



# NEWSLETTER

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## RAC/SPA

The Marine Protected Areas and Biodiversity Centre in the Mediterranean



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*Caulerpa taxifolia* © Patrice Francour

# Specially Protected Areas of Mediterranean Importance (SPAMIs)

## Evaluation of three sites included in the SPAMI list since 2005

The SPA/BD Protocol provides the framework for SPAMI creation as the core of a network targeting the effective conservation of the Mediterranean heritage and the protection of the natural heritage of the region. To ensure SPAMI protection and management, the Protocol provides for the regular revision of the status of the SPAMI sites (Art.10; Art. 21.2; and Art.23 of the SPA/BD Protocol).

An in depth review of each SPAMI shall take place every six years, counting from the date of the inclusion of the site in the SPAMI List. This Periodic Review assesses the degree of conformity with the criteria defined in the SPA/BD Protocol concerning the existing threats, regulations, management, protection measures, resources, means, knowledge, cooperation and networking.

This year RAC/SPA launched the evaluation of three sites included in the SPAMI list in 2005:

**Italy:** “Marine Protected Area of Portofino” (February 2013)

**Algeria:** “Banc des Kabyles Marine Reserve” and “Habibas Islands” (March 2013)

The Periodic Review has been entrusted to a multi-expert Technical Advisory Commission (TAC) composed of:

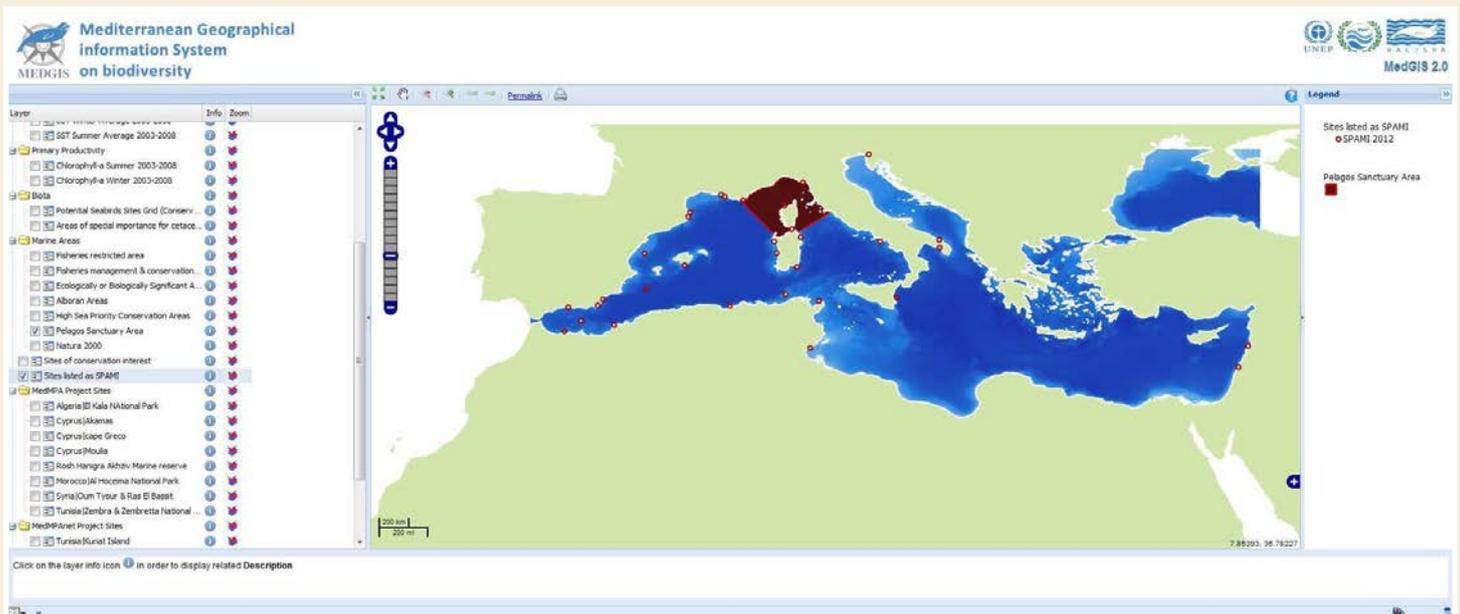
- The National Focal Point for SPAs concerned and the person responsible for the SPAMI management;
- A national expert on the particular biology and ecology of the area;
- Two non-national independent experts, who have the necessary qualifications, regional experience in protected area management, independence and impartiality.

The results of this periodic review, based on an adopted format, have been forwarded to RAC/SPA by the concerned Focal Points, to be surveyed and presented at the Eleventh Meeting of National Focal Points for Specially Protected Areas for endorsement.



# MedGIS

## Mediterranean Geographical Information System on Biodiversity



GIS (Geographical Information System) has been proved to be crucial for biodiversity conservation, spatial planning, decision making. To this end RAC/SPA developed the Mediterranean Geographical Information System on biodiversity in order to provide a useful tool for the Mediterranean countries with updated and accurate geographical information on key

habitats, on critical areas for threatened species and other information on physical features of the Mediterranean Sea. The system is user friendly and its use does not need any special competence.

MedGIS is a tool developed under the clearing house mechanism on biodiversity.

## Elaboration of an Action Plan concerning Dark Habitats (Caves and Canyons)



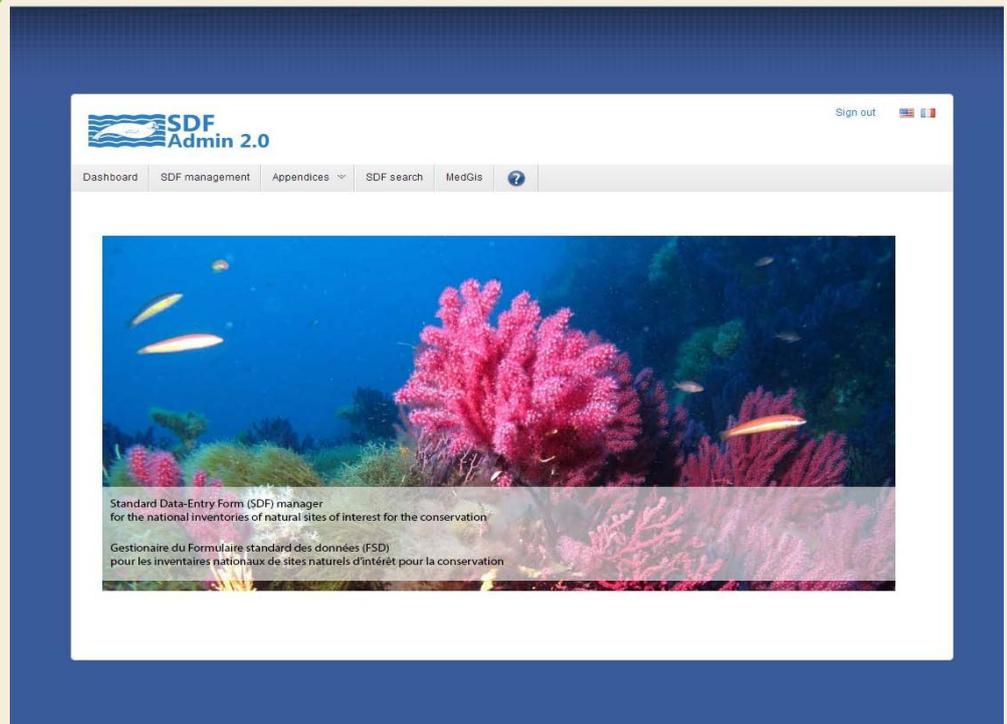
© Thierry Pérez, IMBE-CNRS

As decided by the last meeting of the CoP (Paris, February 2012), RAC/SPA has launched the elaboration of this Action Plan in order to conserve the biodiversity of the caves and the canyons. A draft of this Action Plan will be discussed during an *ad hoc* meeting planned for early May in Marseilles thanks to the support of the French Marine Protected Areas Agency. The draft Action Plan will be submitted to the next Focal Point meeting for adoption and will complement the other regional strategies for the conservation of threatened species and habitats, in particular the Action Plan for the Conservation of the Coralligenous and other Calcareous Bio-Concretions in the Mediterranean Sea.

# SDF Web Manager 2.0

In order to assist countries to draw up inventories of sites of conservation interest, RAC/SPA developed a database and computerized version of the Standard Data Entry Form (SDF). The web application has a user friendly interface in order to help users with filling in the SDF by providing validation rules, as well as interpretation sheets on habitats and species. Each Party can log into the closed system to access useful statistics such as the occurrence of threatened species and habitats, impacts and use of specific sites and their protection status.

The system will be officially launched together with the MedGIS during the next Focal Point meeting.



## MAMIAS

### Marine Mediterranean Invasive Alien Species Database

As provided for by the Action Plan concerning species introductions and invasive species in the Mediterranean Sea, RAC/SPA and in collaboration of the Hellenic Centre for Marine Research (HCMR) developed a first attempt of regional system to collect, analyse and diffusion of information on alien and invasive species in line with a feasibility study realised during the last biennium in order to identify the ways and means to put in the Mediterranean region such a system. The system will be launched online soon and has been used in two cases:

- to act as a database to create and update the list of introduced species in Tunisian water

MAMIAS is a tool developed under the clearing house mechanism on biodiversity

The system as well as proposals for its further development and promotion at the Mediterranean level will be discussed during the next Focal Point meeting and officially launched.

- to produce a scientific paper on introduced marines species in Croatian waters (Eastern Adriatic Sea)

Species Name	First Mediterranean Sighting	Author	Ecofunctional group	Origin Region	Establishment/Success
Abudefduf vaigiensis	1957	(Quoy & Gaimard, 1825)	Demersal Fish	Indo-Pacific	established
Aplysia trigona	1984	Quoy & Gaimard, 1827	Zooplankton	Indian	casual
Acabaria erythraea	1999	(Ehrenberg, 1834)	Zoobenthos	Indo-Pacific	established
Acanthopleura gemmata	2007	(Blainville, 1825)	Zoobenthos	Indo-Pacific	casual
Acanthurus	.....	Steindachner,	.....	Atlantic	.....

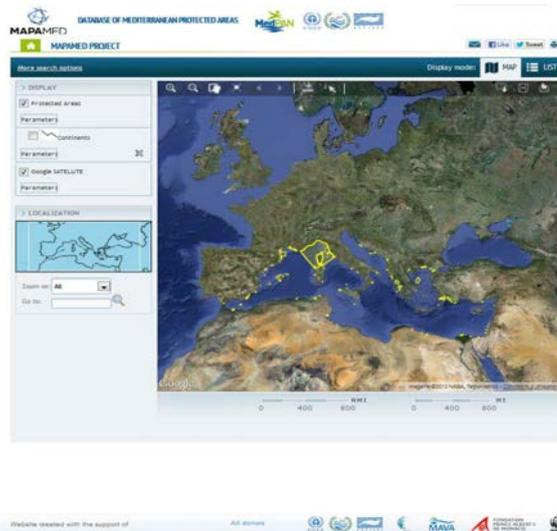
# MaPAMed

## Database on Marine Protected Areas in the Mediterranean

In collaboration with the MedPAN network, RAC/SPA has set up an online database of Marine Protected Areas in the Mediterranean (MaPAMed). This database is the result of two years of extensive work in order to collect, structure and verify the inserted data.

The development of the MaPAMed database stems from the need to have a resource centre which gathers and structures existing information on Mediterranean MPAs. The three main objectives of this database are:

- improving data access,
- supporting the analysis and assessment of the status and trends observed within MPA network,
- Identifying ecological and management matters at a larger scale.



The spatial MPA data originates from various sources: European Environment Agency, National Focal Points for Specially Protected Areas, national contacts within the MedPAN network, MPA managers, university laboratories... The attribute data is collected directly from MPA managers.

Users can now localize and visualize MPAs on a dynamic map. For each MPA included in MaPAMed, it is possible to consult identification sheets presenting detailed information about the site governance, the management objectives, existing habitats and species. The sheets include available documents linked to the concerned MPA, such as creation texts, management plans and presentation brochures. All information can be downloaded through the database's website.

Website:

<http://www.mapamed.org/>

## A new online workspace for spatial planning in the Mediterranean Sea

RAC/SPA has been invited to use a new online mapping tool (Seasketch) which facilitates spatial planning of MPAs. Seasketch allows users to upload map layers, to sketch management areas and discuss the optimal design in various online fora. Anyone with an internet connection can now design management plans, including protected areas, thanks to a user-friendly interface, which does not require any previous GIS knowledge or prior training. From fishermen to government officials, users can now engage online and are no longer limited to face-to-face meetings. Closed groups can be set up for decision-makers, as required. Seasketch is currently in a pilot stage and is developed by a team of researchers and conservationists from the University of California Santa Barbara.

RAC/SPA has developed a Seasketch platform for the MedOpenSeas project, which facilitates planning of SPAMIs in areas within and beyond national jurisdictions.

The MedOpenSeas project is currently in its third phase and focuses on the development of SPAMIs in three priority areas: Alboran Sea, Adriatic Sea and Sicily Channel/Tunisian Plateau. The Seasketch workspace brings together map layers collected by RAC/SPA and its



partners, including existing and proposed management areas as well as a selection of biological and physical data. It is envisaged that the Seasketch tool will support pre- and post-meeting discussions on SPAMIs in the open seas and contribute to further strengthening MPA planning in the Mediterranean.

MedOpenSeas Seasketch page:

Website: [www.seasketch.org/#projecthomepage/50ec2c788aba407518518a4c/about](http://www.seasketch.org/#projecthomepage/50ec2c788aba407518518a4c/about)

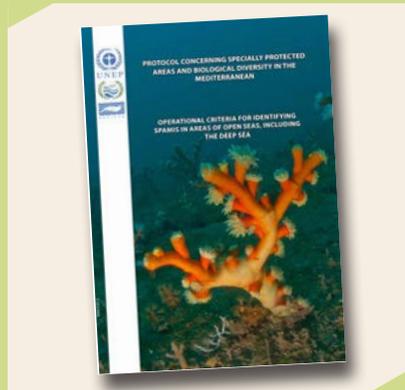
## Operational criteria for identifying SPAMIs in areas of open seas, including the deep sea

This new publication presents a strategic and hierarchical process of using existing databases and analyses to delineate areas of conservation importance in the open seas. The operational criteria integrate the SPAMI criteria, as well as other available formats (see below), in order to develop a representative network of MPAs in the Mediterranean.

RAC/SPA enriched the SPAMI criteria to adapt them to the open seas, including the deep sea, taking into account other pertinent ecological criteria such as, among others:

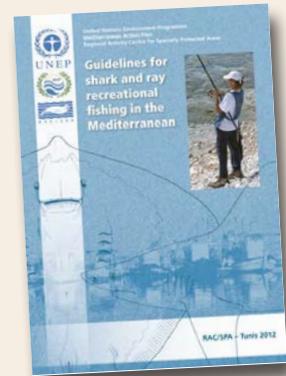
- those adopted in 2008 by the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) to identify Ecologically or Biologically Significant Areas (EBSA) that target open sea waters, including the habitats of the deep seas (UNEP(DEPI)/MED WG.348/Inf.5 and UNEP(DEPI)/MED WG.348/Inf.6)
- a set of criteria to identify habitats of importance for Mediterranean fishing, taking into account the ongoing activities within the

framework of the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM) for establishing regulated-access fishing areas, including in the High Sea.



Document available for download on the RAC/SPA website.

## Guidelines for shark and ray recreational fishing in the Mediterranean



These guidelines for recreational fishers have been prepared as a contribution to the Action Plan for the Conservation of Cartilaginous Fishes in the Mediterranean Sea.

The document is edited on two languages (French and English) and aims to:

- Reduce the potentially harmful impacts of recreational fishing activities on Mediterranean populations of sharks and rays by promoting catch and release,
- Disseminate protocols for the handling of catches to improve post-release survival,
- Encourage the participation of recreational fishers in data collection and management activities, including tag and release programmes, and
- Raise public awareness and scientific knowledge of the status, biodiversity and ecological importance of sharks and rays in the Mediterranean.

Document available for download on the RAC/SPA website.

## Best practice guidelines for Aquaculture and sustainable management in Mediterranean coastal wetlands



New guidelines have been developed by the Regional Activity Centre for Specially Protected Areas (RAC/SPA) of the UNEP Mediterranean Action Plan. They are based on the results of the successful experience combining sustainable aquaculture practices and environmental conservation, developed

in recent years in Doñana, a vast protected Mediterranean coastal marshland in Southern Spain.

This guide is devoted to the interaction between aquaculture practices and the environment, particularly the conservation of threatened species and sensitive wetland habitats. It illustrates a successful case of a rehabilitation of a degraded wetland and could provide inspiration for wetland recovery across the Mediterranean.

Document available for download on the RAC/SPA website.

## SAVE THE DATE

### 11<sup>th</sup> Meeting of Focal Points for SPAs Rabat, 2 - 5 July 2013

The 11<sup>th</sup> Meeting of Focal Points for Specially Protected Areas will be held in Rabat, from 2 to 5 July 2013.

This meeting will be the key moment for RAC/SPA to present the different activities undertaken during the last two years (2012-2013) and to seek agreement on the programme of work for the next biennium (2014-2015).

The Focal Point Meeting will be preceded by the 4<sup>th</sup> Meeting of SAP BIO National Correspondents on the 1<sup>st</sup> of July 2013 in Rabat.

## Note on the establishment of MPAs beyond national jurisdiction or in areas where the limits of national sovereignty or jurisdiction have not yet been defined in the Mediterranean Sea



This document examines the legal implications of the establishment and the management of marine protected areas (MPAs) and in particular Specially Protected Areas of Mediterranean Importance (SPAMIs) beyond national jurisdiction or in areas where the limits of national sovereignty or jurisdiction have not yet been defined, bearing in mind the relevant international framework.

Document available for download on the RAC/SPA website.



UNEP



RAC/SPA

United Nations Environment Programme / Mediterranean Action Plan (UNEP/MAP)

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