



National Code of Good Practice

Protected Areas & Invasive Alien Species

Common concerns over the significant detrimental impacts of invasive alien species may bring together interest groups to draw attention to those man-mediated actions or interventions that may facilitate the introduction and spread of invasive alien species. In parallel with the drawing up of the National Strategy on Invasive Alien Species, a series of sector-specific codes are being drawn up to raise awareness and promote good practice to curb the risks associated with introducing and using alien species that exhibit an invasive potential. The mandate for such codes is found in Malta's National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (2012-2020). The present document puts forward a series of recommendations to serve as a code when addressing invasive alien species in protected areas. The recommendations, which adopt the principle of self-regulation, aim to provide practical and concise guidance in establishing common standards of good practice in efforts to prevent and manage the impacts of invasive alien species in protected areas. The recommendations do not replace established national legislation that regulates activities that use alien species. The recommendations are intended to be complementary to the legally-binding obligations defined in national legislation to entice compliance, and also to support the implementation of the National Strategy on Invasive Alien Species. Wide dissemination of this code to the target stakeholders is of essence in order to create partnerships and encourage voluntary adoption in order to overcome any malpractices that may occur as a result of lack of knowledge or understanding of the risks that alien and invasive species may pose.

2018

National Code of Good Practice – Addressing Invasive Alien Species in Protected Areas

Further Reading:

*European Guidelines on Protected Areas and IAS – Monaco & Genovesi, 2014, Council of Europe*¹
Management Plans drawn up for Natura 2000 Sites In Malta
*Guidelines on managing non-native plant invaders and restoring native plant communities in terrestrial settings in the Maltese Islands – ERA, 2016*²

Malta has designated a number of terrestrial and marine sites as legally **protected areas** under Maltese law. The purpose of such protected areas is to safeguard sites of conservation value that support important rare and endangered species and habitats by *inter alia* regulating anthropogenic activities to ensure that such activities do not harm the biodiversity within the protected area. **Invasive alien species (IAS)** can however undermine conservation efforts and protection earmarked for vulnerable species and habitats within protected areas. It is hence crucial that IAS within, and directly adjacent to, protected areas are addressed in a timely and effective manner as part of **active protected area management**. The latter should also be combined with **regular monitoring**, not only to detect new incursions, but also to elucidate whether management measures being implemented in the protected area are effective and indeed positively impacting native biodiversity.

Various IAS are currently found within protected areas. IAS have been identified as a concerning pressure in the following terrestrial **Natura 2000** sites:

- MT0000001 – L-Inħawi ta' Għajn Barrani
- MT0000002 – L-Inħawi ta' Pembroke
- MT0000003 – Il-Ballut tal-Wardija
- MT0000004 – Il-Maqluba (limiti tal-Qrendi)
- MT0000005 – L-Inħawi tar-Ramla
- MT0000006 – Is-Simar (limiti ta' San Pawl il-Baħar)
- MT0000007 – Is-Salini
- MT0000008 – L-Għadira s-Safra
- MT0000009 – L-Inħawi tar-Ramla tat-Torri u tal-Irdum tal-Madonna
- MT0000010 – Ix-Xagħra tal-Kortin
- MT0000012 – Wied il-Mizieb
- MT0000014 – Il-Ballut ta' Marsaxlokk
- MT0000015 – L-Inħawi tal-Għadira
- MT0000017 – Kemmuna u l-Gzejjer ta' Madwarha
- MT0000018 – L-Inħawi tal-Buskett u tal-Girgenti
- MT0000019 – L-Inħawi tad-Dwejra u tal-Qawra, inkluż Haġret il-Ġeneral
- MT0000020 – L-Inħawi tax-Xlendi u tal-Wied tal-Kantra
- MT0000021 – L-Inħawi tal-Imġiebaħ u tal-Miġnuna
- MT0000022 – Il-Gzejjer ta' San Pawl (Selmunett)
- MT0000023 – Il-Magħluq tal-baħar ta' Marsaskala
- MT0000024 – Rdumijiet ta' Malta: Ir-Ramla tac-Ċirkewwa sal-Ponta ta' Bengħisa
- MT0000026 – Il-Qortin tal-Magun u l-Qortin il-Kbir
- MT0000027 – Rdumijiet ta' Għawdex: Ta' Ċenċ
- MT0000029 – Rdumijiet ta' Għawdex: Il-Ponta ta' Ħarrux sal-Bajja tax-Xlendi
- MT0000030 – Rdumijiet ta' Għawdex: Il-Ponta ta' San Dimitri sal-Ponta ta' Ħarrux

¹ Available at: <https://rm.coe.int/168063e4a0>

² Available at: <https://era.org.mt/en/Pages/Natura-2000-Management-Planning.aspx>

Efforts are implemented (or planned) to address these as part of the management of terrestrial protected areas. Marine invasive species have also been identified in marine protected areas via the **MedPAN North project**, which involved the participation of the former Malta Environment and Planning Authority. One of the research activities of this project was data acquisition on the presence of selected alien species in the marine waters around Malta, including all the marine protected areas. Considerations on addressing marine invaders have been made in the preparation of management plan for the marine Natura 2000 sites.

The following recommendations build on the “**European Guidelines on Protected Areas and IAS**” and are aimed at protected area/site managers, staff and practitioners of protected areas in the Maltese Islands. These recommendations are supplementary to the “**Guidelines on managing non-native plant invaders and restoring native plant communities in terrestrial settings in the Maltese Islands**”.

✓ MAINTAIN a checklist/inventory of alien and invasive species (actual and potential) that are found in the protected area (including in the buffer zone).

✓ BE AWARE of the lists of IAS of Union concern and the national list of species deemed to be invasive alien species and the legal obligations that apply to these species.

✓ RAISE and diffuse awareness on IAS issues to visitors and users of the protected area (and promote responsible behaviour when in the protected area), while at the same time communicating the importance and value of native biodiversity and related ecosystem service benefits in that protected area and why such legal safeguard is important.

✓ INTEGRATE IAS issues into all aspects of protected area management and on the basis of the ecosystems approach (taking into account relationships between invasive and other alien species, with native species and habitats and with other pressures e.g. climate change) and by adopting adaptive management approaches.

✓ IDENTIFY what pathways and vectors can result in the introduction and spread of IAS in the protected area and IMPLEMENT site-based preventative actions (addressing both introduction, and containment or control of spread) as a priority.

✓ DEVELOP protected area staff capacities on all relevant aspects of IAS identification and development of technical skills on IAS management aspects and ecosystem recovery/rehabilitation.

✓ SET UP a rapid detection scheme (surveillance) and a prompt contingency response framework (designed for targeted species or broader taxonomic groups), including maintenance of basic equipment, to enforce effective management of newly arrived alien and invasive species in the protected area at the earliest possible stage after introduction.

✓ MANAGE alien and invasive species within and beyond sites boundaries and, in buffer zones, by COOPERATING with land owners and land users within and adjacent to the protected area for the effective prevention and management of IAS problems.

✓ NETWORK regularly with other site managers and practitioners to share data and exchange information on IAS and experiences on management, and cooperate to create a central database

(data sharing platform combining species checklists/inventories from all protected areas) providing information on existing IAS for all protected areas, including alien and invasive species for which protected area managers should be on the lookout.

✓ REPORT all activities of IAS identification and management to the Competent Authority, including costing of actions to evaluate the sustainability of the required actions.

✓ ENCOURAGE the involvement of local communities, recreational users (e.g. rambblers, divers) and other stakeholders (e.g. food establishments, hotels and other land users) in the locality where the protected area is found to become involved as volunteers in different IAS-related activities (monitoring, management, with health and safety considerations) that benefit the protected area bearing in mind the social and economic benefits derived from protected areas, such as for recreation and tourism.

✓ PROMOTE the use of the "Guidelines on managing non-native plant invaders and restoring native plant communities in terrestrial settings in the Maltese Islands" in protected areas and document experiences on IAS management to help update and improve these guidelines as a living document.

These recommendations, if followed by all site managers would help in the prevention of introduction, and timely detection on new alien species in Maltese waters. Continued dialogue, liaison and cooperation between Government and site managers is of essence, especially when recognising the first-hand knowledge and experience of site managers in combating IAS on the ground and the challenges encountered (e.g. limited resources, lack of capacity, lack of information, and lack of stakeholder support). IAS management measures planned in the protected area need to be communicated beforehand to the Competent Authority for authorisation vis-à-vis permit requirements and also approval of any method statements/methodologies to be applied.