

Thessaloniki, 6<sup>th</sup> December 2023

## **Press Release: New report on Posidonia meadows in the Ionian Sea stresses the need for urgent decision-making towards their preservation.**

**Posidonia oceanica** is one of our most crucial allies in **Climate Crisis mitigation** and essential component for safeguarding **marine life** in the Mediterranean. However, less 46% of its extent in the Ionian will be finally protected, new report reveals.

*Posidonia oceanica* meadows in the Eastern Ionian Sea extend in an approximate area of 440 km<sup>2</sup>, being susceptible to a variety of pressures. **Uncontrolled anchorage** was considered the most intensive pressure on the *Posidonia* meadows, followed by **aquaculture** and **sewage discharges**, while other 29 pressures, were taken into account. Based on the study, 1/4 of this vital marine ecosystem is **threatened** by human activities in the area with almost half of the habitat's extend (46%) being within the Natura 2000 network.

The Layman's report '**Prioritising Posidonia oceanica meadows in the Ionian Sea**' was produced by iSea, in collaboration with terraSolutions.mer, Ionian Environment Foundation and Blue Marine Foundation, within the framework of **REPOSIDONIA** project, to shed light on the gaps of knowledge regarding the threats that *Posidonia* face in the Ionian Sea and prioritise the meadows that are in urgent need of protection. This report is addressed to the wider public, relevant stakeholders and decision makers proposing specific actions to ensure the protection of *Posidonia* meadows in a local and national level.

According to the results, in several areas the habitat is still poorly documented. At the same time, boat tourism and aquaculture activities are thriving, but still their proper documentation and management measures to mitigate their environmental impact is scarce. Although the area is among the most popular Mediterranean sailing destinations, a regulatory framework on anchorage is yet to be enforced. While more than 60% of areas with fish farms overlap with *Posidonia* meadows extend, no matter the documented threats posed to the habitat.

The results of this preliminary work highlight the **gaps of knowledge** with regards to accurate and detailed mapping of the habitat and the threats it faces, but also the **lack of its systematic monitoring and assessment** of its Ecological Status. In addition, the report stresses the need of informing the **public** about its ecological value and ecosystem services, and more importantly to empower the **tourism sector** by advising on good practises for its preservation.

The report also provides valuable information that could be used as a decision tool to focus future efforts. Based on its results, to ensure the protection of *P. oceanica* meadows in the Ionian Sea, policy makers should enforce 1) specific and science-based local **management measures** using a precautionary approach and taking into consideration the activities that take place in the area within and outside the Natura 2000 network, 2) **strategies** to minimise uncontrolled anchorage by replicating successful models of Mediterranean areas, 3) legally binding **management plans** setting specific goals based on the results and pledges of the most recent reports, protocols and agreements on mitigating **Climate Crisis** and 4) legally binding **action plans** for the **restoration of degraded meadows**, based on current and future projections of change.

Marcial Bardolet, co-founder of the [Mediterranean Posidonia Network](#) mentions that "The collective efforts of communities, governments, and scientific bodies illustrate that unified and coordinated actions can have a significant positive impact. *Posidonia* is a shared responsibility, and this document is not just an academic study of *Posidonia oceanica*; it is a call for action for protecting the Ionian Sea."

In the context of the project "Prioritising *Posidonia oceanica* meadows in the Ionian Sea", iSea, in collaboration with terraSolutions m.e.r. and the support of the Ionian Environment Foundation and Blue



Marine Foundation, aims to improve the data availability and quality for the distribution of Posidonia meadows in the Ionian islands and prioritise areas that require immediate intervention to enhance their conservation.

The report is available in English and Greek. Find it [here](#).

Find more information on the project in the Inner Ionian Archipelago [here](#).

#### **Information for the editor:**

**Blue Marine Foundation:** Blue Marine Foundation is a UK based charity dedicated to restoring the ocean to health by tackling overfishing, one of the world's biggest environmental problems. This dynamic charity is working all over the world to protect huge areas of ocean and restore marine biodiversity. In the coming decade Blue Marine aims to see at least 30 per cent of the ocean protected, and the other 70 per cent sustainably managed.

For more information, contact:

Angela Lazou Dean

Greece Projects Manager, Blue Marine Foundation

T. (+30) 6947778113

Email: [angela@bluemarinefoundation.com](mailto:angela@bluemarinefoundation.com)

**Ionian Environment Foundation:** The essence of the IEF's approach is to provide support and guidance for conservation projects that the local communities themselves have initiated and designed. We have seen in our first three years that tangible local action can unlock solutions to shared global challenges, and that this is best achieved by empowering communities to protect their own local environment through a 'bottom-up' approach.

For more information, contact:

Dr Simon Karythis

Executive Director, Ionian Environment Foundation

T. (+30) 6981864552

Email: [simon@ionianenvironment.org](mailto:simon@ionianenvironment.org)

**iSea:** iSea is a Not for Profit Non-Governmental Organisation founded in March 2016, in Greece, with the aim to protect and restore the precious heritage of the aquatic environment by preserving its biodiversity and ensuring its vital functions that contribute to a clean, healthy and productive environment. Our goal is: 1) the protection of aquatic ecosystems through raising awareness and informing society about current environmental problems and good practices to address them, 2) promoting the adoption of measures and sound policies for the protection of the environment 3) the elaboration and promotion of scientific research, in order to be the basis for sustainable development with the aim of environmental, social and economic prosperity. We operate in 4 main pillars that contribute to the assessment of the state of aquatic ecosystems: 1) Vulnerable species, 2) Citizen Science, 3) Aquatic litter and 4) Human and Aquatic ecosystems.

For more information, contact:

Roxani Naasan Aga - Spyridopoulou

Project manager, iSea

T. (+30) 2313090696

Email: [roxani.naasanaga@isea.com.gr](mailto:roxani.naasanaga@isea.com.gr)