

THE LOŠINJ DOLPHIN RESERVE – PROMOTING HABITAT PROTECTION AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT THROUGH THE PRESENCE OF FLAGSHIP SPECIES

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The proposed Lošinj dolphin reserve (LDR) is unique in the fact that it will be both the first dedicated dolphin reserve within Europe, but outside the European Union, and the first dolphin reserve in the Mediterranean. The establishment proposal is based on research data collected by Adriatic Dolphin Project (ADP) since 1987, which identifies the Lošinj-Cres archipelago as a critical habitat for bottlenose dolphins. The main threats to this population are fishing competition and disturbance by tourist boats. The education and public awareness activities of BW have been aimed at the reduction of the main stresses the dolphins face and conservation of habitat they live. The establishment of the LDR will be the next logical step in this process. Although the primary focus of the proposal is dolphin conservation, the societal needs of the local people are regarded as an important aspect to be incorporated into the designation and management of the reserve. Support for the reserve by the local community shows how cooperation can limit conflict in areas of conservation. Raising the profile of cetaceans and their socio-economic worth in this area has shown that protection and the sustainable development of the economy can work when all groups are involved. As research in other areas of the Croatian Adriatic identifies critical habitats for other populations of flagship species the designation and management techniques developed and tested in the LDR can be used as a best practise model for the creation of similar reserves through out Croatia.