaning of the area, purchasing cages for the protection of turtle nests, as well as for the protection and monitoring of sea turtles every year.

12- Ensure That Litter Is Periodically Removed From The Beach And Dunes:

The areas where high human presence is seen are cleaned daily by the municipality, and the entire beach is cleaned weekly. So as to increase awareness, the beach is also cleaned with the participation of locals and daily visitors and non-governmental organizations.

13- Continue to Prevent Uncontrolled Human Settlement Behind The Nesting Area Of Patara Beach:

There is no construction right behind the beach, and new constructions are not allowed to built. Patara beach is protected from human affects, as it is completely closed to human activities during the nesting hours of sea turtles, and human activities are limited during the day. In this context, Patara beach is one of the best conservation nesting beach in Türkiye.

14- Ensuring That All Nests in Populated Areas Are Protected with Appropriate Equipment To Protect Them From Being Crushed by Human Activities and Beach Furniture:

In order to protect the sea turtle nests against especially predation, human-induced damage and other factors cages (prism-shaped above-ground cages and flat-shaped underground cages) are made every year (Fig.15-18).

15- Sea Turtle Monitoring and Conservation Studies:

Sea turtle monitoring and conservation studies have been conducted by Prof. Dr. Eyup BAŞKALE (Biologist) and their research team on Patara Beach for several years. The Project designed by the Ministry of Environment, Urbanization and Climate Change to support the scientific team that carries out the activities for monitoring and conservation of sea turtles. In this context, conservation activities such as 24-hour monitoring (between 15th May – 30th September) of the beach, raising awareness of beach users, and nest protection have been carried out (Fig.19-20).

16- Public Awareness, Sharing Information with Stakeholders and Warning Signs

Warning and information signs have been placed on Patara beach before the 2022 breeding season. The old signs have been renewed and 50 new information signs also have been placed on the beach. In this way it was ensured that visitors were informed about how to use beach, and awareness has been gained about the protection of sea turtle breeding grounds and nests. In addition, the Project team provides continuous training to visitors, business owners and other area users, especially local people, about the importance of protecting the area and about sea turtles (Fig.12-13-14-15-16-17-18).

17- Determination of Sea Turtles Nesting Areas and Beach Zoning on Patara Beach by Placing Wooden Posts:

The borders of the nesting zone on the whole beach of Patara were drawn with wooden posts by the study carried out in 2021. Thus, physical factors that affect the number of nests are prevented. Human activities are restricted (no sunbathing, digging sand etc.) and beach furnitures (including sunbeds, umbrellas, pavilions) are not allowed in the nesting zone (Fig.32-34).

18- Smoke-Free Airzone and Zero Waste Project:

In order to protect the dune habitat, the area has been declared as a smoke-free air area, and zero waste implementation has also been carried out in the region (Fig.35-37).

19- Strengthening The Resilience Of Ecosystems in The Mediterranean Cooperation Protocol (Pilot Site: Patara Special Environmental Protection Area):

To promote the development of the Patara SPA, designated as one of the pilot sites for the “Strengthening the Resilience of Ecosystems in the Mediterranean (RESCOM)” project by the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN), a cooperation protocol has been established on November 2024. This protocol is signed between the IUCN Mediterranean Office and the Ministry of Environment, Urbanization, and Climate Change (General Directorate for the Protection of Natural Assets). Its goal is to prepare a Management Plan that identifies and implements nature-based solutions in collaboration with various stakeholders. This protocol outlines the following objectives:

- Enhance the capacities of stakeholders at regional, national, and local levels to protect ecosystems.
- Develop the Patara SPA Management Plan with stakeholder participation, promoting the implementation of nature-based solutions in the Mediterranean region.
- Plan and execute exemplary nature-based solutions and activities aimed at ecosystem conservation, prevention of biodiversity loss, addressing climate change issues, and responding to related social challenges and needs within the Patara SPA Management Plan studies. The General Directorate for the Protection of Natural Assets (TVKGM) and IUCN will collaborate in the development of projects within the Patara SPA pilot area.

Appendix : [Site Images Patara](#)