



MANTIS: Marine protected Areas Network Towards Sustainable fisheries in the Central Mediterranean

Report of the Introductory meeting with stakeholders of the Northern Adriatic

**Chioggia
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Workpackage 1, Deliverable 1.5

Workshop report

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The 4th introductory meeting was held in the Chioggia on the 27th of May 2017, hosted at the ISPRA institute. 5 fishermen took part to the meeting representing rapido and trawlers, in addition to Sasa Raicevich and Gianluca Franceschini from ISPRA, Giuseppe Scarcella from CNR and Giulia Prato from WWF Italy.

The objectives of the meeting were to:

- Introduce the project to fishermen in Chioggia
- Collect spatial information on the distribution of the essential fish habitats for the 4 target species
- Collect management suggestions for the 4 target species (Hake, Mullet, Sole and Norway lobster, *Merluccius merluccius*, *Mullus barbatus*, *Solea solea* and *Nephrops norvegicus*) in Northern Adriatic (GSA 17)

After a brief presentation of Mantis project background and objectives from Giulia Prato and Giuseppe Scarcella, the discussion was opened..

Main complaints from fishermen on the current situation were:

- Overfishing is due to the uncontrolled increase in fishing effort in the Northern Adriatic, i.e. increase in the number of boats, increase in the size of boats hence in fishing capacity, increase in the number of fishing hours/boat and displacement of fishing effort from other Italian areas to the northern Adriatic.
- in Chioggia smaller boats were substituted by larger ones with higher fishing capacity. These larger boats tend to fish h24 or even longer. Imposing reductions of fishing effort based on fishing days for such boats was not effective, since 1 fishing day for a large boat lasts 24 hours, much longer than the real duration of 1 fishing day for a smaller boat. Fishing restrictions should thus be based on fishing hours and not days. Restrictions should be applied equally to all fishing activities, including artisanal fishing.
- Engine power, which is necessarily larger in the larger boats, should be controlled.
- Security on board is an issue for fishers, since they are obliged to work also with bad weather
- Stocks (in particular common sole, cuttlefish and *Mustelus asterias*) keep decreasing despite all measures implemented in the last 30 years (including the biological ban, the reduction of effort to 3 days per week, the ban within 6 miles from coast). Artisanal fishing boats (fixed boats) are increasing, work every day and are subject to few controls.

Sasa Raicevich and Giuseppe Scarcella reminded that:

- The findings of a scientific paper from Scarcella et al. demonstrated that measuring fishing effort as Kwh/day does not provide real information on fishing impact. The Ministry (MIPAAF) generally measures reduction of fishing effort based on Kwh/day, and this should change.
- CNR opposed the Ministry's request for a management plan dealing only with trawling. CNR proposed a management plan that includes artisanal fishing too, given this activity is often targeting the same demersal resources of trawling, and sometimes employs several people on one boat for both fishing and nets cleaning



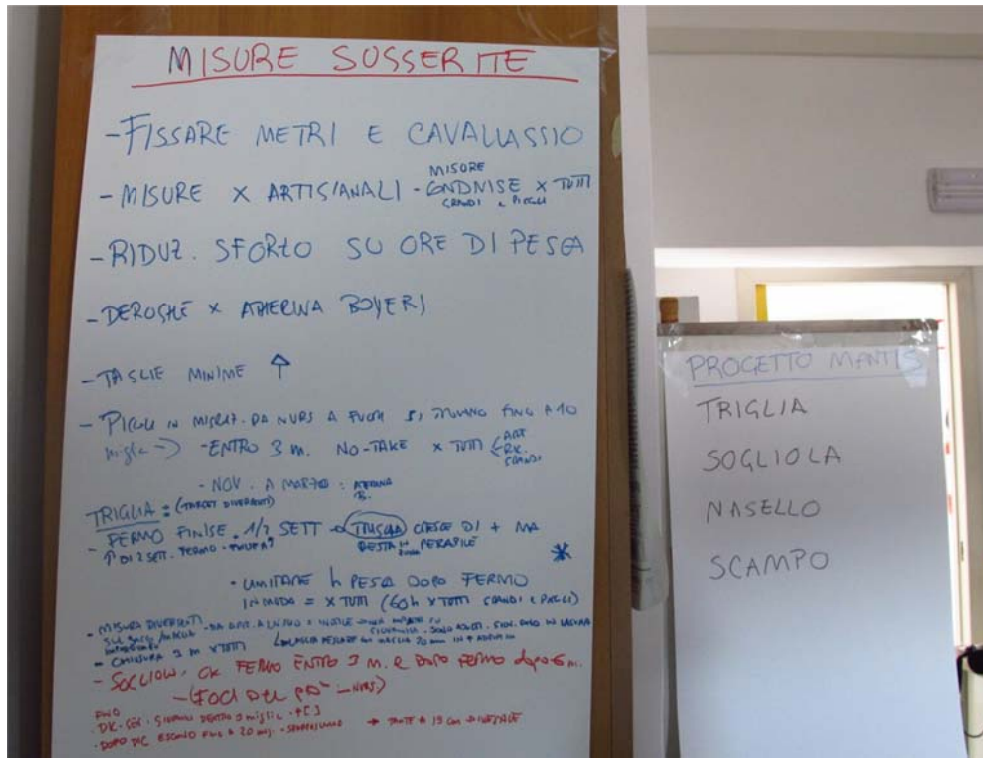
- Reduction of fishing effort should be applied to all fishing activities. In order to estimate the appropriate reduction needed, overall fishing effort must be estimated, but information is lacking for several reasons (fishers don't compile logbooks, controls from port authorities are lacking). Management based on fishing days or hours is thus impossible without having knowledge of the fishing days. Hence the proposed management plan asks for precise information of fishing days per each vessel. Fishing days were chosen instead of fishing hours since these are measured with VMS and AIS which cover only part of the vessels.
- A measure based on fishing permits linked to specific areas will be implemented. Every year the permit will have to be renewed. This should stop vessels from distant areas to fish in the northern Adriatic.

Other fishermen complaints:

- Fishers are not present on the discussion tables where they should be heard. The small scale fishing is organized into cooperatives whose only duty is to sell fish at the market. One new cooperative was recently established, grouping 7-8 boats with traps for *Squilla mantis*, in order to represent them in front of decision makers
- Fishers need an authority who can enforce the rules, they cannot be the ones enforcing them.
- The fishing crisis especially in Chioggia is due to large 30 m fishing boats fishing 24h without any pause. These threaten the economic survival of fishers using smaller vessels. The only surviving ones are those running a family business.
- Co-management (previously introduced by WWF) is not impossible, but real measures must be taken at the fish market, where rules should be fixed, such as fixed opening and closing hours and public audiences.
- More restrictive daily quotas should be set for large boats (30m) fishing small pelagics and fishing days should be fixed per year.

Management measures for the target species





The participants were fishermen fishing with *bottom trawlers and otter trawlers (rete a divergenti)*, The discussion was focused on red mullet and sole being the two major target species in the area. Participants were shown distribution maps of the species according to scientific data, and agreed with presented data.

According to participants, management of fisheries in the Northern Adriatic should have specific measures, different from other areas, due to its particular characteristics (very shallow, fishes reaching adult stage at small sizes). The problem of undersized fish is very high in Chioggia, since also while respecting rules (mesh size, miles from coast, etc) fish of 1 cm shorter than the legal size are caught, and large fines are thus received. Additional spatial management measures are not appropriate in such area since nursery grounds for target species occur in the coastal lagoons and within 3 miles from coast where fishing is already banned. Once they grow up to legal fishing size adults spread all over the northern Adriatic, hence it is impossible to identify other stable concentration areas. The main suggested measures for the target species are mainly technical and enforcement measures, such as:

- Red mullet (mainly targeted by trawling)

When asked if spatial closures would be appropriate to allow recovery of red mullet stocks, fishermen disagreed, stating that several areas are already closed to fishing or are not productive anymore in the northern Adriatic (the "Gasiera" area is brought as an example as an area once rich in fish and nowadays dead. Enforcement of existing bans would be enough, while closing additional areas would threaten the survival of the activity. Instead, the following measures were suggested:



- Forbid all types of fishing activities within the 3 miles, including small scale fishing with fixed nets and recreational fishing
 - increasing the biological ban duration of two weeks, to allow red mullets to reach fishable size.
 - Setting a limit of 60 fishing hours equal for all boats (both larger and smaller ones) for 10 weeks after the ban. After the ban allow fishing for 72 hours. This measure was already requested but was rejected.
 - Allow to fish with traditional mesh size of 20 mm between April and July, when only adults are caught (juveniles are all in the lagoons), instead of the imposed 40 mm diamond mesh size.
- Common sole (mainly targeted by demersal otter trawls – *reti a divergenti*):

The additional fishing ban within 6 miles after the biological ban had good results, however fishermen don't agree with extending the 6 miles ban to the whole year nor to increase the ban to 9 miles. In December, when soles migrate out of the lagoons and out of the 3 miles they disperse in the northern Adriatic, thus spatial measures are not useful. On the contrary, they suggest to:

- Set a fixed common length of 4 meters for the bar in contact with the sea bottom (rampone) for both large and small boats, which would automatically lead to a reduction in fishing effort.
- Increase tolerance for marketable fish size (reference size is 20cm, allow for selling 19 cm too since it is caught despite respecting all rules – mesh size, distance from coast, season)

Other general measures repeatedly suggested were:

- Measures on the market:
 - Enforce controls over illegal fish selling at the fish market, especially from recreational fishers
 - Allow for public auctions
 - Implement taxes on foreign fish (Croatia)
- Other measures:
 - Include all fishing activities, also artisanal and recreational, in the 3 miles ban
 - Properly enforce the 3 miles ban against illegal activities: confiscate fishing licence if caught
 - Set fixed annual fishing licences specific for fishing technique, with fixed number of fishing days. Allow for change of licence only with a penalty of 10 fishing days less.
 - Allow the diversification of the fishing activity to catch *Atherina boyeri* during the biological ban on red mullet and sole.
 - Allow fishing for limpets as in the tradition, following a sustainable practice. Scarcella reminded that fisheries derogations for these kind of activities could be asked, however Raicevich and fishermen explained that in Chioggia a management plan was prepared in cooperation with fishermen, but was rejected at ministerial level: there is scarce interest at national level in smaller fishing activities.

