

Over 3,000 participants of thematic workshops became acquainted with dependence and correlation of man with nature in the pans.



Halophilous plants in autumn colours (1)
Little tern (2)
Ringing of a young black-winged stilt for the purpose of monitoring its movements (3)



LIFE MANSALT project main aim is to protect and improve biodiversity in the Natura 2000 site Sečovlje salt pans.

EU project: LIFE+MANSALT
Man and Nature at Sečovlje salt pans LIFE09 NAT/SI/000376
Duration of the project: 10/2010 - 9/2015
Value of the project: 7,056,366 EUR
EU co-financing: 50%
Project manager: SOLINE Pridelava soli d.o.o.
Project area: Sečovlje Salina Nature Park

Over 40 people from the local environment participated in the project.

Results of the LIFE+ MANSALT project:

- More than 500 ha of SSNP are protected against high tides (reconstruction of more than 4,000 m of embankments)
- More than 8,000 m of edge channels dug along the edges of salt basins to prevent colonies of saltpan birds being reached by foxes and martens
- Regulated habitat for the European pond terrapin
- Guidelines for environmentally-friendly regulation of quays in Jernej Channel
- Awareness building as to the significance of biodiversity conservation at Natura 2000 sites (via 100,000 printed leaflets, 80 educational workshops, 2 films on biodiversity of the pans, website, contributions in the municipal Newsletter)
- Exchange of experience in ecological reconstruction with the coastal wetlands managers

More about the LIFE programme:
www.ec.europa.eu/environment/life

More about the Natura 2000 network:
www.natura2000.gov.si

More about the MANSALT project:
www.kpss.si

Text: A. Sovinc/ Photos: I. Škornik, SSNP Archives /
Front cover photo: Arrangement of the islets for the growth of halophilous plants and breeding of saltpan birds.

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LIFE PROJECT MANSALT

Man and Nature at Sečovlje Salt pans
LIFE09 NAT/SI/000376



REPUBLIKA SLOVENIJA
MINISTRSTVO ZA OKOLJE IN PROSTOR



"The project funds have been provided by the EU LIFE financial instrument, the Government of the Republic of Slovenia, Telekom d.d. and SOLINE d.o.o."

In the plain shaped through the geological past by the Dragonja River and its depositing of alluvial sediments, embankments were built in the 9th century, or perhaps even earlier. Behind them, people caught seawater and with the aid of the sun, wind and hard manual work speeded up the seawater evaporation process. On the bottom of salt basins, crystals of sea salt (or sodium chloride as called by experts) are formed during the summer.

Special features of salt-making at Sečovlje salt pans

At Sečovlje salt pans, salt is still produced manually in compliance with centuries old procedures. This is the reason why this salt is very special, as it contains a high share of minerals, especially magnesium.



Man and Nature at Sečovlje salt pans

Salt pans are actually very similar to coastal lagoons, which are full of life. A significant difference between salt pans and natural wetlands lies in the water regulatory regime: in nature, humans have little impact on water circulation via evaporation and precipitation. At the pans, on the other hand, saltworkers have vital effect on conditions for the living beings by letting seawater into the salt pan basins and out of them. This has been practiced by Sečovlje workers for centuries in the very same manner, which means that they have not been encroaching upon the pans or destroying the diverse habitats. Eventually, some of the plants and animals have become dependent on the pans. At Fontanigge, salt has not been harvested for more than half a century; salt-making was abandoned simply because salt produced manually in the pans was too expensive in comparison with the industrially produced salt. Fontanigge is thus becoming increasingly overgrown with halophilous (salt-loving) plants, and the area is becoming more and more similar to completely natural wetlands. Most characteristic among them are sea-lavender, marsh samphire and glasswort. Along the channels, the rare association of spartina swards is thriving.



Constantly inundated basins in the salt pans prevent halophilous plants from growing



The embankment that has not been maintained for years cannot defy the increasingly higher tides



Totally dried up basins



Through the regulation of the water level and control of water flow, the salt pan basins soon become overgrown with halophytes



The same embankment after the reconstruction works provides for flood protection in the hinterland



The dug out edge channels retain water in dry periods as well

Among the major threats to the life in the pans are uncontrolled floods during high tides, which can burst through the walls and embankments that separate the pans from the sea. With the funds from the EU LIFE programme within the project **MANSALT Man and Nature at Sečovlje salt pans** and funds provided by the Republic of Slovenia, more than four kilometres of embankments have been renewed in the last few years. The uncontrolled spilling of seawater threatened the ground-nesting salt pan birds and inundated the halophilous plants. Within the LIFE MANSALT project, the reconstructed embankments protect the clutches of black-winged stilts, avocets, Kentish plovers, terns and other birds against the rushing water.



Little tern

Conservation of diversity of species and their habitats at Sečovlje salt pans

The most endangered plant and animal species and their habitats in the European Union are protected within the framework of NATURA 2000 sites. Any human activities that could potentially endanger the existence of target species and their habitats within NATURA sites are, as a rule, prohibited. At Sečovlje salt pans, a NATURA 2000 site, the traditional salt-making is no threat to wildlife. On the contrary, the continuation of this activity at Lera, the northern part of Sečovlje Salina Nature Park, is in fact indispensable for securing appropriate water regimes for the salt pan plants and animals. At the same time, the traditional salt-making creates jobs and contributes to the development of the local community, given that traditional salt-making, possibility of experiencing and observing nature and the rich cultural heritage attract numerous visitors. Nature conservation, especially if linked to traditional human activities, is therefore also a developmental opportunity at NATURA 2000 sites!