



## **Social Economic Aspects of Fishery and Fishing Activities in Albanian Part of Prespa Lakes<sup>#</sup>**

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*Received May 06, 2009; Accepted May 22, 2009*

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**Abstract:** Prespa Lakes region is shared by Albania, Greece and Macedonia. The basin includes Micro Prespa and Macro Prespa Lakes, and the surrounding forested mountainous slopes, covering a total area of 27 750 ha. The area is characterized by its natural beauty, its great biodiversity and its populations of rare water birds. The fauna of the area includes characteristically 23 species of fish (8 endemic species) and approximately 46 species of mammals. The basin is of a specific importance for water birds as the Dalmatian pelican, white pelicans and pygmy cormorants. This level of biodiversity and endemism makes these lakes special by any standards. Based on the cultural elements Prespa is representing a remarkable importance. Prespa Lake is among the seventeen most ancient lakes on earth and is estimated to be more than five million years old. 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. This paper also presents to a wider public the economic, ecological and evolutionary importance of these lakes. 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.

**Key words:** *Prespa Lake, fishery, fishing activities, endemic species, economic development*

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<sup>#</sup>This study has been presented at 24-25 April 2009-Alblakes'09, Pogradec- Albania