



reboot med



MAREMMA



Policy recommendations for the responsible use of the Diaccia Botrona natural Reserve, Tuscany (Italy) Deliverable D4.1 : Towards Recovering, Experiencing and Boosting Ecotourism in the WestMed Area



Conselleria de Turisme,
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I. Introduction and main objectives

At a time when the demand for tourism globally is unabated, it is increasingly necessary to work on policies and strategies to orient supply toward new and renewed ways of organizing in order to ensure sustainable and circular tourism for territories, able to respect local dynamics, including with reference to traditional production practices.

This continued growth has often created significant benefits in terms of socio-economic development and employment but at the same time it poses a challenge related to natural resource consumption and impacts on local Communities and the environment, as well as to the carrying capacity of protected areas and tourist destinations in general. In this context, there is now a growing consensus among both government agencies, tourism stakeholders, and local Communities on how the future of tourism will depend on the tourism industry's ability to balance the needs of people and the planet.

While it is true that tourists are increasingly being seduced by emotional marketing, the most relevant finding is that sustainability issues remain fundamental and have become an integral part of consumer behavior and purchasing choices. Increasing percentages of tourists say they want to have a positive impact on the environment through their daily actions¹. Indeed, climate change is increasingly impacting tourism and destination choice. More and more travelers will look for different times and places where they can find refreshment from rising temperatures. Indeed, environmental concerns remain top of mind, but consumers, aware of the climate crisis, know they cannot deal with it alone. That is why they are asking tourist destinations, brands and businesses to be the bearers of change: they demand responsibility and positive impact instead of empty promises and false narratives. In addition, tourists also increasingly look for places and vacation experiences that can amaze, far from standardized vacations and the pressing pace of everyday life.

In the renewed vision of the territories, therefore, the response to what both local Communities and tourists are looking for is also to be ensured: a sense of well-being, active lifestyle, nature, local and quality products, sustainable purchasing choices, and attention to environmental issues. These elements and experiential activities are actually replacing traditional vacation motivations. In particular, wellness and active, nature-focused vacations are reaching unprecedented levels of the pandemic, becoming an increasing priority in the choices of tourists who recognize the importance of enjoying nature, the outdoors and good health.

The Diaccia Botrona Reserve will have to confront new trends, while keeping the need for environmental protection and preservation solid. The challenge is complex, suffice it to say that tourist presences in the territory bordering the Reserve, in the third quarter (July-September) cover between 65% and 68% of the annual presences, to which is added an additional 24% - 26%² in the second quarter, with data tending to remain unchanged between 2019 and 2022.

¹ Booking.com Sustainable Travel Report 2024.

² SL&A's elaboration of data Istat (Italian National Institute of Statistics).

The 2%-4% in the first quarter and 6% in the fourth quarter represent the percentage of visitors to be enhanced and increased through tourism products related to nature attractions: the offer could very successfully include precisely the Diaccia Botrona Reserve visit itineraries integrated with those at the other neighboring protected areas, first and foremost the Maremma Regional Park area.

With the aim of contributing in a sustainable and circular way to the future of the Diaccia Botrona Reserve, traditional production activities and tourism in the area around, we present these Policy Recommendations that lay the groundwork for more balanced, sustainable and lasting development patterns, not just tourism, throughout the area. The recommendations require the establishment of an agreement between the parties, but are developed primarily to share principles, collaborate on environmental protection, and stimulate action for sustainable and circular enhancement.

In fact, these Policy Recommendations come to life as a result of joint, collaborative work between public and private stakeholders in the framework of REBOOT MED Project. They have put forth significant efforts toward the transition to a more sustainable, season-less, economically and socially community-minded tourism. Moreover, this paper is part of a broad collection of policies, programs and initiatives related to tourism and to maritime and coastal tourism, at different levels: national, regional and local policies, and private sector. This means on the one hand referring to standards and guidelines already established at different levels, and on the other hand contributing to and supporting local and WestMED public authorities in diversifying maritime and coastal tourism products with a green, digital and circular economy approach. In particular, this document also refers to the "Memorandum for the Responsible Enhancement of the Diaccia Botrona Reserve" and the "Decalogue of Good Rules of Responsible Access and Behavior in the Diaccia Botrona Reserve," established among the stakeholders participating in the project.

The vision of the document recommends some lines of action, which can guide local development and ecotourism in the area, according to the following themes: biodiversity conservation, climate action, sustainable and circular economy, ancient practices and traditional production activities, and governance.

II. Context

The Diaccia Botrona Regional Nature Reserve, Natura 2000 designation “Padule di Diaccia Botrona” Natura 2000 code “IT51A0011,” type SAC - SPA, since 1971 Wetland of International Importance with Ramsar code IT046, has the Region of Tuscany as the managing entity but the “Convention between the Region of Tuscany, the Municipality of Castiglione della Pescaia and the Municipality of Grosseto concerning some activities inherent to the management of the Diaccia Botrona Regional Nature Reserve” is in force.

The Diaccia Botrona Reserve is, among Tuscan wetlands, the site with the largest number of wintering waterfowl. It is a wetland of international importance, and the general national and regional conservation measures inherent in the protection of the natural and/or protected area system apply there. However, thanks in part to the Reboot Med project, the stakeholders involved have noted a number of critical issues affecting the health and current status of the Reserve.

First of all, the governance of the Reserve, given the shared management between the Region of Tuscany and the Municipalities of Castiglione della Pescaia and Grosseto, which makes the definition of roles and tasks complex, especially regarding the aspects of surveillance and interventions to be carried out.

In fact, the ecosystem fragility of the Reserve is increasingly worrisome and dangerous, even in the face of climate change, the process of salinization and salt wedge ingression, and the invasion of allochthonous and alien species, leading to a slow and irreversible process of degradation of the wetland area.

There is also an urgent need for care and extraordinary maintenance work on the canals and the hydraulic and hydrogeological system of the Reserve, as well as the infrastructure for tourist use, in order to make the experience of visiting the area safer and less impactful.

Therefore, a collective awareness of the state of the Reserve, both from the point of view of the positive elements and the criticalities present, is found to be necessary and urgent, in order to achieve some common objectives capable of ensuring the conservation, protection and enhancement of the natural and cultural heritage of Diaccia Botrona.

From this point of view, the stakeholders participating in the project express their interest in establishing, each within the scope of their respective roles, competencies and institutional responsibilities, a collaborative relationship aimed at sharing and implementing actions directed at jointly disseminating the protection, preservation and responsible enhancement of the environmental and historical-cultural heritage of the Diaccia Botrona Reserve.

III. Purposes and targets

These Policy Recommendations have the following objectives:

1. Strengthen the governance performance of Diaccia Botrona Reserve in order to make clear and effective the different tasks of conservation and protection, enhancement and promotion, safety and maintenance.
2. Stimulate the emergence of public-private collaboration and networking, by means of agreements, conventions, area animation activities and other forms of public-private participation.
3. Reflect on the desirability of promoting scientific, educational, cultural, educational and environmental awareness activities as tools to stimulate virtuous behavior aimed at increasing sensitivity and awareness of the importance of protecting the Reserve.
4. Support and encourage the sustainability of touristic products, through good product governance, lengthening of tourist seasons, appropriate and channeled modes of promotion and marketing.

These objectives involve the following target stakeholders, each with their own distinctive interests, priorities, and concerns:

- Public Authorities: Tuscany Region, Province of Grosseto, Castiglione della Pescaia Municipality, Grosseto Municipality;
- Other institutions or agencies: Far Maremma, Ambiti Turistici (DMOs), subsidiary companies, etc;
- Traditional production sector, such as small and medium-sized traditional extensive aquaculture enterprises, non-intensive agricultural cooperatives and non-intensive livestock farms, agro-tourism, local handicraft producers, etc. ;
- Private tourism sector, including service providers such as accommodation, online travel agencies, hospitality, transportation, trade associations, outdoor guides, touristic guides, etc;
- Environmental organizations, voluntary associations.

IV. Policy framework

As mentioned, the “Convention between the Region of Tuscany, the Municipality of Castiglione della Pescaia and the Municipality of Grosseto concerning some activities inherent to the management of the Diaccia Botrona Regional Nature Reserve” is in effect.

The convention is also a political and administrative tool for the purpose of complying with general conservation measures. The measures in force to date are the regulations of the Regional administration of Tuscany (DGR 1223/2015 and DGR 454/2008), as well as all the national and regional regulations inherent to the protection of the system of natural and/or protected areas.

The political framework within which these Policy Recommendations are established is represented by regulations and plans at different levels (national, regional, local).

EU policy level

- Programmes of several areas of the cohesion policies;
- REBOOT MED Blue Economy Action Plans for the Recovery of the tourism sector;
- Strategic guidelines for a more sustainable and competitive EU aquaculture for the period 2021-2030 – European Commission;
- The Invasive Alien Species Regulation (Regulation (EU) 1143/2014);
- EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030.

National level

- Italian Strategic Tourism Development Plan 2023-2027, Italian Tourism Ministry (Piano strategico di sviluppo del turismo per il periodo 2023-2027, Ministero del Turismo);
- Measure foreseen in the Economic Manoeuvre concerning the Blue Economy, Ministry of Enterprises and Made in Italy (Manovra Economica sulla Blue Economy del Ministero delle Imprese e del Made in Italy)
- Sea Plan, Interministerial Committee for Sea Policy (Piano del Mare, Comitato interministeriale per le politiche del mare)

Regional level

- Regional Law n.49 of 11 April 1995 ‘Rules on parks, nature reserves and protected natural areas of local interest’ Tuscany Region
- Regional Law n.30 of 19 March 2015 ‘Rules for the conservation and enhancement of the regional natural-environmental heritage’ Tuscany Region
- Operational programme for tourism 2024, Toscana Promozione Turistica

EU projects applied in the local area

- ‘Action Plan for sustainable tourism in the Tuscan Archipelago’ – WinterMed
- ‘Models of Integrated Tourism in the MEDiterranean’ – MitoMed +

Local practices or strategies

- European green pioneer of smart tourism 2024 award – Grosseto Municipality
- Blue Flag – Castiglione della Pescaia Municipality and Grosseto Municipality
- Bandiera Gialla – Cycle Municipality award – Grosseto Municipality

- Cross-Polli Nation - Citizen project - Grosseto Municipality
- 'Mare per tutti' project - Grosseto Municipality
- Plastic free project - Castiglione della Pescaia Municipality
- Seabin project - Castiglione della Pescaia Municipality
- Charta Smeralda - Code of ethics to share principles and actions to protect the seas - Castiglione della Pescaia Municipality
- Green Beach - MitoMed + - Castiglione della Pescaia Municipality
- G20's Beaches - Castiglione della Pescaia Municipality
- Memoirs and insights into the status of the Diaccia Botrona Reserve and traditional productions - Agripesca ConfCooperative

The following policies or shared approaches are of particular importance:

- Blue Economy Action Plans for the Recovery of the tourism sector produced within REBOOT MED project
- The Invasive Alien Species Regulation (Regulation (EU) 1143/2014)
- Regional environmental protection regulations and in particular Regional Law n.30 of March 19, 2015 'Rules for the conservation and enhancement of the regional natural-environmental heritage' of Tuscany Region
- Strategic guidelines for a more sustainable and competitive EU aquaculture for the period 2021-2030
- Insights into the status of the Diaccia Botrona Reserve and traditional productions - Agripesca ConfCooperative

V. Key policy messages

This policy paper elaborated by the local multi-stakeholder cluster of FAR MAREMMA with interests in Diaccia Botrona Reserve.

- 1. Calls the Tuscany Region, the Province of Grosseto and the Municipalities of Grosseto and Castiglione della Pescaia to keep the focus on Diaccia Botrona Reserve high in their policy agendas.** Set up a technical-scientific working group and a political panel on Diaccia Botrona to bring together scientific subjects, the Tuscany Region (both sectors Environment and Productive Activities), the Province of Grosseto and the two Municipalities, in order to draw up a multiannual conservation plan for water regulation, desalination of the area and a coexistence with ancient and traditional productive activities, focal points for its preservation.
- 2. Invites the Tuscany Region, Municipalities, and private stakeholders to improve governance of Diaccia Botrona Reserve.** The parties adhering to these Policy Recommendations, while respecting their statutory roles and duties, shall activate synergies to initiate actions of joint responsibility and projects aimed at the protection and preservation of the Reserve. For example: definition of a "memorandum of intent" for the organization and management of the area; establishment of a control room for the definition and monitoring of the roles of protection, control, maintenance, enhancement; agreements or conventions, for the definition of actions and timing of intervention; steer recovery funds towards sustainable traditional production and tourism sector.
- 3. Encourages public authorities, private sector and tourism organizations to consolidate partnerships and networking.** Enhancing collaboration and dialogue between public authorities, private sector (traditional productive sector such as traditional extensive aquaculture, agritourism, agri-food productions, fishery activities), tourism organizations as well as other key stakeholders along the tourism value chain, at destination level. Involve local stakeholders, including traditional productive enterprises, environmental protection and conservation stakeholders as well as local Communities in the networking, since inclusive participatory approaches are crucial to ensure an efficient implementation of recovery plans.
- 4. Stimulates technicians and experts to share and make available their skills and knowledge.** Involve technicians and experts, including volunteers, from the fields of science, culture, traditional productions, tourism, for initiatives, studies and actions related to nature conservation and to verify the feasibility of sustainable development (example traditional extensive aquaculture) and ecotourism initiatives, aiming to integrate global expertise on environmental protection and monitoring with local private and productive activities. This policy is also intended to invite reflection on the need/opportunity to think about a "specific and detailed plan" for the management of the Reserve, regarding a number of environmental, economic, and social aspects, or the spillover of ancient practices and traditional production activities.
- 5. Supports small and medium-sized enterprises to invest in nature-based options to improve the sustainability of products, services and activities.** Drive innovation in the traditional production and tourism sectors toward sustainability through a series of actions such as: extending tourism product governance to other local stakeholders not yet involved, in order to integrate sustainable experiences; prioritizing traditional sustainable production approaches (traditional extensive aquaculture, km zero agricultural products, etc.); expanding tourism seasons outside of summer; involving

traditional production sectors in carbon removal; and monitoring and reporting CO2 emissions from production and tourism activities in order to communicate them to users and raise awareness of the issue.

- 6. Invites the Tuscany Region and Municipalities to establish the carrying capacity of the Reserve.** Define the carrying capacity of the Diaccia Botrona Reserve through discussions with experts and local stakeholders to ensure the environmental, economic and social sustainability of the Diaccia Botrona system and local Communities. Carrying capacity means: establishing groups in adequate numbers to respect natural habitats; respecting no-fishing zones, periods and seasons most sensitive to wildlife; organizing activities with a low ecological footprint; promoting experiences that do not exploit natural resources; providing environmental maintenance and management of the Reserve's canals and hydraulic system; involving traditional producers in maintaining ecological balances ; Define the ancient practices and traditional activities to be safeguarded.
- 7. Invites touristic SME(s) and the two tourist destination organizations (Ambiti turistici Maremma Nord e Maremma Sud) to make sustainability through communication.** Transparent, disruptive and proactive communication on the environmental measures put in place is one of the key to make sustainability together with tourists. Touristic destination of which Diaccia Botrona Reserve is a part, shall send clear and consistent messages to their targets and better adjust to their perceptions in order to encourage increasingly responsible choices by consumers.
- 8. Calls on the Italian government and the Tuscany Region to implement policies against the risk of invasive species.** It's necessary for the Italian government and Tuscany Region, each within their respective competencies, to deploy all available resources to combat the invasion of alien and invasive species, through: existing rules and regulations; the support of experts and technicians; and the involvement of producers and local Communities. This intervention aims to increase the local Community's awareness of the problem of alien species in Diaccia Botrona and to encourage the adoption of responsible behavior aimed at reducing the risk of new introductions. Involve actors involved in various capacities in the prevention and management of alien species by promoting, through meetings, seminars, courses, the proper implementation of regulations and the adoption of voluntary codes of conduct and good practices.

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