

## **INTERREG MED PROGRAMME**

### ***FISHMPABLUE2 PLUS PROJECT***

#### **Act. 3.3 Capacity building**

#### **Deliverable 3.3.b “National Coaching Strategy”**

**CROATIA**

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

WWF is an international NGO working in more than 100 countries, WWF Adria is a regional office working in 8 countries: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo\*\*, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Slovenia and Serbia. In this project our focus is on two pilot areas in Croatia: Nature Park of Lastovo islands and Velebit channel Marine Reserve and in this document you will find more about the pilot sites and about the coaching strategy.

## 2. THE PILOT AREAS MAIN FEATURES

### 2.1. Pilot area: Nature Park Lastovo islands

Nature Park Lastovo Islands is situated in southern part of Croatia and central part of Adriatic Sea. It is managed by Nature Park Public Institution and the total area of the park is 185.83 km<sup>2</sup>, of which 52.71 km<sup>2</sup> is on the land and 143.12 km<sup>2</sup> on the sea. It consists of 46 islands, islets and rocks of which four are inhabited: Lastovo, Prežba, Sušac and Glavat. Island Lastovo is the fourteenth-largest island in the Adriatic Sea.

The most commonly used fishing gear within the Park are gill nets, shore seines, trammel nets, traps and long lines (500 hooks). There was assessment of coastal fisheries resources in the waters of the Park in the period from 2010 to 2010. Of total 79 species recorded, there was 56 species of fish, while cephalopods were represented with 3 and crustaceans with 20 species. The most frequently observed fishes are forkbeard (*Phycis phycis*), and the striped red mullet (*Mullus surmuletus*). The most common crustacean is the spiny lobster, *Palinurus elephas*. Cephalopods were somewhat lower in number and less regularly present - cuttlefish, *Sepia officinalis*, was the dominant species.

Park currently has rotational fisheries management which is worldwide highly specific and rarely used form of fishing regulation. It was implemented in an agreement with 34 local SSF, subdividing the park marine area into 4 zones which are protected and fished in pairs with temporal rotation of 3 years, started in 2010. Regular monitoring's showed there have been no significant effects of protection on fish stocks over the three assessment years in any of the studied aspects of the abundance, composition and structure of coastal fishery resources. This is due to a number of issues but mostly to the fact that rotational scheme does not work in combination with high fishing pressure and the small size of the area.

## 2.2. Pilot area: Velebit channel marine reserve

Velebit channel is marine channel situated in the central part of East coast of Adriatic Sea located between coastal part of Velebit Mountain and islands Krk, Prvić, Goli, Rab and Pag. Total length of Velebit channel is 121 kilometer with average width of 3 to 4 kilometers and maximal depth of 106 meters. All settlements are situated on East coast of Velebit channel due to the strong North East wind (Bura) which is preventing any urbanization on West coast of channel. Mayor settlements are Senj, Sveti Juraj, Jablanac and Karlobag.

Velebit channel is not *stricto sensu* a protected area but fishery is managed from national level through Fishery Department of Ministry of Agriculture which considers all channel as single fishery sub zone E3 and also a fisheries restricted are since trawlers are banned there.

Small scale fishery is main type of fishery conducted in Velebit channel, due to the fact that trawling in that area is banned since 1997 and small pelagic purse seine commercial boats are recently also excluded from this area. Thus only small scale and recreational fishery are active stakeholders in Velebit channel.

Main targeted species in Velebit channel is Norwegian lobster (*Nephrops norvegicus*) which is also keystone species from this area recognized nationwide. Other important species are octopus (*Octopus vulgaris*), hake (*Merluccius merluccius*) and various sparids common to Adriatic Sea. Also Velebit Chanel has historical records of large Atlantic Bluefin tuna landings which are observed again in recent years due to successful fishery management of BFT species.

Approximately 200 small scale fishers are active in this area with various fishing gear, mostly trammel nets, long lines, hook and line and crab pots. There is specific group of fishers which are using mostly crab pots to target Norwegian lobster which would be main stakeholder of this project. Norwegian lobster fishery is well recognized as low impact fishery targeting several species and with low impact on habitats and small quantity of unwanted catch. Norwegian lobster fishery consists of 30 fishers in Velebit channel, each of them using 300 small crab pots on long line technique.

One of the goals of this project is to establish co-management of Norwegian lobster fishers making this fishery more sustainable with changes in fishing gear, temporal and spatial closures and communication support of this fishery regarding markets and media as low impact fishery case study.

### **3. THE COACHING STRATEGY**

#### **3.1. Creating the Local Governance Cluster**

Since both NP Lastovo islands and Velebit channel are locations where WWF Adria has worked, we already have an established relationship with the fishers and the management body, so we already had a meeting in September, in both sites, with fishers and the management body where we presented the case of the FishMPABlue2+ project and the goal of forming the local governance cluster (LGC). Our next mission is to organize another meeting in November where we'll talk more about the SSF governance toolkit and this is when we'll form the LGC.

#### **3.2. Adopting the “SSF Governance Toolkit”**

We already started talking with the management bodies of the two pilots about the better enforcement of rules and regulations of the MPA and the idea is to do this in two ways: park rangers will increase the hours spent at the sea, but we are also exploring possibilities of implementing new technologies regarding surveillance. Also, we plan to do a workshop with the local community, in March 2022, on what are the sea related illegal activities and how everyone could contribute to the healthy sea.

Our next step is more directed to the fishers and the idea is to form a co-management body that will enable fishers to be a part of the decision making process, which will likely reflect on the way they see the management body, not as bad authority, but as partners. Co-management will also help the management body as it will give them a more broader view from different stakeholders. With co-management fishers will have a say what makes sense, what doesn't and this will give more accountability for the decisions that are taken.

And lastly, we plan to reduce the fishing effort by providing alternative sources of income to the fishers – pesca-turismo. We plan to do this by presenting good examples of practice from the world with the goal of making the fishers fish less, but earn more.