
INTERVIEW FOCE TRIGNO - MARINA DI MONTENERO DI BISACCIA 03/03/2026

OLIVIERI FRANCESCO OWNER OF CAMPING COSTA VERDE - MARINA DI MONTENERO DI BISACCIA

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You are familiar with the MAPA project. What do you expect from the implementation of the project in terms of new opportunities for your company, or in general for the economic development of your area or city?

"Well, this is what I understand: it is an international project, in quotation marks, which originated in Croatia and is being developed both in Croatia and at the mouth of the Trigno River and in an area of Conero in Ancona. It basically concerns — and here I got a little confused — the marine reserve, the protection of the sea. I read that various meetings were held in Campobasso and elsewhere to bring young people together, or that fishermen were brought here to Sardinia to help them understand certain things. The aim is to protect the sea from overfishing and to transform it, in part, into fishing tourism."

Why do you think it's difficult?

"Because a fisherman who works as a fisherman finds it difficult to switch to fishing tourism. I mean, they're two different things. I may be in favour of it, but someone who fishes... I think there are regulations that dictate the timing, i.e. when fishing season opens and closes, what can be fished, based on the size of the net mesh, whether large or small fish can be caught, as well as clams, shellfish and everything else. Transforming fishing into fishing tourism — perhaps I'm wrong, I haven't quite got to that mindset yet. I see it as something else: fishing tourism is people who go fishing for sport, but not to supply the food chain of restaurants or the food industry. Transforming commercial fishing areas into fishing tourism... I imagine a fishing boat where you get on with your rod and go fishing for tuna or other fish. I see it as a bit complicated: changing the job of someone who has always done that job, in my opinion, is wrong.

So, how do you think the intervention has improved the environment in which you operate? Has it brought any direct benefits?

"No, basically I haven't seen anything. The project started in 2023-2024, correct me if I'm wrong, and ends in July 2026. The aim is to rebuild the seabed with oysters, worms, something natural: I fully agree. But I repeat, these projects are welcome, because they are good for everyone, people are educated, there are many positive things. But it must not end there: at the end of July, the project must be propagated, continued. It's not a case of taking the money for the project and then saying goodbye and thank you, as happens with so many

other projects. Let me give you an example: the cycle path to Montenero. That cycle path cost a lot of money when the funds were available. Now, as it was coming along, it looks like something that was thrown in there because the money was available. Now, if today the project costs €1,426,000, divided among 34 participants, between courses, advertising, various activities... will we have any money left over for the final product? That is, for actual conservation? Because if it's only used to make plans, to draw a big dotted green line to say "this is the reserve area" and then it ends there — we put up a sign, we write "Nature reserve, mouth of the Trigno" — it's a shame. Things need to be done constructively, and once something has been built, it needs to be maintained: there's a whole organisation behind it. I read that they may also have to run courses for sea guardians, or something like that. But sea guardians cannot work for free: as we unfortunately see in all associations, they tend to die out because the funding runs out.

Once upon a time, there were also beach guardians—something was done for the Kentish plover, for turtles, for other species—but now, if you look into it, those projects have all been discontinued. If this project is to bear fruit, it must aim to build something that will remain in the future. As I see it now, it's a bit complicated. I honestly haven't seen anything concrete — what I've read is because I had already done my research, but in practice I don't know. Identifying a nature reserve area where there are various types of fish, various types of birds, various types of species... and then identifying that same spot as a loading and unloading point for beach erosion material — have you seen that mountain of rocks? It doesn't make sense. You're entering a nature reserve where you should be tiptoeing around."

These are the problems that could hinder the project. From a technical point of view, what others could there be?

"For me, a protected area is a place you enter politely, quietly, because you are entering someone else's habitat. It is protected in the sense that, in quotation marks, living animals take precedence over humans. So if we identify an area such as the mouth of the Trigno, which is already a de facto nature reserve—as several authorities have said—it makes no sense to carry out work there, because it disrupts the ecosystem. With a cliff to be dismantled, trucks going back and forth, intense activity, while we have said that this is a protected area where we should remain silent.

That mountain of rocks you saw is needed to restore the cliffs in San Salvo, on the south side of the river, where part of the coast is subject to erosion. Unfortunately, this work has to be done, it's not that it shouldn't be done — just as renaturalization has to be done here on land and everywhere else — but we need to identify areas for loading and unloading the material. However, in my opinion, this cannot be done in the same place that we have designated as a protected area. If we are creating a protected area, then loading and unloading must be done elsewhere. Instead, if you want to reach the area by car, at a certain point you will find a construction site. They are building a cycle bridge there. Usually, you could drive through, but now that road is closed. That road you saw on your way to the sea, on the right there is tall grass and a low wall: that is the second river embankment. The Trigno has two embankments—the first and the second—the second borders the campsite and the road, then there is another one further inland for flooding. But along that road, if you walk it, it is full of all kinds of rubbish. One wants to do things properly, but then... a sign alone is not enough. Next to the church, there is a sign for a project related to trees: trying to do a big project. What that project is, I don't know. The fundamental point that young people

need to understand, in order to move towards a better world, is to respect the intended use of places: if something is intended for a certain purpose, you cannot do other things in that same place.

There is a sort of construction site there, there are warehouses, there is an area that you have now seen like this, at a standstill. But when it is in operation, there are ships arriving to pick up the material, trucks unloading, there is a constant coming and going.

If we consider it as a habitat where fish must live—because that's how I see it: the natural area, the fish, for goodness' sake, you stay quiet, you stroll, you take a walk, but the animals must not be subjected to constant noise. It's not a happy oasis if it's not treated as such. Because otherwise it makes no sense: here, this whole area of the sea, this area until the early 2000s, nothing could be done because it was a site of community interest. The most protected animal, if I'm not mistaken, was the Salamandrina. So, when you dig to build infrastructure, you destroy the animals' nests and shelters.

Then you move on to the next phase. But if you want to do something where there is already something active—for example, a protected area on the Trigno River, which I think has already been defined as such—you have to take that into account. However, this designation, in itself, does not entail any concrete constraints: everyone can do what they want because there is no coordination between the authorities. Authority X arrives and decides to do thing Y without caring what the others are doing. There is no coordination. San Salvo needs to do the work, I agree — so it takes a loading point that is elsewhere. Why does it come here? Usually, the river mouths are used, which are easier because there are piers. The other loading point is located two minutes away at the mouth of the Biferno, in Petacciato Marina. The same can be said of what, in quotation marks, should be a protected area.

Yes, we have noticed a sort of deterioration: there is plastic, which is not exactly ideal for a reserve. Seeing it like this, it doesn't look like a reserve.

The definition alone does not change the situation: a 360° reserve must be cared for in a certain way. Money must be found to maintain it. It's true that people throw away paper and plastic, but it's also true that if there is money allocated to a reserve, something has to be given to clean it up regularly. That one annual collection day with Plastic Free is not enough: once a year is not enough.

As a school, we have also made an agreement with the Plastic Free association to protect and raise awareness among young people.

“Awareness is important, but it is essential that young people are left with something concrete—that they understand how things work. That way, when they become mayor, councilor, or entrepreneur, they will remember that things have to be done in a certain way, and that money should not be the only thing that matters. Unfortunately, that is often how it works today: those with the most money are in charge.”

What actions are you taking to protect this area?

“Well, I personally have fought hard, and we are seeing some results on the purification plant front. If you look for some news around, you will see that in past years the river water was practically brown. Now it's starting to be slightly clearer. So environmental protection, even

by agencies that now—I don't want to blame anyone, I can't say for sure that it was them—but the evidence is there. If you go to Google Maps—you know how to use it—you can go back in time. Look at today's satellite photo, from the highway bridge towards the sea and from the highway bridge towards the mountains: you will see two colors that are almost the same today. Then go back a few years and you will see a clear difference: something was wrong. If something has been resolved, so much the better. Keeping the area clean—for the river, for the animals, for the fish—is a matter that concerns everyone, because we also go to the sea and we eat the fish.

From a tourist point of view, has the situation improved or worsened? Is there more attention, or is it left as it is?

That's a world unto itself, left there, and it's not that interesting. If you go in the summer, you'll find cars, campers, trailers, people camping. From what I see on the internet, I believe there are many interventions by the Coast Guard and the Finance Police—but in reality, I personally haven't noticed this. Maybe there are, I don't know everything about everyone. But in the summer, you take a walk and see that it's full of campers parked there: it doesn't seem normal to me that there are campsites in a nature reserve. In Italy, free camping is prohibited everywhere, let alone in a nature reserve. Yet there are people who bring their caravans there even on Saturdays and Sundays.

Tomorrow we have a meeting with the mayor, who is coming to our school. Can you suggest some questions for us to ask her?

Well, Simona is very keen on this issue, and she has also been active on other issues. If you go to her profile, you will see photos of her going under the bridge to take walks and monitor the situation. She has been very active on the issue of the water treatment plant over the last five years as mayor, and in the previous five years as councilor for the environment. I must say that she has been very keen on this river and marina issue over the last nine or ten years. One question to ask her might be whether she thinks the project will not only remain on paper but will continue in the future, and how this area could be better protected. Unfortunately, I think this is not so much a municipal issue as a regional one: it involves the Region, the Forestry Police, and the whole chain of authorities. The municipality can do little on state-owned land—it shrugs its shoulders and says, 'What can I do? I can push for the relevant authorities to take action. Over the last nine years, the municipality has pushed hard, especially for the treatment plant and, consequently, for the river. On paper, apart from going in to clean up the area from time to time, there is not much that can be done. I have always recommended closing that road to traffic: at least those who need to go there won't go with a truck to dump stuff. Those who need to go fishing will walk there. It's not like you drag a mattress there to throw it away: it's quicker to go to the recycling center in Montenero or San Salvo. Yet there is everything there: mattresses, appliances, it's really a dump. You can see it on Google Maps, because we didn't go in there, obviously. You can see the whole situation with the satellite view. I also fly my drone there from time to time. Look: this is the riverbank, this is the road. You've come this far, where there's that mountain of rocks. There should also be a narrow path here—I've cycled along it—here it is. If you go there, you can clearly see that someone has tried to clean up some areas, but then they threw more stuff there. There is some ferrous material. As you go further, there is even more, especially at the beginning, where it is more accessible: you get there, throw your stuff

away, and leave. I took this photo in October-November, a few months ago. I enjoy playing with my camera, despite my age. So, in my opinion, right at the beginning, where there are these concrete blocks, it should be closed off and left closed. Anyone who is willing to tidy up and clean up is welcome. My only doubt in all this is that projects will be made and then left to die there. This applies to any type of comprehensive project: if you start it, you have to see it through. Otherwise, there's no point in even starting. We make nice presentations, we say we're going to do things, and then they die there because the funds have run out. At least we raise awareness, we agree, but it should be structured from the beginning: "We have €1.4 million for the next 10-15-20 years, in the meantime we'll find more money." Instead, with this €1,400,000 divided between three partners, we do a few concrete things and then it's over. Unfortunately, this is the case for public works in general: often more than half of the money is spent on ancillary expenses, and less than half ends up on the work itself."