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CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF EUROPEAN WILDLIFE  
AND NATURAL HABITATS

**Standing Committee**

42<sup>nd</sup> meeting

Strasbourg, 29 November – 2 December 2022

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**Open File: 2012/9**

**Follow-up of Recommendations Nos. 182 and 183 (2015)  
on Presumed degradation of nesting beaches  
in Fethiye and Patara SPAs  
(Turkey)**

**- REPORT BY THE GOVERNMENT -**

*Document prepared by the  
Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry & Ministry of Environment, Urbanization and  
Climate Change, Turkey*

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**REPUBLIC OF TURKEY****Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry & Ministry of Environment, Urbanization and Climate Change****25.02.2022****Government Report on Follow-up of Recommendations No. 182 and 183 (2015) on Presumed degradation of nesting beaches in Fethiye and Patara SPAs (Turkey)****Background Information:**

Two different complaints, one about the degradation of the habitats of sea turtle nesting beaches in Fethiye and the other about that in Patara were submitted to the Secretariat in 2012 and 2013 by an NGO. The Bureau decided on addressing these two complaints in conjunction. In the 33<sup>rd</sup> meeting of the Standing committee, a casefile was opened for both of the complaints. In 2014, the Committee decided on conducting an on-the-spot appraisal to the relevant sites. In 2015, two recommendations, Recommendations No. 182 (2015) and No.183 (2015) were prepared following the on-the-spot appraisal. In the following years, the Standing Committee decided to keep the case file open, while urging the Turkish authorities to step up their current efforts and ensuring that both Recommendations [No. 182 (2015) and No. 183 (2015)] are fully implemented from that on.

**1- Determination of Sea Turtles Nesting Areas and Beach Zoning on Fethiye Beach by Placing Wooden Posts**

Nesting zones were determined by using the coordinates of the nests on the Fethiye beach in line with approximately 20 years of data. In the light of this information compiled, with the study carried out in 2021, the borders of the nesting zone were drawn with wooden posts on the whole beach of Fethiye. Human activities are restricted (no sunbathing, digging sand etc.) and beach furnitures (including sunbeds, umbrellas, pavilions) are not allowed in the nesting zone.





(Note that the photos were taken during winter. The wheel tracks will be cleaned away prior to the nesting season.)

**2- Information and Warning Signs:**

At the beginning of 2022, new warning and awareness signs were placed on Fethiye beach. 60 more signboards are being built and will be placed in the same year when the construction is completed. In this way, beach users will be informed and their sensitivity to protection will be increased.





### **3- Sea Turtle Monitoring and Conservation Studies:**

Sea turtle monitoring and conservation studies have been carried out on behalf of the Ministry by Prof. Dr. Yakup KASKA (Biologist) and his research team on Fethiye Beach for many years. As in previous years, a budget was allocated by the Ministry of Environment, Urbanization and Climate Change in 2022 to support the scientific team that carries out activities for monitoring and conservation of sea turtles. In this context, conservation activities such as 24-hour monitoring of the beach, raising awareness of beach users, and nest protection will continue in 2022.

### **4- Actions Against Predation:**

New Grid cages (against Predation) and prism cages (for raising awareness) were made and will be used as in previous years.

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

Fethiye Special Environmental Protection Area has been declared in line with international agreements (such as the Bern Convention) to which our country is a party. In order to ensure the protection and sustainability of the region, studies on site-specific conservation management plans were initiated in 2022 with the participation of different stakeholders such as official institutions, non-governmental organizations, universities and local people.

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

After the Fethiye region and nesting beaches was declared a protected area for sea turtles (1985), no new areas were opened for development, especially on the coastline. Some tourism businesses built after this date are legal businesses that benefit from the property rights they had before the area was declared as a protected area. However, they have to accept all the conditions for the protection of sea turtles presented in the **Annex**. There have been requests to build a shipyard and a pier in a part of Fethiye beach. However, this request was rejected as it would affect the turtle nesting beach.

### **7- Actions for Removal of All Structures on Fethiye Beach (Wooden Roads, Wooden Cafes, Bars, Platforms, Showers, Carpets, Terraces, etc.):**

The area where complaints and problems are expressed on Fethiye beach is seen in one-third of the beach. Since the aforementioned beach area was included in the properties of the legal landowners and people living there, it was not possible to intervene in this area sufficiently, and a judicial decision was required in order to take action.

To solve this problem, judicial proceedings were initiated in previous years, and towards the end of 2021, the property rights on the beach were canceled by a judicial decision.

In 2022, in line with this judicial decision, necessary instructions were given to local public institutions to remove all occupations in the Fethiye beach area.

### **8- Sand Extraction:**

Since 2010, the use of beach sand in constructions has been prohibited in Turkey. For this reason, strict inspections are carried out regarding the extraction of beach/sea sand in the entire coastline of our country. Penal action is taken against people who extract sand illegally.

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

These plants were planted by landowners on their own properties. As explained above, since the judicial process has been completed, local public institutions have been instructed to remove the trees in these beach areas.

### **10- Light Pollution:**

All street lightings through Fethiye beach were replaced and is now screened and the light is not directly reflected on the beach.

Studies against light pollution caused by tourism businesses continues along the Fethiye beach, and the sea turtle research team in the area are constantly inspecting, providing training on this subject and issuing certificates to businesses that implement the rules.

In 2022, inspections will be carried out strictly. However, in the following years, inspections and accompanying conservation activities will be developed with ecological solutions.

#### **11- Construction of Permanent Barriers to Prevent Vehicle Entry to the Beach:**

Barriers were built in previous years to prevent vehicle entrance to the beach, and these barriers prevented vehicles from entering the beaches as much as possible.



#### **12- Marine Traffic:**

Within the scope of the circular numbered 2009/10 for the protection of sea turtles, water sports are prohibited in an area of 1 mile from the coast to the sea. Marine vehicles should sail below 8 miles per hour in these areas. Our law enforcement officers patrol in our seas and continue their strict controls in this regard, and actions are taken against those who violate the prohibitions.

#### **13- Beach Clean Up:**

Garbage containers were placed through the beach and containers are regularly emptied by the municipality. Disposal of the wastes is in accordance with the Waste Management Regulations. In addition, Beach cleanings are carried out at regular intervals.

Annex: Conditions of protection and use of sea turtle nesting areas

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

Nesting zones were determined by using the coordinates of the nests on the Patara beach in line with approximately 20 years data. In the light of this information compiled, with the study carried out in 2021, the borders of the nesting zone were drawn with wooden posts on the whole beach of Patara. Human activities are restricted (no sunbathing, digging sand etc.) and beach furniture (including sunbeds, umbrellas, pavilions) are not allowed in the nesting zone.





## 2- Information and Warning Signs:

At the beginning of 2022, new warning and awareness signs were placed on Patara beach. 20 more signboards are being built and will be placed in the same year when the construction is completed. In this way, beach users will be informed and their sensitivity to protection will be increased.





### 3- Actions Against the Predation:

New Grid cages (against Predation) and prism cages (for raising awareness) were made and will be used as in previous years.

### 4- Sea Turtle Monitoring and Conservation Studies:

Sea turtle monitoring and conservation studies have been carried out by Prof. Dr. Eyup BAŞKALE (Biologist) and their research team on Patara Beach for many years. As in previous years, a budget was allocated by the Ministry of Environment, Urbanization and Climate Change in 2022 to support the scientific team that carries out activities for monitoring and conservation of sea turtles. In this context, conservation activities such as 24-hour monitoring of the beach, raising awareness of beach users, and nest protection will continue in 2022.

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

Patara Special Environmental Protection Area Protection areas have been declared in line with international agreements (such as the Bern Convention) to which our country is a party. In order to ensure the protection and sustainability of the region, studies on site-specific conservation management plans were initiated in 2022 with the participation of different stakeholders such as official institutions, non-governmental organizations, universities and local people. In the management plan, preparations will be made in line with the recommendations made specifically for Patara by the Bern Secretariat.

### 6- 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, and additional barriers and signs will be built in 2022.





### 7- Light Pollution

There is a small business at one point on the Patara beach, and there is no light pollution caused by the business. In 2021, a special light screening system was installed for the use of security-related lights. Since the Patara beach is very far from the residential areas, human-induced light does not reach the beach.

### 8- Prohibition of Fishing Activities by the Coastal Zone:

Patara beach is not suitable for fishing activities. Amateur anglers are rarely seen, and they are also warned away. Likewise, net fishing is not allowed around the beach.

### 9. Continue to Prevent Uncontrolled Human Settlement Behind the Beach, Particularly Where These May Result in Making the Beaches Unsuitable For Turtle Nesting:

There is no construction just behind the beach, and new constructions are not allowed. Since the zoning and construction permits of the cooperatives, which are approximately 1.4 km from the beach, were taken before the region was taken under protection, and houses are built in a certain number. The opening of new zoning and construction areas is not allowed. However, the construction of the aforementioned cooperatives has been stopped, and the cooperative, which has completed the legal process, continues its construction. For other cooperatives, the legal process continues.

Patara beach is protected from human pressure, as it is completely closed to human activities during the nesting hours of sea turtles, and human activities are restricted during the day. In this context, Patara beach is one of the good conservation examples in Turkey.



#### **10. 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. In addition, in order to increase awareness, the beach is also cleaned with the participation of local and daily visitors and non-governmental organizations.



## ANNEX

### **Rules for The Protection of Sea Turtles and Nesting Areas During the Establishment of The Business for The Tourism Business with A Zoning Permit on The Beach of Fethiye (Example)**

#### **PROTECTION AND USEAGE CONDITIONS OF THE SEA TURTLE NESTING AREAS**

Conservation measures were determined by using the Circular No. 2009/10 and its Annex published by the former Ministry of Forestry and Water Affairs, in accordance with the Coastal Law No. 3621 and the relevant articles of the Coastal Law Implementation Regulation and the results of scientific studies that were conducted by the General Directorate of Conservation of Natural Assets in Fethiye-Göcek SEPA in the marine and terrestrial habitats.

#### **IN MARINE HABITATS:**

- a) Motorized water sports activities (as the main cause of injuries and deaths in sea turtles are motorized marine vehicles) are prohibited within a 1-mile sea area from the shoreline between April 1st and September 30<sup>th</sup>, which is the breeding season of sea turtles.
- b) Negative activities such as pollution in the marine environment will be inspected by the authorized administrations and will be prevented by taking necessary measures.
- c) The wooden piers installed or planned to be built on the nesting beaches should be used only for swimming and sunbathing, lighting and use at night is not allowed. They should be built at a level that will not prevent the movement of sand at the contact point with the beach, and the project area of the pier to be prepared should not exceed 100 m<sup>2</sup>.
- d) Direct or indirect (via nearby streams) discharge of the solid or liquid wastes to the marine environment originating from all kinds of structures to be built behind the coast, such as “hotels, residences, commercial etc.” is forbidden.

#### **IN TERRESTRIAL HABITATS:**

Sea turtle nesting beaches are zoned in four categories in order to protect sea turtle nesting areas. These categories are: I. Protection Zone, II. Protection Zone, Buffer Zone, and Impact Zone. The protection measures brought by these classifications are as follows.

#### **I. PROTECTION ZONE**

The sea turtle nesting zone has been determined as the I. Protection Zone and covers an area of 65 m in the direction of land, starting from the shoreline. If the coast is narrower than 65 m, it is the area up to the coastline.

- a) No buildings can be built in these areas; Walls, fences, ditches, piles and similar obstacles cannot be build.
- b) On these zones, no excavation can be made, sand, gravel etc. cannot be extracted, the shape of the sands cannot be changed, any attempt to disrupt the dune ecosystem is prohibited.
- c) Any waste and residues such as rubble, soil, slag, garbage cannot be dumped on these zones.
- d) Drying, plantation, and land acquisition by filling, is prohibited.
- e) Sand cleaning cannot be done with vehicles during the breeding season between April 1st and September 30<sup>th</sup>.
- f) Motor vehicle use in prohibited in these zones.
- g) Roads cannot be built with materials such as wood, carpet, stone, etc. for walking purposes in these zones.
- h) The use of beach and sea by people will not be allowed after 08.00 PM.

- I) The nests will not be intervened except by experts, and if the nests need to be altered to another place, this process will definitely be done by experts. Researchers and security guards who will be assigned to the beach by the administration will be assisted if needed.
- j) No water flow will be allowed to the beach area in any way.
- k) Camp fire or any fire on the beach is not allowed. In addition, intervene and extinguish the fires that may occur in the environment will be assisted by all governmental organizations.
- l) Necessary measures will be taken to prevent the entrance of safari vehicles, mounts, ATVs, etc. to the beach area.
- m) Within the I. Protection Zone; It is forbidden to place any mobile furniture such as umbrellas, sunbeds, tents or permanent structures such as pavilions.
- n) Warning and informative signs will be placed on the beach by the tourism business in order to indicate the boundaries of the sea turtle nesting area and to raise awareness of the visitors.

## **II. PROTECTION ZONE.**

It is the area from the end of the I. Protection Zone to the coastal edge line.

- a) In this area, the conditions in the I. Protection Zone are valid, and only mobile canopies that are not driven into the sand can be used.
- b) If the beach is narrow (the area between the shoreline and the shore edge line is narrower than 65 m), then the mobile canopies behind the nesting zone (determined by the relevant expert personnel of the Ministry of Environment, Urbanization and Climate Change) with the condition of collecting all structures/furniture in a certain area after 20:00 PM, can be used.
- c) In this area, activities that will disrupt the geomorphological structure of the beach and harm the natural flora and fauna, road construction, sand extraction, changing the shape of the sand, grazing animals are prohibited.
- d) The opinion of the Ministry of Environment, Urbanization and Climate Change will be sought regarding the applications to be made in this area.
- e) Water sports units to be deployed in the terrestrial environment in tourism areas are allowed if they are planned at a distance of at least 65 meters from the shore, outside the nesting zone. When the beach is narrow, if the water sport facility is planned outside the nesting zone, it is allowed provided that the approval of the Ministry of Environment and Urbanization is obtained.
- f) Sea turtle observation tours in and around nesting areas (terrestrial and marine environments) for ecotourism purposes are not allowed.

## **BUFFER ZONE**

It covers an area of 100 m from the Coastal Edge line.

- a) In this area, daily tourism buildings and facilities can be built, with the exception of accommodation, with the decision of the zoning plan. The opinion of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry will be taken together with the opinion of the Ministry of Environment, Urbanization and Climate Change regarding the facilities and plan changes to be made in this area.

## **IMPACT ZONE**

It covers an area of 1000 m from the border of the Buffer Zone.

In this area, buildings can be built in accordance with the zoning plan, provided that the following special conditions are met.

- a) Construction work will be carried out in daylight only during the breeding season (April 1 – September 30). Construction work will be prohibited after 08.00 PM.



- b) During all the construction works, along the Coastal Edge line, an appropriate material and height embankment will be created in order to prevent the spillage of construction materials that may affect the beach area from the construction.
- c) Lighting that may affect the beach area will be kept at a minimum throughout the entire time (operation period) from the start of construction of the facilities to be built, in order to ensure that the light source is not seen from the beach and to prevent the illumination of the beach, the height of the external lights shall not be more than 1.5 m from the ground. However, they can be temporarily raised depending on the permission in case of necessity in terms of life and property safety. In all cases, light screening is mandatory.
- d) For the internal lighting, it is obligatory to take measures to prevent the leakage of light (curtains, blinds, red lights, etc.)
- e) In the architectural project to be made, entertainment venues (bar, disco, stage, etc.) and parking lots (due to the negative effects of sound and light pollution on sea turtles) will be designed at the furthest distance from the coast.