



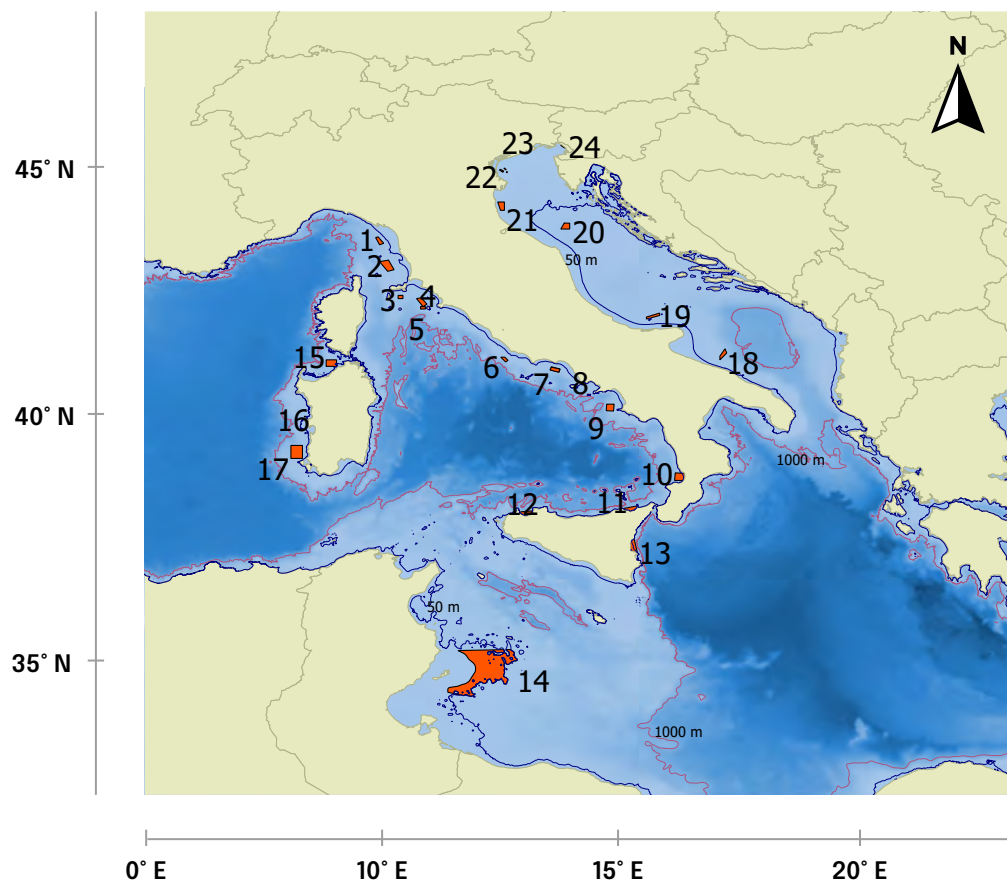
ITALY'S MARINE PAPER PARKS

Bottom trawling in the Tremiti ZTB protection zone during the period closed to fishing (2022)



INTRODUCTION

To promote the recovery of overfished stocks, Italian legislation bans trawling in certain areas, referred to as Biological Protection Zones (*Zona di Tutela Biologica* or *ZTB*), which are important for reproduction or growth of commercial fish species. In recent decades, the Italian Ministry of Agricultural, Food and Forestry Policies (MIPAAF) has established at least 26 ZTBs, where bottom trawling is entirely prohibited or permitted only during certain months of the year. Some of these zones are adjacent to marine protected areas, extending the benefits of protection measures, while others have been established in areas where important fish habitats have been identified.



- | | | |
|--------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1 Toscana N | 9 Sorrento Peninsula | 17 Bugherru |
| 2 Capraia | 10 Near Amantea | 18 Apulia Sea |
| 3 Elba S | 11 Gulf of Patti | 19 Tremiti |
| 4 Giglio N-O | 12 Gulf of Castellamare | 20 Barbare |
| 5 Argentario | 13 Gulf of Catania | 21 Off Ravenna |
| 6 Anzio | 14 Mammellone | 22 Chioggia Tegnue |
| 7 Gaeta (Lazio S) | 15 Asinara | 23 Porto Falconera - Caorle |
| 8 Santa Croce Bank | 16 Gulf of Oristano | 24 Miramare |

To assess the effectiveness of ZTBs, in 2017 MIPAAF commissioned a National Research Council (CNR) study,¹ looking at 12 ZTBs.²

This study revealed fundamental failures in compliance with the trawl ban in these areas. Analysis of AIS³ data found that the trawl ban was respected in only one of the ZTBs, while the other 11 were subject to illegal trawling for a total of 193,000 km fished illegally by 217 fishing vessels, over an area corresponding to 72.4% of the ZTBs assessed by the study.

In some cases, such as in the Tremiti ZTB, the identified illegal fishing activity covered 100% of the protected zone, while in other ZTBs, such as that of Barbare, it covered over 50%.

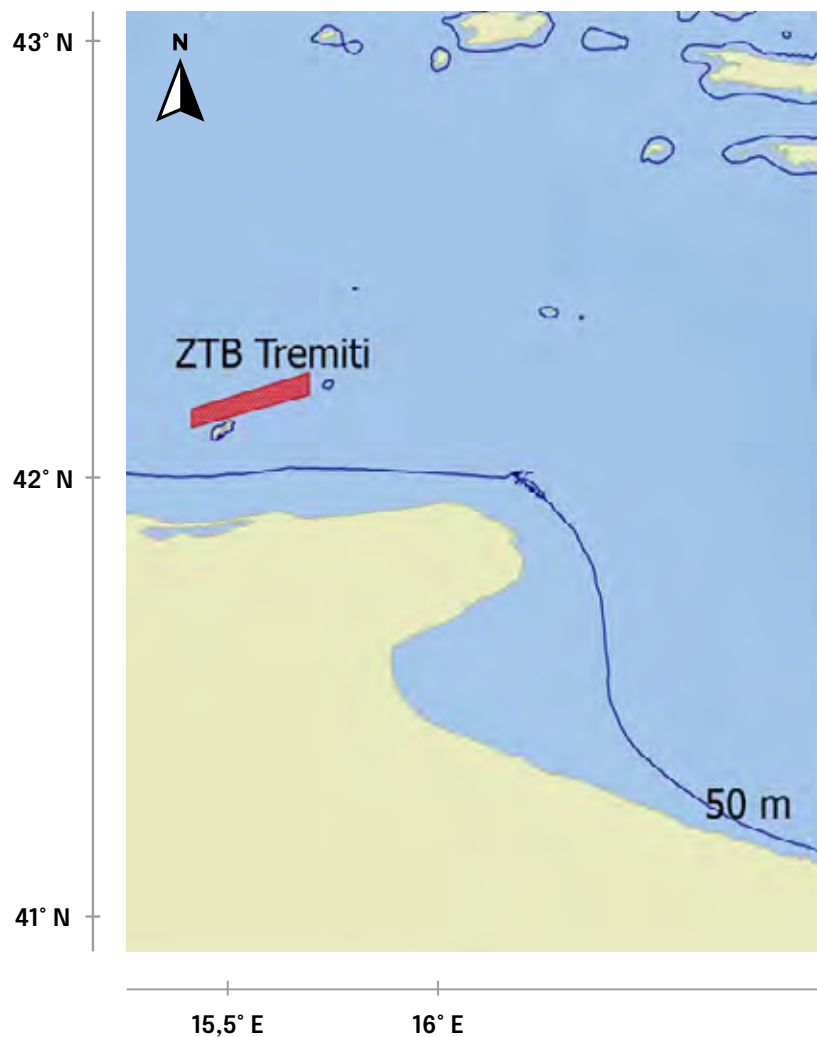


1. Tasseti, A.N., Ferrà, C., & Fabi, G. "Rating the effectiveness of fishery-regulated areas with AIS data". *Ocean & Coastal Management* 175 (2019): 90–97. Link: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0964569119300286>
2. The ZTBs considered in the CNR study were: Miramare, Porto Falconera - Caorle, Chioggia Tegnue, Off Ravenna, Barbare, Tremiti, Apulia Sea, Near Amantea, Sorrento Peninsula, Santa Croce Bank, Gaeta (Lazio S) and Argentario.
3. Automatic Identification System used by European Union fishing vessels larger than 15 metres.

THE TREMITI ZTB

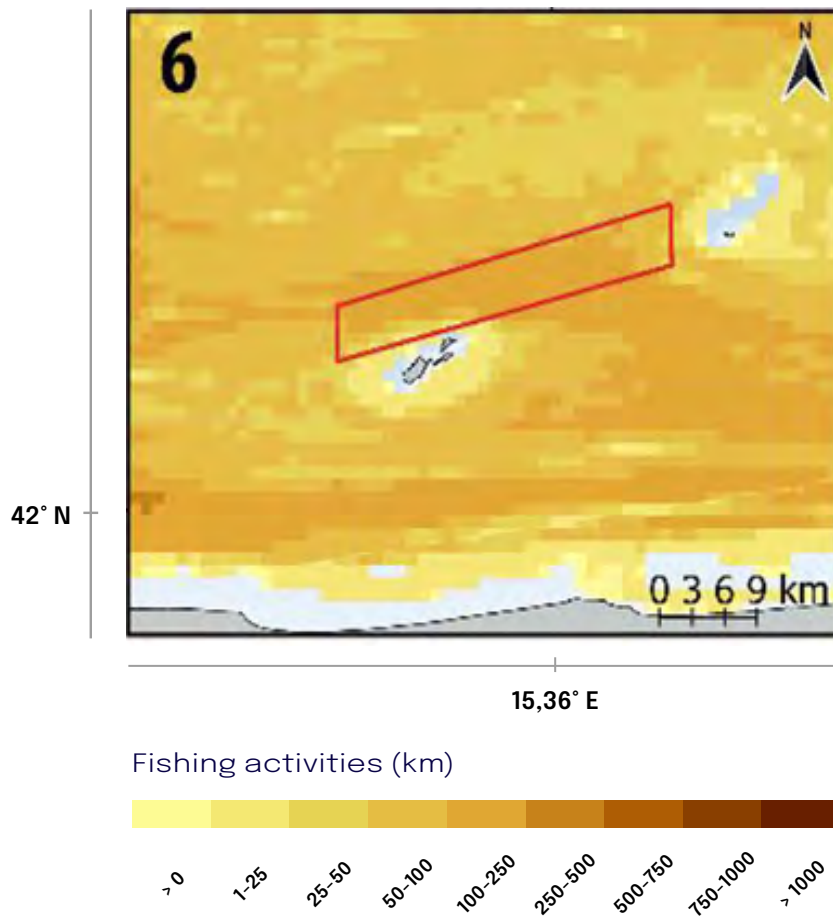
The Tremiti ZTB, located off the coast of the Tremiti Islands in an area hosting hake nurseries, was established on a trial basis for three years in 2004,⁴ with a ban on fishing of juveniles and on bottom trawling.

In 2009, the ZTB became permanent, but the area was reopened to bottom trawling between 1 November and 31 March, despite its proximity to the Tremiti Marine Protected Area.⁵ In the rest of the year, the ban on bottom trawling appeared to exist only on paper.



4. Italian Ministerial Decree, Official Journal General Series no. 53 of 04/03/2004.

5. Italian Ministerial Decree, Official Journal General Series no. 37 of 14/02/2009.

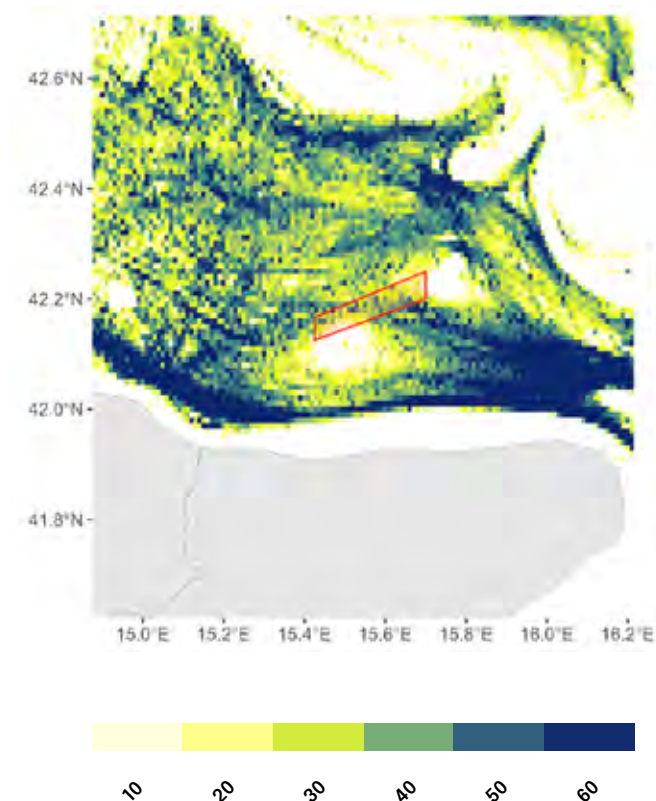


Annual bottom trawling activity during the 2014 closure period in the Tremiti ZTB
 (Source: Tassetti, A. N., Ferrà, C., & Fabi, G. "Rating the effectiveness of fishery-regulated areas with AIS data")

AIS data available on the Global Fishing Watch platform records apparent bottom trawling activity in the ZTB for a total of 54 days of apparent fishing⁶ during the 2020 and 2021 no-fishing periods, by vessels primarily from the ports of Termoli, Vieste and Manfredonia.

Additionally, between 31 March and 1 May 2022, when bottom trawling was prohibited, apparent bottom-trawling activity by 52 fishing vessels was detected, for a total of 175 days.

In Spring 2022, seeking confirmation of findings from AIS tracking, MedReAct interviewed small-scale fishermen in the Tremiti Islands and local operators, who confirmed ongoing illegal trawling in the Tremiti ZTB.



Hours of apparent bottom trawling in the Tremiti ZTB during the 2020 and 2021 no-fishing periods. (Source: Global Fishing Watch)

6. Any and all references to “fishing” should be understood in the context of Global Fishing Watch’s fishing detection algorithm, which is a best effort to determine “apparent fishing effort” based on data from the Automatic Identification System (AIS) collected via satellites and terrestrial receivers. As AIS data varies in completeness, accuracy and quality, it is possible that some fishing effort is not identified and conversely, that what is identified as fishing effort in fact is not. For these reasons, Global Fishing Watch qualifies all designations of vessel fishing effort, including synonyms of the term “fishing effort,” such as “fishing” or “fishing activity,” as “apparent,” rather than certain.

TREMITI

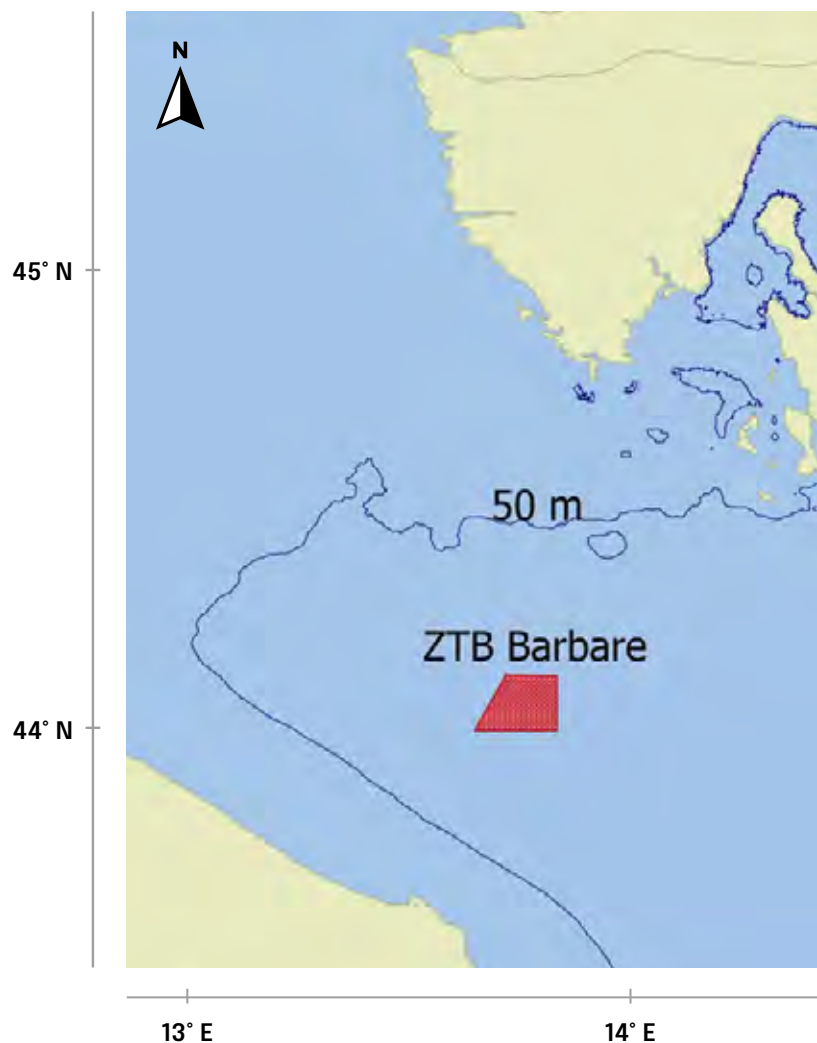
THE PHANTOM ZTB

[click on the image to watch the video](#)

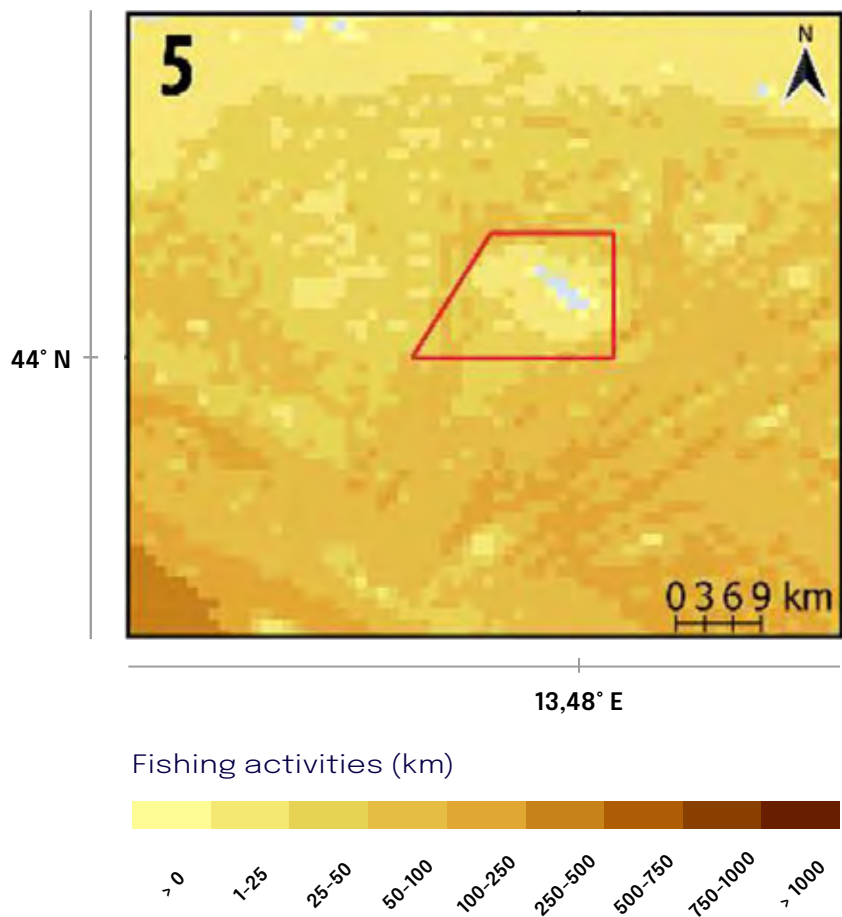
THE BARBARE ZTB

The Barbare ZTB is located approximately 30 miles off the coast of Ancona, and contains several offshore platforms.

Like the Tremiti ZTB, it was established in 2004⁷ with a complete ban on bottom trawling. However, despite the presence of 11 offshore platforms, bottom-trawling – already flagged by the CNR study across more than 50% of the ZTB – appears to have continued.



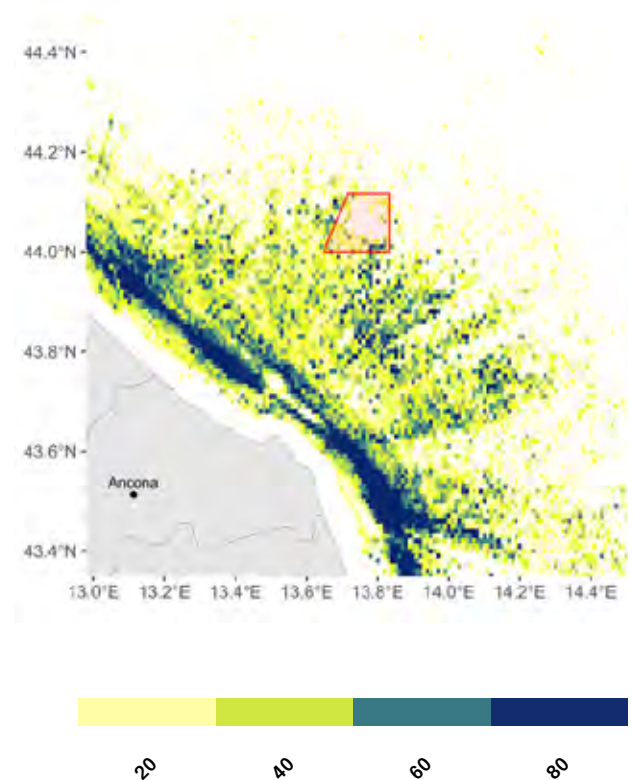
7. Italian Ministerial Decree, Official Journal General Series no. 77 of 01/04/2004.



Annual bottom-trawling activity in 2014 in the Barbare ZTB

(Source: Tassetti, A. N., Ferrà, C., & Fabi, G. "Rating the effectiveness of fishery-regulated areas with AIS data")

Data reported by the Med Sea Alliance⁸ [Atlas](#) on trawling in protected areas of the Mediterranean, in addition to providing an overview of potential infringements in ZTBs and other protected areas of the Mediterranean, indicates 507 days of apparent trawling in the [Barbare](#) ZTB between January 2020 and November 2021 by 25 fishing vessels from Ancona, Rimini, Senigallia, Fano and Civitanova Marche.



Hours of apparent trawling in the Barbare ZTB between 1 January 2020 and 30 November 2021 (Source: Med Sea Alliance)

8. *The Med Sea Alliance brings together non-governmental organizations working to improve the health and productivity of the Mediterranean Sea.*

CONCLUSIONS

Our research shows a potential and continuous lack of compliance in Italian ZTBs, with protection measures all too often existing only on paper.

The case of the Tremiti ZTB, witnessed by those who have direct experience of constant illegal fishing, is indicative of poor management of Italian fisheries. Whereas, if properly managed, ZTBs could contribute to the recovery of fish stocks and contribute to the future of responsible fisheries. However, this change can only come about if authorities truly commit to safeguarding these key areas.

