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CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF EUROPEAN WILDLIFE
AND NATURAL HABITATS

Standing Committee

36th meeting
Strasbourg, 15-18 November 2016

Possible file

**Threat to the Mediterranean monk seal (*Monachus
monachus*)
(Turkey)**

- REPORT BY THE GOVERNMENT -

*Document prepared by
the Ministry of Forestry and Water Affairs, Turkey*

**GOVERNMENT REPORT ON COMPLAINT NO. 2011/4 – POSSIBLE FILE:
THREAT TO THE MEDITERRANEAN MONK SEAL (MONACHUS MONACHUS)
IN TURKEY**

As previously presented in the 35th Standing Committee meeting, this case is carried before National Supreme Court after the local court made its decision in favor of construction of the harbor. It is still in supreme court.

A. Monitoring Studies Within the Scope of Harbor Construction:

As the harbor construction progress, the construction company was obliged to carry out some commitments based on the Environmental Impact Assessment Report. The commitment was that Mediterranean Monk Seal population had to be monitored by expert people, being financed by the company. Within this scope, academic staff from Ankara University is monitoring the area.

“Balıklı Cave”, which is a breeding site for *Monachus monachus*, is located about 600 m away from the piled jetty system at the tip of the harbor. A full-time biologist and an aquaculture engineer is employed to monitor the effects of construction activities. They present quarterly reports to the Mersin Branch of Ministry of Forestry and Water Affairs. Mersin Branch is evaluating the reports and make their inspection based on the information provided by those reports. These detailed reports are then transferred to the General Directorate of Nature Conservation and National Parks based in Ankara. After our last year’s report to the committee (App. 1), there are two other quarterly reports. The information about all the monk seal sightings could be found in Appendix 2. The monitoring of harbor activities is still continuing in the coordination of Mersin Branch of Ministry of Forestry.

B. Implementations of Monk Seal Conservation Action Plan

As it was stated before, the action plan was prepared by the Ministry of Forestry and Water Affairs in 2012 and revised in 2014 based on the requirement of including activities like harbor construction. The action plan itself is presented in App.3.

One of the activities in the action plan is to determine the habitats of monk seal within the marine and coastal ecosystems of Mersin province and to put forward the population sizes and monitor them. An agreement with the concept “Monitoring of Monk Seal Populations and Habitats” was signed between Middle East Technical University Institution of Marine Sciences and Mersin Branch of the Ministry. This agreement targets protecting the monk seal habitats and carrying them to future generations. The methods of monitoring monk seals was taught to Mersin Branch personnel by the University staff. The report produced at the end of the studies is presented in App.4. Based on the activities carried out, a table was produced and presented in App.5.

Appendix 1

GOVERNMENT REPORT ON COMPLAINT No: 2011/4 - POSSIBLE FILE: THREAT TO MEDITERRANEAN MONK SEAL (*Monachus monachus*) IN TURKEY

It was stated in the previous reports that this case was before the Turkish national court. Recently, the Court has made its decision and the decision was in favor of construction of the harbor. Now, the complainant NGO, Underwater Research Society, has lodged an appeal with the Supreme Court.

The Yeşilovacık Harbor Project, consisting of building a filling area and construction of a port, is pursued by Yeşilovacık Harbor Enterprises Inc. The Environmental Impact Assessment of this construction was completed in 2008. Based on an “ecosystem evaluation report” prepared by three professors from Ankara University as a part of Environmental Impact Assessment, it was committed by the company that the Mediterranean Monk Seal population would be monitored. According to this commitment, the construction company is obliged to finance the monitoring activities of the Monk Seal. Within this scope, academic staff from Ankara University is monitoring the area and they present quarterly reports to the Ministry of Forestry and Water Affairs. Besides, a full-time aquaculture engineer is employed to monitor the effects of construction activities in a timely manner. Our authorities have received two monitoring reports since the beginning of 2015.

Reports on monitoring of the monk seal activities around the port

The first report mentions that the monitoring system in the area is working well. There are 6 observation points (See App. 1) one of which (GN-2) has a video camera recording 24 hours a day and 7 days a week. As the analysis of video recorder reveals, there was one monk seal activity around the construction site. This young monk seal was recorded on February 3, 2015, and considering the size of the monk seal, it was probably the one which was mentioned to be born in the previous monitoring period. (See App.2) The report also mentions that the construction of fill area and the piles of the port was completed, and the construction of superstructure of the port was still continuing at that time. It was also reported that the construction of piles and fill area resulted in creation of a new littoral habitat and species like acorn barnacle (*Semibalanus balanoides* Linnaeus, 1767), rayed Mediterranean limpet (*Patella caerulea* Linnaeus, 1758), Chlorophyta and Odophyta species, macroalgae and microalgae belonging to Cyanophyta phylum were observed in the habitat. The habitat was also rich in diatoms, and with the settlement of new species, pelagic fish like common dolphinfish (*Coryphaena hippurus* Linnaeus 1758), yellowstripe barracuda (*Sphyræna chrysotaenia* Klunzinger, 1884), yellowtail barracuda (*Sphyræna flavicauda* Rüppell, 1838) and Cephalopoda species like common squid (*Loligo vulgaris* Lamarck, 1798) and common octopus (*Octopus vulgaris* Cuvier, 1797) started to be observed, even some predator fish species were observed. This increase in food availability resulted in an increase in the sightings of monk seal.

The second report mentions about, besides continuous monitoring at the six observation points, installation of new cameras under the sea. A new camera capable of rotating 360° was installed at the edge of the port and it became active on September 1st, 2015. In this monitoring period, three different sightings of monk seals occurred. On March 10th, 2015, a monk seal was observed for 20 minutes. This was thought to be the same individual which was observed one month ago. The second sighting was 3 days later, on March 13th, 2015. (See App. 3) This individual was observed for 50 minutes, and this was thought to be female monk seal. The last observation mentioned in the second report is on April 29, 2015. This was observed and recorded for 6 minutes. Comparing with the previous reporting season, monk seals were observed more in the close vicinity of the port.

Implementation of the Action Plan

Number and Name of the Activity In the Plan	Current situation of implementation
1.1 Cave Inventory Studies 1.1.1 The caves which are used by monk seals will be determined and labeled on a digital map. 1.1.2 The threats on monk seal caves will be determined.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A protocol was signed between METU Marine Sciences Institution (the complainant) and provincial directorate of the Ministry of Forestry and Water Affairs on 04 June 2015. The protocol includes determination of caves actively used by monk seals and monitoring of monk seal activities in these caves. This study will be completed by the end of 2015.
1.2 Population Inventory Studies 1.2.1 By using phototrap, the number of monk seals and sex and age ratios of the population will be determined. 1.2.2 A web site and a call center will be created for monk seal observations and the notifications received will be recorded in the website. This call center will also serve for urgent situations of monk seals.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Underwater camera sets and GPS devices have been purchased. 30 phototrap were ordered and they will have been installed by the end of 2015. The data obtained from the phototrap will be analyzed and used in determination of sex and age ratio of the population and also rate of fertility. A web site was built and became operational. The existing report line (0 324 481 22 84) for sea turtle rehabilitation center has been arranged to serve for monk seals also. This new report line has been announced in hand brochures and Gendarmerie and local governments have been informed about this new line. There were two reports received until today, stating that two different monk seals have been observed around Mersin Harbor.
2.1 Protection of Habitats 2.1.1 Informing stakeholders about the habitats that monk seals use. 2.1.2 Hanging out warning and/or information signs around the important terrestrial sites close to monk seal habitats. 2.1.3 Evaluating the existing legislation about monk seals and improving them to serve for mitigating threats to monk seal habitats. 2.1.4 Increasing the precautions to protect the monk seal cave in Akkum locality of Silifke District. 2.1.5 Cooperation, in general, with the stakeholders to better implement protection precautions. 2.1.6 Making fisheries install outer protective nets for their breeding cages. 2.1.7 To determine the acceptable distance for noise creating activities depending on the decibel level, using this guide to evaluate the planned activities that may have negative effects on monk seal habitats. Besides, for activities which do not have noise impact, evaluating the threat level of the activity through a scientific research. Allowing the activities only if the scientific reports approves them. 2.1.8 To determine, in order to protect the monk seals, the route that yachts will use when the Aydıncık Marina is completed, as it is as close as 2 km to the monk seal cave in the region.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This activity was assessed within the scope of education and awareness raising issues. Manufacturing of the warning and information signs started with the help of Erdemli Industrial High School, they will be completed and hanged by the end of 2015. A Ministerial Manifest is still being prepared at the Ministry of Forestry and Water Affairs, about protection of monk seal and its habitats throughout Turkish coasts of Mediterranean, Egean and Marmara Seas. Bilateral relations were increased between local branches of Ministry of Forestry and Water Affairs and that of Ministry of Culture and Tourism to improve the protection status of monk seal cave in Akkum locality. It was agreed that local branch of the ministry of culture and tourism will pay regard to the monk seal cave in their plans and they requested for extra information about the rules and regulations. In February 2015, a written report, which is about the precautions to be taken to protect the monk seal cave, prepared in cooperation with METU Marine Sciences Institution was sent to local branch of ministry of culture and tourism. Exchange of views, with all the stakeholders and particularly with Mersin University and METU Marine Sciences Institution is made throughout the year to better implement the action plan. This issue is followed by local branch of ministry of food, agriculture and livestock. The related ministry is pushing all the fisheries to complete the installment of outer protective nets. Not much progress has been made. Investing activities are still evaluated based on the map for monk seal habitats, which is an appendix of the action plan. A meeting which includes all the stakeholders will be held in November 2015, to determine the route that yachts will use.

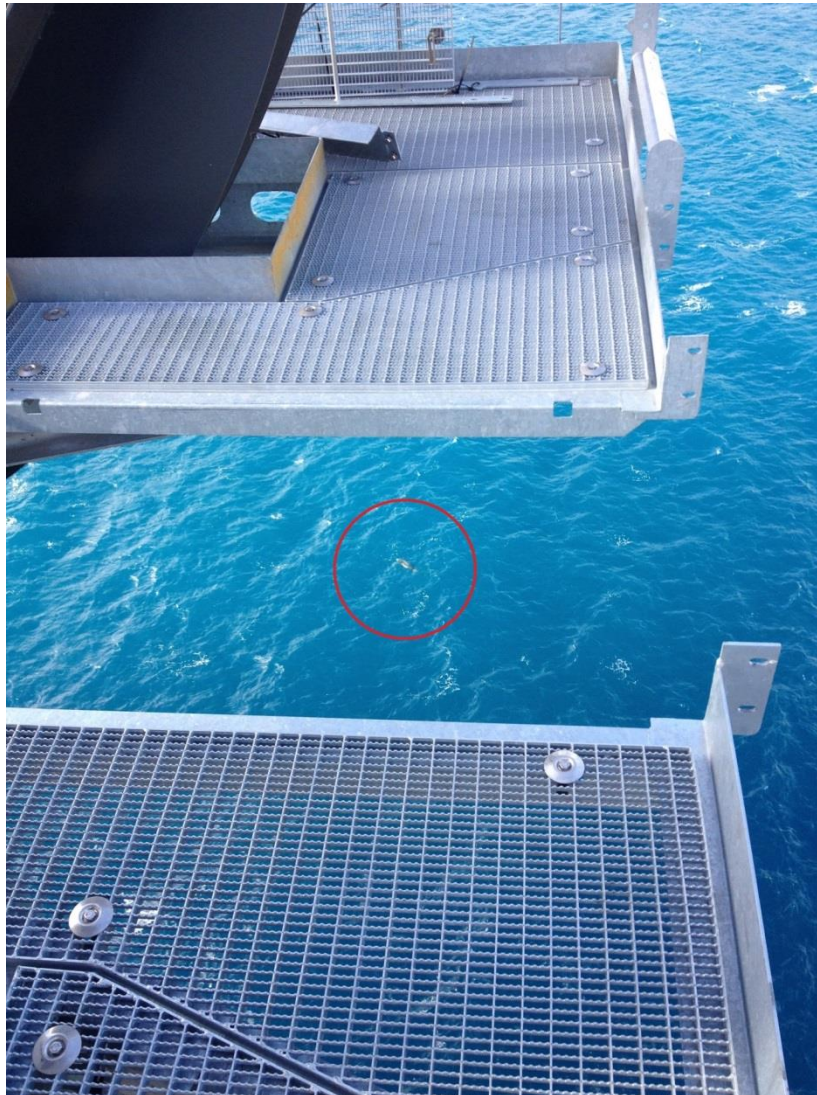
<p>2.2 Protection of the Species</p> <p>2.2.1 Creating a communication tool for both notification of dead or injured monk seals and also for increasing communication between the institutions.</p> <p>2.2.2 In cooperation with Underwater Research Society, there will be a study about bringing a speed limit for sportive activities in the sea, where the region is defined as a monk seal habitat in the action plan. The results of this study will be shared with the ministry of transport, maritime affairs and communication.</p> <p>2.2.3 The veterinarians employed by the Ministry in coastal regions will have an education about caring injured monk seals, and the education will be provided by the experts of Underwater Research Society and METU Marine Sciences Institution.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A website was prepared as it was mentioned under activity 1.2.2. This website will serve for both monk seal observations and also for urgent situations. Besides, a reporting line was arranged for monk seals. (0324 481 22 84) • This study is still going on and it was also assessed in the Ministerial Manifest mentioned in activity 2.1.3. • The education program will be implemented in 2015 and 2016.
<p>3.1 Education and Awareness Raising Studies;</p> <p>3.1.1 Meetings for the education and awareness raising for local people and students will be held. Brochures, posters and handouts will be prepared and distributed in the meetings.</p> <p>3.1.2 Education of fishermen and fisheries personnel.</p> <p>3.1.3 Informative meetings about the biology and ecology of monk seals and research going on about monk seals.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educational meetings were held around the primary and secondary schools close to the monk seal habitats in 2015. Educational material was supported by visual material like photographs and videos. Also handouts were given to all attendees. Close cooperation with the Ministry of Education was made and 7 schools determined in Anamur, Bozyazı and Aydıncık districts where monk seal population is highest (App. 4). Education program included the threats to monk seal and conservative measures. The schools in Silifke and Erdemli districts will have the same education program by the end of 2015. • An education program was held with the participation of heads of fishermen cooperatives on 07 May 2015. 18 people participated in the meeting. This education program will be repeated once more by the end of 2015. (App 5). • During biopiracy education, Coast Guard Command was informed about monk seal action plan. In these meetings which took place in Mersin Central and Taşucu Boat Commands, 53 personnel were educated. (App 6).
<p>4.1 Monitoring Program</p> <p>4.1.1 To monitor the change in birth and death rates of monk seals.</p> <p>4.1.2 To monitor the threats on monk seal habitats.</p> <p>4.1.3 To monitor the newborns and determining the rate of survival.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Phototaps were purchased and started to be set in the caves. After completing the installation, the data will start to flow. Monitoring a long time will result in determining the birth and death rates • By using the report line, the website and the phototaps together, the data gathered will be evaluated in the analysis of threats. • It is activity is being planned at the moment.

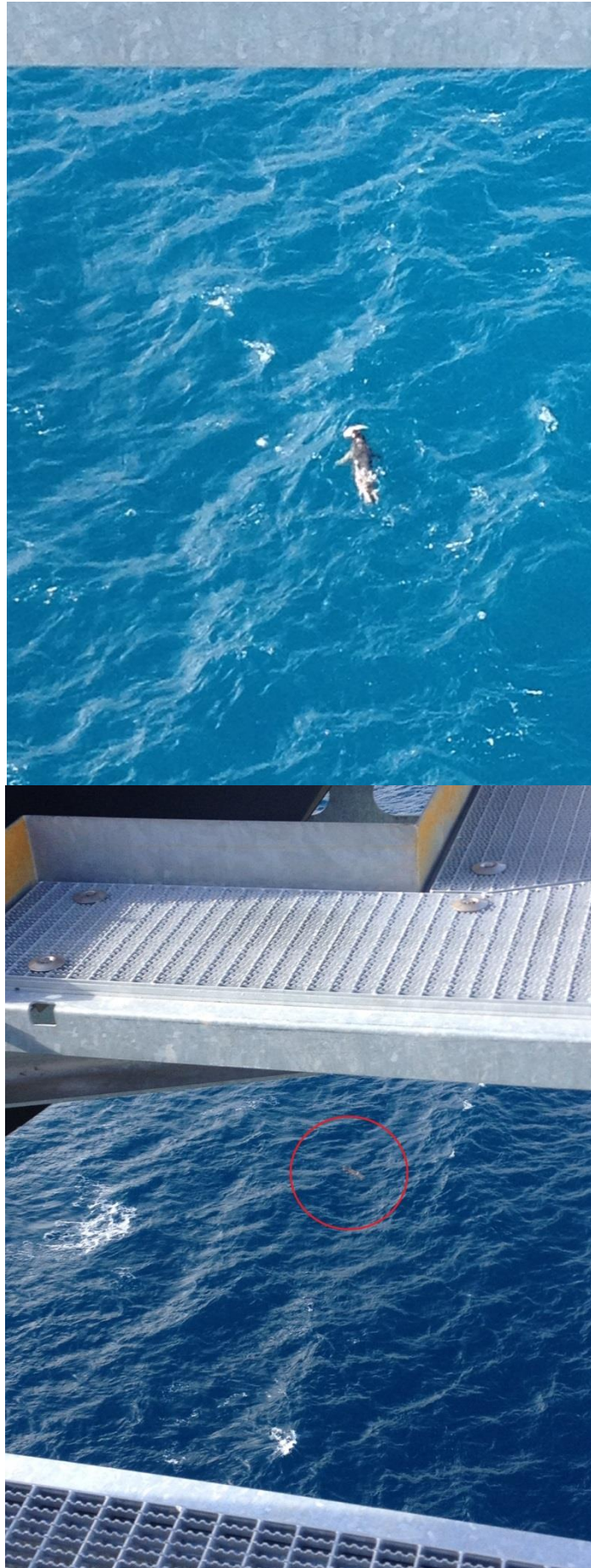
The Ministry of Forestry and Water Affairs has prepared two other action plans for the Province of Mugla. Implementation of all three action plans will therefore provide combining of east and west populations of monk seals to stay in connection. We, as Turkish government, are spending a lot of man power and time on the management of monk seal populations, and we believe that this possible file should not be opened.

Appendix 1. Location of observation points in the port area.



Appendix 2. Photos of a monk seal feeding around the piles of the port. (First monitoring report)





Appendix 3 Monk seal observed around the construction site on 13 March 2015.



Appendix 4 Education given to school children





Appendix 5 Education given to fishermen



Appendix 6 Informative meetings for Coast Guard



Appendix 2

APPENDIX 2 - SUMMARY OF MONK SEAL SIGHTINGS						
Observation Point	Location	Day	Hour	Sex	Record Type	Note
OP-2	Yeşilovacık	30.12.2012	16 ⁴⁹	Female	Photograph	
OP-2	Yeşilovacık	20.01.2013	11 ²⁸	Female	Photograph	
OP-2	Yeşilovacık	24.02.2013	12 ¹²	? – Young	Photograph and Video	
OP-4	Yeşilovacık	20.12.2013	16 ⁰⁰	? – Young	Photograph	
OP-1	Yeşilovacık	16.02.2014	09 ³⁴	? – Young	Photograph and Video	
OP-1	Yeşilovacık	17.02.2014	14 ¹⁵	? – Young	Photograph	
OP-5	Yeşilovacık	01.05.2014	11 ²⁵	Male	Photograph	
OP-1	Yeşilovacık	03.02.2015	14 ³¹	Male	Photograph	
OP-1	Yeşilovacık	10.03.2015	17 ³⁰	Male	Photograph and Video	
Fishing port	Yeşilovacık	13.03.2015	11 ⁰⁰	Female	Photograph and Video	
Fishing port	Yeşilovacık	16.04.2015	20 ¹⁵	? – Long distance	Photograph and Video	
Dolphin (Companion)	Yeşilovacık	29.04.2015	10 ⁰³	? – Long distance	Video	
OP-1	Yeşilovacık	28.01.2016	16 ⁰⁵	Female	Report	
OP-1 Harbor Fill Site	Yeşilovacık	12.02.2016	21 ³⁰	Male	Video	
OP-1 Harbor Fill Site	Yeşilovacık	16.02.2016	17 ³⁴	Male	Photograph and Video	

*The data do not include the last two periods of 2016 as they were not ready at the time of preparation of this report.



Appendix 3

MONK SEAL ACTION PLAN

The document can be found at the following address:

<http://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=09000016806b7392>

Appendix 4

REPORT OF MONITORING PROJECT BETWEEN METU-IMS AND MOFWA MERSIN BRANCH

The document can be found at the following address:

<http://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=09000016806b7393>

Appendix 5

IMPLEMENTATION OF ACTION PLAN

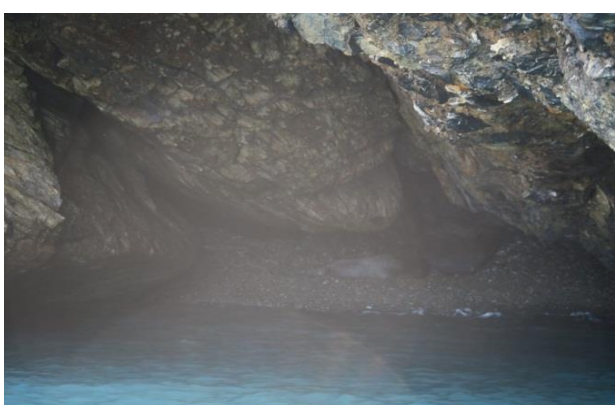
Number and Name of the Activity In the Plan	Current situation of implementation
1.3 Cave Inventory Studies 1.3.1 The caves which are used by monk seals will be determined and labeled on a digital map. 1.3.2 The threats on monk seal caves will be determined.	<p>□□ The phototrap traps were purchased and installed into the caves. Monitoring studies are continuing. (App.4)</p> <p>2. Threats are monitored during the field surveys. To be reported together with the cave inventory.</p>
1.4 Population Inventory Studies 1.2.3 By using phototrap traps, the number of monk seals and sex and age ratios of the population will be determined. 1.2.4 A web site and a call center will be created for monk seal observations and the notifications received will be recorded in the website. This call center will also serve for urgent situations of monk seals.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The data obtained from the phototrap traps will be analyzed and used in determination of sex and age ratio of the population and also rate of fertility. A web site was built and became operational. The existing report line (0 324 481 22 84) for sea turtle rehabilitation center has been arranged to serve for monk seals also. This new report line has been announced in hand brochures and Gendarmerie and local governments have been informed about this new line. There were four reports received until today, stating that four different monk seals have been observed around Mersin Harbor, Karaduvar, Limonlu and Antalya Gazipaşa.
2.3 Protection of Habitats 2.3.1 Informing stakeholders about the habitats that monk seals use. 2.3.2 Hanging out warning and/or information signs around the important terrestrial sites close to monk seal habitats. 2.3.3 Evaluating the existing legislation about monk seals and improving them to serve for mitigating threats to monk seal habitats. 2.3.4 Increasing the precautions to protect the monk seal cave in Akkum locality of Silifke District. 2.3.5 Cooperation, in general, with the stakeholders to better implement protection precautions. 2.3.6 Making fisheries install outer protective nets for their breeding cages. 2.3.7 To determine the acceptable distance for noise creating activities depending on the decibel level, using this guide to evaluate the planned activities that may have negative effects on monk seal habitats. Besides, for activities which do not have noise impact, evaluating the threat level of the activity through a scientific research. Allowing the activities only if the scientific reports approves them. 2.3.8 To determine, in order to protect the monk seals, the route that yachts will use when the Aydıncık Marina is completed, as it is as close as 2 km to the monk seal cave in the region.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> The stakeholders will be informed after the phototrap study is completed. 15 warning signs were manufactured with the help of Erdemli Industrial High School and hanged in order to inform people in terrestrial habitats. (See Figure 1) A Ministerial Manifest is still being prepared at the Ministry of Forestry and Water Affairs, about protection of monk seal and its habitats throughout Turkish coasts of Mediterranean, Egean and Marmara Seas. Bilateral relations were increased between local branches of Ministry of Forestry and Water Affairs and that of Ministry of Culture and Tourism to improve the protection status of monk seal cave in Akkum locality. It was agreed that local branch of the ministry of culture and tourism will pay regard to the monk seal cave in their plans and they requested for extra information about the rules and regulations. In February 2015, a written report, which is about the precautions to be taken to protect the monk seal cave, prepared in cooperation with METU Marine Sciences Institution was sent to local branch of ministry of culture and tourism. Exchange of views, with all the stakeholders and particularly with Mersin University and METU Marine Sciences Institution is made throughout the year to better implement the action plan. This issue is followed by local branch of ministry of food, agriculture and livestock. The related ministry is pushing all the fisheries to complete the installment of outer protective nets. Not much progress has been made. Investing activities are still evaluated based on the map for monk seal habitats, which is an appendix of the action plan.

	<p>8. A meeting which included all the stakeholders was held in December 2015 and the route that yachts will use was determined. This route that was produced was sent to the Anamur Harbor Department of Ministry of Transportation, Maritime and Communication with an official letter. (See Figure 2)</p>
<p>2.4 Protection of the Species</p> <p>2.4.1 Creating a communication tool for both notification of dead or injured monk seals and also for increasing communication between the institutions.</p> <p>2.4.2 In cooperation with Underwater Research Society, there will be a study about bringing a speed limit for sportive activities in the sea, where the region is defined as a monk seal habitat in the action plan. The results of this study will be shared with the ministry of transport, maritime affairs and communication.</p> <p>2.4.3 The veterinarians employed by the Ministry in coastal regions will have an education about caring injured monk seals, and the education will be provided by the experts of Underwater Research Society and METU Marine Sciences Institution.</p>	<p>1. A website was prepared as it was mentioned under activity 1.2.2. This website will serve for both monk seal observations and also for urgent situations. Besides, a reporting line was arranged for monk seals. (0324 481 22 84)</p> <p>2. Although the Ministry of Transportation, Maritime and Communication informed us that there will be a study about bringing a speed limit for sportive facilities, there is no feedback until today. Besides, the regulation 2016/35 on catching of sea products which is published by the Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Livestock states that “the following activities are forbidden in monk seal breeding caves; usage of illuminating tools, to dive in, to get into the caves by any means, to wait and anchor in front of the caves”. The studies for including the monk seal caves stated in the action plan to this regulation is still going on.</p> <p>3. An education program was planned to be implemented in 2017, in which veterinarians will be trained by SAD-AFAG (Underwater research society-monk seal research group) and ODTÜ DBE (Middle East Technical University – Institution of Marine Sciences) about how to treat injured or sick monk seals.</p>
<p>3.1 Education and Awareness Raising Studies;</p> <p>3.1.4 Meetings for the education and awareness raising for local people and students will be held. Brochures, posters and handouts will be prepared and distributed in the meetings.</p> <p>3.1.5 Education of fishermen and fisheries personnel.</p> <p>3.1.6 Informative meetings about the biology and ecology of monk seals and research going on about monk seals.</p>	<p>1. Educational meetings were held around the primary and secondary schools close to the monk seal habitats in 2016. Educational material was supported by visual material like photographs and videos. Also handouts were given to all attendees. Close cooperation with the Ministry of Education was made and list of primary and secondary schools were taken from them. In Mersin, the priority was given this year to Akdeniz, Mezitli, Erdemli, Silifke, Aydıncık, Bozyazı and Anamur districts where the monk seal population is the highest. In 2016, 443 students attended to those education programs. List of schools can be found in App. 6.</p> <p>2. The education program that was held with the participation of heads of fishermen cooperatives in 2015 was repeated in 2016. 20 people participated in the meeting.</p> <p>3. During biopiracy education, Coast Guard Command was informed about monk seal action plan. In these meetings which took place in Mersin Central and Taşucu Boat Commands, 60 personnel were educated.</p>
<p>4.2 Monitoring Program</p> <p>4.2.1 To monitor the change in birth and death rates of monk seals.</p> <p>4.2.2 To monitor the threats on monk seal habitats.</p> <p>4.2.3 To monitor the newborns and determining the rate of survival.</p>	<p>1. Monitoring with phototraps is still continuing. The results will be published later.</p> <p>2. By using the report line, the website and the phototraps together, the data gathered will be evaluated in the analysis of threats.</p> <p>3. This activity is still in progress.</p>

Figure 1. Warning Signs**Figure 2. Yacht Route****Figure 3. Education and Field Program**







Appendix 6**LIST OF SCHOOLS FOR EDUCATION PROGRAM**

NAME OF DISTRICT	NAME OF SCHOOL	DATE OF EDUCATION
Bozyazı	Hüseyin Hüsnü Tekışık Ortaokulu	13/04/2016
	Gazi Ortaokulu	
	Yunus Emre Ortaokulu	14/04/2016
Anamur	Bozdoğan Mamure Ortaokulu	
Akdeniz	Kazanlı İsmail Kurtuluş Ortaokulu	19/04/2016
	Kazanlı Belediyesi Ortaokulu	
	Karacailyas Ortaokulu	21/04/2016
	Yakaköy Ortaokulu	
	Huzurkent Latife Hanım Ortaokulu	26/04/2016
	Huzurkent Kazım Karabekir Ortaokulu	
	Huzurkent Atatürk Ortaokulu	28/04/2016
	Yenitaşkent Yusuf Bayık Ortaokulu	
Silifke	Yeşilovacık Ortaokulu	03/05/2016
	Ovacık Ortaokulu	
Akdeniz	İbrahim Rencuzoğulları Ortaokulu	05/05/2015
	Adanalıoğlu Reşitcan Ortaokulu	
Aydıncık	Aydıncık İmam Hatip Ortaokulu	11/05/2016
	Aydıncık Ortaokulu	
Anamur	Anamur Ortaokulu	12/05/2016
	Malaklar Ortaokulu	
Mezitli	Davulpepe Atatürk Ortaokulu	24/05/2016
	Tece Ortaokulu	
	Tece Cumhuriyet Ortaokulu	26/05/2016
Erdemli	Çeşmeli Ortaokulu	
	Kargıpınarı Çıkacak Ortaokulu	04/10/2016
	Kargıpınarı Ortaokulu	
	General Vali Ömer Lütfi Hancıoğlu Ortaokulu	06/10/2016
	Arpaçbahşiş Ortaokulu	11/10/2016
	Mustafa Kayışoğlu Ortaokulu	
	Alata Ortaokulu	13/10/2016
	Kocahasanlı Ortaokulu	
	Limonlu Ortaokulu	18/10/2016
	Ayaş ortaokulu	
	Kızkalesi Ortaokulu	20/10/2016
	Memduh Türkoğlu Ortaokulu	