

Regional Meeting to further implement the Marine Litter Regional Plan

GUIDE ON BEST PRACTICES FOR FISHING FOR LITTER IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

**Adopted by COP 19; Decision IG 22/10
UNEP/MAP, February, 2016**



United Nations Environment Programme /
Mediterranean Action Plan (UNEP/MAP)
Barcelona Convention

Background

- Marine litter emerging threat at global level with significant implications for the marine and coastal environment
- Marine litter issue of concern in the Mediterranean since the 1970s
- LBS Protocol of the Barcelona Convention recognised the importance of dealing with the problem of marine litter
- The Mediterranean was designated a Special Area for the purposes of Annex V (Prevention of pollution by garbage from ships) of the MARPOL 73/78 Convention
- COP 18 of the Barcelona Convention (2013) adopted the Regional Plan on Marine Litter Management in the Mediterranean: provides for FfL as one of the most important measures that has the potential to reduce the amounts of ML at sea by involving the fishing industry (one of the key stakeholders sectors)



Background

- FfL is included in the strategies C4 and C5 of the Honolulu Strategy (2011)
- “Encourage fishing for litter initiatives” is included on the list of suggestions made for marine debris mitigation and management (predominantly plastic) by the Convention on Biological Diversity Expert Workshop to Prepare Practical Guidance on Preventing and Mitigating the Significant Adverse Impacts of Marine Debris on Marine and Coastal Biodiversity and Habitats (2014)
- FfL activities have been widely applied mainly in NE Atlantic Ocean, and specifically in the North Sea
- In the Mediterranean, four projects are being implemented currently: *Contrats Bleus* (French Coast), Ecological bags on board (Spanish East Coast), *Ecopuertos* (Andalusian Coast, Spain) and DeFishGear (Adriatic Sea)



Background

- This guide has been developed to be commonly agreed at the Mediterranean level and implemented accordingly (UNEP/MAP Programme of work on pollution assessment and control thematic priority and the objectives of the project on EcAp funded by the EC)



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Scope of FfL practices

- 1. Active practices:** specifically performed to remove marine litter, fishermen involved are paid
 - Marine litter removal practices during specific fishing trips to remove litter from hotspots or from protected areas
 - Retrieval of derelict (abandoned, lost or otherwise discarded) fishing gear at sea where individual fishermen are contracted to retrieve nets
- 2. Passive practices:** carried out by fishermen during their normal fishing activities without financial compensation
 - Fishing vessels are given free bags to collect ML they catch in their nets
 - Free disposal facilities in harbour
 - All types of ML are targeted depending on the gear type used (most amounts are from seafloor litter collected with bottom-contacting gear)
 - Bags are deposited on the quayside where the participating harbours monitor the waste before moving the bag to a dedicated skip for disposal (litter is weighed and, where possible, composition recorded)



Objectives

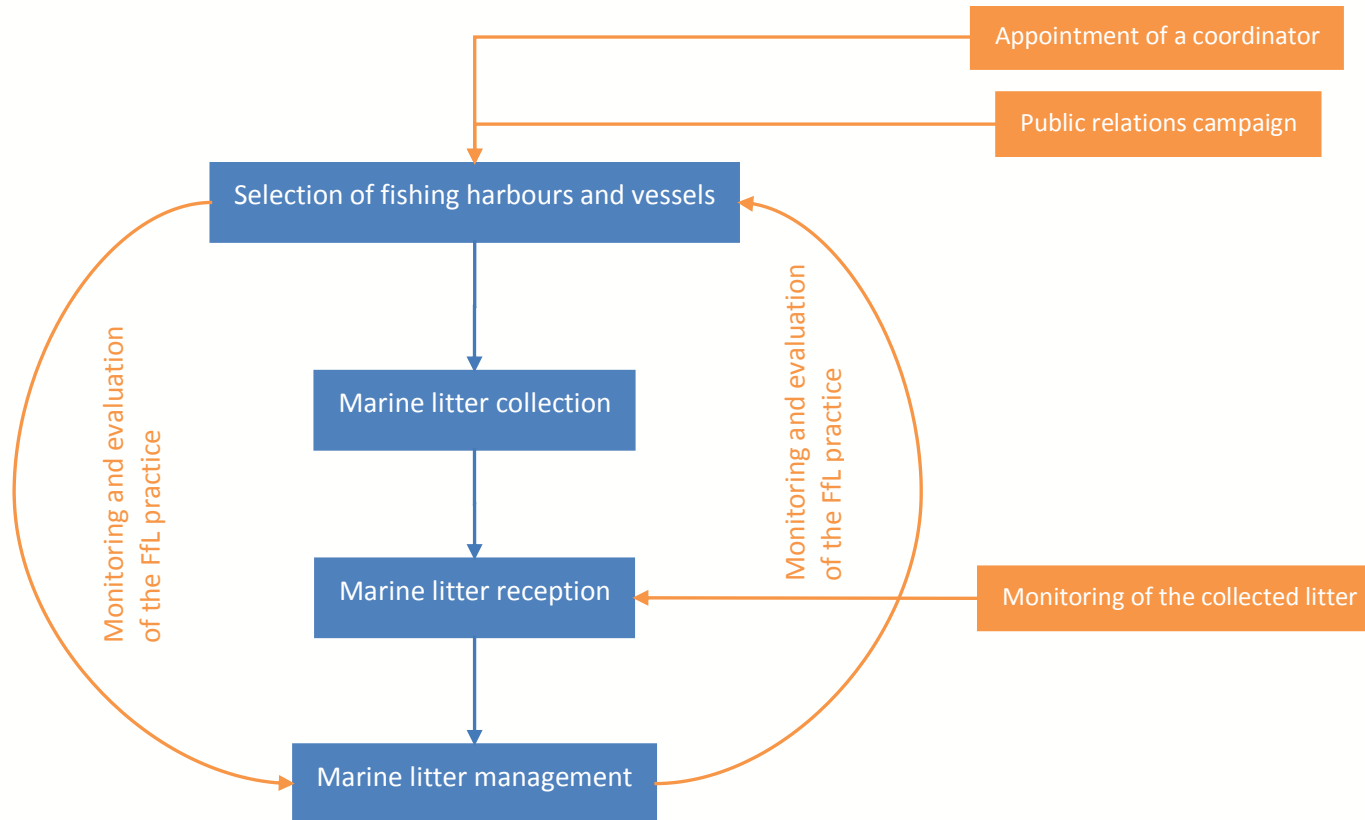
- Provide technical guidance on the mechanism to remove litter from the sea in an environmentally friendly manner ensuring negative impacts on marine environment and ecosystems are avoided
- Provide guidance on the process of involving the stakeholders responsible for the implementation and coordination of FfL practices

These practices are expected to be implemented in local areas at small-medium scale due to the specific characteristics of the Mediterranean trawling fishing fleet

FfL practices are described in areas where fishermen are able and allowed to fish



Implementing a FfL practice - steps



1 Selection of fishing harbours and vessels

Establishment of contacts with relevant stakeholders:

- Fishermen's associations (both national and local) to explore the possibilities of collaboration
- Ports and harbours authorities to develop support to the FfL practice
- Waste management authorities and companies for the involvement of these sectors into the FfL practice



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2 Marine litter collection

Characteristics of the bags:

- Solid enough
- Appropriate size depending on the vessel size to ensure enough free space on board during fishing activities

Guidelines to collect marine litter to be followed by the fishermen:

- ML should only be collected in the bags
- Only ML caught in your nets should be collected in the bags
- Garbage including plastics, domestic wastes, cooking oil, operational wastes and fishing gear should never be thrown overboard in the Mediterranean
- Objects of natural origin entrapped by fishing gear can be subsequently discharged back to the sea
- Special waste (drums of fluids, chemicals or oil and hazardous items such as batteries) should be dealt with through the harbours existing procedures
- No collection of ML items with an adverse effect on the stability and seaworthiness of the vessel
- Record of the number of bags and approximate weight of ML collected



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3 Marine litter reception

- Bags of ML should be unloaded and placed safely on the quayside (no ML losses occur)
- Bags will be taken to the existing waste reception facilities in the harbour
- Appropriate waste reception facilities in the harbour should be available (closed containers with lids, large enough to receive the amounts and sizes of items removed; emptied on regular basis and at the shortest possible distance from fishing boats)
- It is recommended that the arrangements for handling ML are the same as the normal arrangements for handling the fishing vessels' own waste



4 Marine litter management

- ML removed has to be properly managed in order to not return to the sea
- Appropriate waste treatment facilities should be available
- Waste management should ensure that waste is segregated and recycled conveniently prioritising the recovery (both material and energetic) from the deposit (in a controlled facility)
- Management system of ML collected: integrated in the harbour existing waste management system; independent management system or, combined system of the two previous options
- Agreements between waste management authorities and private sector could be made to put into the market segregated materials



Additional steps - Appointment of a coordinator

- FfL practice coordinator at national or regional level might be appointed
- Coordinator tasks:
 - Searching for resources
 - Involving fishing harbours and vessels
 - Developing of the public relations campaign
 - Reporting monitoring data



Additional steps - Public relations campaign

- Encourage fishing industry to participate in the FfL practice
- Inform general public about the FfL practice
- The success of this kind of practices is the high engagement and involvement of fishermen and a good public perception could strengthen the fishermen support to the FfL practice

The main aspects public relations campaign should cover are summarised in the guide



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Additional steps - Monitoring of the collected litter

Ensure adequate collection, sorting, recycling and/or environmentally sound disposal of the fished litter

Monitoring forms:

- Based on the Master List of main categories of Litter Items as agreed in the UNEP/MAP Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Programme – seafloor litter
- ML collected form:
 - Number of items according to the categories defined
 - Total weight of ML caught
 - Daily recorded on the quayside by qualified personnel and monthly reported to the FfL practice coordinator
- Monthly tons and monthly composition of ML collected forms:
 - Annually reported to the National Competent Authority for the protection of the marine environment



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Additional steps - Monitoring and evaluation of the FfL practice

- Data collected (number of vessels and harbours participating, amounts and composition of litter collected, etc.) might be periodically reviewed to evaluate the success of FfL initiatives
- Costs, benefits and governance might be considered
- Locate accumulation areas and support an optimised strategy to further focus on hot spots
- Assess the impacts of the FfL practice
- Identify lessons that can be used to improve future initiatives
- Prove to funding and supporting organisations that the practice is on track to achieve planned objectives



Health and safety implications

- With regard to hazardous and other substances that might be caught in trawls and collected on board vessels, health and safety aspects of implementing these types of initiatives would be the same as normal fishing activities and therefore there would likely not be any additional implications
- With regard to the stability and seaworthiness of the vessel, no object of ML will be collected if there is suspicion of hazard, adverse effect or risk jeopardizing the stability of the vessel
- The experience of FfL projects in the North Sea developing since 2000 indicates that there have been no instances of accidents or injuries directly related to the collection, storage or transfer to shore of ML collected as part of these projects



Environmental impact assessment procedures including transboundary impacts

- FfL practices are carried alongside normal fishing operations therefore there are no, in principle, potential adverse effects on the marine environment
- MLRP highlights the need to consider EIA and environmental impacts of implementing FfL and draws the attention that the best environmental practices and techniques should be used for this purpose due to the fact that such interventions may also have a very negative impact on marine environment and ecosystems
- Main potential environmental impacts of FfL practices are related to:
 - the harm to the seafloor and the benthic communities associated
 - exceed the capacity of the harbour waste reception and storage facilities
 - human health and safety risks
- Best practices established in the guide considered as mitigation measures of potential negative impacts of FfL practices on marine environment



Environmental impact assessment procedures including transboundary impacts

An environmental impact assessment of the FfL practice should be considered depending on:

1. Characteristics of the FfL practice:
 - a) the size and design of the whole FfL practice
 - b) cumulative effects with other existing and/or approved FfL practices
 - c) the use of natural resources, in particular land, soil, water and biodiversity
 - d) the production of waste
 - e) pollution and nuisances
 - f) the risk of major accidents and/or disasters which are relevant to the FfL practice concerned
 - g) the risks to human health
2. Location of the FfL practice: environmental sensitivity of geographical areas affected by the FfL practice with particular regard to marine protected areas
3. Transboundary nature of the potential impacts



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