

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS 1:
MUNICIPALITY OF TERMOLI
01/30/2026

INTERVIEWERS:

- DI FABIO IOLANDA
- DI FLORIO ANDREA

INTERVIEW WITH THE MUNICIPALITY OF TERMOLI 30/01/26

SIGNING OF THE MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

INTERVIEWEES

- Ciciola Silvana (Councillor for the Environment of the Municipality of Termoli)
- Sardella Giovanni (ARPA MOLISE)
- Del Borrello Fiorenza (Councillor for the Environment of the Municipality of Montenero di Bisaccia) (deputy mayor Simona Contucci)
- Lascialandà Giampiero (Deputy Mayor of Petacciato) (deputy mayor ...)
- Marinucci Paola (President of the “Armatori Pesca del Molise” Association)
- Cannarsa Basso (President of the “Produttori Pesca del Molise” Association)
- Mascilongo Roberto (representing Guidotti Domenico of Federpesca)
- Di Lallo Alessandro (Gal Molise)
- Norante Nicola (representative of the magazine “Uccelli d'Italia”)
- Iovine Francesco (member of ISPRA)

PART 1: INITIAL GREETINGS FROM CICIOLA SILVANA

"I welcome all of you students and those who will speak about this extraordinary project, funded by MAPA, an Italy-Croatia intervention programme.

First of all, I bring you greetings from the entire administration and the Mayor, who unfortunately is here in the Town Hall but is engaged in a meeting that he cannot leave. I am really very happy that you have chosen Termoli to talk about this wonderful project; I have spoken to the students at Boccardi and I am really pleased to know that they are so interested. We exchanged a few words about this project and I would like to congratulate

you, your teachers and your Headteacher, who have shown great attention to environmental issues: this is truly extraordinary.

As I said, we didn't have much time because we were busy on many fronts, but given the timing that was important for you to respect today, we tried and we succeeded. Although we haven't prepared everything in detail in terms of the schedule of speeches, we will adjust as we go along. If it's okay with you, I'll hand over directly to Giovanni Sardella.

PART 2: SPEECH BY GIOVANNI SARDELLA

“Good morning, I am Giovanni Sardella from ARPA Molise. We are partners in the MAPA project together with GAL Molise, whom I would like to thank for the administrative and managerial support provided in many of our activities.

I would like to thank all the participants and hope that this will be an interesting opportunity to share the spirit of the initiative. The main objective of the project is to bring to fruition the idea of protecting an area of Molise that was initially thought to have little potential for the establishment of a protected area. However, the project has given us the opportunity to better understand how our territory still possesses strong resilience systems, i.e. the ability to overcome human impact on nature.

Thanks to the studies carried out and comparisons with other areas, such as the Conero Park and some areas of the Croatian coast, we were able to share valuable experiences. This gave us the opportunity to apply the necessary protection measures to promote the creation of a protected area in our territory.

We have tried to involve most of the local stakeholders: I would like to thank all the local authorities, who have participated with great interest in our initiatives, and the stakeholders. I am referring to those who work in the marine sector and who, understandably, may have concerns about the establishment of a protected area due to possible restrictions on their activities. However, we are trying to explain that it is not a question of imposing limits, but rather of creating new opportunities, which we will try to stimulate today.

For example, Alessandro will illustrate the details of a fishing tourism course, an initiative that will allow the development of sustainable forms of economy within the protected area. That is precisely the purpose of today's meeting: by signing a memorandum of understanding, we want to lay the foundations for a collective commitment. The aim is to define with the Molise Region the methods of protection and the boundaries of the area, which will be decided together with the municipalities, in order to finally protect this territory effectively.

I would like to thank everyone and add that it is really nice to see the young people here: they are the main actors of the future and those who will need to have the necessary sensitivity to carry on with environmental protection. The environment is a unique and irreplaceable asset, therefore it must be protected in the most appropriate way.

With regard to the memorandum of understanding, each participant may submit proposals for the future, with a view to establishing a form of legal protection to be proposed to the Region. We will now proceed with the agenda.

PART 3: SPEECH BY ROBERTO MASCILONGO

“Good morning, everyone. Today I will talk to you about Innovation Sea, a company that has been part of the Guidotti Group for four years, but which boasts 25 years of experience in the sector. We are a start-up operating in the Blue Economy and we are carrying out projects of great importance. Before going into detail, I will show you a short explanatory video. (Video screening follows) As you have seen, we use drones and ROVs (Remotely Operated Vehicles) for environmental reconnaissance. These tools are essential: drones allow us to monitor very large areas, while ROVs — actual underwater robots equipped with cameras — probe the seabed. We also use advanced methodologies to obtain accurate three-dimensional analyses. Initially, Innovation Sea was mainly concerned with cleaning up the sea surface, but we soon realised that the vast majority of waste actually settles on the seabed. The only effective way to tackle this problem is to collaborate with fishermen, who unintentionally collect large amounts of debris during their normal fishing activities.

We have therefore entered into an agreement with national fishing federations to ensure that this waste — technically referred to as RAP (Accidentally Caught Waste) — is brought ashore. Here, it is taken over by authorised companies which, where possible, manage its recycling, feeding into a circular economy system. You are probably aware of the so-called Salvamare Law; although several implementing decrees are still pending, the first incentives for fishermen who bring waste ashore are beginning to take effect. However, the essential condition is certification of the origin of the waste. To ensure maximum transparency, we have adopted software based on Blockchain technology. This system creates a legal, secure and immutable certification of all stages: from the fisherman's departure to sea to final disposal or recycling. Everything is tracked in the so-called “digital marine waste passport”, which we hope will soon feed into a dedicated national register. Returning to the aspects that most interest our project, I would like to emphasise that we work extensively with universities and schools. In particular, we have collaborated with the “Marconi” Technical Institute in Campobasso: the students have developed a system that, by analysing images transmitted live from drones, can identify the type of waste (e.g. how much plastic is present).

This is an extraordinary achievement by students, demonstrating that these technologies are accessible. The system identifies objects in the sea and, using artificial intelligence, recognises their material. This technology is invaluable for environmental monitoring: it is not limited to surveillance from above, but also allows data on the state of the ecosystem to be collected and automatic alerts to be generated in the event of anomalies. Finally, I would like to present “Sea Trace”, our blockchain-based tracking platform, which is already fully operational. Thank you all for your attention.”

PART 4: SPEECH BY LALLO ALESSANDRO

“Good morning everyone, I am Alessandro Di Lallo, representative of GAL Molise.

The MAPA project stands for Marine Adriatic Parks and has identified three pilot areas of particular interest: the mouth of the Trigno River, the Conero Park and the island of Silba in Croatia. It is important to note that these are not yet three marine protected areas; however, Conero and the island of Silba in particular aspire to become so. The aim of the project is not the immediate creation of legally protected areas, but the launch of an awareness-raising process aimed at defining good management practices and appropriate tools for enhancing the value of the territory. This is precisely why we have such a diverse audience today: political representatives, administrators, technicians and students. The MAPA project

encompasses all these levels: from institutional awareness-raising among administrators to the direct involvement of operators and the cultural and educational process of citizenship.

Following Giovanni's remarks, I would like to thank the municipalities of Montenero di Bisaccia and Petacciato for their constant presence. To date, the MAPA project has produced tangible results: research carried out in the Trigno estuary area has shown that the environment is still surprisingly uncontaminated, despite its proximity to the estuary, although it does exhibit the typical fragility of these ecosystems.

As for the activities planned for the next six months, I would like to involve the three municipalities directly: we will install surveillance cameras dedicated to environmental monitoring. We will liaise with you to identify the most suitable locations. I would like to reassure you about privacy: these devices are not used to record sensitive data about citizens, but to monitor the state of the coastline. As suggested by the mayor of Petacciato in a previous meeting, there are particularly sensitive areas where a camera could be very useful. At the same time, we will install information panels to illustrate the species present and the characteristics of the area.

Another key activity of MAPA is the promotion of fishing tourism. To study successful models, we visited marine protected areas in southern Sardinia and in March we will travel to San Pietro and Spain. These are not holidays, but technical meetings with local operators to understand how they apply fishing tourism and how to export that model here.

In this regard, there has been considerable interest in a training course lasting approximately 14 hours, organised by our technical partner Parco del Conero. This course will enable operators to obtain specific certification to practise fishing tourism. Some professionals from the Tremiti Islands, who already own fishing boats, have already signed up with enthusiasm. For operators present who would like to learn more, I have left some forms: it is an excellent opportunity to acquire new knowledge on a topic that, perhaps due to our specific coastal characteristics, has never been seriously addressed in Molise.

Today's meeting, characterised by a free and dialogue-based format, is part of the Ocean Action Festival, a format already tested at the University of Marche and on the island of Silba. The absence of a rigid agenda is deliberate: we want to encourage direct dialogue between students and the political world, allowing young people to ask questions and understand, for example, how the Municipality of Termoli is moving forward on environmental issues and what the next steps will be.

PART 5: SPEECH BY THE COUNCILLOR FOR THE ENVIRONMENT (MUNICIPALITY OF MONTENERO DI BISACCIA)

"Good morning, everyone. I would like to emphasise how important this project has been for us. The Montenero area is home to the mouth of the Trigno River, a veritable treasure trove of biodiversity that encompasses the sea, the land and the sky. We have discovered that this area is home to countless species of migratory birds, reminding us that the sea is not just about what happens underwater, but is an integrated ecosystem that must be preserved with the utmost care.

The MAPA project has been invaluable, first and foremost as a tool for knowledge and discussion. It has allowed us to engage in dialogue with stakeholders and to bring together

different experiences: from those who fish on a daily basis to those who study the nature of our territory. I am thinking, for example, of the valuable contribution of Dr Norante and the environmental associations, whose stories about the species that pass through the estuary never cease to amaze us.

As a municipality, we began the process of establishing a reserve or park at the mouth of the Trigno River in 2016. Unfortunately, these procedures are long and complex due to extremely detailed regulations. It is clear that a local council cannot do this alone: institutional support from the Region and the Ministry is essential. However, today I am certain of one thing: it is essential to start "from the bottom up", directly involving those who live and work in these areas.

Today, as part of this project, we local councils are going to sign a memorandum of understanding aimed at initiating a constructive dialogue. ARPA is often perceived by fishermen and trade associations as a purely repressive body; in reality, it performs an essential protective role. We are here to overcome these prejudices and share good practices, listening to the real needs of those who live by the sea every day.

Signing this memorandum is a fundamental step towards making a serious commitment to protecting the Adriatic, while also drawing on the experiences gained in other coastal areas. Finally, I would like to address the young people here today. I am very curious to find out more about the activities you have been involved in. I am proud of you because you have chosen to take on a complex and challenging project; I can see that you are attentive and "on the ball". The environment must be protected today in order to leave a positive mark and a concrete legacy for future generations. Thank you."

PART 6: SPEECH BY THE DEPUTY MAYOR OF PETACCIATO

"Good morning everyone, I am the Deputy Mayor of Petacciato. I always start from the assumption that the environmental issue is, first and foremost, a cultural challenge; for this reason, we place our trust in the younger generations, we place our trust in you. Our generation has probably failed in part in this task, but let us not lose hope. I firmly believe that the idea behind this project and the establishment of a marine reserve represent an invaluable added value for the entire Molise coast and the entire region. We must remember that we are guests of nature and, as such, we should act with the utmost respect. We have been lobbying the various institutional authorities for some time: we administrators and citizens are fully aware of the problems afflicting the area, but from a legal point of view we face too many constraints.

I am referring to the management of state-owned areas and pine forests, where restrictions are such that even necessary interventions during the summer period are blocked. We are well aware of the current critical issues; for this reason, thanks to the memorandum of understanding and the establishment of the marine reserve, we could put more pressure on the higher institutions. Our goal is to actively involve them in helping us to unblock the bureaucratic situation in our areas, specifically Petacciato and Montenero. We have great confidence in this project, we firmly believe in it and we thank you for your commitment. A special greeting to Dr Norante, whom we deeply respect for his work.

PART 7: SPEECH BY DR. NICOLA NORANTE + QUESTION

"Good morning, my name is Nicola Norante. I have been studying the birdlife of Molise for forty years and I can say that the mouth of the Trigno river is one of the most important and rare ecosystems in our region. I will explain technically why protecting it is a fundamental choice, starting with a comparison between the three sites in the project: Conero, the island of Silba and the mouth of the Trigno. Conero and Silba are natural rocky promontories that already host a well-established fish biodiversity. Thinking of a park at the mouth of the Trigno is, in a sense, a "heroic act". Studies conducted by marine biologists, botanists and us ornithologists from the Molise Ornithological Studies Group (the only institutional body in the sector in the area) show that this estuary acts as a natural filter. The Municipality of Montenero has shown great sensitivity in understanding that the species that frequent this habitat deserve protection. The mouth of the Trigno is unique in its changeability: its conformation naturally creates different water basins and wetlands, each of which is home to specific biodiversity. We have compiled a national checklist, filed with the Italian Council for Ornithological Research, which lists 216 species of birds. If you consider that there are just over 500 species in the whole of central Italy, you will understand that almost half of them pass through here.

Creating a terrestrial reserve adjacent to a marine area is extremely valuable: the river mouth is the "kidney" of the ecosystem. The vegetation and species that nest there filter waste and heavy metals, preventing these pollutants from reaching the sea. This process ensures clearer water and an environment conducive to fish reproduction, also promoting the growth of aquatic plants similar to Posidonia, which oxygenate the sea and protect the coast from erosion. Ten years ago, as environmental groups, we proposed the creation of an Ornithological Observatory to regional politicians. The idea came about almost by chance: one day, unable to reach the Tremiti Islands for monitoring, we stopped at the mouth of the Trigno. It seemed as if the whole of Northern Europe had moved there: we counted over 130 species in migration, from Scandinavian seagulls to rare sea ducks. Our Swiss, German and Austrian colleagues said to us, "You have a treasure, why don't you make the most of it?". Creating a reserve means filtering and monitoring who uses the area, from fishermen to visitors, ensuring concrete benefits such as an increase in valuable fish species (mullet, sea bass) that lay their eggs in these brackish waters. My hope is that the first concrete step will be the design of an observatory and a ringing station.

This year, we have already begun research activities that we intend to continue, using GPS systems to track the migratory routes of species that, starting from Siberia and weighing just a few grams, cross the Balkans to reach the Sahara.

QUESTION FROM DI FABIO IOLANDA

'We would like to know what factors could compromise the effectiveness of the project we are monitoring and what critical issues could arise over time.'

ANSWER FROM DR. NORANTE

"I believe that the main limitations are essentially linked to the impact of human activities in the areas we are studying. It is necessary to find a balance between human activities and

conservation measures; the most important challenge, therefore, is to raise awareness in the community so that people understand that protecting the environment is not a limitation to development, but a fundamental resource. With this in mind, administrators and all the institutions involved — from ARPA, which is responsible for monitoring and analysis, to the Region, which issues authorisations — must always carry out a rigorous cost-benefit analysis.

Every work or installation must be weighed against the preservation of the ecosystem. As I said before, the environment is not an infinite resource: it belongs to us only as long as we are able to protect it. There is a level of resilience, or resistance to “attacks” from human activities, which has an insurmountable limit. Once that threshold is crossed, the damage becomes irreversible and we will no longer be able to turn back or promote development that is compatible with existing biodiversity. We must all feel that we are protagonists of this change, especially local councils, which must act as guardians of the territory. Finally, I would like to issue a warning, which we at ARPA often try to convey, even to businesses operating outside these areas: too often, actions are taken lightly, without understanding that every business activity must be based, as a primary principle, on respect for the environment.”

PART 8: COMMENTS BY PAOLA MARINUCCI

“When I hear talk of marine parks, I always worry because we care deeply about the fate of local coastal fishing. As for the fishing tourism course, we have already signed up and will invite our members to participate. However, it is essential to protect small-scale fishing, which operates close to the coast. We hope that the establishment of a protected area will serve to crack down on those who fish without a licence, protecting those who work within the law. We trawler fishermen are the first to recover from the sea the waste that others throw into the rivers. We only ask to be involved from the outset of projects, not after the fact.

PART 9: COMMENTS BY BASSO CANNARSA (FEDERPESCA)

We monitor the sea 365 days a year, day and night. We detect changes in the sea in real time and can make a decisive contribution. The socio-economic aspect must be considered: the Trigno area affects clam fishing and small-scale fishing. We are not opposed to protection — between 2010 and 2016, we proposed management plans and biological protection zones, even requesting the extension of fishing bans to encourage species reproduction — but our requests are often lost in bureaucracy. We are working to update a law from the 1990s that is now obsolete: it can be an excellent source of additional income and a way to reduce fishing effort.

PART 10: SPEECH BY IOVINE FRANCESCO (FISHERMEN’S COOPERATIVE)

I work in small-scale fishing and have invested heavily in a new boat designed specifically for fishing tourism. As I also operate in the Tremiti Islands, I am very familiar with the dynamics of protected areas. I wonder: if an area is created at the mouth of the Trigno, how will I be able to take tourists there to fish if we are not involved in the zoning? It is essential to understand "how, where and when" we will be able to work. We small-scale fishermen work manually, pulling the nets by hand and often having to clean them of the rubbish that gets caught in them. Paradoxically, if I bring the collected rubbish ashore, I risk a fine because I am not authorised to transport waste. We want to be protagonists of this change because we truly believe in fishing tourism.

PART 11: LEGAMBIENTE REPRESENTATIVE

"The richness of biodiversity must be protected, also in the interests of future generations, as stated in Article 9 of the Constitution. In Italy, protected areas cover 11% of the territory, compared to the 30% required by Europe for 2030. In Molise, we are stuck at 1.70%: too low a percentage for a region that defines itself as unspoilt. The MAPA project is a cooperation project: we listened to the concerns of operators and, for this reason, we did not propose a strict marine protected area for Termoli, but a plan to enhance the marine environment that takes the economic sector into account. We are focusing on projects such as the Green Deal and jellyfish monitoring in Petacciato, which do not interfere with the work of fishermen."

PART 12: PRESENTATION BY GRAZIA CIFFOLILLO AND LORENZO FIARDI (BOCCARDI - TIBERIO INSTITUTE)

Grazia Ciffolillo: 'We represent the Boccardi-Tiberio school and participate in the ASOC (A Scuola di OpenCoesione) project. We carry out civic monitoring to check how public funds allocated to the MAPA project are used. We collaborate with a Croatian school and have different roles: I am the Project Manager, Lorenzo is the Graphic Designer. We have created a website to showcase our work.'

Lorenzo Fiardi illustrates the digital tools: 'We publish scientific news and updates on the project on our website and social media. We have created the "Blue Waves" logo and a padlet that acts as an information "wall". There is a section dedicated to monitoring and we also recount our practical experiences, such as the use of VR headsets to simulate ship docking manoeuvres.'

PART 13: QUESTION FROM ANDREA DI FLORIO

What is the impact of businesses in the Termoli industrial area on the coast? Do you have any data?'

SARDELLA GIOVANNI

Giovanni Sardella (ARPA): "The impact on the river and sea is significant but constantly monitored. The main critical issues arise from an industrial purification plant located on the Abruzzo side and intensive agricultural activity along the Trigno valley, which acts as a collector. As ARPA, we carry out continuous monitoring and participate in the European Marine Strategy project for in-depth investigations at sea. We collaborate with municipalities to manage emergencies, especially during the summer. This study is preparatory to limiting the impact of human activities. Your contribution as young people is essential: raise awareness among your families to apply good daily practices for environmental management."