



## **How to Plan a Sustainable Fishery When Environmental Goals Conflict with Existing Practices in a Trans-Boundary Protected Area**

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**Abstract:** Concerns over the relationship between environmental protection, prevention of loss of biodiversity and protection of habitats and of internationally important species of flora and fauna on the one hand and sustainable economic activities and recreation in a protected area on the other can all be dealt with effectively by appropriate regulatory and policy measures, particularly with the support of local actions that strive to preserve local biotopes and conditions. The aim of the present paper is to provide information on the current situation of the fisheries on the Albanian side of the lakes Macro and Micro Prespa, along with the existing practices and regulations, and to offer views from an Albanian perspective that will help resolve some of the current difficulties. In doing so this paper also presents to a wider public the economic, ecological and evolutionary importance of these lakes. The fish fauna of the Prespa lakes comprises 23 species or forms of species (Society for the Protection of Prespa, 2003), of which five are endemic to Prespa and another two are endemic to the Balkans. This level of biodiversity and endemism makes these lakes special by any standards. Fishing is one of the main economic activities in the area. On the Albanian side some 100 fishermen from the villages around the lakes regularly fish these waters. Unfortunately, their activities are disorganised and carried out on an individual basis, while half of them fish informally, i.e. without a licence. The water and fishery policies and practices applied in Albania over the last fifty years have negatively affected the region's biodiversity in general and its fish species in particular. Lake Micro Prespa especially has suffered substantial, though reversible, damage from a policy that turned this internationally important lake into little more than a reservoir for the local, albeit nationally economically important, irrigation system. It is very important for the future of the species found in the Prespa region, as well as for the communities that depend upon them, to strive, through best practices, analysis of policy and positive actions of trans-boundary cooperation, to improve the current situation. Some remedies are presented in the present paper.

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