



The Formentera Tourism Department and the Formentera Environment Department report that online audiences got a first look yesterday at a joint effort by GEN-GOB and Soldecocos to explore nautical practices that favour the sustainability of posidonia seagrass — an idea with roots in the Consell de Formentera-backed Save Posidonia Project’s 2017 call for proposals.

FED chief Antonio J. Sanz said continued research in the field was “every bit as key as the ongoing effort to safeguard this crucial part of the local ecosystem”. A total of €112,000 will go to winning SPP submissions in 2021, said Sanz, who drew attention to the 11 proposals already received. “Since launching, SPP has meant protection for 252,000 square metres of seagrass”, he pointed out, asserting, “There’s an increasing amount of awareness around the issue.”

The study’s general aim is to expand government’s reach to the sea — inquiring into how the sea and locally protected sites are managed and used; weighing the toll of moorage; formulating a consensus-based assessment of the ecological health of seagrass meadows; training students and study administrators and stewarding vulnerable undersea habitats located in posidonia meadows.

GEN-GOB’s Xisco Sobrado and Immaculada Martínez, of Soldecocos, led the presentation, which drew from two separate studies: one, a progress report on posidonia conservation and protection so far; the other, a look at the impact of anchoring watercraft on posidonia meadows on the Formentera coast.

General consensus re: posidonia virtues

Ecology, culture, the economy and identity were among the factors that came up most frequently when social and professional stakeholders were queried about posidonia’s importance. Researchers also underscored general consensus around the value of posidonia, and the potentially crucial role of social participation in improving governance and decision-making on the issue.

Five hundred 26-metre ships daily on Formentera shores

The study also mentions recreational watercraft, “a source of considerable pressure on Formentera’s seafloor”. Such vessels are present in spades in summer, particularly August, when moorage points number between 14,000 and 24,000 and five hundred 26-metre ships dot the coast any given day on average. One per cent of these ships are believed to anchor on seagrass, with the most dramatic impact observed on the western shore of Illetes and at Cala Saona. Researchers named motorboats, yachts and sailboats between 6 and 195 metres long (26 metres on average) among the offending craft. The average boat length is 12 metres.

SPP’s other winning proposal, ‘Antroposi’ by Imedeia, is a look at the direct effect of human activity on posidonia meadows, Findings are due shortly.

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