NaTour4CChange | Interreg Euro-MED | Co-funded by the European Union

Climate-Friendly Destination Marketing and Communication Strategy

Hutovo Blato Nature Park – Pilot Destination

Ministarstvo poljoprivrede, šumarstva i vodoprivrede HNŽ

Contracting authority: Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management of the Herzegovina-Neretva Canton

August 2026

Table of Content

1. Introduction and Context 3
2. Climate Risks and Communication Implications 4
2.1 Priority Nature-based Solutions (NbS) and the role of communication 6
3. Strategic Communication Objectives 7
4. Target Audiences 8
5. Core Messages and Narrative 9
5.1 Narrative framing 9
5.2 Core messages 10
5.3 Connection to local identity 10
6. Communication Channels and Touchpoints 11
6.1 Existing channels and baseline practices 11
6.2 Touchpoint plan across the visitor journey 11
6.3 Channel roles 12
7. Key Campaign Actions 12
Campaign 1: "Guardians of the Wetland" (Čuvari močvare) 12
Campaign 2: "Every Drop for the Wetland" (Svaka kap za močvaru) 14
Seasonal action: visit-timing communication 15
Seasonal action: fire-prevention protocol 15
8. Stakeholder Engagement 15
8.1 Roles 15
8.2 Coordination mechanisms 16
9. Monitoring and Evaluation 17
9.1 Baseline and target values 17
9.2 Indicators 17
9.3 Responsibilities and reporting 18
10. Implementation Roadmap 18
10.1 Timeline 18
10.2 Resource requirements 19

10.3 Availability of proposed infrastructure and communication mechanisms 19

References 21

1. Introduction and Context

Hutovo Blato is one of two nature parks in Bosnia and Herzegovina and one of the most important wetland areas in the wider Mediterranean region. It accounts for 8.05% of the total area under state protection in BiH, or 10.4% of the total area of all protected areas in the Federation of BiH. The park was established in 1995, included on the Provisional List of National Monuments of Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2002, and inscribed on the list of wetlands of international importance under the Ramsar Convention in 2001. The International Council for Bird Preservation (ICBP) recognised it as an internationally important bird habitat as early as 1998, and according to the park's Management Plan and Ramsar documentation it is considered one of the largest wintering grounds for birds in Europe. Administratively, the park falls within the municipalities of Čapljina and Stolac, on the left bank of the Neretva River, covering approximately 7,800 hectares of wetland, flatland and hilly terrain with elevations from 1 to 588 metres above sea level. Its aquatic core comprises six larger lakes (Deransko, Svitavsko, Jelim, Orah, Drijen and Škrka) connected by the Krupa River to the lower course of the Neretva.

As a sensitive Mediterranean and sub-Mediterranean ecosystem, Hutovo Blato is particularly exposed to climate change: altered hydrological conditions driven by hydropower operations and drought, heat extremes, wildfire risk and growing pressure on natural resources. Tourism in the park is still in its early stages, concentrated around the Karaotok area, with peak visitation in spring and early autumn. This creates a strategic opportunity: unlike mature destinations that must retrofit sustainability into an already established visitor economy, Hutovo Blato can embed climate-responsible communication into its destination identity from the outset.

NaTour4CChange is a European initiative under the Interreg Euro-MED Programme aimed at enhancing the governance of sustainable tourism in regions of high environmental value by reconnecting tourism and nature through an ecosystem-based approach. Within the project, Hutovo Blato serves as the pilot destination for the Herzegovina-Neretva Canton (HNC). Climate risks, priority actions and Nature-based Solutions (NbS) have already been identified through the project deliverable D2.4.1 and the Regional Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation Strategy for Tourism of the HNC (D2.5.1); the marketing and communication component is expected to translate these existing findings into practical actions aimed at influencing the behaviour of visitors and other relevant target groups.

The overall goal of this Strategy is to create the conditions for climate-friendly destination tourism

marketing that converts existing climate priorities into targeted actions supporting behaviour change, destination climate resilience and sustainable tourism management. Communication for climate resilience should not remain at the level of general awareness raising; its purpose is to translate climate priorities into targeted communication and marketing actions, with a clear link between the climate risk, the selected action or NbS measure, the target audience and the behaviour to be influenced. The specific objectives of the Strategy are: (i) identifying the key climate risks and priorities for Hutovo Blato and their implications for tourism, visitor experience and destination communication; (ii) defining a limited set of communication objectives, priority audiences and measurable behaviours; (iii) developing key messages, narrative, channels and touchpoints, campaigns and a stakeholder-engagement approach; and (iv) defining an implementation, monitoring and evaluation framework with a timeline, key actions, KPIs, resource needs and recommendations for further application.

This Strategy builds on, and does not duplicate, existing project outputs: the climate risk and vulnerability assessment (D2.4.1), the Regional Strategy (D2.5.1) and the forthcoming Destination Tourism Climate Action Plan for Hutovo Blato (D3.4.1). Methodological guidance is taken from the Manual on Destination Marketing and Communication for Climate Action (D1.8) and its Toolbox, and the theoretical framing draws on research on interpretation and visitor behaviour in ecotourism (Moscardo, 1996; Steg & Vlek, 2009; Lopez Gutierrez et al., 2020) and on the literature on managing visitor pressure in protected areas (Mandić & Petrić, eds., 2021). The objectives and priorities set out here should be discussed and validated with key stakeholders – the park management, the Tourism Climate Action Taskforce, municipalities and tourism businesses – to ensure relevance, feasibility and local ownership.

2. Climate Risks and Communication Implications

The climate risk assessment for the HNC region (D2.4.1), based on hydro-meteorological data, expert analysis and a participatory questionnaire, shows that natural areas are the most vulnerable tourism asset group, with forest fires already at a higher-medium risk level in the current climate, and extreme temperatures, heatwaves, drought and river floods intensifying in future climate projections. For Hutovo Blato specifically, the assessment highlights the structural vulnerability of a wetland whose water regime depends on the Neretva River and on hydropower operations upstream: the Krupa River has no fixed source and can flow in either direction; water covers about 39% of the park; salinization of water and soil is advancing in the Neretva Delta; and prolonged droughts – such as those of 2023, which affected 70% of agricultural land in Herzegovina – directly threaten the wetland's ecological stability.

In line with the project guidance to focus on a limited number of priorities, this Strategy addresses three priority climate risks and their communication implications:

Climate risk	Tourism impact	Communication sensitivity	Communication implication / need	Visitor behaviour relevance
1. Disruption of the water regime: drought, reduced inflow, salinization	Degradation of the wetland ecosystem that constitutes the core attraction; lower lake levels affecting boat tours, birdwatching and fishing; long-term loss of destination appeal	Politically sensitive (hydropower, agriculture, water management); fear that "talking about problems" damages destination image	Explain why the wetland matters and what is being done (wetland restoration, hydrological research, NbS) without alarmism; promote the mindful use of water as a limited resource and responsible consumption; build the narrative of the wetland as a living, protected system visitors can help safeguard	Use refill stations instead of buying bottled water; mindful water use; support and visit restoration sites; choose guided tours that interpret the wetland
2. Heatwaves and extreme summer temperatures (up to 40°C in lower HNC)	Reduced visitor comfort and safety in summer; suppressed summer visitation (in August 2023, during a period of extreme heat, Neum recorded a 20% drop in overnight stays – D2.4.1); pressure to shift the season	Reluctance of businesses to highlight risks; concern about discouraging summer bookings	Provide practical, positively framed guidance (timing, shade, hydration, morning/evening activities); promote spring and early autumn – already the park's natural peak – as the prime visiting seasons, turning a climate constraint into a deseasonalisation opportunity	Adjust visit timing (morning/late afternoon, shoulder seasons); use shaded routes; hydrate and use refill stations
3. Wildfires and intensifying extreme events (fires risk for natural areas; river floods increasing)	Direct threat to habitats, trails and visitor safety; potential closures and infrastructure damage; degraded visitor experience	High sensitivity during fire season; need to avoid both complacency and panic; local economic dependence on visitation	Communicate fire-prevention rules clearly and seasonally; explain why restrictions exist (protecting a Ramsar site and an important bird wintering ground); integrate early-warning information into visitor channels	No open fire, no cigarettes in nature, comply with closures and ranger instructions; stay informed via official channels

Messaging barriers. Three barriers may complicate climate communication at the destination: (i) the fragmented institutional landscape (park management, two municipalities, cantonal ministries, hydropower operators), which risks inconsistent messaging; (ii) limited communication capacity and budget within the park's public enterprise; and (iii) the absence of systematic visitor monitoring, which makes baselines hard to establish. These barriers are addressed through the stakeholder coordination mechanism (Section 8), a phased implementation roadmap focused on quick wins (Section 10), and simple proxy-based monitoring (Section 9).

Implications for communication priorities. The risk analysis indicates that communication should prioritise: (a) behaviours that directly reduce pressure on the sensitive wetland ecosystem (staying on designated paths, no littering, no fire, respecting quiet zones for birds); (b) a responsible relationship with water and reduced single-use plastic; and (c) visitor timing choices that reduce heat exposure and spread visitation beyond climate-stressed periods. Communication must consistently link each message to the concrete action or NbS being implemented, so that visitors understand that protective behaviour is part of a larger, credible restoration effort.

2.1 Priority Nature-based Solutions (NbS) and the role of communication

To make the link between climate action and communication immediate, the table below consolidates the priority measures already under implementation or confirmed in the relevant technical project documents, the problem they address, the visitor behaviour needed for their success, and the role of communication. As the Destination Climate Action Plan (D3.4.1) is still under preparation, the table deliberately covers only existing, documented measures and will be aligned with the final selection of priority measures once the plan is adopted.

Priority measure (NbS) and source	Problem it addresses	Behaviour needed for the measure to succeed	Role of communication
Wetland habitat and channel restoration, hydrological research (MERLIN project; over 1,500 ha of habitat restored according to D2.4.1)	Disrupted water regime, drought, habitat degradation; loss of the wetland's retention capacity	Visitors stay on designated trails and boardwalks, do not enter restoration zones; choose guided tours that interpret the restoration	Make restoration visible and understandable (interpretation, video content, stories of returning species); link everyday visitor behaviour to measurable restoration outcomes
Invasive species removal (MERLIN project)	Pressure on the wetland's native	No bringing in or taking out plants and animals; compliance with park staff	Explain through simple on-site messages why invasive species are a problem and what visitors can (not)

	biodiversity	instructions	do
Protection of endemic fish spawning grounds ("Save Hutovo Blato Nature Park as a spawning ground of endemic fish" project, Dinarica Association / European Open Rivers Programme)	Endangered endemic species and a sensitive water regime	Respect no-disturbance zones; responsible angling and boat movement	Interpret the value of endemic species; guide the behaviour of anglers and visitors toward protective zones

3. Strategic Communication Objectives

The communication objectives below are behaviour-oriented: each is linked to a specific, observable behaviour change rather than to general awareness alone, following the guidance of the Manual on Destination Marketing and Communication for Climate Action (D1.8, Sections 4 and 5). They are aligned with the climate priorities of the Regional Strategy (D2.5.1) and the forthcoming Destination Climate Action Plan (D3.4.1).

Objective 1 – Protect the wetland habitat through visitor behaviour. Increase visitor compliance with designated trails, boardwalks and quiet zones, and reduce littering and wildlife disturbance in sensitive areas of the park. *Observable behaviours:* visitors stay on marked trails, do not leave litter, keep the prescribed distances from bird colonies during boat tours. *Indicators:* share of observed visitors on trails; litter incidence at key sites.

Objective 2 – Responsible relationship with water and less single-use plastic. Reduce single-use plastic at the destination by normalising the use of refill stations and reusable bottles, while also promoting the mindful use of water as a limited resource. These are two related but distinct behaviour changes: refill stations primarily reduce the need for single-use plastic bottles, while water-saving messages target more mindful consumption. *Observable behaviours:* visitors refill and carry reusable bottles; follow guidance on mindful water use. *Indicators:* refill station usage counts; share of visitors carrying reusable bottles; plastic bottle litter counts.

Objective 3 – Shift visitation toward climate-resilient timing. Encourage visitors to choose visits in spring and early autumn, or during cooler morning/evening hours in summer, positioning Hutovo Blato as a prime shoulder-season destination. *Observable behaviour:* when planning, the visitor chooses a shoulder-season date or a morning/evening slot in summer. *Indicators* (which show whether the change has occurred, and are not behaviours in themselves): share of visits outside peak summer midday hours; shoulder-season ticket sales against the baseline; uptake of morning and evening programmes.

Objective 4 – Build a consistent climate narrative across stakeholders. Ensure that the park management, municipalities, tourism businesses and guides deliver consistent, solution-oriented climate messages at all visitor touchpoints. *Observable behaviours:* partners apply the shared message Toolbox; guides and park staff use the prepared messages. *Indicators:* number of businesses applying the Toolbox; training participation; message consistency checks at touchpoints.

Objectives 1 and 2 are the primary behavioural focus for the first implementation period (with Campaigns 1 and 2, Section 7); Objectives 3 and 4 are pursued in parallel through seasonal communication, channel integration and stakeholder engagement. All objectives will be refined with the Tourism Climate Action Taskforce before campaign launch.

4. Target Audiences

Following the template's recommendation to concentrate on a limited number of segments, the Strategy identifies two primary audiences and one multiplier audience. Selection is based on the destination's visitor profile (tourism in early development, peak visitation in spring and early autumn, strong share of regional and international nature-oriented visitors) and on the behavioural priorities defined in Section 3.

Audience	Why important	Behaviour priority
1. Nature-oriented visitors and birdwatchers (international and regional; individuals and small organised groups, often arriving from the Adriatic coast, Mostar or Međugorje)	Core market of the park; highly motivated and receptive to nature-interpretation content; direct interaction with the most sensitive habitats (lakes, reed beds, bird colonies); ambassadors who amplify the destination's image through photography and social media	Stay on designated trails and observation points; respect quiet zones and approach distances during bird breeding and wintering periods; use refill stations; visit in shoulder seasons and cooler hours
2. Day visitors and excursionists (domestic and regional, incl. school groups and families; high-volume, short-stay visits concentrated at Karaotok)	Largest volume segment with the highest per-visit pressure (litter, off-trail movement, noise); short visits leave little time for interpretation, so messages must be simple, visual and immediate	Stay on marked paths; take litter back or use bins; no open fire; follow ranger and guide instructions
3. Tourism businesses and staff in direct contact with visitors (accommodation and hospitality providers in Čapljina, Stolac and the Neretva Valley; tour operators;	Communication multipliers: they deliver messages at booking, arrival and on-site touchpoints where the park administration has no direct reach; their own practices (water use, waste, energy) model the behaviour expected	Apply the shared message Toolbox consistently; promote refill, water saving and shoulder-season visits to their guests; participate in training and coordinate with park

park rangers and guides; visitor centre staff)	from visitors	management

Local residents, farmers and schools are engaged primarily as partners in content co-creation and stewardship (Section 8) rather than as primary behavioural targets of visitor-facing campaigns. Where relevant – for example fire-prevention rules in the dry season – resident-oriented communication will be coordinated with the municipalities and civil protection services.

5. Core Messages and Narrative

5.1 Narrative framing

The narrative of the Strategy is built on four principles from the Manual (D1.8, Section 4.3): positive and solution-oriented framing, place-based storytelling, emphasis on co-benefits, and the use of social norms. This approach is consistent with research on interpretation and visitor behaviour, which shows that interpretation linked to place identity and tangible conservation action is more effective in shaping visitor behaviour than generic environmental appeals (Moscardo, 1996; Steg & Vlek, 2009; Lopez Gutierrez et al., 2020), and with the protected-area literature on managing visitor pressure, which emphasises that visitors accept rules and restrictions when they understand the specific natural value being protected and see management acting credibly to protect it (Mandić & Petrić, eds., 2021).

The destination narrative can be summarised in one sentence: **"Hutovo Blato is a living wetland – one of Europe's great bird wintering grounds – and every visitor can help keep it alive."** The narrative rests on three distinctive, fact-based local assets:

- **A European-scale natural value:** a Ramsar wetland of international importance and one of the largest bird wintering grounds in Europe (park Management Plan; Ramsar documentation) – a place whose protection is a matter of international commitment, not only local regulation.
- **A quiet climate hero:** the wetland is a green oasis that stores carbon and stabilises the regional microclimate; restoring it (as under the MERLIN project) is concrete climate action that visitors can witness and support.
- **A living Herzegovinian landscape:** the park is inseparable from the Neretva Valley's identity – its fisheries, traditional boats, music and gastronomy – so protecting the wetland also protects local livelihoods and culture.

Tone rules for all communication: positive before restrictive (say what to do, then why it matters); simple language without technical jargon (e.g. "nature-based solutions" is translated into visible stories about

restored channels and returning birds); risks acknowledged honestly toward local and professional audiences, but always linked to actions and solutions; and social-norm cues ("most visitors stay on the boardwalk – thank you") rather than prohibitions alone.

5.2 Core messages

Six core messages are defined, each linked to a priority behaviour and a climate risk or NbS action. Wording is adapted per audience and channel. The water-related messages are deliberately split into two linked but distinct messages: one on the mindful use of a limited water resource (M3), and one on refill behaviour and plastic reduction (M4) – which also makes later measurement of results clearer.

Priority behaviour	Core message (visitor wording)	Linked risk / action
M1 – Stay on designated trails and observation points	"The wetland is fragile – stay on the path and it stays alive." Variant for birdwatchers: "The best sightings come from the hide – the birds decide the distance."	Habitat degradation; wetland restoration (NbS)
M2 – Respect quiet zones and approach distances to birds	"Thousands of birds winter here because it is quiet. Keep it that way."	Biodiversity pressure; Ramsar commitments
M3 – Mindful use of water as a limited resource	"This wetland lives on water. Use it wisely."	Water scarcity, drought, salinization
M4 – Use refill stations; avoid single-use plastic	"Refill – less plastic in the wetland."	Plastic waste, pollution of water bodies
M5 – Visit in shoulder seasons and cooler hours	"Hutovo Blato is at its best in spring and early autumn – cooler for you, calmer for the birds." Summer variant: "Come early, stay cool – mornings are when the wetland wakes up."	Heatwaves; seasonality shift
M6 – No open fire; comply with fire-season rules	"One spark can burn a European treasure. No fire in the park – ever."	Wildfires (highest-rated risk for natural areas)

5.3 Connection to local identity

Messages are deliberately anchored in the identity of the Neretva Valley: the traditional boats and fishing heritage of Hutovo Blato, the story of the Krupa River that "flows both ways", and the valley's gastronomy. Wherever possible, communication pairs the nature message with a local-experience benefit – for example, a morning birdwatching tour followed by a local breakfast – so that climate-smart behaviour is experienced

as a richer visit, not a sacrifice. This co-benefit framing is central to acceptance by tourism businesses, whose cooperation depends on messages that support rather than undermine their commercial offer.

6. Communication Channels and Touchpoints

6.1 Existing channels and baseline practices

The baseline mapping shows that destination communication currently relies on: the park's website and social media profiles, on-site signage at Karaotok (the main visitor hub), direct contact with rangers and boat-tour operators, municipal and cantonal tourism channels (Čapljina and Stolac tourist boards, HNC tourism promotion), and occasional media coverage of restoration projects (MERLIN, "Save Hutovo Blato as a spawning ground of endemic fish", Pathways2Resilience). Climate-related content is currently sporadic and event-driven; there is no systematic integration of behavioural messages across the visitor journey. The gaps identified are: (i) absence of pre-trip behavioural messaging (booking confirmations, website visit-planning pages); (ii) limited on-site behavioural nudges beyond regulatory signage; (iii) no structured post-visit engagement; and (iv) no shared message framework for businesses and guides.

6.2 Touchpoint plan across the visitor journey

Journey stage	Channels / touchpoints	Climate message integration
Pre-trip	Park website (visit-planning page), social media (Instagram/Facebook), booking and ticket confirmation emails, partner sites (municipal tourist boards, tour operators), Google Business profile	Seasonal-timing guidance (M5: "best in spring and early autumn; come early in summer"); what-to-bring framing (reusable bottle, refill map – M4); expectations of a protected wetland (M1/M2); short storytelling videos about restoration and birds
Arrival	Entrance signage at Karaotok, parking area, ticket office, visitor centre, tour-boat boarding point	Welcome panel with the destination narrative and three simple behaviour icons (path, quiet, refill); refill station visibility; fire-season rules displayed prominently when in force (M6); prepared ranger welcome message for groups
During stay	Trail and boardwalk signage, trail markings, observation hides, boat tours, guided programmes, picnic areas	Behavioural nudges at decision points (path entry, lakeshore, hides – M1/M2); interpretation panels linking visible landscape to climate and restoration stories; guides and boat skippers trained to deliver 60-second climate stories; QR codes linking to short videos
Post-visit	Social media engagement, e-newsletter, post-visit survey (QR on ticket/panel), prompts for	Invitation to share photos with the campaign hashtag; feedback survey including awareness and behaviour-intention questions;

	visitor content	"thank you for protecting the wetland" message reinforcing social norms; promotion of shoulder-season return visits

Priority focus. In line with the recommendation to concentrate on 1–2 priority behaviours, the first implementation period integrates messages M1–M4 (trail compliance, quiet zones, mindful water use, refill) across all touchpoints, with M5 emphasised in pre-trip digital channels and M6 activated seasonally during the fire-risk period. This staged integration avoids message overload and keeps the plan feasible within the park's limited communication capacity.

6.3 Channel roles

- **Website and social media –** primary storytelling and pre-trip behaviour-setting channels; short video formats (60–90 s) on restoration, birds and "how to visit".
- **On-site signage and nudges** – the highest-impact behavioural channel for day visitors; designed with visuals and icons, multilingual (local languages + English, plus German and Croatian variants where relevant).
- **Rangers, guides and boat skippers** – the most trusted voices on-site; equipped with prepared messages and FAQ answers.
- **Business channels** (reception desks, menus, booking platforms) – carry the shared Toolbox messages (refill, water saving, seasonal timing) to audiences the park does not reach directly.

7. Key Campaign Actions

The portfolio of communication actions for the first implementation period consists of two campaigns and two smaller seasonal actions: Campaign 1 ("Guardians of the Wetland") for visitor behaviour in nature, Campaign 2 ("Every Drop for the Wetland") for water, refill and plastic reduction, a seasonal visit-timing communication action, and a seasonal fire-prevention protocol. The campaigns follow the Campaign Planning Canvas (Toolbox, Tool 3); the seasonal actions are lightweight, recurring activities delivered through existing channels.

Campaign 1: "Guardians of the Wetland" (Čuvari močvare)

Element	Description
Behaviour objective	Increase trail and boardwalk compliance, reduce littering and reduce disturbance of birds in sensitive zones (Objectives 1 and 4)

Target audience	Primary: nature-oriented visitors and birdwatchers; secondary: day visitors and excursionists
Key messages	M1 ("Stay on the path and it stays alive"), M2 ("Thousands of birds winter here because it is quiet"), supported by the destination narrative and visible restoration stories (MERLIN: over 1,500 ha of restored habitat, according to D2.4.1)
Actions	• Design and install a coherent signage and visual-cue system: welcome panel at Karaotok, decision-point nudges at trail entries and lakeshore, interpretation panels in observation hides linking the visible landscape to restoration stories • Produce a short video series (3 × 60–90 s): "Why the wetland matters", "How restoration works", "How to visit like a guardian"; distribute via website, social media and QR codes on-site • Develop a pre-trip "Plan your visit" web page with behavioural expectations, seasonal guidance and the refill map • Train rangers, guides and boat skippers in delivering 60-second climate stories and consistent rule explanations (prepared messages + FAQ answers) • Launch the #ČuvariMočvare / #WetlandGuardians hashtag with a photo-sharing prompt ("share your sighting from the hide"), inviting visitor content that models the desired behaviour • Co-design one signature guided experience with local partners ("Morning with the birds" – dawn birdwatching + local breakfast), demonstrating that protective behaviour enhances the visit
Channels	Website, social media, on-site signage and nudges, guides/rangers, partner business channels, media coverage of restoration milestones
Partners	JP Park prirode Hutovo Blato (lead), municipalities of Čapljina and Stolac and their tourist boards, HNC Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management, local tour operators and accommodation providers, Dinarica Association, schools and youth groups (ambassador programme), IUCN/NaTour4CChange expert support
Timeline	Design and stakeholder validation: months 1–3; production and installation: months 3–5; launch with the spring birdwatching season; peak activation in spring and early autumn; review after the first full season
KPIs	Trail compliance rate at 3 observation points (ranger spot checks, monthly in season); litter incidence at Karaotok and lakeshore (weekly counts in season); video views and hashtag posts; number of partners applying the Toolbox; visitor survey: message recall and stated compliance intention

Campaign 2: "Every Drop for the Wetland" (Svaka kap za močvaru)

Element	Description
Behaviour objective	Increase refill-station use and reusable-bottle carrying, reduce single-use plastic at the destination, and promote the mindful use of water as a limited resource (Objective 2)
Target audience	Day visitors and excursionists (primary); nature-oriented visitors; tourism businesses as message carriers
Key messages	M3 ("This wetland lives on water. Use it wisely."), M4 ("Refill – less plastic in the wetland.")
Actions	• Install/point out refill stations at Karaotok and key rest points, with a visible counter ("bottles saved") where feasible; map all refill points on the website and welcome panel • Introduce a reusable bottle with the park's visual identity (local motif) sold at the ticket office, with a refill incentive (e.g. small discount on guided tours for bottle holders) • Integrate refill, mindful-water and what-to-bring messages into ticket confirmation emails, social media and the "Plan your visit" page • Tell the story of water scarcity and the importance of the water regime for the wetland through on-site interpretation (lakeshore, boat tours) (M3) • Engage hospitality partners to display refill and mindful-water messages at reception desks and on menus
Channels	Digital (website, social media, booking emails), on-site (refill stations, welcome panel, ticket office, interpretation), partner business touchpoints
Partners	JP Park prirode Hutovo Blato (lead), hospitality and accommodation businesses in Čapljina, Stolac and the Neretva Valley, tour operators, municipal tourist boards, local producers
Timeline	Refill infrastructure mapping and partner agreements: months 1–4; bottle with park visual identity and materials: months 3–5; launch before the summer season; continuous activation during the season
KPIs	Refill station usage (weekly counts in season); share of visitors with reusable bottles (short survey, twice per season); plastic bottle litter counts; number of businesses displaying Toolbox messages

Seasonal action: visit-timing communication

Visit timing is communicated as a smaller, recurring seasonal action (message M5), separate from Campaign 2, since it concerns a different topic and audience in communication terms. Actions: early-spring and late-summer digital promotion waves ("Spring is for birds, autumn is for colour") targeting regional and coastal audiences, in cooperation with tour operators and municipal tourist boards; a summer "cool hours" programme (early-morning and late-afternoon tours) developed with businesses and promoted as the premium way to experience the park in summer; and permanent integration of visit-timing guidance into pre-trip channels (website, booking emails, social media). Indicators: shoulder-season ticket sales against the baseline; share of summer entries before 10:00 and after 16:00; uptake of morning and evening tours.

Seasonal action: fire-prevention protocol

During the official fire-risk period, message M6 ("One spark can burn a European treasure") is activated through: prominent entrance signage and social media reminders; integration into rangers' introductory briefings and boat-tour announcements; coordination with municipal civil protection services on alert days; and immediate closure communication through all digital channels when restrictions apply. The protocol requires minimal additional resources and is reviewed each autumn.

8. Stakeholder Engagement

Consistent climate communication across the entire destination requires clear roles and a streamlined yet reliable coordination structure. The engagement approach focuses on overarching roles and mechanisms rather than individual campaigns. The roles of specific stakeholders outlined below (including municipalities, tourism boards, and tourism operators) are proposed and will be confirmed with the relevant partners during Phase 0, ensuring the Strategy does not pre-emptively commit other institutions.

8.1 Roles

Actor	Role in communication
JP Park prirode Hutovo Blato (park management enterprise)	Lead coordinator of the Strategy; owner of the narrative, Toolbox and on-site channels; responsible for signage, refill infrastructure, prepared messages for staff/guides and monitoring data collection
Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management of the HNC (project partner)	Strategic oversight and policy alignment; link to the Regional Strategy (D2.5.1) and Climate Action Plan (D3.4.1); support for funding and inter-institutional coordination

Municipalities of Čapljina and Stolac + tourist boards	Integration of messages into municipal promotion, events and visitor information; coordination with civil protection for fire-season communication
Tourism businesses (accommodation, hospitality, tour operators, transport)	Message delivery at booking, reception and during services; modelling sustainable practices; feedback channel on visitor reactions
Protected-area staff, rangers and guides	On-site interpretation, behavioural nudges, rule explanation and monitoring through spot checks
NGOs and community organisations (e.g. Dinarica Association, angling and ornithological societies)	Content co-creation, volunteer actions (clean-ups, restoration days), credibility with residents and enthusiasts
Schools and youth groups	Junior ambassador activities, co-creation of youth-oriented content, peer influence on family visitation behaviour

8.2 Coordination mechanisms

- **Co-creation workshop** before campaign launch: validation of objectives, messages and visuals with the Tourism Climate Action Taskforce, businesses and municipalities (also serving as the message-testing step of the Toolbox, Tool 2).
- **Seasonal coordination meetings** (twice per year, before spring and before summer) between park management, municipalities and business representatives to align timing, materials and responsibilities.
- **Partner communication Toolbox:** message templates, visual identity elements, signage artwork, social media texts and a short "how to talk about the wetland" guide, distributed to all partners to ensure message consistency.
- **Capacity building:** one training per year for guides, rangers and staff in direct contact with visitors on climate storytelling and behaviour-focused communication, with NaTour4CChange expert support.
- **Feedback channels:** a short seasonal partner survey and informal feedback collected by rangers, feeding the monitoring framework (Section 9).

Coordination leadership sits with the park management enterprise, with the HNC Ministry providing strategic oversight. Message consistency is ensured through the shared Toolbox, the seasonal meetings and a simple annual consistency check of key touchpoints.

9. Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring follows a simple, practical framework (Toolbox, Tool 6), using a limited set of indicators that reflect communication reach, awareness, behaviour change (assessed through proxies where direct measurement is not feasible) and stakeholder participation. Given the absence of an established visitor-monitoring system at the destination, all indicators are designed to be collectable with existing staff capacity.

9.1 Baseline and target values

Phase 0 of the implementation plan (Chapter 10) will establish baseline values for key indicators: trail adherence at observation points, litter frequency, use of refill stations, the proportion of visitors with reusable bottles, ticket sales by season and time of day, and the number of partners implementing the Toolbox. Realistic target values for the first full season will be set only after the baseline has been established, in consultation with the Tourism Climate Action Working Group. The strategy deliberately avoids setting arbitrary percentage-based targets, as there is currently no data to justify them. Phase 0 will also confirm the operational feasibility of monitoring with Park management—specifically, conducting monthly observations at three fixed points, weekly litter counts, tracking refill station usage, and administering two surveys per season—with measurement frequency adjusted to available staff capacity if necessary. At the same time, it will be verified whether the existing ticketing system allows for the segregation of entries before 10:00 and after 16:00; if not, a simpler alternative estimation method will be used.

9.2 Indicators

Objective	Indicator	Method	Frequency
O1 – Trail compliance and habitat protection	% of observed visitors on designated trails at 3 fixed observation points; litter incidence at Karaotok and lakeshore	Ranger spot checks (standard form); litter count on fixed route	Monthly (trails), weekly (litter) in season
O2 – Water and less plastic	Refill station usage counts; share of visitors carrying reusable bottles; plastic bottle litter count	Station counters/manual tally; 5-question intercept survey; litter count	Weekly in season; survey twice per season
O3 – Climate-resilient visit timing	Shoulder-season ticket sales vs. baseline; share of summer entries before 10:00 / after 16:00; uptake of morning/evening programmes	Ticket sales data; programme booking data	Seasonal
O4 – Consistent	Number of partners applying the Toolbox; trained guides/rangers; touchpoint consistency	Partner register; training records; annual walk-	Annual

stakeholder narrative	check	through audit	
Reach and engagement	Website visits to "Plan your visit"; video views; hashtag posts; post-visit survey responses (awareness, message recall, behaviour intention)	Web and social analytics; QR-linked survey	Monthly in season

9.3 Responsibilities and reporting

Data collection is the responsibility of the park management enterprise (rangers for spot checks and counts; administrative staff for ticket and web analytics), with businesses providing simple partner-level data through the seasonal survey. The HNC Ministry receives a short seasonal dashboard (one page) and an annual review summarising results against objectives. The annual review, held after the autumn season, decides on message adjustments, signage changes and the next season's campaign focus. Where proxy indicators show persistent gaps (e.g. low trail compliance at a specific point), the response is a targeted intervention (additional nudge, guide presence) rather than a strategy overhaul, keeping the framework adaptive and lightweight.

10. Implementation Roadmap

10.1 Timeline

Period	Key actions
Phase 0 – Preparation (months 1–3)	Stakeholder validation workshop; finalisation of messages and visual identity; production of the partner Toolbox; refill-point mapping and partner agreements; baseline establishment for key indicators (first spot checks, counts, sales baseline – see Section 9.1)
Phase 1 – Quick wins (months 2–5)	Website "Plan your visit" page; social media storytelling start; ticket-email messages; welcome panel and first decision-point signage at Karaotok; procurement of the bottle with park visual identity; guide/ranger training
Phase 2 – Campaign launch (spring season)	Launch of Campaign 1 ("Guardians of the Wetland") with the spring birdwatching season; video series release; hashtag activation; "Morning with the birds" signature experience pilot; early-spring promotion wave of the visit-timing seasonal action
Phase 3 – Summer adaptation (summer season)	Campaign 2 at season peak (refill, mindful water use); summer "cool hours" programme; fire-prevention protocol active; weekly monitoring
Phase 4 – Shoulder season	Late-summer promotion wave ("Autumn is for colour"); seasonal dashboard; annual stakeholder

and evaluation (autumn)	review; adjustments to messages and signage
Phase 5 – Consolidation (winter)	Annual report; Toolbox update; training refresh; planning of year-two actions (e.g. extension of signage network, school ambassador programme)

10.2 Resource requirements

Resource	Need	Status
Human resources	One designated communication coordinator within the park enterprise (part-time assignment acceptable at start); ranger time for spot checks; external designer/video producer for materials; NaTour4CChange expert support for training	Partially available; coordinator role to be formally assigned
Financial resources	Signage and refill infrastructure production; procurement of the bottle with park visual identity; video production; training and workshops; survey administration	To be secured through project funds (NaTour4CChange), municipal co-financing and EU/national grant schemes (e.g. environmental and tourism grant lines)
Technical tools	Web and social analytics; QR-code tracking; simple monitoring forms (paper or mobile); refill stations with counters where feasible	Analytics and QR tools available; refill stations and counters to be procured
Partnerships	Businesses and tourist boards for message distribution; NGOs for content co-creation and volunteer actions; civil protection for the fire protocol; schools for ambassador activities	Core partnerships exist through the project; to be formalised via Toolbox agreements

10.3 Availability of proposed infrastructure and communication mechanisms

So that the Strategy does not create the impression that the proposed infrastructure is already available, the overview below distinguishes between what already exists, what can be delivered as a quick win with existing resources, and what requires new investment or a partner agreement.

Element	Status	Note
Park website and social media	Existing	Existing channels; regular publication of climate content needed

Messages in ticket confirmation emails	Quick win	Existing sales system; message texts to be added
"Plan your visit" page	Quick win	Within the existing website
QR surveys and web/social analytics	Quick win	Free or low-cost tools
Welcome panel at Karaotok	Quick win	Upgrade of the existing panel
Signage and nudges on trails and lakeshore	New investment	Design, production and installation
Refill stations (with counters)	New investment	Procurement, installation and maintenance; locations to be set in Phase 0
Reusable bottle with park visual identity	New investment / partner agreement	Procurement; sale at the ticket office; sponsorship co-financing possible
Guide and ranger training	Project support	NaTour4CChange expert support; own organisation
"Morning with the birds" and "cool hours" programmes	Partner agreement	Businesses, guides, local producers

Quick wins for early momentum. Actions achievable within the first three months using existing channels and minimal budget, with no new infrastructure: updating the website with seasonal-timing and behavioural content; adding climate messages to ticket confirmation emails; a refill-point map and refreshed welcome panel at Karaotok; and a social media storytelling series based on existing restoration material (MERLIN). These generate visible early impact while the campaign infrastructure is produced.

Adaptation and further application. The Strategy is designed as a living document: the annual review adjusts messages, channels and campaign focus based on monitoring results, and the framework can be extended to additional behaviours (e.g. waste separation, sustainable mobility to the park) and neighbouring destinations of the Neretva Valley once the first cycle demonstrates feasibility. Recommendations for further application include aligning the Toolbox with the Destination Climate Action Plan (D3.4.1) as it is adopted – including the table of priority NbS measures in Section 2.1 – and sharing the Hutovo Blato experience through NaTour4CChange cross-regional learning activities.

References

Project documents (NaTour4CChange, Interreg Euro-MED):

- Deliverable D1.8: *Manual on Destination Marketing and Communication for Climate Action*, with Annex Toolbox (Tools 1, 2, 3 and 6).
- Deliverable D2.4.1: *Identification and assessment of the main coastal tourism-related issues concerning climate change* – Herzegovina-Neretva Canton (GEKOM version).
- Deliverable D2.5.1: *Strategy for Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation in Tourism of the Herzegovina-Neretva Canton*.
- Deliverable D3.5.1: *Report on nature-based solutions for Hutovo Blato Nature Park (draft).*
- Deliverable D3.4.1: *Destination Tourism Climate Action Plan* – Hutovo Blato Nature Park (under preparation).
- *Pilot Site Climate Communication & Marketing Plan Template*.

Scientific and professional sources:

- Mandić, A. & Petrić, L. (Eds.) (2021). *Mediterranean Protected Areas in the Era of Overtourism: Challenges and Solutions*. Springer International Publishing, Cham.
- Lopez Gutierrez, B., Almeyda Zambrano, A. M., Mulder, G., Ols, C., Dirzo, R., et al. (2020). Ecotourism: the 'human shield' for wildlife conservation in the Osa Peninsula, Costa Rica. *Journal of Ecotourism*, 19(3), 197–216.
- Moscardo, G. (1996). Mindful visitors: Heritage and tourism. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 23(2), 376–397.
- Steg, L. & Vlek, C. (2009). Encouraging pro-environmental behaviour: An integrative review and research agenda. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 29(3), 309–317.

Other sources:

- Management Plan for Hutovo Blato Nature Park; Ramsar Convention documentation on Hutovo Blato (Ramsar site, 2001).
- MERLIN project documentation (freshwater ecosystem restoration, Hutovo Blato); Pathways2Resilience project; "Save Hutovo Blato Nature Park as a spawning ground of endemic fish" project (Dinarica Association, European Open Rivers Programme).
- Glasgow Declaration on Climate Action in Tourism (2021); EU Strategy on Adaptation to Climate Change (2021); European Green Deal (2019).