

Integrated Management of Specially Protected Coastal Area in Malta

LIFE Project TCY 99/M/95

Report for the period January, 2002, to July, 2002 on activities carried out by The Gaia Foundation as Project Manager.

Project Dionysius -Beach Management

1. In June safety lines for Ghajn Tuffieha and Golden Sands were reintroduced for the summer months. The feedback from the public has been good, and by the end of July no incidents related to the rough weather have been recorded.
2. A new set of signs on beach safety were produced to replace the boards with stick on letters. The new set is printed, UV resistant and also covered with Perspex to prevent or reduce vandalism.
3. Low lying small signs that were placed last summer along the sand dune area indicating the protected nature of the site at Ramla, and requesting the public to use the footpaths, were serviced and increased.
4. Vehicular access points to Ghajn Tuffieha bay and to the tower were completely overhauled. The original bollards were placed there in 1997, and had been subject to constant vandalism and subsequent repair. The new bollards are made of thick steel, and filled with concrete, placed 1 metre below ground. Access is closed with a thick steel cable. The system is similar to the one used for Ramla in the previous year.
5. The operator of one of the beach bars at Ramla has been using a powerful searchlight to light up the bar area and a large part of the beach area at night. Complaints were received and forwarded to the Malta Environment and Planning Authority (MEPA), and requests were made to take action to reduce the light pollution effect on the protected area.
6. 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.
7. Extra duty police officers were hired to assist the wardens in their duties on land and sea on the weekends in July. 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. 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. The person chosen to carry out the operation is due to construct the bar and commence operations this summer upon obtaining an operating license.

Project Poseidon – Marine Conservation and Safety.

9. Sea patrols were carried out on weekends in July, by an extra duty police officer and a Foundation warden, using the Poseidon patrol boat. These patrols were useful in the enforcement of regulations pertaining to safety as well as dumping of waste or effluent at sea.
10. The 2 members of staff who 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, obtained their licences after having successfully completed the course.
11. In July, meetings were held with a conservation ngo in preparation for enhanced assistance in the monitoring and conservation biology work related to the project sites, both land and marine. A programme for such cooperation is currently being drawn up.

Project Hermes – Dissemination of Information

12. In January, the project featured very well in the German Media. Articles appeared in the *Suddeutch Zeitung* and the *Augsburger Zeitung*. These covered the integrated management of the sites in extensive detail and highlighted the connection between coastal management and eco tourism for Malta.
13. In February, the project's organic farming wing featured in an article in the local *Times*.
14. In March, an Austrian tv crew from A1 flew to Malta to make a documentary on Malta and its road to the EU. The project featured extensively. The documentary was televised in Austria.
15. In May the website, projectgaia.org, which was available in English and Spanish, was upgraded once again and translated into French. The translated was uploaded in May and June by a student from James Madison University (JMU).
16. In May, the newly appointed Parliamentary Secretary for the Environment visited the Foundation's nursery at Ghajn Tuffieha and expressed his support for the project. The tour was covered by the local media.
17. In May two student groups of four from JMU carried out work as part of their studies. One group concentrated on improving the dissemination of information of the project by providing fact sheets and drafts for information boards and brochures. The other focused on a survey of the area between Ghajn Tuffieha and Majjiesa, as a possible extension of the existing conservation biology site at Ghajn Tuffieha.

18. In May a documentary produced by PBS (The Public Broadcasting Service of Malta) shot on location at Ghajn Tuffieha, and interviewed the Manager as part of a series of features on the Maltese landscape.
19. In May and June, preliminary work was carried out between the Foundation and Amy Townsend, author of the book “Smart Office”, in preparation of services to be made available for hotel operators in the Ghajn Tuffieha area to assist them in “greening” their business, as part of an initiative to promote eco tourism in the Ghajn Tuffieha area.
20. In July, a German TV producer flew to Malta to cover the project exclusively for German and French national tv. The programme will feature projects in 4 European countries, and is expected to be aired in September. A copy of the programme will be made available to the Foundation then.

Project Olympus – Coastal conservation

21. In July, the Foundation started working on a phase out plan for the alien species *Acacia mimosa*, which is found in great abundance on the Ghajn Tuffieha site. This is in accordance with the guidelines set out by the conservation order issued by MEPA 2002.
22. Regular wardening was carried out on both sites to control breaches of regulations in connection with offroading bikes and campers.

Project Phoenix – Waste management

23. 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 skip[s for glass, metal and plastic. The Foundation’s separated waste bins located at Ghajn Tuffieha are serviced by the tourism department beach waste personnel. Meetings were held to have the waste assembled at a collection point, to be collected by Gaia personnel.
24. In July, Apple’s Eye restaurant, a prominent restaurant at Ghajn Tuffieha, was approached by the foundation and agreed to set up a separated system for organic, glass, metal and plastic. These bins are regularly taken to the above mentioned skips by Gaia personnel until such time as Progett Skart will make other bins available at a closer point, upon which the restaurant personnel can dispose of the waste directly themselves.

Project Persephone – Sustainable Agriculture

25. The sustainable agriculture project has carried on into this project period. July saw the 1st anniversary of production. Production in the Spring and summer months has been lower than projected yields because of the very low rainfall this year. Problems in relation to pest control have not been encountered.

26. crops propagated in this period: marrows, cucumber, cauliflower, broccoli, turnips, beans, artichokes, cabbage, garlic, onions, tomatoes, lettuce, radish, parsnips, herbs, and potatoes.
27. 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.
28. Organic farming carried out by the Ramla site in Gozo, which commenced late last year, has also been in progress. The Foundation has assisted these farmers in finding a customer base for their produce.
29. In May, the farmer at Majjiesa, who has been working with organic methods for many years, was also assisted by the Foundation in marketing his produce.
30. The Persephone Fields were irrigated 3 times per week in May, June and July and twice in March and April. The second year in a row of low rainfall has led to an increase in water costs. The reservoir that was restored in January did not fill up at all in the following months.
31. Mushroom compost was purchased in the Spring to add to the chicken compost and posidonia seaweed compost. This was deemed necessary owing to the low organic matter found in the fields under cultivation.

Project Elysium

32. 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 34. Trees and shrubs planted on site are listed in par. 35. Soil was also moved for repotting, and weeding and cleaning was carried out throughout the nursery.
33. The trees and shrubs planted at Ghajn Tuffieha were irrigated by drip from the water sources at the Nursery. 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, while Hotba l-Bajda was irrigated once a week.
34. Work at the tree nursery carried out in the report period included the following:

February:

Layering: 455 Tamarisk

March:

Layering: 590 Tamarisk

Repotting: 644 Shrubby Orache

Sowing: 100 Dwarf Palm, 2650 Aleppo Pine, 300 Sandarac Gum Tree.

April:

Repotting: 21 mint, 10 oregano, 48 thyme.

Sowing: 160 Bay Laurel.

Sticking: 140 Cliff Orache, 150 Shrubby Orache, 90 Golden Samphire, 140 Maltese Everlasting.

May:

Sticking: 100 Shrubby Orachy,

300 Cliff Orache

50 Golden Samphire

June:

Sticking: 288 Sea Samphire

Repotting: 300 Aleppo Pine

July:

Sticking: 116 Cistus

60 Sage

Sowing: 400 Cistus, 168 Carex extensa.

35. A total of 2,035 trees and shrubs were planted in the project sites. These were Tamarisk africana, Atriplex halimus, Inula crithmoides, Lygeum spartum, Olea europea, Centaurea cressifolia, Lygeum spartum, gScenecio bicolor, Euphorbia dendroides, Pinus halipensis and Tetraclinis articulata.

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