

Mar Menor



Legal status Sites of Community Importance, including Protected Landscapes and a Marine Reserve

Foundation year 1992 (Protected Areas and 1995 (Marine Reserve)

Foundation text Law n° 4/1992, Decree 15/1995 (31-3-1995) and Order 22-6-1995

Management body Department of Sustainable Development and Planning of Murcia regional Government, and the Ministry of the Environment, and Rural and Marine Affairs

Superficy 27500 ha

Territory



The area is located in the Southeast of the Region of Murcia, limiting in its Northern end with the province of Alicante. Toward the East and the South embraces a portion of the submerged coastal fringe, as well as the Hormigas, Grosa and Farallón Islands.

The western limit follows the shore line of the Mar Menor interior lagoon, incorporating three wetlands area.

The Southern limit includes the submerged coast fringe between Palos Cape and Negrete Cape.



Mar Menor and oriental Mediterranean zone of the Murcia Region Coast has been SPAMI since 2001 thanks to the great *Posidonia oceanica* meadows, the high population of aquatic birds and the ecosystem of the considerable lagoon.



Physical features

The geomorphology of the area has been due fundamentally to the volcanic and sedimentary processes that gave origin to the sandy bar of La Manga, and the biggest interior lagoon in Spain (Mar Menor). Associated to the lagoon there are coastal salt marshes, salt flats (salt steppes) and some volcanic mountains. The morphology of the coast is shallow (6.5 m. maxi). The south coast is characterized by an alternation between rocky (sea) cliffs and small creeks and beaches. The submarine coast registers the same heterogeneity.

Specificities and Importance

The zone presents a high number of terrestrial habitats. It is presented in the area the unique "sabinar of dunes" (*Juniperus turbinata*) of the Region, which is not very abundant in the rest of the Iberian Peninsula.

It is presented vegetation of salt environment in a good conservation state and a great variety of communities characteristic of shoreline dunes.

The ecosystem of the lagoon is unique in the western Mediterranean coast. It is the biggest interior lagoon in the western Mediterranean coast and presents environmental conditions different of the Mediterranean Sea.

The area is an important area for aquatic birds, Isla Grosa is a very important colony in the world of *Larus audouinii*.

The seagrass *Posidonia oceanica* covers approximately 8 400 ha.

There are a lot of marine invertebrates and other important species like *Caretta caretta* and *Tursiops truncatus*.

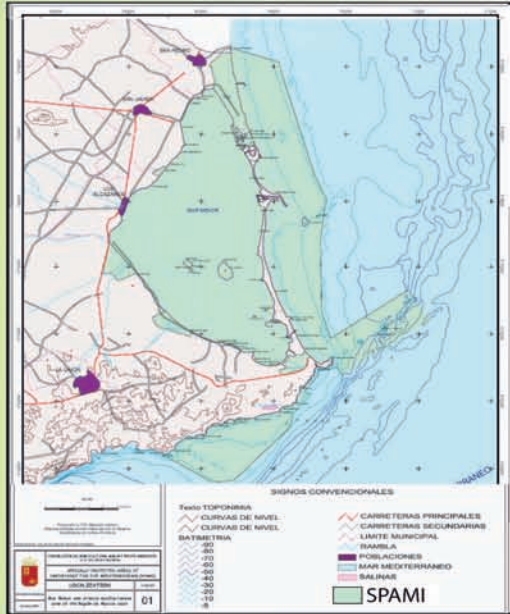


Threats and pressures



The main threats on the natural resources of the area come from the exterior, fundamentally around the zone, especially for the modification and intensification of cultivation practices and touristic uses.

A second threat on the natural resources is the abandonment of traditional extensive land uses of the area.



Management

At the moment, doesn't exist a common Management Plan for the whole area, but a draft is available.

Protection, planning and/or ordering measures at the present time, come from Salinas y Arenales de San Pedro del Pinatar Regional Park and Espacios Abiertos e Islas del Mar Menor Natural Site.

The basic financing comes from own resources of the Regional Government of the Murcia Region, and the Ministry of the Environment and Rural and Marine Affairs for the external waters of the Marine reserve..

The surveillance of the area are carried out for the Regional Government in land area and the Government of Spain in marine area.



In the area, academic and investigators activities are developed (mainly of the University of Murcia).

There are volunteer programmes and non-governmental organisations activities related to investigation and monitoring