



Mr Karmenu Vella  
Commissioner for Environment, Maritime Affairs  
and Fisheries  
European Commission  
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B-1049 Brussels

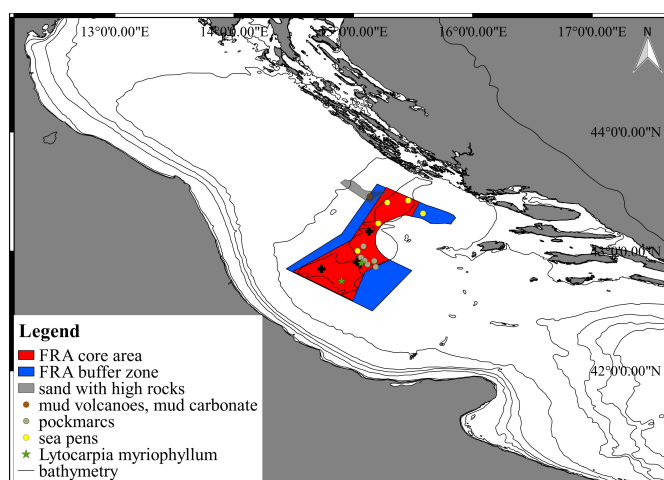
July 31<sup>st</sup>, 2017

**Subject: Urgent call for a Fisheries Restricted Area in the Jabuka/Pomo Pit closed to demersal fisheries.**

Dear Commissioner Vella,

the Jabuka/Pomo Pit, in the central Adriatic Sea, is a site of unique productivity due to the physical processes influencing the dynamics of water circulation and nutrient delivery to this area. In particular, the Pit hosts the most important Adriatic nurseries for European hake, Norway lobster and others valuable species, such as horned octopus and monkfish, making it a critical area for the recovery and sustainability of these stocks and the fisheries that depend on them. The Jabuka/Pomo Pit is also a key area for vulnerable species of cetaceans and sea turtles and a suite of Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems (VMEs).

Last May the Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC) of the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM), endorsed a proposal for the establishment of a Fisheries Restricted Area (FRA) in the Jabuka/Pomo Pit, with a core area closed to demersal fisheries and a surrounding buffer area with limited and monitored fishing (see map below)<sup>1</sup>.



Map of the proposed Jabuka/Pomo Pit FRA endorsed by the SAC.

The proposed FRA covers the waters closed to trawling through a bilateral agreement between Italy and Croatia in 2015, which took into account the advice of AdriaMed scientists. The Pit was then re-opened to trawling in 2016 due to pressure from the Italian fishing sector, depriving the area and its nursery and spawning grounds from the much needed protection. Recently, following the growing support for a FRA in the Jabuka/Pomo Pit, Croatia and Italy agreed to reintroduce a fishing closure from the September 1<sup>st</sup> 2017. Because of their critical and irreplaceable importance to the Adriatic broader marine ecosystems and ecosystem services, the Pit Essential Fish Habitats deserve lasting

<sup>1</sup> "The Scientific Advisory Committee requested the Commission to consider the establishment of a new GFCM FRA

conservation measures to ensure that national political shifts do not reverse established protection, as it was the case in 2016.

We, the undersigned organizations and groups, call on you to propose the establishment of a Jabuka/Pomo Pit FRA closed to demersal and recreational fisheries at the next GFCM Conference (Montenegro, 16-20 October 2017).

A proposal by the EU following scientific advice, would be fully consistent with the CFP. A FRA in the Jabuka/Pomo Pit would also create a level playing field in the Adriatic by extending the current fishing ban introduced in area by Croatia, to other fleets in the region. Based on scientific information available to date, anything short of a FRA closing the Pit to demersal fisheries is unlikely to be effective in rebuilding Adriatic depleted stocks and would fall short of the MedFish4Ever Declaration objective to recover fisheries in the region.

We therefore strongly urge you to promote a FRA in the Jabuka/Pomo Pit that:

- Introduces a ban on demersal fisheries including towed nets, bottom set nets, bottom and mid-water longlines and recreational fishing.
- Defines the waters closed to demersal and recreational fishing according to the proposed FRA core area endorsed by the SAC in May 2017.
- Includes a buffer area where fishing activities will be restricted and only allowed to authorized fishing vessels.
- Provides mechanisms for monitoring the status of the EFHs and VMEs in the area.
- Strengthen MCS measures to ensure full compliance.

Yours faithfully,

20000 Milja– 20.000 Leagues Marine Explorers Society.

Adriatic Recovery Project

AIDAP

Archipelagos Institute of Marine Conservation

BIOM

CASA - Clean Adriatic Sea Alliance

Fundació ENT

Greenpeace

Legambiente

Marevivo

MEDASSET – Mediterranean Association to Save the Sea Turtles

MedCEM – Mediterranean Center for Environment Monitoring

MedReAct

New Economics Foundation

Pechétique

Oceana

OurFish

Seas at Risk

Sunce - Association for Nature, Environment and Sustainable Development

Vivamar – Society for the Sustainable Development for the Sea

Zdravi Grad.