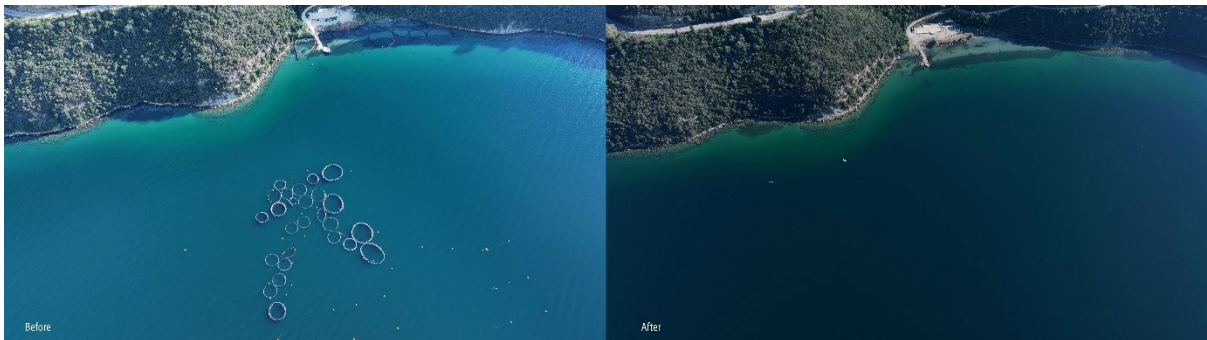


The Healthy Seas Foundation and Partners Collect 50 Containers of Marine Litter in Six Days in Final 2024 Operation Ghost Farms Clean-Up

A Collaborative Effort of Clean-ups, Education, and Community Engagement to Address Marine Pollution in Abandoned Fish Farms in Western Greece

- **Comprehensive Effort:** **Three major clean-up operations in 2024**, targeting abandoned fish farms in Western Greece, including the latest in Menidi, Gulf of Amvrakikos, with the support of Hyundai Motor Europe.
- **Immediate Environmental Impact:** **Early intervention** prevents more severe pollution by removing large structures and marine litter before they degrade further.
- **Community and Educational Involvement:** Initiatives with local schools, universities, and harbours raise awareness and engage the community in ocean conservation efforts.



November 5th, 2024 - Western Greece – Healthy Seas, in partnership with Hyundai Motor Europe and other partners, has concluded its **year-long "Operation Ghost Farms – Reclaiming Waters"** with a comprehensive clean-up in Menidi, Gulf of Amvrakikos. **Ghost farms are abandoned fish farms whose structures, left to degrade at sea, pollute coastal areas and cause significant damage to marine flora and fauna, as well as to local communities that rely on these waters.** This mission, the third of its kind in 2024, showcases Healthy Seas' commitment to reclaiming polluted waters, engaging communities, and preventing marine pollution at its source.

The clean-up in Menidi, unlike previous operations in Ithaca and Patras, targeted a recently abandoned fish farm, allowing for effective intervention before severe degradation occurred. The efforts included removing **fish nets, 35 big buoys, and 43 floating rings, numerous other items and retrieving a half-sunken maintenance boat from the sea.** On land, volunteers tackled the cleanup of coastal litter, including household waste discarded by private citizens and broken Styrofoam from fish farm operations.



The collected materials, such as fishing nets, **will be processed for recycling**. Healthy Seas, through its partner Diopas, which serves as a hub for old fish farming nets, will send suitable nets from the clean-up to Aquafil for transformation into ECONYL® regenerated nylon for new products. Pipes and other structures have been allocated for recycling, with some going to local recycling facilities, others to a local construction company for reuse, ensuring reuse and a circular approach to waste management.

Ecological and Social Impact: Ghost farms contribute to widespread ecological damage, releasing debris, plastics, and pollutants that disrupt marine ecosystems, endanger local flora and fauna, and pollute coastal areas. These abandoned structures also pose significant socio-economic risks, compromising maritime safety for fisheries, tourism, and other vessels navigating these waters. Through the removal of hazardous materials, the Healthy Seas Foundation's efforts not only restore the marine environment but also protect resources essential to the well-being and livelihood of coastal communities.

Healthy Seas also organized several **educational initiatives**:

- **School Programs:** In collaboration with the European Outdoor Education Hub, activities engaged local primary schools in Amphiloikia, teaching children about marine conservation and the impact of pollution. Primary school students from the 1st Primary School of Amphiloikia participated over two days, utilizing local seaside areas for hands-on learning.
- **University Workshops:** At the Faculty of Messolonghi, Healthy Seas will present during the Open Aquaculture Days and will organize others seminars in other faculties as previously done in May.

Additionally, two **harbour clean-ups** were conducted in Astakos and Mytikas with the support of a local diving partner recovering marine litter like fishing lines and tires from these locations.

Partners: This mission is a collaborative effort between the Healthy Seas foundation and Hyundai Motor Europe, supported by a diverse group of organizations and institutional partners.

Acknowledgements are extended to the volunteer divers of Ghost Diving, who tirelessly operated at sea to recover nets, detach them from the rings, and document the process underwater and on the surface with cameras.

Associated partners include Aquafil, Diopas, Ozon, the European Outdoor Education Hub, We Dive We Clean, Odyssey Outdoor Activities, and DOTANK Plus, which served as our impact strategy and project development advisor.

We also appreciate the support from our institutional partners: the Municipality of Nafpaktia, Municipality of Xiromero, Municipality of Ithaca, Municipality of Amfilochia,

the Decentralized Administration of Peloponnese, Western Greece and the Ionian, the Hellenic Public Real Estate Agency of Aetolia-Acarmania, and the Port Authority of Nafpaktos. This project operates under the auspices of the Region of Western Greece and the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Greece.

Quotes:

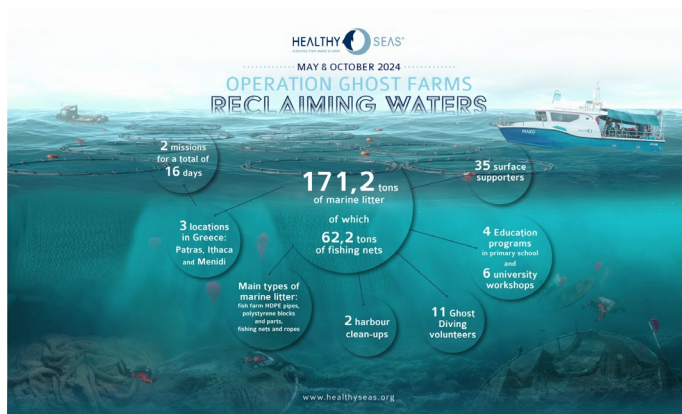
Veronika Mikos, Director of Healthy Seas, reflected on the success of the year:

"This year has been remarkable. With three major clean-ups and many educational programs, we've made an incredible impact, not only in removing waste but also in raising awareness among communities and the next generation. We are grateful to our partners and volunteers for their commitment and hard work."

Elvira Herrera, Corporate Communications Expert at Hyundai Motor Europe, added:

"Our partnership with the Healthy Seas Foundation underlines our commitment to a sustainable future through our 'Progress for Humanity' strategy. By addressing marine pollution at its source, we protect ecosystems and support coastal communities, making a lasting, positive impact."

Results (May project and October project):



October Clean-up:

- People involved: 6 days and 35 people
- 128.5 tons of marine litter collected – equal to about 50 big containers
- Of which 50.9 tons of fishing nets

May Clean-up:

- People involved: 30 people, 8 days
- 42.7 tons of litter collected – equal to about 15 big containers
- Of which 11.3 tons were fishing nets.



Educational Programs (between May and end of the year): 4 primary school programs and 6 or more university workshops throughout the year.

Harbor Clean-ups: Two locations cleaned (Astakos and Mytikas).

This year's successful missions demonstrate the power of collaboration in tackling marine pollution. Healthy Seas and Hyundai Motor Europe encourage ongoing community and partner involvement to sustain and expand these crucial conservation efforts.

About Healthy Seas:

Healthy Seas Foundation is dedicated to safeguarding the world's oceans and seas through three key pillars: clean-up, education, and prevention of marine litter.

Our primary mission is to tackle the problem of marine debris, with a particular emphasis on fishing nets, to promote healthier aquatic ecosystems. Over the past decade, we have forged collaborations with volunteer divers, educators, fishermen, harbour authorities, and waste managers on a global scale.

While we are engaged in repurposing marine litter into innovative products through partnerships, our core focus remains on marine conservation. Together with 150 partners and nearly 550 dedicated volunteers, we have collected 991 tons of fishing nets and other marine litter since our inception in 2013.

More information about ghost farms, previous projects and coverage:

<https://www.healthyseas.org/knowledge/ghost-farms-problem/>

Media Assets: Please make sure to use the credits according to the folder name.

Pictures from October mission (surface and underwater + infographics):

<https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fo/w0wj8hr2r0mz1fnanig9o/AErBPOuUMkNHWqgRzDxmRI?rlkey=6qskr7p8s3h12jprhesnpibsv&st=fesi5chg&dl=0>

Video Reel from October mission:

<https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/ocztcb3th3dzhk0m5mva3/PRESS-REEL.mp4?rlkey=ruech726nclis8b7qezxvtsg&st=mlsm9p0r&dl=0>

From May project (video and pictures):

https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fo/ok4ytra6lst2b0engrre0/AJhrLgD-I_LA1E6nliYGjMM?rlkey=vdujqnkdftbt46r68c86nixw&st=6d59g5aj&dl=0

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