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CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF EUROPEAN WILDLIFE
AND NATURAL HABITATS

Standing Committee

40th meeting
Strasbourg, 30 November - 4 December 2020

Other complaints

**Habitat destruction in Mersin Anamur Beach
(Turkey)**

- REPORT BY THE COMPLAINANT -

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

H.E. Mr. Murat Kurum

Minister

Ministry of Environment and Urban Planning

H.E. Dr. Bekir Pakdemirli

Minister

Ministry of Water Affairs and Forestry

21 August 2020

Our Ref. 41.2020

SUBJECT: Habitat destruction in Mersin Anamur Beach

Dear Ministers,

I am writing to express my extreme concern about the conservation status of Anamur beach and surrounding habitat. It is the 2nd most important nesting beach in Turkey, for the sea turtle *Caretta caretta* (Vulnerable species) and a significant reproductive site for the Critically Endangered soft shelled Nile turtle, *Trionyx triunguis*. Your leadership and action are required as a matter of urgency to ensure the protection of this site. The coastline, a 13km zone between the “Pullu Nature Park” and the “Anamuryum Ancient City”, is protected nationally under Turkish legislation and internationally through the Bern, RAMSAR and Barcelona International Conventions for its significant importance to the vulnerable *Caretta caretta* species. The scope of protection as outlined in the National legislation Circular # B.18.0.DMP.0.01.03 / 831.02, as issued by the Ministry of Forestry and Water Affairs has been determined very clearly in accordance with the rules of domestic law and International Conventions. The recent and continued illegal development of a ‘Picnic and Recreation Area’ carried out by the Municipality of Anamur, destroying the sensitive nesting habitat and Sarısu Creek, is in complete violation of these agreements and obligations.

I am aware that both the ‘Ministry of Environment and Urban Planning’ and the ‘Ministry of Water Affairs and Forestry’ ordered the Municipality to cease work, restore the site, that they issued a fine, and that this has been ignored. However, I am very disturbed to learn that the Ministries have taken no further action to follow-up compliance to their instructions and that no restoration work has been implemented. The construction works carried out before, during and after the sensitive nesting season completely destroyed part of the nesting beach, the sand dunes and neighbouring creek, and continue to pose a significant threat to the adjacent nesting area, for both nesting females and emerging hatchlings.

The news of another much larger Coastal Arrangement Project by the Mayor of Anamur to start on 1st September 2020, (during the hatchling season) will be devastating and will further deteriorate the essential nesting areas and ecological site of the *Caretta caretta* and *Trionyx Triunguis*. We wish to reiterate the urgent need for immediate action, before it is too late and irreversible, in order to stop the developments and that you continue to take all the necessary measures to reinforce protection and help reverse the degradation of the nesting beaches that have been heavily impacted by these developments.

With well-managed and sufficiently protected coastal areas, Turkey can contribute to the survival of rare and protected ecosystems and vulnerable species, while achieving high-quality development, tourism and sustainable livelihoods. By taking action to conserve among other important nesting beaches, Anamur beach, Turkey will fulfil its commitments as a contracting party to the Bern Convention and the Barcelona Convention, which offer protection to sea turtles and the above habitats.

MEDASSET remains at the disposal of your government to provide further information and to assist in the improvement of the conservation status of these important sites.

Thank you for taking the time to address this important nature conservation issue. We look forward to action being taken as soon as possible regarding this matter of extreme concern to our organisation.

Yours sincerely,

Lily Venizelos

President | MEDASSET - Mediterranean Association to Save the Sea Turtles

Member IUCN - Species Survival Commission, Marine Turtle Specialist Group

E: lilyvenizelos@medasset.org | 1c Licavitou St., 106 72 Athens, GREECE

T: [+ 30 210 3613572](tel:+302103613572), [+ 30 210 364 0389](tel:+302103640389), F: [+ 30 210 3613572](tel:+302103613572)

Connect: [Facebook](#) | [Twitter](#) | [YouTube](#) | [LinkedIn](#) | www.medasset.org

Cc:

Bern Convention Secretary

Barcelona Convention, UNEP/MAP and Compliance Committee

European Commission, Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations, Dir A: Strategy and Turkey

European Commission, Directorate-General for the Environment, Dir F: Global Sustainable Development

UNDP Turkey

Attachments:

Files23e 2020 Turkey Mersin Anamur beach Complaint Form

39th Standing Committee Presentation MEDASSET Kazanli.Anamur

UPDATE REPORT BY THE NGOs

Marine Turtle Conservation in the Mediterranean

**LOGGERHEAD SEA TURTLE (*CARETTA CARETTA*)
SOFT SHELL NILE TURTLE (*TRIONYX TRIUNGUIS*)
& CONSERVATION MONITORING
ANAMUR BEACH, MERSIN, TURKEY**



12 August 2020

Document produced by
MERÇED - Mersin Environment and Nature Association Deputy

& presented by

MEDASSET - the Mediterranean Association to Save the Sea Turtles

for the Bureau Meeting 15-16 September 2020 and in view of the 40th Standing Committee Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (Bern Convention)

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1 BACKGROUND & SUMMARY

1.1 Information about Region

Anamur beach is one of 21 sea turtle nesting beaches in Turkey, which is under protection. Studies carried out since 1988[R18], have repeatedly shown that the number of *Caretta caretta* nests in this area reaches 1000+. It is the 2nd most important *Caretta caretta* nesting beach in Turkey; 4th most important nesting area for *Caretta caretta* within the Mediterranean region, which is listed as “VU: Vulnerable” in the red list by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) [R1], [R2], [R3], [R4]. The main *Chelonia mydas* (listed Endangered on the IUCN Red List) nesting beaches in Turkey (and the Mediterranean) are located east of Anamur, but sporadic nesting has previously been recorded on Anamur beach [R2]. Furthermore, this area is the natural habitat of the Sand lilies (*Pancratium maritimum*), which also along with the surrounding canals, creeks and streams is an important area for the Critically Endangered Mediterranean subpopulation [R5] of the Soft Shell Nile Turtles (*Trionyx triunguis*). It is thought that the entire Mediterranean population of *Trionyx triunguis* comprises of less than 1000 adult individuals, and previous MEDASSET research identified Turkey as the only country that holds a significant population, with Anamur identified as an important reproduction site [R6]. The habitat requirement of the mentioned species and breeding areas are sand dunes and sandy beaches that maintain their biological life cycle. Destruction of the Anamur beach will undoubtedly affect the nesting and population of these turtle species.

1.2 Summary of the Complaint According to Complaint Form

Although Anamur Beach is protected by under the signatory of various national and international conventions, the Municipality of Anamur started construction to build a “Picnic and Recreation Area” on the Karaağaç/ Cerenler region which is a very important *Caretta caretta* nesting area. Heavy construction and excavation machines worked on the beach during the sensitive nesting period, completely altering the beach and neighbouring creek (Sarisu Creek) from its natural state. This creek identified by MEDASSET research [R6] provides important habitat for soft-shelled Nile turtles, various wild birds, and ducks. Due to the developments of constructions, the sand and dune structure is destructed, living and nesting area of the endangered animal and plant species has been destroyed.

The threats identified before, during and after the nesting season lead to the destruction of nests, unsuccessful nesting attempts, mortality of hatchlings and adult turtles, overall contributing to the decline of nest numbers.

1.3 Updates after Application Form is Submitted

No restoration of the site has been attempted, despite two government offices (Ministry of Environment and Urbanization and the Ministry of Forestry and Water Affairs, National Parks Nature Conservation Directorate) ordering the removal of the soil and trees by 16.07.2019.

However, negative developments have occurred. The Mersin Governorship owns the picnic area. This area and an additional area, which is almost 20 times bigger than the picnic area, are pre-allocated to the Anamur Municipality for 2 years to carry out the “Picnic & Recreation Project” and a new “Beach Arrangement Project.” The Beach Arrangement Project for Anamur includes further construction of bicycle and walking paths, green areas, sports parks, children's playgrounds, pergolas, and sitting benches. Both of the areas will be permanently allocated to the Municipality at the end of 2 years [R7].

1.4 National Law Violations

This intervention is contrary to the “coastal law #3621 of the Ministry of Environment and Urban [R8]”, as well as the “circular of the Ministry of Environment and Forestry # B.18.0.DMP.0.01.03 / 831.02 dated October 2009 about the protection of the sea turtles [R9]”.

According to Circular No: B.18.0.DMP.0.01.03 / 831.02 [R9], the coordinates of the construction area are within the 1st-degree Conservation Area (covering 65 m area from the coastal line). Therefore sand cannot be removed, sand dunes cannot be moved, sand cannot be cleaned by heavy vehicles and land cannot be acquired from beach by filling and drying according to Article 6 of the Coastal Law No. 3621 [R8].

This illegal work initiated by the Municipality was decided to be stopped by two government offices, the authorities decided the Municipality to rehabilitate the beach and remove the illegally planted trees and soil no later than 16.07.2019, and the Municipality was fined 180.489 Turkish Lira (approx. 22.846 Euros). Nevertheless, the Municipality did not rehabilitate the area and continued to irrigate and maintain the illegally planted alien species (trees and lawn). Moreover, the Municipality did not pay the fine. The authorities who decided on the rehabilitation order and fine imposed are not capable to force the Municipality to stop illegal actions and to obey the law.

1.5 International Conventions Violations

Turkey has committed to the protection of biodiversity as a signatory of multiple international conventions. However, all these activities are violating multiple provisions of international conventions such as Barcelona, Bern, and Ramsar. In particular, the provisions of the first 11 articles of the Bern Convention and Article 10 of the Protocol on ‘Special Protected Areas and Biodiversity in the Mediterranean Sea’, which is an annex to the Barcelona Convention, have been violated. In addition, many provisions of the Ramsar Convention have been violated due to the cutting of the reeds around the Sarisu Creek and installing a stonewall throughout the creek, where wild waterfowl and soft-shelled Nile turtles lay eggs. It caused existing nests to be damaged and prevented new nests to be established by the mentioned species.

1.6 Bern Convention Application Status

This report presents a detailed update to follow-up to the complaint submitted (2019) for the habitat destruction at the Anamur beach, Complaint No. 2019/05; Title: Habitat destruction in Mersin Anamur Beach. The initial complaint was presented at the 39th Meeting of the Standing Committee, Bern Convention on 3 – 6 December 2019 by MEDASSET on behalf of MERÇED. The Bureau of the Standing Committee examined the case at its meeting in April 2020 and expressed their concern for urgent measures to be implemented prior to the 2020 nesting season. The Bureau requested updates of this case from the authorities for their next scheduled meeting in September 2020. The complaint was also invited to provide an update, which is outlined in Section 2.

2 DETAILED INFORMATION ABOUT PICNIC AREA CONSTRUCTION

2.1 Anamur's Location and Importance

Anamur beach is the 2nd most important sea turtle nesting site in Turkey and 4th most important *Caretta caretta* nesting site in the whole Mediterranean region [R1] [R2], [R3]. Anamur Beach is located in the south of Turkey, Mersin, Anamur. The historic town of Ören (Anamurium) (36°01'20.1"N, 32°48'21.6"E) is located at the most western part of the beach and Pullu Forest Camp (36°05'26.0"N, 32°54'86.8"E) is at the eastern end of the beach, for a total of 12.7 km in length. [R3] (See

Figure 2 and Figure 3) There are two archaeological SIT areas throughout Anamur Beach: Anamurium and Mahmure Castle coasts.

Total number of Loggerhead turtle (*Caretta caretta*) nests are;

- Average is 422 (146-907) for years 1990, 1994, 1996, 2006-2007 [R1]
- Average is 791 for years 2006-2007 [R1]
- 674 in 2006 and 907 in 2007 [R10]
- In recent years the number of nests exceeds 1000+.



Figure 1: The main loggerhead and green turtle nesting grounds of Turkey 1. Dalyan, 2. Dalaman, 3. Fethiye, 4. Patara, 5. Kale-Demre, 6. Fenike-Kumluca, 7. Çıralı, 8. Belek, 9. Kızılot, 10. Demirtaş, 11. Anamur, 12. Göksu Delta, 13. Alata, 14. Davultepe, 15. Kazanlı, 16. Akyatan, 17. Süğözü, 18. Samandağ

Figure 1 - Nesting Grounds of Turkey and Anamur's Location [R3]

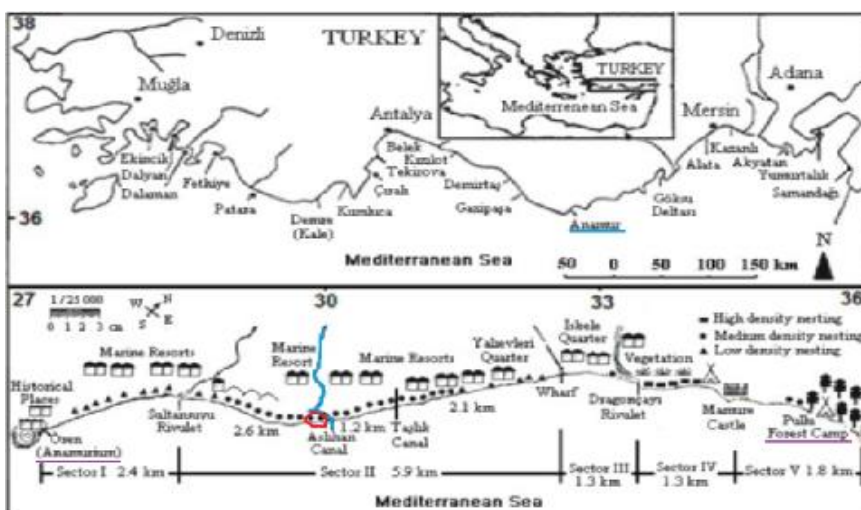


Figure 2 - Map of Anamur beach and location of picnic area [R10]

2.2 Location & Date of Construction

Picnic area construction coordinates are 36.02.46N - 32.50.27E and 36.02.51N - 32.50.34E. The latest Google earth views are depicted in Figure 3 and Figure 4. Photos of the site before construction started can be seen in Figure 5 (Section 2.7).

Planted trees and soil-covered area can be seen easily in Figure 4. The distance of the area from the shoreline is varying around 25-52 m and approximately 200 m long [R11]. Just behind the construction area, there is a creek, where a stonewall was built along the inner edge which prevents soft-shelled Nile turtles to spawn.

The construction started on the 31st of May 2019, Friday (Figure 6). This date is important because it was the starting of a 9-day official holiday. The construction and irrigation activities continued until the end of September 2020. Watering activities are still going on.



Figure 3 - Map of Anamur and Location of the Picnic Area - Google Earth View sourced, 18.07.2020



Figure 4 - Google Earth View of Picnic Area, sourced, 18.07.2020

2.3 Activities

The Municipality of Anamur initiated the construction of a picnic area with heavy machinery and trucks, destroying the natural habitat to create walkways, pavilions and barbecues. Lorries transported soil and big rocks, and bucket machinery was used to put these inside the creek just behind the construction area. Approximately 40cm of soil was poured over the sand, which was used by the construction team for access and car parking. Large holes were dug for the transplanted of mature trees (which were extracted with their roots and earth) on the beach, in addition to a grass lawn laid in the surrounding area. Vehicles pumped water from the creek to water the newly planted trees and pipes were laid to create a sprinkler system. The high volume of water used to irrigate the trees, caused the adjacent sand region (nesting area) to become compacted.

The scientists declared that the closest nests, laid just in front of the construction area during the 2019 nesting season, were most probably damaged and the probability of the healthy turtle coming out of the nest was very low due to the exertion of high pressure from the newly laid soil mass and vibration during excavation and other construction activities. Furthermore, excessive water together with some soil flowed onto the nesting beach, creating additional threats to the success of the nests with risks of inundation altering the nest's

incubation environment and embryo development, subsequently reducing the hatchling success rate.

The Municipality web page – On-Going Projects Section [R12] gives information about the planned details of the “Recreation Area and Public Beach Project”. The below table is the translation of details from Turkish to English. The Municipality could only achieve to plant some of the trees of this list. The remaining items could not be completed due to ongoing cases.

The ongoing impacts of the excessive deterioration caused by this project on the nesting beach and the huge amount of visitors that will come to the beach for barbecue parties and the light, sound, and fragrant pollution caused by the night parties will have a severely negative affect of the spawning of sea turtles.

Table 1 - The Municipality web page - Recreation Area and Public Beach Project Details [R12]

Turkish	English
Mesire Alanı ve Halk Plajı Projesi	Recreation Area and Public Beach Project
T.C. ANAMUR BELEDİYESİ Fen İşleriMüdürlüğü PROJESİ 2019	Turkish Republic ANAMUR MUNICIPALITY Project of Directorate of Technical Works 2019
Mesire Alanı ve Halk Plajı Projesi	Recreation Area and Public Beach Project
· Toplam Arazi Alanı : 7194 m2 · Toplam Yeşil Alan : 3169 m2 · Toplam Sert Zemin Alan : 2452 m2 · Toplam Çocuk Oyun Alanı : 400 m2 · Toplam Bordür : 1751 m · Kameriye : 32 Adet · Çocuk Oyun Grubu : 2 Adet · Tuğla Barbekü : 18 Adet · Çeşme : 12 Adet · Araç Otoparkı : 40 Adet · Panel Çit : 250 metre · Çam Türevi Ağaç : 97 Adet · Kauçuk Türevi Ağaç : 96 Adet · Palmiye Türevi Ağaç : 20 Adet · Çalı Bitkisi : 1000 Adet	· Total Land Area: 7194 m2 · Total Green Area: 3169 m2 · Total Hard Floor Area: 2452 m2 · Total Children Playground: 400 m2 · Total borders: 1751 m · Pergolas: 32 Pieces · Children Play Group: 2 Pieces · Brick Barbecue: 18 Pieces · Fountain: 12 · Car Parking lot: 40 · Panel Fence: 250 meters · Tree - Pine Family: 97 Piece · Tree - Rubber Family: 96 Pieces · Tree - Palm Family: 20 Pieces · Bush: 1000 Pieces

2.4 Local Action

Local processes have been initiated opposing these works and its destruction of the protected area. A citizen applied to the Chief Public Prosecutor's Office to raise a complaint about the situation, MERÇED (Mersin Environment and Nature Association - Mersin Çevre ve Doğa Derneği) performed two press briefing, some scientists and universities declared their concerns of the project and a petition has started on change.org [R13]. Many citizens have filled out forms to complain about the Municipality to the Turkish Presidential Communication Centre (CİMER). The Municipality response to the complaints has stated that “*In the area mentioned, Creek Stream Improvement work has been done and no work has been done in the dune area.*” [R14]. Video (Section 2.6 and photo (Section 2.7 evidences shows that the Municipality’s answer is not correct and construction performed in the dune area is destructed and irrecoverable.

2.5 Government Action

This illegal work initiated by the Municipality was order to be stopped by two government offices (the Ministry of Environment and Urbanization and the Ministry of Forestry and Water Affairs, National Parks Nature Conservation Directorate), and the Municipality was subsequently fined 180.489 Turkish Lira (approx. 22.846 Euros). To date this fine has not been paid, as the Municipality is appealing this fine through the courts.

Additionally, the authorities ordered the Municipality to rehabilitate the beach and take out transported trees and soil no later than 16.07.2019. However, the Municipality disregarded this order and did not rehabilitate the beach and continued to irrigate the plants. The authorities working for the National Parks Conservation Directorate, which is responsible for protecting the nesting beaches, did not take any extra action to force the Municipality to comply with the stopping and rehabilitation decisions.

2.6 Videos

The conceptual animation of the picnic area project published by the Municipality's YouTube account, dated 23.06.2019: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JNsxC79t9_o

Sprinklers watering plants and excessive water is flowing down to the beach that has nests, dated 22.06.2019 <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=309525683260331>

The sand and dune area is greatly damaged and narrowed. After the soil has been poured over the sand, two *Caretta caretta* sea turtles footprints are observed on the beach that has climbed over the sand-covered area and returned without laying eggs. Video shows the footprints of a turtle: 27.07.2019 <https://www.facebook.com/949710881892145/videos/2391783101110906/>

2.7 Photo

As it can be seen from the following photographs, the natural structure of the beach is deteriorated irreversibly. Figure 5 displays the photos of the beach before picnic area construction starts. Figure 6 displays the first day photo of the construction at the beach and Figure 7 - displays the first day photo of the Sarısu Creek. They also show the original structure of the beach and the creek. All the photos from Figure 6 and Figure 21 are taken between 31.05.2020 and 30.07.2020.

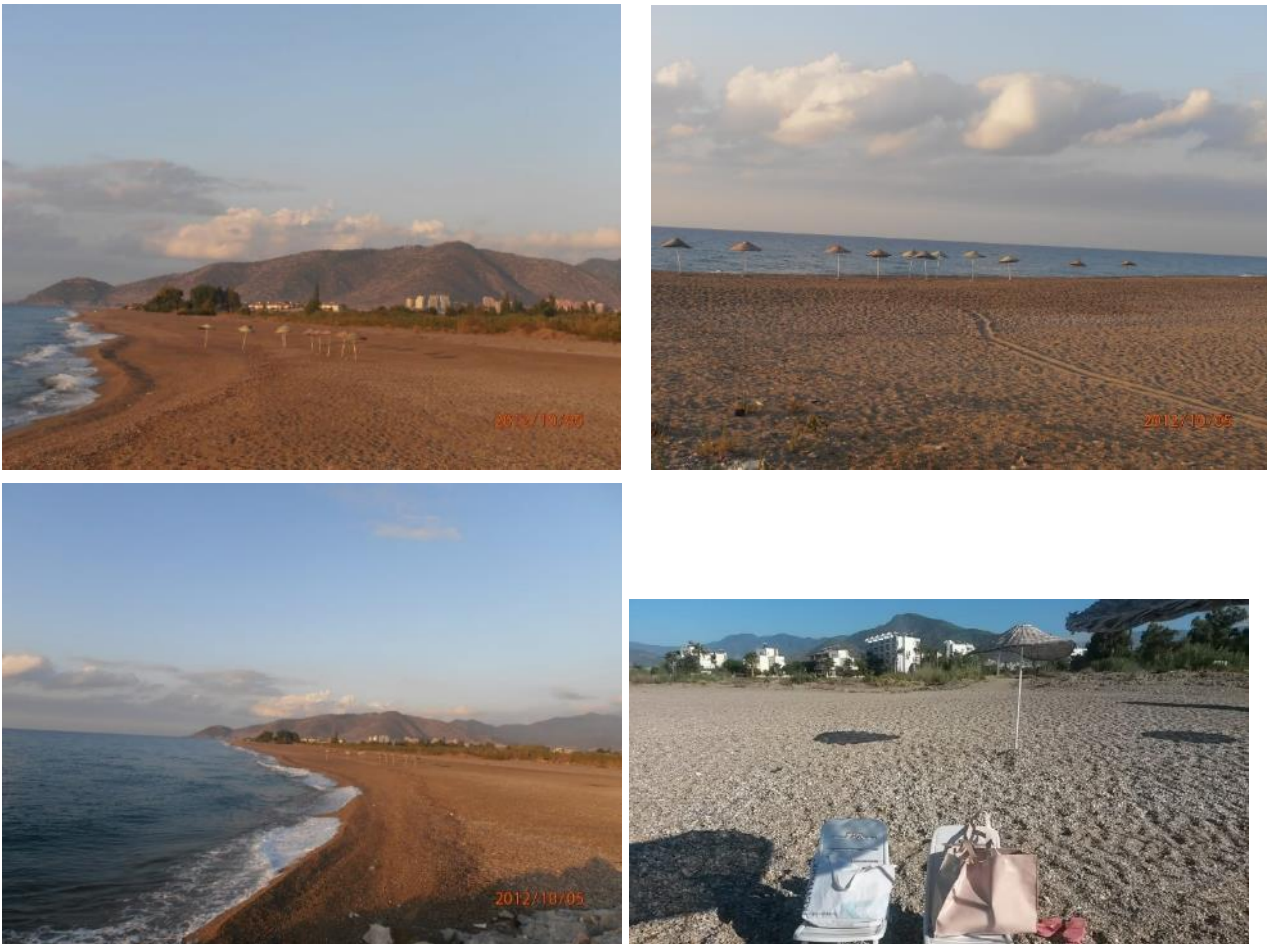


Figure 5 – Old Photos of the Beach before Construction Starts



Figure 6 - Machines Poured Soil on the Beach (First Day of Construction-31.05.2019)

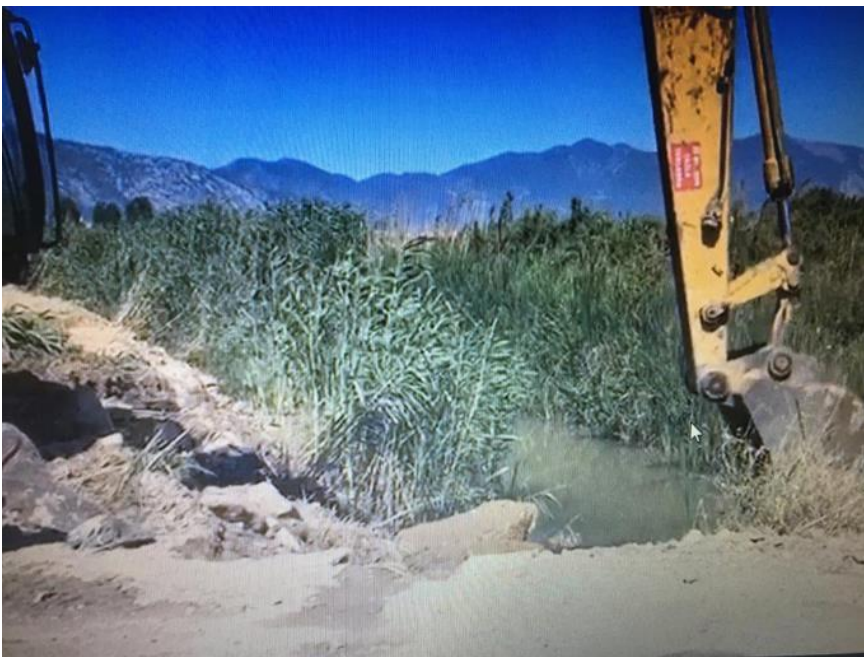


Figure 7 - Original Look of the Sarisu Creek (First Day of Construction - 10.06.2019). Photo shows reeds growing along both sides of the Creek.



Figure 8 - Heavy machines working at the beach



Figure 9 - Soil laid on the beach



Figure 10 - Trees planted in the dug large holes



Figure 11 - The soil covered beach (prior to grass being planted)



Figure 12 - Workers of the Municipality are Planting Trees, with newly soil-covered area being used as carpark area for construction team. Red circle shows a 'protected' sea turtle nest.



Figure 13 - Construction Site Distance to Existing Nests



Figure 14 - The Mayor holding a sign (translation) “It is a sea turtle nest. Please protect it” and his Picnic Area Construction in the Same Photo. There is no Other Example in the World.” The trees and soil on the right-hand side were not at the beach a month before that photograph taken.



Figure 15 - Fire truck of the Municipality watering the transported trees, causing runoff of water and soil onto the nesting beach.



Figure 16 – Sea turtle tracks showing failed nesting attempt. See section 2.6 for full video.



Figure 17 - Trees and Grass are Watered Regularly with Water Pumped from the Creek Behind



Figure 18 - Excavation Machines Pouring Soil and Stone in the Creek where Soft-Shelled Nile Turtles Live



Figure 19 - Creek Construction - Reeds at both sides of the creek (as shown in Figure 7) are destroyed, a stone wall has been built along one bank of the Creek to prevent additional soil seeping into the Creek



Figure 20 - Stone Wall Built inside the Creek



Figure 21 - Destroyed Reeds and Stone Wall Inside the Creek



Figure 22 - Dried Trees due to Salt Water and Waves
During winter (Waves took some of the soil and beach sand is damaged due to the soil)

2.8 Additional Media References

Sercan İNGİLOK who is a founding member and board member of **MERÇED** prepared a documentary and a book about this subject to ensure more people to have information about this subject: <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1W2PGncYWnjN9yj8P86YLeww28uoqtlzr?usp=sharing> (Subtitles in English will be provided later.)

More photographs and videos can be seen at ‘Anamur Environment Platform’'s Facebook pages:

* First post about this subject on 31.05.2019:

<https://www.facebook.com/949710881892145/posts/1139578989571999/>

* Picnic construction photos (some samples from the first day to the latest situation) : <https://www.facebook.com/949710881892145/posts/1187335428129688/> Photos include lorries pouring soil to the beach, excavators working, stone wall installed throughout the creek, transported trees and green grass due to regular watering, watering hoses, existing nests, some official decisions of authorities)

* Transplanted trees: <https://www.facebook.com/949710881892145/posts/1150514305145134/>

* Water sprinklers, stone wall installed alongside the creek:

<https://www.facebook.com/949710881892145/posts/1173114076218490/>

* Lorries pouring soil to the beach and excavators are working:

<https://www.facebook.com/949710881892145/posts/1169922746537623/>and

<https://www.facebook.com/949710881892145/posts/1146774205519144/>

* Excess water is flowing to beach:

<https://www.facebook.com/949710881892145/videos/330603354547474/> and

<https://www.facebook.com/949710881892145/videos/309525683260331/>

* Shadow of trees cause gender change of the eggs in the nests:

<https://www.facebook.com/949710881892145/posts/1155764347953463/>

* Academic report of SAD in Turkish. English version is attached as annex2 of

<https://www.facebook.com/949710881892145/posts/1151258218404076/>

* People protest against the distraction of the beach:

<https://www.facebook.com/949710881892145/posts/1148954811967750/> and

<https://www.facebook.com/949710881892145/posts/1141659492697282/>

2.9 Updated Activities after Submission of Complaint to Bern Convention

2.9.1 The Status of the Picnic Area as of 20.07.2020

The Municipality did not rehabilitate the beach (Figure 24 & Figure 25) and did not pay the fine. Sprinklers and hoses are removed. However, trees are still being watered as shown in Figure 23. Shoreline gets closer to trees during winter. Almost half of the trees dried up due to salt water and waves.

The Municipality web page that lists the details of the Recreation Area and Public Beach Project is still available at the web site [R12]. This shows that the Municipality did not give up. (See Table 1 for project details)



Figure 23 – Municipality Workers Watering Trees - 10.08.2020



Figure 24 - Latest Photo Taken from Aslihan Canal Direction - 01.07.2020



Figure 25 - Latest Photo of the Picnic Area on the Beach - 06.08.2020

2.9.2 Additional Nesting Areas are Allocated to the Municipality for New Constructions – 27.02.2020

The official Anamur Municipality web page announced an update that the picnic construction area and a second one (almost 20 times bigger than the picnic area) are pre-allocated to Municipality by the Mersin Governorship, Provincial Directorate of Environment and Urbanization. [R7]

The pre-allocation of these two areas is valid for 2 years. Information about them is given below:

I) 4.660 m² area is planned for the construction of “Beach 5 Project”. This project includes Picnic and Recreation Area that has started 1 year ago. <Coordinates are approximately between 36.0245N - 32.5027E, and 36.0250N, 32.5034E> (According to Google Earth). See the area marked at the left-hand side in Figure 26.

II) 93.408 m² area is planned for the construction of the “Coastal Arrangement Project”. This project includes bicycle and walking paths, green areas, sports parks, children's playgrounds, pergolas, sitting benches, and many more. Coordinates are approximately between 36.0259 N, 32.5041E, and

36.0339N, 32.5121E (According to Google Earth). See the area marked at the right-hand side in Figure 26.

Pre-allocation conditions: Not to be used for commercial purposes, not to use / transfer third parties for commercial / non-commercial purposes, to keep the public benefit free without any fees other than the income determined by the relevant legislation of the allocated administration and which are obligatory to receive.

It is very important to note that action must be taken before it is too late. If the investment project is prepared within the specified period, and it is taken into the investment program and the project is completed, before action is taken, then the pre-allocation will be changed to a permanent allocation. However, if action is taken before the allocation process, the allocation will be deemed withdrawn without the need for any further action and correspondence, which will save many future problems.



Figure 26 – (a) Pre-Allocated Areas Published at the Municipality Webpage (4.660 m² + 93.408 m²) [R7]. 1st area (picnic area) is on the left-hand side of the Aslıhan Channel and the 2nd area is at the right-hand side of the Channel and continues to the east direction. (b) Google Earth map showing the proximity of the two sites. Source 06/08/20

Both of the areas are actively nesting areas and they are defined as restricted areas according to the national law # B.18.0.DMP.0.01.03/831.02 [R9]. 5th page of this circular lists, coordinates of the nesting areas, length of the nesting beach, and the nest number of *C.caretta* and *C.mydas* turtles. Both of the pre-allocation areas are within these coordinates defined as “Protection Zone” in the aforementioned circular.

A local Anamur news portal [R15] published an Interview with the Anamur Mayor about Coastal Projects. The Mayor stated that the Coastal Arrangement Project is postponed due to Corona Virus and the Project will start on 1st September 2020. This project will cover almost 95.000 m2 area, starting from the Yalı touristic facilities and extends to the Taşlık region. The total length will be 5 km. He mentioned about the area allocations given above and stated that the project will include public usage facilities such as bicycles and walkways, shower, toilet, green areas, cafeterias, sitting benches ... etc in the scope of this project.

The Mayor also stated that the Coastal Arrangement Project and Karaağaç Picnic Area will be in service in 2021. Figure 27 depicts a conceptual illustration of Anamur Beach as published at the local news portal. The text in Turkish written on the photo states that “Anamur Beach will be Like This”.

Along with the aforementioned allocation process, the timeline and the scale of destruction this will cause further, it is imperative that immediate action be taken.

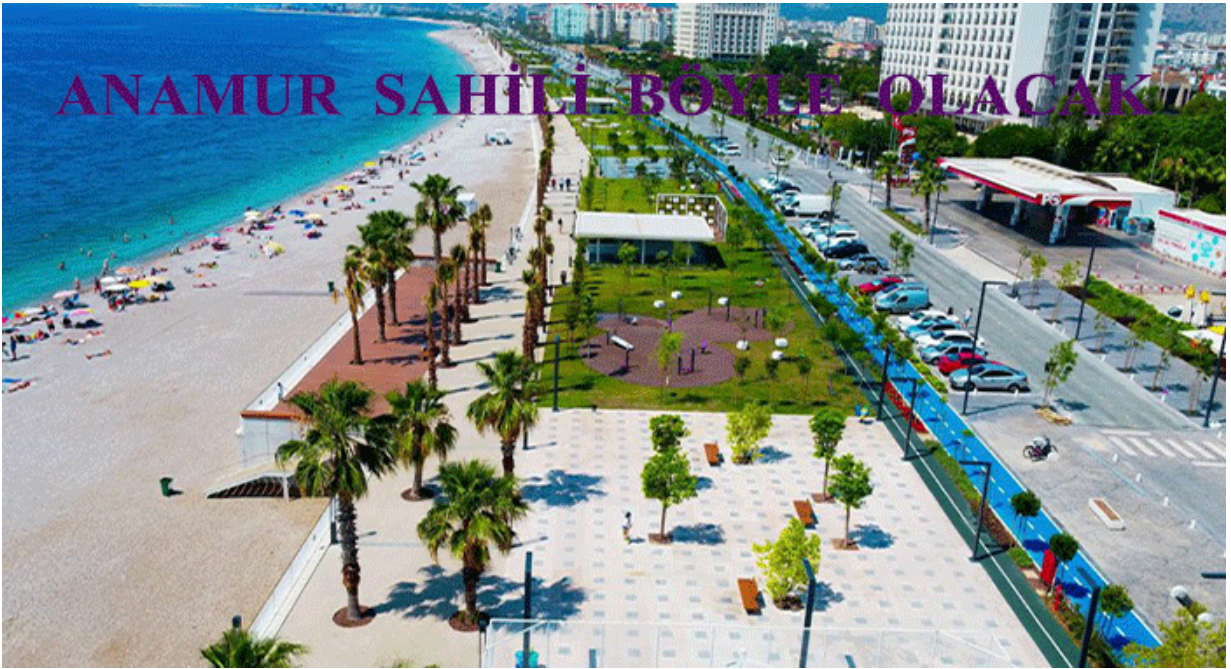


Figure 27 - The Conceptual Illustration of the Costal Arrangement Project [R15]

3 VIOLATIONS OTHER THAN PICNIC AREA CONSTRUCTION

The picnic area construction on the beach is not the only threat to the sea turtles. There are many issues that occur very often. The authorities observe all these negative situations but they do not take appropriate and necessary legislative and administrative measures to ensure the conservation of the habitats. The number of violations is increasing every year. We are obliged to apply the Convention since the local authorities do not intervene effectively with the commercial companies and with the Municipality that violates the protection of the abovementioned species.

Additional violations (other than picnic area) leading to the degradation of the nesting area are listed below and related videos and photographs are depicted in the following pages:

- Cars, motorcycles, tractors and even towed boats are able to go into the beach in many places of the Anamur Beach. The authorities are not blocking entrance to the beach at all points.
- The hotels, bars, tea gardens, and other tourism businesses placed arboreal, umbrellas, tables, chairs, and sun loungers starting from 3-5 meters from the shoreline and left them on the beach even during the night for whole summer season.
- Organizations held noisy, brightly lit parties or wedding ceremonies (sometimes including fireworks) on the beach with the permission of the Anamur District Governorate.
- Bright light from Street Lamps, Hotels, Tea Gardens, Apartments.
- Littering. The authorities are not sufficient to clean the beaches, canals, rivulets. They are not organizing any activity to increase awareness to keep the environment clean, or they don't punish litterers to set an example to other litterers.
- Not enough person to control the nesting beach. Only 1 person is allocated for 12,7 km beach. But this number is far below the need. And the authorized person is just checking nests, he is not warning any violating organization or keeping the records of violations. There is a volunteer person who supports them for 15 years. (See Figure 37).
- Illegal constructions on the beach and Dragon Çayı Rivulet.
- Illegal sand extraction on the nesting beach by the Municipality and by the people.

3.1 Videos

Commercial businesses are warned by the MERÇED members to remove sunbeds, arboreal, umbrellas, tables, chairs, and sun loungers during the night but none of them are obeying rules. 3 rows of sunbeds are staying at the beach and a *Caretta caretta* found next day trying to find a place to spawn - 1.8.2019: <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=2873578545991380>

In this video, it can be seen that sea turtle footprints are going beneath the sunbeds.- 13.07.2019

<https://www.facebook.com/949710881892145/posts/1170329603163604/>

Driving at the Beach. There may be some nests under the sand that cars ride on) - 20.07.2019
<https://www.facebook.com/949710881892145/posts/1175214202675144?s=100009453642339&sfns=cl>

The Municipality vehicles are taking sand out of the beach - 1.11.2019

<https://www.facebook.com/949710881892145/posts/1253633151499915/?vh=e&d=n>

3.2 Photos



Figure 28 - Beach Invaded by Tourism Businesses



Figure 29 - Sea Turtle Spawning Beach Signs. The authorities placed a sign stating that “Anamur Sea Turtle Spawning Beach”, but do not give information of the rules (e.g. driving not allowed, and campfire not allowed, etc.). Most of the local people do not know that they are prohibited and there is no enforcement of any violations.



Figure 30 - Discrepancy between Sign and Occupied Beach. The sign states that it is “Caretta Spawning Area”. The authorities think that it is enough to put a sign to protect *Caretta caretta*. However, it can be seen that sunbeds, umbrellas, etc. behind the sign occupy the beach. All of the furniture/ facilities remain on the beach throughout the entire summer.



Figure 31 - Nest Among the Sunbeds



Figure 32 - Tables, Chairs, Sunbeds on the Beach, around Nests



Figure 33 – Beach Furniture/ Facilities are Not Removed at the Beach During the Night



Figure 34 - Illegal Car Entries to Anamur Beach at Many Different Areas



Figure 35 - Wheel Track Too Close To The Nest (and maybe over undetected/unmarked nests)



Figure 36 - Tractor Transport Boat, Driving over the Anamur Beach. Snapshot of a video in front of Picnic Area at 22.07.2020. Not only cars but also tractors and boats are transported over the beach sands.



Figure 37 - A Volunteer Member of MERÇED Taking Care of Nests for 15 Years. (a) Releasing hatchling, (b) marking a nest with reed sticks, (c) recording nesting activity.



Figure 38 - Accessories Left at the Beach During the Night. People or tourism businesses burn fire at the barrel. Sometimes people bring table and chairs for night parties.



Figure 39 - Remains of Campfire on the Beach



Figure 40 - The Reeds and Sticks Used to Mark Nests are Burnt at the Beach - Snapshot of video [R16]. The volunteer (Figure 37) recorded a video of the reed sticks she uses to mark the nests being taken and used as fuel for a campfire. Subsequently the nest markings were lost.



Figure 41 - Littering Everywhere. The Municipality very rarely cleans beaches and canals/creeks flowing to the sea. Volunteers are not sufficient to clean kms of beach. In addition, the authorities are not organizing training or cleaning campaigns to raise awareness. There are lots of waste all around. Extensive litter attracts a higher presence of hatchling predators to the area (seagull).



Figure 42 - Littering - Glass Items. Even glass bottles are thrown on to the beach, which can harm people and sea turtles.



Figure 43 - Bright Lights and a Sea Turtle Nest Marked with a White Sign



Figure 44 - Bright Lights of a “Caretta Beach Hotel”. Ironic name of hotel as no measures are taken to reduce their impact and protect the *Caretta caretta*. They just use the name to impress customers. MERÇED members requested them to decrease the level of lights and the volume of the music that they play until late hours. However, they did not change their attitude and the authorities have not taken any preventative action for many years.



Figure 45 - Bright Lights of an Apartment Site Close to the Beach



Figure 46 - Illegal Container Building on the Beach. The container building has been removed after people protested. However, the concrete base is still on the beach. The authorities never control or apply fines for these kinds of violations. This situation encourages people to dare new illegal attempts.



Figure 47 - Illegal Construction on the Beach

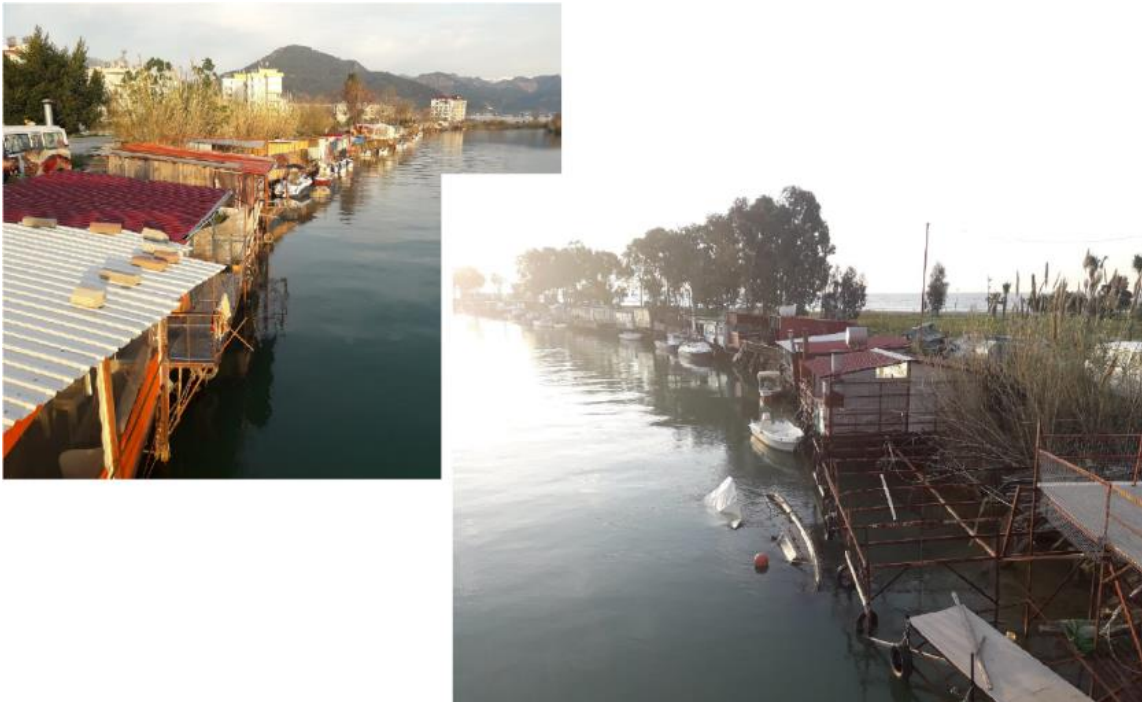


Figure 48 - Illegal Constructions at Both Sides of the Dragon Çayı Rivulet. Dragon Çayı Rivulet is on the side of Anamur. (See the map in Figure 2) The rivulet merges into the sea at the natural habitat of the *Soft Shell Nile Turtles*. However, both sides of the Rivulet are occupied with illegal shanties, sheds, and huts. Since they are illegal, they do not even have a sewage system. National laws do not permit settlements in such places, but the authorities do not remove these illegal buildings, which implicitly means that they permit the use by the owners. This situation causes extreme degradation of the Soft Shell Nile Turtles habitat.



Figure 49 - Pathway Established on the Beach for Bride and Groom for wedding ceremonies. Some units are almost 10+ meter from the shoreline.



Figure 50 - Illegal Construction at Anamur Beach for a Water sports Company [R17]. Last year (2019), construction started on the beach by a water sports company, about 10 m from the shoreline. Initially, the authorities allowed the company to start the building. However, when people protest against it, the building was removed. Continual construction attempts show that authorities are not paying enough attention for protecting the sea turtle nesting areas.



Figure 51 - The Municipality is Extracting Sand from the Beach – 1.11.2019. The Anamur Municipality applied to request permission from Anamur District Governorate for evacuation canal cleaning on 31.10.2019. However, they extracted trucks full of sand from the beach in contrary to the letter of permission. In addition, the Anamur District Governorate or any other authority did not make a complaint about this situation. See section 3.1 for full video and [R19] for more photos.



Figure 52 – Canals and Creek are Carrying Pollution to the Sea – Aslihan Canal - 6.8.2020. We suspect that the sewage system is connected to the canals. This affects the habitat of both Loggerhead turtles and Soft Shell Nile Turtles.

4 RECOMMENDATIONS

We believe in the importance of biodiversity and we think that achieving a healthy ecosystem is not just protecting a small location of the beach. Therefore, the whole Anamur beach needs to be protected carefully with special care. We recommend Turkish authorities to take urgent legislative and administrative measures to protect the nesting areas of the Loggerhead turtles (*Caretta caretta*) and Soft Shell Nile Turtles (*Trionyx triunguis*):

- **Rehabilitate the picnic area** and remove trees and soil that is transferred to the nesting beach.
- The Municipality to **comply with declared fines and orders**.
- Projects for both of the pre-allocated sites to be **compliant with national laws** ([R8], [R9]) and international conventions.
- **Guarding staff resource** needs to be reinforced and increased to enable correct implementation of management and conservation measures (control of beach access, correct beach zone use by visitors, recording and acting upon violations, etc.). Guarding person needs to be trained about the related laws and their authorities. Guarding should commence at the start of the nesting season. 1 officer present only tries to mark the nests. He does not work to control or record violations.
- **Scientific monitoring and nest protection** should commence at the start of the nesting season (May) to ensure the protection of all nests, as the tourist season kicks off in April.
- All **sunbeds** should be removed from the beach at night, or rearranged in an upright position and secured or hung on the umbrellas. The number of sunbeds and umbrellas should not increase. In all cases, sunbeds should not be placed in the sections of the beaches that serve as prime nesting areas. Multiple rows of dense sunbeds and umbrellas need to be rearranged and reduced to permit nesting turtles to access the beach and hatchlings to return to the sea unhindered. **Fixed structures**, such as arboreal, pavilions, and cabanas should not be allowed.
- Water from **beach showers** should be channelled to not directly run-off onto the nesting beach, or beach showers should be relocated away from the beach.
- **Information sign** location should be corrected and additional signs should be installed at the start of the nesting season at all major entry points to the beaches. Signs should include the **rules and all the prohibited actions** (such as campfire, driving, etc.) and the penalties.
- **Vehicle access** problems need to be tackled effectively. Fencing that cannot be removed, should be installed and be complemented by effective guarding, signage at all points of entry, and education of residents, business owners and visitors.
- **Visitor access: Wedding ceremonies, bonfires, night parties, fireworks, camping, picnic and barbecue** activities should not be allowed on the nesting beach or at places close to the beach.
- **Parking space:** Appropriate areas that would not involve the flattening of dunes and removal of natural beach vegetation should be chosen.
- **Damaged sand dunes and vegetated areas** should be restored to their natural state.
- **Lights:** Powerful, tall, seaward-facing lights need to be removed. Business owners should be required to screen or paint with dark colours all lights shining onto the beach that cannot be switched off during night hours during the nesting and hatching season. Street lamps and apartments need to take similar measures.
- **Litter:** A coordinated effort can be pursued so that beach clean-ups combined with awareness raising among locals can be conducted at the start of the nesting season and at the end of the hatching season. Rubbish collection should be done manually and not with the use of heavy machinery (e.g. bulldozers). **Daily** litter collection could be combined with beach furniture collection/re-arrangement at the end of the day.
- **Canals, creeks, and streams** that are joining the sea need to be cleared periodically. Sewage system or chemical waste, pesticide packing should not go into them.
- Regulations should be effectively **communicated to stakeholders and business holders**.
- Authorities should ensure **enforcement** of rules and measures.

- A small **dockyard** after an Environmental Impact Assessment has been carried out needs to be established for small boats or fishing boats to sail to the sea. (Currently, they are being towed on the beach.
- **Unbuilt beach area** should be secured against development.
- A **SPA (Special Protected Area) management plan** that will cover both the land and marine areas should be formulated that will include a clear description of permitted land uses and activities.
- **Illegal constructions** on the whole Anamur Beach and Dragon Çayı Rivulet should be removed.
- **Sand extraction** from nesting beach should be strictly prohibited and violators need to be punished immediately. Any government office, people, or business should not extract sand for any reason.
- Provide **training, seminars, and volunteered organizations** to proactively raise awareness to protect sea turtle's nests and biodiversity.

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