

Report from the PMC meeting in Pomorie



Photo: Elena Kafadarova.



The Project Management Committee, which is the supreme body of ALAS, met during two days in June in Pomorie. Delegates arrived from all the four sites and the work took place in the town's new conference center.

The main topics discussed were the creation of salt-routes, co-operation with other organizations (UNESCO, MedWet...), management and protection of salinas.

An important subject was the notion of salt quality. The World Trade Organization (WTO) has adopted norms that say that salt - in

order to have the right to be called "salt" - must contain at least 97% of NaCl. Many traditional salinas produce salt with lower levels of sodium chloride, because their degree in minor salts and trace elements are higher. Unrefined salt that is produced on clay bottoms will also contain more "impurities". Many countries - and also the European Union - are about to adopt these norms in their legislation. This creates an additional pressure on the small salinas.

The different publications, studies and other outcomes from the project were treated and decided

upon.

The PMC also adopted the project work plan, a document that will evolve as the works advance.

The Technical Working Groups on ecological management and on tourism also met during these days. The conference excursion took the participants to the small traditional salina close to the town and to the modernized salinas north of Pomorie. The excursion ended with a tour to the town of Nessebar, a World Heritage Site.

The minutes from the meeting can be ordered free of charge by simple request from: alas@otenet.gr

Some web sites linked to salt

ALAS is putting up its own web site, but when writing this it is not yet available (www.alas.gr). While waiting for this web-site to be operational, here are some links that you might find interesting:

general about salt:

- www.saltinsite.org
- www.salt.org.il
- www.insula.org

salt producers

- www.eu-salt.com
- www.saltino.com
- www.saltunion.com
- www.solvay.com/salt

salt museums

- www.members.aol.com/salzmuseum/index.htm
- www.saltcenter.com
- www.lionsaltworkstrust.co.uk

- www.infcom.it/kalat/zone/saline
- www.salzbergwerke.com
- www.mines.ch

- www2.arnes.si/~kppomorskim2/english/salt_pan.htm
- www.batzsurmer.com

- www.muzeum.wieliczka.pl/en/

wetland conservation

- www.ramsar.org
- www.medwet.gr
- www.europa.eu.int/comm/environment/nature/home.htm

The list is far from complete. If you have any exciting links please send them to the editor.

Addresses to the four sites

(project managers and technical operators)

Lesvos, Greece:

AENAL, P.O. Box 146,
GR-81100 MYTILENE
Tel +30 251 44945,
Fax +30 251 48 115
Spiros Efstratiou, project manager
Hjalmar Dahm, assistant pm
alas@otenet.gr

Pomorie, Bulgaria

ALAS office,
Yavorov Blvd 40A,
BG-8200 POMORIE
Tel/Fax +359 596 78 56
alas@unacs.bg
Milcho Skumov, project manager
Elena Kafadarova, assistant pm

Figueira da Foz, Portugal

Municipality,
Av. Saraiva de Carvalho,
P-3080 FIGUEIRA DA FOZ
Tel +351 233 403 300,
Fax +351 233 403 310
Catarina Monteiro, project manager
Sonia Pinto, assistant pm
catarina.monteiro@cm-fig.foz.pt
Renato Neves and Rui Rufino
(Mae d'agua), technical operators
littorina@mail.telepac.pt

Piran, Slovenia

Commune of Piran,
Tartinijev trg 2, SLO-6330 PIRAN
Tel +386 567 103 00
Robert Turk, project manager
robert.turk@guest.arnes.si
Tel +386 567 315 38



All About Salt

Newsletter

Issue 2, October 2001

Notes from the editor

Small is beautiful

Like in most economic areas today, it is not really a surprise to learn that also salt production is under the "law of globalization". Neither is it a surprise that the USA is our planet's leading salt producer and that one European and three USA companies control 50% of the world's salt manufacturing capacity.

Most salt is produced in big units, either as rock salt, vacuum salt or sea salt. Even in Europe and around the Mediterranean several coastal salinas produce over 100.000 tons of salt annually.

The ALAS project aims to preserve and promote the small salinas, where the annual production often does not exceed some thousand tons. This does not mean that we should disregard the big salinas; they play a significant economic role and are important manmade wetlands and ecosystems.

But the small salinas must also be allowed to survive. They have an interesting history, their impact on the local economy and employment is worth to consider. They are of importance both for nature-conservation and for tourism and education.

Some salinas have maintained the traditional way of working, with manual harvests. It is a labor-intensive way of producing salt and the product will obviously be more expensive than salt produced in the big, modern - and thus more efficient - salinas. So, many small salinas have closed down, others are threatened, all are very fragile. The economical studies carried out within the ALAS project will hopefully help the small salinas, not only to survive, but to develop new products and introduce new ways of operating them.

The salt that today is produced in small salinas may seem like a drop in the Ocean, but this drop is symbolic and should not disappear.

Let's hope that the activities through ALAS will give these salinas - also outside the range of the four sites involved in the project - a helping hand,

In sale salus,


Editor

In this issue:

Reports from the sites

Page 2

Tourism in salinas

Page 3

Report from the PMC meeting

in Pomorie

Web-sites

Addresses

Calendar

Page 4

The ALAS Newsletter is published with the financial support of the European Commission.



ECOS-Ouverture

is the European Commission's Programme for Co-operation between the regions and cities of the European Union and their counterparts in Central and Eastern Europe and in the Mediterranean Area. ECOS-Ouverture is managed by the regions and cities of Europe and their representative organisations.



ALAS calendar for coming events

29 September - 2 October
Annual Conference with workshops in Figueira da Foz
March 2002
Project Management Committee in Lesvos
May 2002
Annual Conference in Piran

ALAS Newsletter is published by AENAL,
P.O. Box 146, GR-81100 MYTILENE, Greece



Editor

Hjalmar Dahm, assistant project manager, AENAL
hdahm@geo.aegean.gr

All photos in this issue: Hjalmar Dahm (if not indicated otherwise).

Direct email to ALAS: alas@otenet.gr

Local language Newsletters soon available - contact the local project manager.

Next issue:

ALAS Newsletter 3 will be a special issue on ecological management of salinas. Manuscripts before November 15.
Published beginning of December 2001.

Salinas on Gozo and Malta

These small salinas exist on the two Mediterranean islands of Malta and Gozo. The storage ponds for the seawater, evaporation pools and crystallization pans are carved out in the rock. The exploitation is of family type and the salt is sold on the local market.

These salinas are threatened by abandonment (aging salters), tourism and construction projects (hotels, roads and also platforms for scuba diving). The rising sea level is of course a concern for these salinas.

I took this photo near Marsalforn on the north coast of Gozo in September 1994.



Reports from the sites

In the previous Newsletter the four ALAS partners were presented. We promised short activity reports from the sites in this issue.



The future salt museum in Polichnitos.



The restored salina as it looked just before harvest (June 2001).

Lesvos

Lesvos is the whole project's coordinator and as such handles the administration and networking. One of the local objectives is to create a first Greek salt museum on the island and some progress in this direction has been done through a technical study. A small, but dynamic research team at the University is currently working on several topics, from the history of Greek salinas and eco-tourism to the gastronomic aspects linked to salt.

Piran

With the aim to save the local salinas and the production of salt, the local organizations and administrations have created a salt producers' co-operative. The local ALAS team has produced a new exhibition on salt and natural heritage and the works on the museum on natural heritage have started. This building is situated close to the salt museum's two buildings, out in the salinas. The training course for young salters has started. The training programme also contains lessons on natural heritage and ecological management. Due to not very favorable weather conditions, the production of salt in the area of Piran is expected to be only about 2.000 tons this year. With better weather the production could have been 4 times higher.



Young salters are now being trained in Piran - a hope for the future (August 2001).

Figueira da Foz

The municipality has bought one of the many abandoned salinas and thanks to ALAS it has now been respectfully restored and produced the first salt since many years in 2001. The salina can today be reached with a new-built traditional salt boat. Walking paths and information panels will soon be operational in the area. The team in Figueira also prepares a meeting for all Portuguese salinas and a course for future salters is being put up together with the professional school.

Pomorie

The municipality museum has set up a specific exhibition on the history of salt production in Pomorie. Thanks to a rich collection of photos, tools and models, the permanent exhibition in the future salt museum has taken a big step forward. The local team is also studying the possibilities to put up an ecological center beside the Pomorie Lake, which nowadays is protected through national legislation. This center would be of great interest for the management of this unique lake.



Georgi helps his grandfather during the salt harvest in the traditional salina (June 2001).

TOURISM IN SALINAS

Saltworks are fragile, semi-artificial ecosystems. Apart from their economic role as industrial places where salt is produced, they form very interesting wetlands, where various species of plants and animals can be observed. Many tourists are interested in these species and because of their great interest in nature and ecology they are called **ecotourists**. Furthermore, there are many **scientists** who make research on these species and their habitats.

Apart from their economic and ecological value, saltworks are very interesting places, for social and cultural reasons, since there are lots of myths and traditions related to their history. The natural, ecological and cultural characteristics of the salinas are the reasons for the development of various types of tourism. This kind of tourism is considered soft, since it does not destroy the environment, and also contributes to its protection. The salina's environment (as a nature and tourist resource) should maintain its high quality to be attractive for the tourists and useful for the birds. Thus, tourism development should be controlled and, under the principles of sustainability, help to preserve the natural environment and the landscape.

The saltworks are places where various kinds of tourism can be developed. There are many soft forms of tourism, such as **ecotourism, agrotourism, cultural, gastronomic, educational, walking, sport tourism**, or even **conference tourism**, that can be developed in the saltworks.

Ecotourism is a special kind of tourism that is related to nature and the environment. Tourists, who are interested in nature, ecology and environment, visit the saltworks where they can learn about the wetlands and the special ecosystem that is formed in the salinas and watch the various bird species



(flamingos, avocets, black-winged stilts etc) that gather at the same place. Ecotourism is related to **nature and trekking tourism**. Tourists spend most of the day around the saltworks, walking, in order to find interesting species. A well-organized network of paths and trails would help them in their tours. Hereby it is also easy to develop sport tourism. The paths can be used for mountain bike tours as well. The saltworks are often situated near the seashore. This could be exploited for the development of soft sea sports, such as rowing and sailing.

Another form of tourism, which could be related to the saltworks, is **agrotourism**. Tourists live in a farm, take part in the agricultural works and consume local products. There is also gastronomic tourism related to salt. The tourists taste traditional recipes, and at the same time they become aware of how salt is being used in each place. This type could be combined with cultural tourism. Festivals can be organized, where tourists can take part and learn about local foods, traditional music, dances and customs. In this way the tourists

incorporate better with local life style.

The saltworks can offer a great opportunity for the



development of **educational tourism**. Schools near the salinas, often organize excursions as part of their environmental education programme. The students watch the birds, visit the installations and learn how salt is being produced. There are also many studies that take place in the saltworks by university students, having to do with physical, chemical, or biological parameters. In the concept of educational tourism, conferences can be organized about salt, its uses and ways of production in locations where there are saltworks. However, for the development of conference tourism, there should be the appropriate installations (buildings, microphone and translation facilities).

The presence of a **museum** in the saltworks can play a great role in the better development of all these types of tourism. The tourists and the students can visit this museum throughout the year and learn about salt production, even if it is not the harvesting period, and watch the birds, even if it is not the breeding or immigration period. Furthermore, they can learn about how salt was being produced and used in the past or in other countries and places.

Finally, it should be mentioned that there are a lot of **volunteer groups and organizations** that find salinas an interesting and alternative way of spending their holidays, while at the same time learn about traditional ways of salt production. For this purpose **camping facilities** should be established nearby the salinas, where volunteers will stay.

It is obvious that tourist development in the saltworks can offer a great opportunity for the local development, especially in places that are in decline. Apart from the economic development, new jobs can be created as well as new sources of income for the local people. The exploitation of saltworks for tourism purposes can also help in protecting the environment and offer a new alternative in the world's tourism saturated market.

Lena Vagianni

The ALAS research team at the University of the Aegean, Lesvos