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MONITORING MARINE BENTHIC MACROPHYTES (SEAWEED AND SEAGRASS) SPECIES IN SAROS BAY (NORTH AEGEAN SEA, TURKEY) MARINE PROTECTED AREA

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ABSTRACT

This study was funded by the Turkish Ministry of Environment and Urbanization, General Directorate For Environmental Management as a part of "Determination of Terrestrial and Marine Biodiversity in Saros Bay Specially Protected Area" Project and was performed during 2013-2014. Macrophytes species distributed in the region have been determined and facies regions were mapped in the scope of the study. Samples were collected by vertical and horizontal underwater scanning in 16 different stations at 0 – 40 m depth by Scientific SCUBA and free diving.

As a result of this study, total of 209 taxon species and sub species have been identified: Red algae (98 taxon, Rhodophyta), brown algae (51 taxon, Ochrophyta), green algae (56 taxon, Chlorophyta), blue-green algae (one taxon Cyanobacteria), diatoms (one taxon, Bacillariophyceae) and seagrasses (two taxon Tracheophyta). There were three new registries for Turkish coastal zones, and 11 for Saros Bay. Additionally, five exotic species and five protected species were determined during the study. At the end of the study, distribution areas of protected species, especially *P. oceanica* beds, are mapped and sensitive regions are classified under five categories. Overall evaluation of the region is rated as rich in terms of algae vegetation and healthy *P. oceanica* beds.

Keywords: Seaweed, Seagrasses, Saros Bay, Aegean Sea, Turkey.