



**«Actions to protect, conserve and promote biodiversity. Field studies of endemic, endangered and nationally important species of Greece». Funded by the Natural Environment and Climate Change Agency (NECCA)**

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## **TITLE**

**Pinna nobilis restoration actions in the NE Aegean Sea**

(Project ID: 14868)

## **PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR**

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## **HOST INSTITUTION**

UNIVERSITY OF THE AEGEAN

## **ABSTRACT**

Since the first confirmed records of mass mortality events of *Pinna nobilis* populations at the coasts of Spain in 2016 due to the spread of the pathogenic parasite *Haplosporidium pinnae*, fan mussel populations have been severely affected (i.e. 80-100% mortality in several locations) throughout the Mediterranean, including the Greek seas. As a result, the species has been listed as Critically Endangered on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species, and restoration actions focusing on the recovery of surviving populations are considered crucial to increase the chances of survival of this endemic Mediterranean species. As part of a wider research for the detection of surviving individuals and populations in the Greek seas (Aegean and Ionian Seas), and the assessment of their conservation status, the aim of the proposed work is to strengthen and prolong existing restoration actions of *P. nobilis* in selected sites of the NE Aegean. Specifically, the project will focus on the Islands of Lesbos and Limnos, which constitute good candidate sites for the settlement and survival of fan mussel populations according to scientific information on the existence of past populations, currently surviving individuals, and oceanographic models. The proposed restoration actions include the establishment of larval collectors to investigate the potential travel of larvae from healthy populations of the Marmara Sea to the Aegean, the setting up of protective cages that will act as nurseries for the growth of collected larvae in the natural environment, transplantation of large individuals (> 6-7 cm in size) when needed, periodic surveys for monitoring and detection of additional surviving individuals, and promotion of conservation measures. The project is a response to the international call for immediate action following the *P. nobilis* pandemic, and will complement other relevant conservation and restoration initiatives that are being applied in the Greek Seas and across the Mediterranean

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