

Highlights of Best Practices from Turkey

CLIMATE CHANGE AND
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

CONSERVATION OF BIODIVERSITY
AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

GOVERNANCE FOR
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

POVERTY ERADICATION AND
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY
IN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

INFORMATION AND
COMMUNICATION FOR
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT



GÖKÇEADA MARINE PARK

Objective: The goal of the project is to preserve the region's rich habitat diversity by establishing a marine park, meanwhile supporting the region's intensive fishing and tourism activities in accordance with the principles of sustainable development.

Lead Agency: The Turkish Marine Research Foundation

Project Partners: Diving clubs, the Gökçeada Municipality, the Fishermen's Association, local people

Project Period: February 1999 - ongoing

Project Rationale

- The coast of Gökçeada, which is the largest island of Turkey, is very rich in terms of biodiversity, with 353 species of macro algae, 4 species of seagrass bed, 34 species of sponge, 17 species of cephalopod, and 144 species of fish. The rich habitat diversity is the main reason for the need to establish a marine park in the region, but the region's geomorphologic structure is as important as its biodiversity.
- The greatest danger to marine biology in the region derives from non-sustainable fishing and tourism. Illegal diving and nocturnal spearfishing are rampant in the region, which at any rate is under intense pressure from fishing. Because the island did not have a Coast Guard boat, adequate control was not possible. Fishermen in the region did not know the methods for, or the necessity of biodiversity conservation. Furthermore, the harmful effects of tourism, which become more intensive in the summer, seriously threaten biodiversity.
- Given the serious legal and institutional difficulties arising from uncoordinated legal measures and the conflicts of authority between different branches of the government, there was a need to formulate a set of regulations better suited to deal with the situation.

Critical Dates

- February 21, 1999: Announcement of the "Marine Park" in the Official Gazette;
- June 1999: An informative meeting with the participation of local government representatives;
- June 1999: The "Underwater Photography Contest";
- July 2000: An inventory study with the participation of volunteer scientists from abroad;
- August 2000: Microbiological measurements;



Project Activities and Outputs

- Thanks to this project, a Marine Park has been established for the first time on the Turkish coast.
- The region between the Yıldız Cove and the Yelken Rock, both on the northwest coast of Gökçeada, was proclaimed a "Marine Park". The region lies along the coast and covers an area that is 1 nautical mile long and 200 meters wide. This region was designated on the basis of studies by the Istanbul University, and particularly the Faculty of Aquatic Sciences.
- This status became effective with publication in the Official Gazette on February 21, 1999.
- All fishing in the area was prohibited and the region became a protected area after being published in the circular of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs.
- The park is comprised of a core region with two buffer zones on each side.
- Meetings were held with extensive local participation.
- An underwater photography contest was organized.
- Scientific studies are being carried out in the Park.
- A detailed sea floor map and inventory study are in progress.
- A Coast Guard boat was provided for the region.
- The structure of the region's general habitat was drawn up in 2001.
- A detailed sea floor map of the Yıldız Bay was prepared.
- Postcards bearing photographs that won prizes in the contest were printed, in addition to a brochure about the park.
- Microbiological measurements were initiated in the region.
- Currently, the work to determine sponge species is in progress and the results of the preliminary studies were presented in meetings.
- Thanks to activities that ensured their involvement in the project, the park was embraced by the local people and the fishermen.
- Diving clubs now consider the park as a special diving area within the scope of their tours.
- The park was added to website of the Gökçeada municipality.
- A management plan was drawn up for the park.
- The local people have understood the contribution of the park to tourism in the region and are participating in the ongoing work.
- Cooperation continues among governmental and non-governmental organizations.

Future Prospects

- In Turkey, this project is the first example of its kind, in terms of both the legal regulations and the fieldwork. Data obtained from the project and the results of its implementation will constitute reference points for similar work in the future.
- Being a first of its kind in Turkey, the project can be considered as a pilot undertaking. If successful, it is expected to set an example for similar projects in other areas.
- Research aiming to produce medicinal raw materials in the future has been initiated with studies of bioactivity in sponges.
- Due to the importance of conserving fishing resources and biogenetic reserves in the region, the project is expected to contribute to the development of ecotourism in Gökçeada.
- The project continues with the cooperation of the local people, and the participation and support of volunteer scientists from abroad. It is hoped that in the future the people of the island will become still more involved in the project.

Project Budget: US\$ 100,000