



# BURGESS

## SAFEGUARDING GREEK SEAS



SUMMARY REPORT 2025

# Executive Summary



Blue Marine has been working in Greece for the past four years, leading ambitious and transformative conservation efforts to protect the health of Greek seas and help local livelihoods. Our work is rooted in partnership with a local mosaic of authorities, NGO, scientists, fishers and EU institutions.

For the past three years, Burgess has generously supported these efforts across this complex archipelago. In 2025, contributing an extraordinary **£161,960** to Blue Marine – combining company contributions (from travel and sales) with client donations (from charter and yacht management).

This year these funds enabled us to wrap up the final stage of Posidonia mapping in the Erimitus Peninsula and, most pivotally, support pioneering community-led protection efforts in Amorgos, which this year were officially ratified into law.

Ocean conservation is increasingly a part of high-level policy discourse, with growing political impetus to fulfil international commitments. As such, the next few years leading up to 2030 present an essential scope of opportunity, particularly for Greece who are leading the brave charge in the Mediterranean.

This report outlines the incredible progress Burgess's support has made possible and maps out Blue Marine's goals as we advance through this Ocean Decade of Action – a decade that demands *we create the science we need, for the ocean we want*.



# Key Achievements

## **Historic Presidential Decree for Amorgos**

**for Amorgos** – In August, a Presidential Decree established four new fishing-protected areas around Amorgos, fulfilling an 11-year call from local fishers.

## **Prime Minister Endorsement**

Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis publicly praised Amorgórama as a flagship model for community-led conservation at the UN Ocean Conference and during an official visit to the island, committed to replicate similar community-led projects across Greece.

## **Creation of the Amorgos Model**

**Model** – the Amorgos MPA pioneered by local fishers, includes three permanent no-take zones and enforces a seasonal closure around the island. A new precedent for community-led conservation.

## **Management plan**

**plan** – This year we have initiated plans for a comprehensive five-year management and enforcement framework for Amorgos from 2026-2030.

**National Influence** – In July, the Prime Minister announced two new National Marine Parks for the Southern Cyclades and Ionian Sea. These plans include measures inspired by Amorgos, in clear recognition of our marine leadership.

# Project Background

The Greek coastline stretches for over 15,000km, winding around swathes of carbon rich Posidonia seagrass and algal meadows, and housing a diversity of marine creatures from Mediterranean monk seals to blue crabs. Despite its ecological richness and formal commitments under the EU Habitats Directive, Greece continues to face a suite of systemic challenges: industrial fishing monopolies, weakly enforced marine protection, and unsustainable tourism all continue to degrade these complex marine habitats.

While the Natura 2000 network was established to safeguard Europe's most vulnerable species and habitats, only 12 of Greece's 174 marine sites currently benefit from effective legal protection and management. Most remain 'paper parks' – designated in name but lacking enforcement and community engagement.

Yet, change is emerging. Over the past two years Greece has demonstrated remarkable momentum, making unprecedented commitments towards international marine protection targets. The government has pledged to expand its MPA network from 20 to 36 per cent of national waters and announced a phased ban on bottom trawling within all MPAs by 2030 – a first in Europe.

These actions mark a powerful turning point for protection.



Over the last four years, Blue Marine has worked with local partners to scope and designate MPAs and no-take zones, reform fisheries, tackle invasive species, and strengthen policy. Previous Burgess funding has been instrumental to this, facilitating biodiversity surveys and Posidonia mapping in Corfu's Erimitus Peninsula, deploying advanced seafloor mapping technologies and assessing fish fauna. This research laid the foundation for management plans now guiding community-led marine areas (LMMAs) as a promising approach to sustainable ocean governance.

In 2025, the bulk of Burgess's support has been directed to Amorgos, an area of striking beauty. A home for groupers, wrasses, breams, underwater caves and waters of a deep azure. It is an area where community and conservation intersect. An example made clearly apparent through the success of the Amogorama initiative, which Burgess have so generously supported this year.



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NETWORK FROM 20 TO 36 PER CENT



# Progress Towards Goals

## 1) Ratification Through Collaboration

On 18th August 2025, a Presidential Decree was signed and published, officially establishing Greece's first community-led MPA.

This decree designates four Fisheries Restricted Areas (FRAs) around Amorgos and places a year-round ban on fishing near Katapolon and the islets of Gramvousa and Nikouria. It further introduces a seasonal fishing ban (from 1st April to 31st May) on the area 1.5 nautical miles around Amorgos' shores. A measure which lets breeding and nursery grounds rebound, helping replenish stocks and allowing uninterrupted spawning for diverse fish species. Room is also left for lawful, low impact gear outside of these areas, allowing the continuation of less harmful artisanal fishing.

This milestone comes as a result of an initiative launched 11 years ago by the Professional Fishing Association of Amorgos – born out of concern for dwindling fish stocks and the want for scientifically based management. Over the past four years, collective determination, grit and sustained collaboration have united the Amorgos Fishers' Association, Blue Marine, the Cyclades Preservation Fund and the Agricultural University of Athens under a common goal and created this Amorgorama grassroots model for effective marine conservation.

## 2) Management and Enforcement

Beyond pushing for ratification of the decree, our focus over the past year has also been on implementation and management – practical elements that would ensure the successful day-to-day setup of these FRAs.



The Amorgorama team have been working closely alongside the Ministry of Shipping and Island Policy as well as the Hellenic Coast Guard to consider a strong patrolling system around the designated zones. A dedicated patrol boat has now been deployed to the island, and additional coastguard personnel reinforcement is expected soon. Fines for those who breach these protected areas have also been considered.

In parallel, we have been negotiating with the Ministry of Fisheries to secure dedicated funding for a comprehensive five-year management plan (2026-2030). The Ministry have taken ownership of funding in relation to scientific monitoring, with the rest of the pillars financed across the Amorgorama coalition, by Blue Marine, Cyclades Preservation Fund and the Fishers Association, always in collaboration and coordination with the relevant authorities. This plan would encompass:

- 1) Setting up a collaborative field monitoring and enforcement support system to help authorities protect these FRAs when resources may be limited.

2) Establishing governance of the protected areas, based on participatory approaches through a co-management committee. This would involve all relevant stakeholders including the port police, the Ministry of Maritime Affairs, the Ministry of Rural Development and Food, the Agricultural University of Athens, the Fishers' Association and civil society.

3) Scientific monitoring of fishery production, marine biodiversity (both inside and outside the FRAs), socio-economic development of fisheries activity and mapping of important habitats such as coralligenous beds and Posidonia oceanica meadows.

4) Remote beach cleanups during fishing closure seasons (April and May), to address the island's plastic pollution with fishing vehicles and fishers time repurposed for marine litter removal and recycling activities.

5) Dissemination of science, results and communication success stories across broad audiences via videos, social media, workshops, training and exchange visits.



***"It is one of the biggest marine victories in Greece, for what it symbolises and what it can trigger from now on."***

Angela Lazou, Greece Projects Manager at Blue Marine said of the passing of the Amorgos decree.



Angela Lazou at sea

### 3) Proof of Concept and Scaling Up

Amorgos now stands as a proof of concept for community-led marine protection in Greece.

In June, at the third United Nations Ocean Conference in Nice, Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis emphasised his government's strong backing for community-led conservation efforts, like Amorgorama, highlighting their role in creating safe havens for marine life. This public endorsement was reinforced in October when the Prime Minister, the European Commissioner for Fisheries and Oceans Mr. Kadis, members of the Cabinet, and senior government officials visited Amorgos to honour the fishers and partners behind the initiative.

During the ceremony at the port of Aegiali, the Prime Minister praised Amorgorama as a model of cross-sector collaboration and highlighted its potential as a 'roadmap' for Greece's fishing communities. He emphasised that Amorgorama only represented the beginning and showed his commitment to creating at ***least ten more initiatives similar within a reasonable time frame.***

Seizing this momentum, Blue Marine is expanding the model across Greece. In the Cyclades, we are partnering with the Cyclades Preservation Fund to create a strong network of fisher communities.

We continue supporting Santorini and Formikoula as they finalise protection under the new National Marine Parks. Similar efforts are underway in Lemnos, Kalloni (Lesvos), where years of collaboration with local fishers are shaping new community-led initiatives.

At the national level, we are working alongside a breadth of organisations – from Greenpeace and WWF, to the Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change Agency, to advocate for the 10 per cent no-take target in the upcoming Biodiversity Strategy. We are also seeking to establish a national working group for community-led MPAs.

### 4) Communications

Communications have played an important role in building support locally, and publicising successes and wins to academics, practitioners and the community alike. Over the past year, we have delivered a multi-channel campaign including video production, social media outreach, workshops, and promotional materials. The passing of Amorgorama by Presidential Decree was widely covered in national media, and the initiative received high-profile endorsements at the UN Ocean Conference in Nice and the Amorgos Fishers' Festival. We also supported a short video around the celebration on Amorgorama which can be seen [here](#).



Greek PM visits Amorgos and sits alongside Blue Marine Greece Project Manager Angela Lazou.

# Looking Ahead to 2026

As 2026 nears, we look to the next chapter of our ambitions, focusing on guaranteeing the successful management of Amorgos, while scaling up proven approaches across Greece.

In Amorgos, our priority will be the full and effective implementation of the five-year management plan. This plan will centre a co-management committee, enforcement capacity, scientific monitoring and inclusion of diverse stakeholder voices.

Looking more broadly, we aim to replicate the success of community-led protection models in other islands, with current efforts focused on Santorini, Lemnos, and Kalloni. These initiatives will build on local partnerships and fisher-led agreements to identify and secure new no-take zones.



Beyond site work, at the national level, we will continue our engagement in high level policy spheres (such as the Greek Ministry of Fisheries and the Ministry of the Environment) as we continue to advocate for ten per cent no-take zones and recommend priority locations that align with Greece's 30x30 ocean agenda. Our work will also focus on ensuring that newly designated areas are not just lines on a map, but effectively managed spaces that deliver ecological recovery.

The historic expansion of marine protected areas has created significant momentum; however, the real challenge now lies in ensuring these areas are effectively managed and that ecosystems recover. Our achievements have positioned Blue Marine at the centre of these developments, providing access to policymakers and the opportunity, with your support, to scale up proven, community-led conservation models for stronger, more effective protection.

With 2030 recognised globally as a milestone for ocean recovery, the next five years are crucial. During this time, we can consolidate existing successes, expand community-led management to additional sites, restore key habitats, and influence policy to ensure stricter enforcement and sustainable practices across wondrous Greece's seas.



# Thank You



We would once again like to thank all at Burgess for your incredible ongoing support, which has allowed us to make marked progress in marine protection in Greece.

Your continuous and reliable support has helped us move the dials on ocean protection, influencing policy at the highest level as we continue to advocate for a strong, sustainably protected Greek archipelago.

We are hugely grateful for your unwavering support and look forward to sharing further updates as we move into 2026.

Blue Marine continues to build recognition as a leading force in ocean conservation while remaining lean, focused, and innovative within the NGO sector.

Image Credits: Alexandros Avramidis, Giorgos Moutasis, Dimitris Poursanidis.



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