

A sea of challenges for the Mediterranean Sea

April 11 2012

Cradle of great ancient civilizations, superhighway for trade and transport, treasure-trove of biodiversity, the Mediterranean -- the world's best known sea -- faces a sea of challenges in the 21st century, including climate change, pollution, tourism and overfishing. That's the topic of the cover story in the current edition of *Chemical & Engineering News (C&EN)*, weekly newsmagazine of the American Chemical Society, the world's largest scientific society.

In the article, Sarah Everts, *C&EN* senior editor, points out that the Mediterranean is not only historically important, but it is also environmentally unique. For example, though it contains only 1 percent of the Earth's ocean water, the Mediterranean Sea hosts 8 percent of the world's biodiversity. But those biological treasures are now under threat from human pressures, including [overfishing](#), unregulated [tourism](#), shipping traffic and oil-drilling platforms. Environmental groups have been reporting massive die-offs of marine creatures such as monk seals, which have been called "living fossils" because they were swimming the Mediterranean's waters as long as 15 million years ago.

Stakeholders in the region have been meeting for several decades to discuss shared environmental problems, but getting concerted action to solve these problems is a challenge, given the 22 nations' political, economic, linguistic and cultural differences. But some progress is being made. For example, an \$8 million project called MedSeA is studying the impacts of climate change and acidification on the [Mediterranean](#) Sea. And in some regions, sewage is now treated so it is safe to swim at some

city beaches along the coast — an unthinkable activity back in the 1970s because of widespread pollution.

More information: The Mediterranean: Beneath The Surface - [cen.acs.org/articles/90/i15/Me ... Beneath-Surface.html](https://cen.acs.org/articles/90/i15/Me...Beneath-Surface.html)

Provided by American Chemical Society

Citation: A sea of challenges for the Mediterranean Sea (2012, April 11) retrieved 25 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2012-04-sea-mediterranean.html>

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