

ANNUAL REPORT 2017

Who we are

The Greek Sea is one of the most important biodiversity hotspots of Europe, hosting rare species of cetaceans and mammals, from common dolphins, to sperm whales and unique flora such as seagrass meadows. According to the [IUCN Red List](#) these rare species are all threatened with extinction. The Mediterranean monk seal *Monachus monachus* for example, is an endangered marine mammal and almost half of its population is found in the area of Greece.

“Thalassa” meaning sea in Greek is a non-profit environmental organisation established in 2013, promoting conservation and sustainability of the Mediterranean, especially in the area of Greece. We are devoted to the preservation of marine habitats through actions and policies ensuring sustainable development.

Mapping for Conservation

(mapping of Monk Seal habitats and pupping sites in the whole of Greece)

This 3-year project (2017-2019) is funded by 1/3 by Thalassa Foundation and implemented by [MOM](#)/Hellenic Society for the Study and Protection of the Mediterranean Monk Seal.

MOM's fundraising efforts are ongoing with some funds having been secured by the **National Geographic Society** (“Mapping for conservation: Identifying the critical habitat of the endangered Mediterranean monk seal in the Cyclades Islands”) and the **Euronatur Charitable Foundation**, for another part of the total budget. The first area investigated upon the launch

of the project was the Eastern Aegean islands, followed by Evia, the Southern Ionian islands and the whole of the Peloponnese. Next comes the island of Crete!

With the completion of this project, for the first time in history, Greece will have a complete picture and a full status report of the areas hosting this wonderful and endangered species. And, this information, together with an integrated Action Plan will be made readily available to the general public, official authorities and Conservationists.

Blue Islands of Greece

Thalassa Foundation's holistic approach to marine conservation.

Greek islands constitute a driving force for the Greek economy, by attracting thousands of visitors every year who enjoy their beautiful landscapes and hospitality. Due to their commercial significance, the risk of their environmental degradation is substantial.

The aim of **“Blue Islands”** is to preserve marine natural reserves by engaging local communities in pursuing sustainable growth, thus capitalizing on their natural and cultural heritage from an eco-friendly perspective.

Under this aim lies our **“Blue Alonissos”** project, consisting of several targeted conservation actions.

Blue Alonissos

Alonissos was chosen as a model island as it has remarkable marine biodiversity. [The National Marine Park of Alonissos, Northern Sporades \(N.M.P.A.N.S\)](#) is one of the largest marine parks in Europe and hosts a large variety of rare and endangered species i.e. monk seals (almost 1/4 of their total population) , dolphins and other cetaceans.

The residents of Alonissos were, and still are, ready to follow an eco-touristic model of development..



[The Plastic Bag Free Alonissos Project](#)

(Aug. 2015 - Sept. 2016), implemented by [MedSOS](#) and MOM

was the first project in Alonissos which was fully funded by Thalassa Foundation.

Guarding the N.P.A.N.S

As of May 2016 and all through 2017 Thalassa Foundation conceded motor-boat Kimolos to the Management Body of the Marine Park of Alonissos Northern Sporades. The scope of the concession was to effectively guard the marine park while implementing a multitude of vertical actions that will contribute to an integrated protection scheme.

Scientific Research in the N.M.P.A.N.S.

Thalassa Foundation is also funding:

Scientific Research on the present state of the NMPANS ❖

(May 2017-June 2018)

Implemented by MOM

Study of:

- The seagrass *Posidonia oceanica*
- The Water Quality & microplastics
- Fish & Fishers in the N.M.P.A.N.S.

With the parallel concession of a fully equipped scientific vessel Nereis to MOM.



The project needs to be repeated every 3-5 years to create a reliable dataset for efficient monitoring and advocacy.

What about other islands?

[“ASAP - Active Skiathos Against Plastic Bag”](#)

(May 2017-July 2018)

Implemented by MedSOS



Co-funded by Thalassa Foundation, the **Prince Albert Monaco II Foundation** and the **Municipality of Skiathos**.

- ❑ Beach cleanups: July & October 17
- ❑ The project also entails common/parallel actions in Alonissos

Thalassa Foundation and the Cyclades Preservation Fund

The [Cyclades Preservation Fund](#) a newly established fund belonging to a network of Funds seeks to “raise funds locally and internationally from people and businesses that care and rely on the Cycladic islands’ well being and future, while ensuring that funds are directed appropriately to local, effective initiatives, with measurable impact on land and at sea. The development of collaborative networks as well as the empowerment of the local communities of the Cyclades is the cornerstone of the mission of the CPF.

Thalassa Foundation welcomes this new effort and is very much looking forward to synergies that will help raise environmental awareness and best practices for preservation of this very important part of Greece, the Cyclades complex of islands.

Thalassa Foundation is represented in Fund’s Steering Committee and has just recently granted funds to the CPF.

In the pipeline for 2018

Thalassa Foundation is going to intensify its efforts to effectively patrol Marine Protected Areas, with Alonissos representing an emblematic test area.

Thalassa Foundation will always regard the protection of the marine environment through sustainable development as a crucial priority for humankind and will thus never cease investigating and supporting best practices and ways to engage local communities to also serve this purpose.