

## **Integrated Management of Specially Protected Coastal Area in Malta**

### **LIFE Project TCY 99/M/95**

#### **Report for the period August 2001 to January, 2002, on activities carried out by The Gaia Foundation as project Manager.**

##### Project Dionysius -Beach Management

1. In these months safety lines for ir-Ramla and Golden Sands were maintained. One line in each bay had to be replaced. One at Golden Sands was lost following a strong Northwesterly, while one at Ramla was either lost or stolen. Two signs placed at Ramla that were attached to the life line poles on the beach, and which indicated the purpose and use of the safety lines, were also stolen and had to be replaced.
2. Low lying small signs were placed along the sand dune area indicating the protected nature of the site at Ramla, and requesting the public to use the footpaths.
3. Vehicular access points to the beach and sand dunes had to be repaired several times owing to vandalism caused by some beach patrons who insisted on parking their vehicles on the protected site. Two new heavy duty bollards were inserted 2 metres into the ground and sealed with a steel cable, secured by a heavy duty padlock placed inside a bollard and inaccessible to steel cutters. The controlled access points are also important for the control against the stealing of sand for construction, which has been a major preoccupation here.
4. discussions were held with the operator of one of the beach bars, who was seriously opposed to the enforcement of the present regulations against offroading in the protected area at Ramla. He claimed that some of his patrons wanted to park there and that such control was prejudicial to his business. He also threatened a security member of staff. A report was filed with the central Gozo police station.
5. Billboards were produced and set up at Ramla, one with information about the conservation nature of the site, and one with a list of regulations pertaining to the site, in accordance with current laws and legal notices.
6. Cleaning and maintenance on the support centre on site was finished. An electricity supply was connected. This centre is located at the local police station which has been disused for a number of years.
7. The centre was used throughout the summer by police officers hired through extra duty by the Foundation over the weekends, as well as by Gaia personnel and security. Wardens were used throughout the week and longer hours on weekends. Their main tasks were to provide information on the site as well as to secure implementation of environmental as well as maritime regulations (safety for bathers).

8. A planning permit for the construction of a snack bar for Ghajn Tuffieha, applied for in May, 1999, was obtained in December, 2001. This has given the green light for the construction of a small kiosk 6 metres by 3 metres to be situated at the car park above the beach. It is expected to come into operation in the Spring of 2002, and will focus on healthy organic food and juices. It will separate its waste, reduce the need for packaging, and finance public conveniences and beach security. It will be constructed largely of wood or bamboo obtained from sustainable sources.

#### Project Poseidon – Marine conservation and safety.

9. Sea patrols were carried out on most weekends, weather permitting, by an extra duty police officer and a Foundation warden, using the Poseidon patrol boat. One incident occurred on the 4<sup>th</sup> August, when a certain C. Sammut was caught driving into Ghajn Tuffieha Bay with a motorized dinghy, beyond the Maritime Authority's marker buoys. The man was rude and threatened and insulted the Foundation's warden. The person was booked by the police officer on duty for threats and for breaching maritime regulations.
10. 2 members of staff started a boat handling and regulations training course with the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology Maritime Institute, in order to obtain a boat handling license that is now required for boats powered by 100 HP or over. The Malta Maritime Authority expects to increase the requirements to boats over 50 HP by the coming Spring.

#### Project Hermes – Dissemination of Information

11. On the 22<sup>nd</sup> August, a site visit was held at ir-Ramla. This was attended by the Minister for Environment, Minister for Gozo, the Mayors of Xaghra and Nadur, the Chairman of Bank of Valletta plc, a sponsor for the project, and Inspector Curmi of the district Police station. They were informed of the progress on site, as well as the problems encountered, which were based mostly upon vandalism and blatant breach of site regulations.
12. A brochure on Ramla, printed in July, was disseminated on site. Copies were also left at the Local Council premises.
13. A very extensive upgrade of the website at [www.projectgaia.org](http://www.projectgaia.org) was carried out in this period, providing considerable detail on the foundation's projects and related materials. The Foundation's management accounts are also being posted on the website in accordance with its principles of full disclosure and accountability. The web site is in English and Spanish. Preparations have been initiated for the following upgrade to include a French version.
14. In late November the Foundation hosted a number of German journalists who were interested in covering its activities. A number of articles appeared in the German Press in January, including one in the *Suddeutsche Zeitung*. Copies of

these, as well as articles appearing in the local press, have been posted on the website.

#### Project Olympus – Coastal conservation

15. Parking problems owing to congestion on weekends were alleviated owing to the partial use of some land tenanted by a farmer. The land is otherwise disused during the summer months, but used to grow corn in winter. The main concern on site was public complaints that the exclusion of parking from the protected area would create a parking problem. The use of these fields solved this problem.
16. A serious incident took place on the 30<sup>th</sup> September. Gaia's Executive Director was out on site at Ghajn Tuffieha taking photos of the cleanup areas following world cleanup day, and noticed a bird trapping net placed below the Martinique carpark. A letter had been sent to the person responsible, Charles Micallef, earlier in the year by the Director of Environment to refrain from such activity on the land in question, which is under Environment Protection Department administration and under Gaia's management. Photos of the nets were taken along with the cleanup site just a few metres away. The bird trapper came on site with his son and attacked the Foundation's Director, punching him several times, seizing his camera, smashing it to smithereens and physically prevented him from leaving the site for over one hour in an attempt to get a guarantee that he would be allowed to continue bird trapping on site. This constituted an illegal arrest, which is a serious crime under Maltese Law. The Foundation's director was also threatened several times. A report was filed with the Mosta police station. In a separate incident in November the same bird trapper was booked by the administrative law enforcement of the Police Dept. for using an illegal bird caller on his bird trapping site at Ghajn Tuffieha. He was fined Lm100 (250 Euros) by the Magistrate's Court.
17. In January, 2002 a detailed conservation order for the Ghajn Tuffieha site was issued by the Planning Authority. This recognized the Gaia Foundation as the appointed managers of the site, and set out a number of restrictions and guidelines. It is the first conservation order for a conservation area to be issued in the Maltese Islands. A copy of this is herewith attached and marked CO 1.

#### Project Phoenix – Waste management

18. Beach cleaning at both Ramla and Ghajn Tuffieha bay was carried out on a daily basis, on foot. The separated system was carried out as usual at Ghajn Tuffieha. Separation was not possible at Ramla owing to the lack of necessary infrastructure to deal with it. Most organic waste generated from Rose's Snack Bar is however collected by the operators and reused as food for their family flocks. Glass bottles

are not given out as takeaways to the beach, and are reused as part of the beverage system in place with the local beverage industry.

19. As part of the clean up the world campaign a major cleanup was undertaken by Gaia staff and volunteers on the 29<sup>th</sup> September, covering 2 sites, one below the Riviera Martinique car park and the other along the sand dunes at Golden Bay, below the road. Both sites had been the victim of heavy littering by the public. Bins for the car park were provided by the Mgar Local Council for the said car park, while 2 bins were provided by the Gaia Foundation for the site above the Golden Sands sand dunes. Signs were posted asking the public not to litter the said sites. 4 industrial skips were filled with rubbish, 2 for each site. The cleanup work at the sand dune area was carried out with the assistance of a crane and high up. Apple Eye Restaurant contributed Lm30 to the said cleanup expenses. This cleanup has facilitated the possible planting of indigenous species up from the sand dune area in the coming planting season.

#### Project Persephone – Sustainable Agriculture

20. The sustainable agriculture project got into full swing over this period, with the organic food club being fully subscribed with 70 members. Provision was made for the increased production of vegetables to cater for all members by the end of the year.
21. crops propagated in this period: marrows, cucumber, cauliflower, broccoli, turnips, beans, artichokes, cabbage, garlic, onions, tomatoes, lettuce, radish, parsnips, herbs, and potatoes.
22. Crops harvested in this period: cabbage, long marrow, greenpepper, tomatoes, honey melons, watermelons, lettuce, beetroot, sweetcorn, eggplant, pumpkin, beans and radish, onions, garlic, pumpkin, potatoes, parsnips, herbs,. By September, the harvest was enough to provide for 20 weekly boxes. By January it was providing for 40 boxes. The area under cultivation stood at around 2 tumoli (.6 of an acre) in September and 4 tumoli (1.2 acres) in January, 2002. For production data vide document Pers. 1.
23. In November, 2001, a system was introduced to collate data for the yields of project Persephone. This was commenced in the fourth month of full production. Data on Yields will give vital information on the real productivity of the project, which would be available to farmers who would be exploring the viability of converting to organic methods. Data from November, 2001 to January, 2002 are listed here as an attached document Pers 1.
24. Meetings were held with a farmer working land at ir-Ramla, bordering the land currently under management, named Mario, known as il-Pespus, to initiate a small organic site, about 1.5 tumoli in size. The was started in September, with the

assistance of the Foundation. An outlet, "Abraham's", in Xaghra agreed to act as pickup point for members of the organic club in Gozo. Copies of the organic club brochure were made available at the said outlet. The first produce there was harvested in November, 2001. A second part time farmer, further inland from the Ramla site has started producing organic vegetables under the Foundation's guidance.

25. In January a meeting was held with the operators of the tree nursery "Flower Power", in Ta' Qali. The basis of an agreement was explored for an organic food project to be initiated on site, which would team up with Gaia's project at Ghajn Tuffieha and Ramla.
26. The Persephone Fields were irrigated 3 times per week in the summer time and twice in the autumn. It was not irrigated in the winter, although precipitation has this winter reached what seems to be an all time low.
27. Clover was harvested early in April, 2001 in order to serve as a green compost. It is expected to top harvest three crops in the following 12 month period, commencing April, 2001. The first was harvested June/July/August, the second in September/October/November. The second crop was different in accordance with rotation principles. A third crop of broad beans was sown in October/November, to harvest in April, 2002. This would give a third crop within the year, that is one of the most ideal owing to the nutrients given back to the soil.
28. In December and January work was carried out to restore and clean the large reservoir on site at the Elysium Nursery, Ghajn Tuffieha. This has a capacity of approximately 600,000 litres. In a normal rainy season this is expected to fill up at least a couple of times. This could reduce the need for ground water and save the project a few hundred Liri a year. Work was completed in the end of January.

#### Project Elysium

29. Biodiversity and tree planting: work at the nursery in August and September focused on the repotting of 450 Aleppo pine trees, cutting and sticking of 350 *Centaurea cressifolia*, 200 *Cremnophyton lanfrancoi*, and the sowing of 1,000 seeds of *Tetraclinis articulata*. A total of 5,800 various plants were propagated from seeds and cuttings or repotted in the period between October and January, 2002, bringing the total to 7,800. Soils were moved for repotting, and weeding and cleaning was carried out throughout the nursery.
30. In August and September, maintenance was affected on the last two of five wells at the nursery in order to allow them to store rain water in the coming season. The wells were then rendered by thorough chipping, plastering and then laying 2 layers of sealer.
31. The 6,000 trees and shrubs planted at Ghajn Tuffieha were irrigated by drip from the water sources at the Nursery. Areas planted were the Golden Bay Headland, the clay slopes above Ghajn Tuffieha Bay, and Hotba l-Bajda. The first two sites

were irrigated twice a week regularly, while Hotba l-Bajda was irrigated once a week.

32. All irrigation for the whole site was powered by a three phase generator. The Planning Authority had refused to issue a compliance certificate to the nursery site because of government buildings erected in the 1970's. The application for sanctioning had to be made. This was granted in August, while a compliance certificate was issued in September. In October the Foundation was finally connected to the Grid, and the noisy generator fell silent at last.
33. The rainfall in the Autumn 2001 winter 2002 period has for the second year running reached alarmingly low levels. The tree planting season was subsequently started relatively late, on the 29<sup>th</sup> November. Trees and shrubs planted in the season commencing November, 2001 up to January, 2002, totaled 917. 225 Tamarisk trees were planted at Ramla Bay, Gozo. In Malta 692 plants were planted at Ghajn Tuffieha, around Golden Bay Headland. These consisted of *Pinus halipensis*, Tamarisk africana, *Atriplex halimus*, *Olea europea*, *Cremnophytom lanfranconi*, *Inula crithmoides* and the national shrub *Centaurea cressifolia*.

Rudolf Ragonesi.