

Biodiversity Conservation in Patok Lagoon, Ishëm and Mat River

Sustainable measures aiming to boost the biodiversity of this important area through an Integrated River Basin Management

Context

Patok lagoon and the estuarine waters between Mat and Ishëm rivers are among the most important Biodiversity Hotspots of Albania and South Eastern Europe, regionally known for being unique oasis for much endangered animal species. It is one of the Special Protected Areas of Albania identified by UNEP since 1996. It is the most important wetland site in Albania for waders and one of the two sites where the very rare Slender Billed Curlew has been recorded so far in the region. The lagoon is also an important feeding place for sea turtles in the Mediterranean.

A Paradise in Danger

On the other hand, although having the legal status of a Managed Nature Reserve, biodiversity in Patok is currently considered under severe threat. Reduction of sediment discharge of Mat and Ishëm rivers due to hydropower dams (Ulëz and Shkopet) and water supply dam (Bovilla water reservoir), as well as the exploitation of sands and gravel from the main two rivers and their tributaries, has greatly influenced the coastal geomorphology and ecosystem stability of the lagoon.

All sewage waters produced from one third of Albania's population, about a million people, are discharged untreated into Ishëm river and its tributaries, making the downstream of Ishëm a "dead river" and changing dramatically the quality of the estuarine waters. Solid waste is also dramatically influencing littoral and lagoon system of Patok. Plastics are often ending up in the digestive apparatus of different animals, frequently causing the death of the endangered species.



Integrated Watershed Management Plans

It is evident the need for integrated and sustainable measures aiming to reduce and control the overall impact of human activities and boost the biodiversity of the area. The Integrated Watershed Management Plans (IWMP) for Mat and Ishëm River will define roles and responsibilities to be shared among the stakeholders, will set up management goals and objectives, and identify actions, measures and mechanisms that will ensure preservation and enhancement of Biodiversity in Patok lagoon.

The project will fulfill this goal by achieving three objectives which would also compose the three project components:

- Assessment of the current biodiversity status and preparation of Integrated Watershed Management Plan of Ishëm and Mat River and Patok lagoon,
- Implementation of best management practices to enhance biodiversity and to reduce its threats through development of rehabilitating initiatives

- Raising awareness among stakeholders in order to ensure the sustainability of the conservation efforts.

MAIN FACTS

PARTNERS:

- ✓ Conservation International Foundation
- ✓ Albanian Society for the Protection of Birds and Mammals

DURATION:

January 2014-June 2015

BENEFICIARIES:

- ✓ Local communities
- ✓ Albanian environment and biodiversity

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