DEVELOPING A NETWORK OF REVERSE VENDING MACHINES AT CABO DE GATA-NÍJAR NATURAL PARK

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Cabo de Gata-Níjar Natural Park, Biosphere Reserve & Geopark is located at the very southeastern point of the Iberian Peninsula, in Spain. The semi-arid conditions and the volcanic landscape and very well preserved underwater ecosystems has made the area a very popular place during the summer season in the whole country.

It is a very unique and important area in Spain, home of an important population of steppe birds, very well preserved Posidonia oceanica meadows, and the best preserved outcrops of Submarine volcanism of the western Mediterranean area.

This situation implies a big challenge with waste management and a problem with marine litter.
Facing the problem

Due to the high numbers of visitors every year, and specially during the summer season, a huge amount litter it’s abandoned in beaches every week, coves and the countryside, which generates a big problem. Most of the litter left on the beaches are beverages bottles and tin cans.

Redirecting people to places were they can left the bottles was our priority, so we though that Reverse Vending machines, with a small prize as incentive, could be a useful tool.

Obviously this is not a total solution, but maybe, it could help in some places that are very crowdy during the summer.
Our Pilot Action

We wanted to:

- Involve the three municipalities that configures the MPA: Almería, Níjar y Carboneras
- Make something useful and attractive not only for the visitors but the local residents
- Through the prizes, encourage people to carry with them the litter and leave it on the machines

And finally, to make some noise about the Marine Little Issue at the MPA!!!! Plastic Busters MPAs and SCP-RAC came to rescue!
Our Masterplan

- First step: find the Reverse Vending Machine, it was very very difficult
- Second step: get the Natural Park Small Business Association involved
- Third step: Select the places and meet with all the stake holders
- Happy ending: all working and people recycling
- All seemed easy for us, but it was definitely not that easy.
The Comeback to Reality Masterplan

Preliminary study to have a real picture of the problem at the MPA
Search for the RVMs, decide not to buy or rent a new one
SCP-RAC found some RVMs from another project that could be updated and used
Launch a tender for the update of these RVMs
Launch another tender for the external consultant
Lots of videocalls with the entrepeneurs, to explain and reach and agreement
More videocalls to explain everything to the municipalities
The RVM are finally sent to Cabo de Gata and we establish one in Carboneras castle,
one at the Amoladeras Visitors Center and one in the Touristic information point at San José

All seemed easy for us, but it was definitely not that easy.
And Finally...

El Parque Cabo de Gata-Nijar (Almería) inicia una iniciativa piloto que cambiará la forma de entregar envases de bebidas dando descuentos.

**Una iniciativa piloto cambiará envases de bebidas por descuento en Cabo de Gata**

Se instalarán máquinas en las que depositar los residuos en distintos puntos del parque natural en Almería capital, Nijar y Carboneras.

El Parque Natural Cabo de Gata-Nijar (Almería) ha iniciado una prueba piloto que se llevará a cabo hasta finales de septiembre a través de tres máquinas distribuidas a lo largo del parque, que a cambio, entregarán a los visitantes tickets de descuentos canjeables en los diferentes establecimientos de la zona adheridos al proyecto.

La acción se desarrollará en el marco del proyecto europeo Plastic Busters MPA, según los términos del Interreg Mediterranean PLASTIC BUSTERS MPAs.
The final results

From *The Plastic Busters MPAs showcases on how to prevent and mitigate marine litter in Mediterranean MPAs Synthesis Report (2022)*

![Performance indicators of the pilot action.](image)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Performance indicator</th>
<th>End of September</th>
<th>Middle of October</th>
<th>End of October</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of beverage containers collected</td>
<td>6400</td>
<td>7600</td>
<td>8400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of businesses involved</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of vouchers used</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>184</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of individuals making use of the vouchers</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Main difficulties

Find the RVMs was a huge challenge!!!!!

Choose the perfect location for the RVMs because they have special needs

Reaching an agreement with the small businesses, they all want to participate but not in the same way. The role of Asemparna was crucial.

The maintenance and insurance issue, also the role of Wondereco & ENT was very very important for the development of the pilot. The role of SCP-RAC team was also crucial, without them would have been impossible for us to set this pilot.

Most of the problems appeared before the RVMs arrived to the MPA, once here, all has been more or less under control and people are happy!!!
Lessons learned

In Spain, it’s right now very difficult to establish this kind of actions, the market for RVMs is small and is very expensive to buy or rent one. There more or less only a enterprise to buy or rent. Offering a higher reward would improve the performancec of the system.

The problem with the litter and the management of this kind of waste was also tricky, we sorted ir somehow.

The involvement of the local administrations, local stakeholders and a proper way to “sell” the action is also very important. Also the place to install the RVM is crucial.

Once you solved all these things, people are very happy, and all turns easier so don´t give up!!! And finally... never trust the wind.
Thank you!

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