

PRESS RELEASE: Suspend construction in National Park Skadar Lake until New Spatial Plan for Special Purposes of the Park is adopted

The planned construction of a tourist complex in the NP Skadar Lake is not only contrary to the principles of sustainability and protection of natural and cultural assets, but also threatens ongoing devastation NP Skadar Lake. Please note that the Ministry of Tourism and Sustainable Development issued a building permit for the construction of a large scale tourist complex Porto Skadar Lake - which includes accommodation for 600 tourists and 30 berths for ships. The existing Spatial plan of special purpose for Skadar Lake from 2001 does not recognize this kind of tourist complexes, but favours the rehabilitation of the existing ancient settlements such as: Vranjina, Krnjice, Rijeka Crnojevića which calls into question the correctness of the Ministry's decision to disregard the existing Spatial plan of special purpose the NP Skadar Lake, which is valid until the new Spatial plan.

Non-governmental organizations, citizens Virpazar, small entrepreneurs and experts have appealed to the Ministry of Tourism and Sustainable Development to initiate at the level of Government of Montenegro a reversal of the existing (complex Porto Skadar Lake) and of any new decision on all construction projects until the adoption of the New Spatial Plan for NP "Skadar Lake". We appeal on Montenegrin Government to start implementing a comprehensive, biodiversity and other research of the location.

Single declarations:

"We appeal to the Ministry of Tourism and Sustainable Development to initiate within the Government of Montenegro a reversal of the existing and suspends the adoption of a new decisions of any construction within NP Skadar Lake until adoption of the New Planning Document, except for reconstruction work within Park limits. This prohibition should be of at least one year duration. This practice has been previously applied prior to preparation of spatial plans for special purposes. Example is the latest ban on construction in 2013 in preparation of new spatial plan for special purpose areas of National Park Prokletije, which is in line with the Montenegrin Law on Planning and construction.

In his recent public address in regard of the Porto Skadar Lake project, Minister Gvozdenovic admitted he did not know how was it possible that current special plan was ignored and whether The Advisory Committee for Special Planning of Montenegro was consulted about this project. He also confirmed evident conflict of interest where current head of department for project development at the Ministry is also a major shareholder in private architecture company involved in development of Porto Skadar Lake project.

Nataša Kovačević, Executive Director, NGO Green Home

"I believe that the Government of Montenegro and the Ministry of Sustainable Development and Tourism should re-examine the decision for the project Mihailovici and construction of tourist complex Porto Skadar Lake. I also urge JPNPCG (Publicly company managing Montenegrin National Parks) to freeze its decision to allow construction of temporary facilities within the National Park Skadar Lake (decision made 29.09.2016) until the new Spatial Plan is adopted. The current lack of conditions and capabilities to combat illegal activities within NP Skadar Lake is worrying and needs urgent attention by strengthening the human and financial capacity and structures. Relevant experts in the field of natural science and cultural heritage with the support of the international community and the relevant institutions should be involved in creation of Spatial Plan for NP Skadar Lake, so that eventual decision on the possible construction of a new (permanent or temporary) structures within a Park is made with the best European practice and with the wider social consensus. Otherwise this plan is not acceptable. "

Milan Knezevic, MVDr. MRCVS (Doctor of Veterinary Medicine, a member of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons, the citizen Virpazara)

"The idea that anything built on the shores of Lake Skadar - anything that has temporary or permanent character - entails the issue of long-term development strategy of NP Skadar Lake. If we allow that Biski Rep and Velja Gora are economically exploited by building high class hotels and luxury villas (total size 45,000 m2), remains a question is it going to stop there? Judging on the basis of previous practice of building in attractive areas in the territory of Montenegro - would certainly not. The fact is that any construction in the NP Skadar lake is in direct conflict with the intentions of its complete protection.

The dilemma , in essence, comes to the question weather is worth slathering the cow for one kilo of the meat? Are we prepared to sacrifice the protection of the Lake for future generations just to satisfy the needs of private investors chasing profits and bringing serious degradation of the NP Skadar Lake?

Borislav Vukicevic, BSc. architect

CZIP appeals to the relevant ministry to set a benchmark in the field of spatial planning in protected areas by suspending the procedure for construction of future complex on Lake Skadar until comprehensive survey of the location is completed. Information available from the draft of the future Spatial Plan for this national park regarding avian species is so vague and misleading that it was absolutely not possible to make a proper impact assessment study. Therefore EIA, cannot be use with validity in this particular project. NP Skadar Lake as a whole is lacking sound scientific data on which to base any impact assessment as it should be based on spatial orientation of the most important species for protection and their habitats, as well as estimates of their population. Only on this basis we can safely say that they are not in conflict with the offered infrastructure solutions.

Jovana Janjušević project coordinator, Centre for Bird Protection and Study

"National parks are natural resources, and as such, in the world and in our country, deserve adequate institutional, legal and operational protection and sustainable spatial planning based on the criteria of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN). The regime of protection in national parks is incompatible with the construction of the spa and convention centre in the heart of the park, and threatens to destroy basic nature and spirit of the area. Although the

investor and the Ministry of Sustainable Development and Tourism to promote the project as "ecologically friendly," there is a lack of supporting evidence. Investors claim to have "Green Globe" certification for sustainable tourism by the United Nations has proven to be false by the same organisation. From our previous experience in Montenegro we raise a question of overall impact of this investment."

Patricia Pobrić Executive Director, NGO Our action