

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

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

**Report for the period August, 2002, to April, 2003, on activities carried out by The Gaia Foundation as Project Manager, as the final phase of the said LIFE Project.**

#### **Project Dionysius -Beach Management**

- 1. The safety lines for Ghajn Tuffieha and Golden Sands that were reintroduced for the summer months were instrumental once again in maintaining high levels of safety. The summer went by without incident at Ghajn tuffieha, reputedly the most dangerous bay on the islands.**
- 2. One of the new set of signs on waste separation, together with 2 colour coded bins, were vandalized at night by some men who set them alight. The men ran off when they saw the night watchman approaching from the other end of the beach.**
- 3. The low lying small signs that were placed last summer along the sand dune area indicating the protected nature of the site at Ramla seemed to serve their purpose well, increasing public awareness without trying to close the site off. A beach warden was in attendance at random hours on weekdays and more so on weekends.**
- 4. The vehicular access points to Ghajn Tuffieha bay and to the tower that were completely overhauled in the Spring lead to a big reduction of illegal entry to the beach at night. In previous years the chains and bollards were frequently vandalized. The new bollards, made of thick steel, and filled with concrete, placed 1 metre below ground have not been so vandalized, although on one occasion a padlock was broken and had to be replaced.**
- 5. In late June a water sports operator named Alfred Cini, obtained a limited permit from the Malta Maritime Authority (MMA) to operate 2 jet skis at Ramla Bay. No permission was obtained from MEPA. Letters were sent by the Gaia Foundation and The Director of Environment informing Cini not to commence such operations without the required permits, but these were ignored. The Foundation has been following this case up with the Police, MEPA and MMA. In August a joint operation, coordinated by MEPA's enforcement unit, was carried out between MEPA, The Lands Department, the Foundation as Manager and the Administrative Law Enforcement (ALE) of the Police Department. 2 of Cini's jet skis were confiscated and, under instructions from MEPA, towed by the Manager's boat "Poseidon" to a waiting barge in Comino. They were then removed to a warehouse by MEPA and the Lands Department. This exercise was part of a fourfold maritime action by MEPA to enforcement environment and planning regulations in the coastal zone. It was the very first operation that actually took place from sea, and included action for the removal of illegal jetties at Comino, an**

**operation involving illegal hire of umbrellas and sunbeds in Cominetto, and the removal of an illegal boathouse in Mistra.**

- 6. Extra duty police officers were hired to assist the wardens in their duties on land and sea on the weekends in August and September. 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).**
- 7. The planning permit for the construction of a snack bar for at Ghajn Tuffieha car park, was obtained in December, 2001 and issued in January, 2002. A call for tenders was made in March by the manager for an operator of the bar. Subsequently the Manager applied to the Lands Department for a concession to operate the said bar on public land. The Manager has been informed by the Lands Department that the site in question is not public land. An application was also made to the Malta Tourism Authority for an operating license. This is currently pending.**
- 8. A beach management plan was commissioned and completed for Ramla Bay. It was carried out by Dr. Anton Micallef. This serves as an important step in the management of the site.**

#### **Project Poseidon – Marine Conservation and Safety.**

- 9. Sea patrols were carried out on weekends in the summer months, by an extra duty police officer and a Foundation warden, using the Poseidon patrol boat. These covered the entire area between Fomm ir-Rih and Rdum id-Delli, and included patrols to the Ramla site in Gozo. The patrols served to enforce regulations pertaining to dumping, to check for oil slicks and water quality and bathing safety regulations.**
- 10. In February meetings were held with The Malta Maritime Authority in order to increase cooperation between the two organizations for the expansion of the coastal boat patrols carried out by the Manager, who offered its services in order to cover the entire Northwest of the island with the cooperation of the MMA and the Malta Police Force. The MMA has shown serious interest in such cooperation, which may commence as early as summer, 2003.**

#### **Project Olympus – Coastal Conservation**

- 11. Regular wardening was carried out on both sites to control breaches of regulations in connection with offroading, bikes and campers. The number of breaches of these regulations continues to decline as the public is generally more aware of the protected and important status of the areas of Ramla and Ghajn Tuffieha, although some few exceptions continue to defy the regulations, most notably some off road motor bikes, who go so far as to flout the law by offroading without any registration plates in order to avoid identification. These are very difficult to control, even by extra duty police officers commissioned to assist in patrolling the sites.**

- 12. Work on an updated ecological survey for Ramla and environs has been carried out since September, 2002. A preliminary survey has been completed and forms the basis for ongoing survey work in collaboration with the Biological Conservation and Research Foundation.**
- 13. Work on a survey for Ramla and environs, on geology, geomorphology, paleontology and hydrology has been carried out since September, 2002. The survey has been completed, and again forms part of the instruments necessary for a continuing and enhanced management of the area.**

### **Project Hermes – Dissemination of Information**

- 14. In August an evening beach awareness event took place at Ghajn Tuffieha that combined swimming and entertainment with environment and beach management awareness. At the end the participants assisted ensuring that no litter was left unsorted for reuse and recycling.**
- 15. In September a cultural/environmental event took place with the assistance of The British Council and St. James' Cavalier. A series of 4 nights of music were held, 2 at the Elysium Nursery Reservoir, which doubled up as an amphitheatre in the dry summer month, and 2 at St. James' Cavalier in Valletta. The Rag Foundation, an Ethnic band from Wales, jammed together with a Etnika, a local ethnic group at Elysium on the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup>, and gave a concert at St. James on the 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup>. The British Council sponsored the event in order to encourage the blending of culture and environment, while St. James put in its contribution as part of its 2<sup>nd</sup> anniversary celebrations. The event was also sponsored by the Malta Tourism Authority and Cisk Export. It was a good promotional event to raise awareness of the Manager's tree planting and biodiversity project.**
- 16. In October the Gaia Foundation attended two international Conferences related to Coastal management, in accordance with its LIFE Project obligations related to regional dissemination of information and networking. The first one called Global Challenges symposium, took place in Sardinia, where Gaia had the opportunity to make a full presentation of the project.**
- 17. The other conference, called Ecoaqua, was held in Galizia, Spain, between the 16<sup>th</sup> and the 19<sup>th</sup> October concentrated on the importance of water management and eco tourism. This was attended by the Foundation's Manager, who gave a presentation to the plenary on the Life project in Malta, focusing on the aspects of integrated management and pilot projects which may be replicated throughout the Mediterranean. Other presentations were made by, amongst others, Dr Eugenio Yunis, Head of Sustainable Development of Tourism at the World Tourism Organisation, and Carol Sheedy, Director General of Parks, Eastern Canada.**

- 18. Preparations in the Autumn commenced on the production of a 3 series video presentation of the project, covering all aspects which have now reached an advanced stage at the final part of the LIFE period. A team of two has been approached who will be commissioned to put together the script and production of the documentary:**
- 1. The first is named Project Persephone, covers sustainable agriculture in the coastal zone. It is meant for students, consumers and farmers alike, and forms part of the initiative to organize a sustainable agriculture zone around Ghajn Tuffieha.**
  - 2. The second is named Project Elysium, and covers the biodiversity aspect of the project and the natural habitats found in the Maltese Islands, many of which are essential to the coastal areas of ecological importance.**
  - 3. The third is named Project Olympus, and covers the general subject of coastal conservation and management of the coastal zone.**

**All documentaries are approximately 15 minutes in length and have been produced in both English and Maltese versions.**

- 19. The French and Spanish translations of the upgraded website were uploaded in October, making the site trilingual. A translation of the website into German was made in August. The translation was edited and uploaded in December.**
- 20. Work commenced in October on a 4 page newsletter covering an update of the entire project. This was completed in November and sent out to all stakeholders, members and made available to visitors at the Elysium Centre.**
- 21. Another newsletter was published in April and sent out to stakeholders, members and public officials, giving them an update of the Life project.**
- 22. In September and October work commenced on the organization of a conference, to be named ECOAST, focusing on eco tourism in the coastal zone. The conference is took place on November 26<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup>. 3 speakers were invited to attend from overseas. Prof. Alan Williams, from the Applied Science Department, University of Glamorgan, Wales, gave a presentation on Ecotourism and Heritage Coasts. Dr. Cliff Nelson, coastal manager of Glamorgan, Wales, spoke about ecomanagement of beaches in Coastal areas. Prof. Aysen Ergin, of the Middle East Technical University of Ankara, Turkey, spoke about Gateways to Coastal Ecotourism, examples from Turkey. Dr. Rudolf Ragonesi, Director of The Gaia Foundation, gave a presentation of the Life project covering the specially protected areas of Ghajn Tuffieha and Ramla. Dr. Anton Micallef, of the Euro Mediterranean Centre for Insular Coastal Dynamics, spoke about the development of coastal footpaths in the Maltese Islands. Dr. Adriana Vella, President of the Biological Conservation and Research Foundation, and Lecturer in the Department of Biology, University of Malta, spoke about ecotourism considerations for Maltese underwater biodiversity. Architect Kevin Fsadni, of the Malta Tourism Authority, spoke about initiatives taken in the coastal strategic area. Archaeologist Aloisia de Trafford spoke about the cultural heritage in the coastal zone.**

- 23. In February a workshop was organized at the Elysium centre at Ghajn Tuffieha on organic farming. The workshop was well attended by interested farmers and representatives of the Malta Organic Agricultural Movement. It commenced with a presentation of the Persephone documentary, and included presentations by the Manager on organic farming in the coastal zone, by Mario Salerno on sustainable agriculture techniques and Andre Muscat on ...**
- 24. In March a workshop was organized at Elysium on biodiversity and coastal management projects. The Manager gave a presentation on the Life project at Ghajn Tuffieha and Ramla. Birdlife gave a presentation on the bird habitats along the Maltese Coastline. BICREF gave a presentation on the ecological survey work carried out at Ramla Bay, while Nature Trust gave a presentation on its project on the management of White Tower Bay that commenced in the summer of 2002.**
- 25. In April, a workshop was organized at Elysium between representatives from the Gaia Foundation, Progett Skart and the Malta Tourism Authority, which is responsible for funding beach cleaning in the Maltese Islands. The workshop focused on the launching of a waste management programme for the North West beaches, using Ghajn Tuffieha and Golden Sands as a pilot project. The result of the workshop was an agreement between the 3 entities to follow up the plan with the Local Councils, who are responsible for Beach cleaning, and the various business concerns at or near the beaches in question, in order to implement a separated waste system for both beaches.**
- 26. Throughout Winter and Spring a number of school trips were made to the Ghajn Tuffieha site. The students were exposed to the entire LIFE project and were given information on the habitats of the Maltese Islands and the Indigenous and endemic plants being propagated at the nursery. The said nursery has become a very useful educational tool for young and old alike, as well as providing a supply for a large number of native trees, many of which are not available elsewhere.**
- 27. A brochure was designed covering the Northwest as a place of interest to the traveler. It marks all the sites of ecological and cultural importance, and is suitable for the eco visitor to the project site and environs.**
- 28. A brochure was designed covering the biodiversity in the Maltese Islands. The purpose of such a brochure is to act as educational material for visitors as well as for students interested in the local flora.**
- 29. A number of information boards have been produced covering aspects of the project, from waste management to organic farming and marine conservation. These also provide useful tools for the visitors to the site.**

## **Project Phoenix – Waste management**

- 30. Beach cleaning at both Ramla and Ghajn Tuffieha Bay was carried out on a daily basis, on foot from May to July. The Foundation has started cooperation work with a new Government initiative, called “progett skart” (project waste), that has provided skips for glass, metal and plastic. The Foundation’s separated waste bins located at Ghajn Tuffieha are serviced by the tourism department beach waste personnel. The response of the beach cleaning team was however quite slow, and its work had to be constantly overseen and supplemented by Gaia Staff. Overall, however, the public response, as well as that of Apple’s Eye Restaurant, to the skips was positive, and for its first season, progett skart at Ghajn Tuffieha was considered a success.**
  
- 31. In Spring, 2003, meetings were held with Progett Skart in order to study the possibilities of extending the waste management work at Ghajn Tuffieha to other areas along the North west coast of Malta, that would serve as a pilot project for the rest of the beaches on the islands.**

## **Project Persephone – Sustainable Agriculture**

- 32. A mixture of mushroom compost and Posidonia Meadows compost was added to the fields prior to planting.**
  
- 33. The sustainable agriculture project has carried on into this project period, with sowing of the following crops.**

**August: the brassicae family, namely cabbages, cauliflower and broccoli, as well as parsley.**

**September more broccoli and cauliflower.**

**October: radish, beetroot, potatoes, garlic, cabbage broccoli and broad beans.**

**November: Broad Beans, onions and lettuce were planted.**

**December: Lettuce, Cabbage, Broccoli and Beans were planted.**

**January: Lettuce, peppers and eggplant.**

- 34. There was no harvesting in the period up to November. The first harvest commenced in December. Once again problems related to pest control have been minimal. Snails taking shelter in the rubble walls have been kept at bay with a line of lime at the perimeter of the fields, while chicken wire was used to protect against rabbit attacks. Onions and garlic, sticky Fleabane and Marigolds were planted amongst vegetable crops as repellents. A spray mix of onions garlic and chillie peppers was also used.**

## **Project Elysium**

- 35. The early Autumn was dry as was the case with the previous two autumns. The rains started in earnest in November. This has relieved the pressure of irrigating the site considerably in this period, with the 4 smaller wells filling up quite regularly. Together these have a capacity of approximately 140,000 litres. The large reservoir, with a total capacity of 600,000 litres, was largely filled in the winter months, for the first time during the LIFE project period, owing to the drought that struck the Maltese islands in the previous 2 years. This helped to alleviate the water requirements for March and April.**
- 36. Biodiversity and tree planting: work at the nursery focused on the sowing, sticking and repotting of various indigenous and endemic species, detailed below in paragraph 38. Soil was also moved for repotting, and weeding and cleaning was carried out throughout the nursery. A total of 2337 trees and shrubs were planted throughout the period. These are also detailed in paragraph 38.**
- 37. The trees and shrubs planted at Ghajn Tuffieha were irrigated by drip from the water sources at the Nursery up to October. Areas irrigated 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 up to September, and once a week in October.**
- 38. Planting on site at Ghajn Tuffieha, sowing, sticking, layering and repotting at the tree nursery carried out in the report period were as follows:**

### **August:**

**Repotting : 300 Aleppo Pine  
                  : 200 Sandarac Gum trees  
Sowing       : 200 Spartum Juncus**

### **September:**

**Sowing:       : first trial – 200 Hoary Rock Rose**

### **October:**

**Sowing:   300 Calendula.  
              100 Yellow Poppy  
              200 Sea Fennel  
Sticking: 500 Maltese Rock Centaury  
              270 Shrubby Orache,  
              500 Golden Samphire,  
              170 Maltese Everlasting.**

### **November:**

**Sticking: 200 Shrubby Orache  
              200 Maltese Cliff Orache  
              146 Maltese Everlasting**

**December:**

**Repotting: 95 Curry Plants**

**Sowing: 100 Almond  
200 Rosemary  
172 Shrubby Orache  
200 Maltese Everlasting  
54 Maltese Cliff Orache**

**Planting: 400 Tamarisk africana planted along the southern clay slopes above Ghajn Tuffieha Bay, by the Qarraba Isthmus.**

**January 2003:**

**Planting: 830 Tamarisk  
40 Shrubby Orache  
Repotting: 578 Maltese Rock Centaury  
100 Yellow Poppy**

**Sticking: 100 Rosemary**

**Sowing: 180 Bay Laurel**

**Layering: 3082 Tamarisk**

**February**

**Planting: 227 Tamarisk  
85 Shrubby Orache**

**Repotting: 350 Golden Samphire  
50 Maltese Shrubby Orache  
68 Rosemary  
72 Hoary Rock Rose**

**Layering: 1,000 Tamarisk  
120 Chaste Trees**

**March:**

**Planting: 162 Tamarisk  
20 Rosemary  
33 Shrubby Orache  
5 Glaucum flavum  
72 Maltese Rock Centaury  
40 Ivy  
1 Dwarf Palm  
5 Maltese Everlasting**

**Repotting: 50 Maltese Rock Centaury**

**Sticking: 126 Hoary Rock Rose  
50 Wild Thyme**

**Sowing: 250 Carob**  
**390 Chaste Tree**  
**300 Lentisk**

**Layering: 200 White Poplar**  
**50 Elm**

**April**

**Planting: 330 Tamarisk**  
**60 Shrubby Orache**  
**11 Sandarac Gum Tree**  
**11 Caper Bush**  
**5 Hoary Rock Rose**

**Sowing: 50 Maltese Cliff Orache**  
**150 Marigold**  
**48 Neem**

**Rudolf Ragonesi**