

Spread over 1,059 hectares, Punta de sa Creu marine reserve is due for approval in committee this Friday

The Balearic ministry of environment, agriculture and fishing has drafted an order creating a new, 1,059-hectare marine reserve called Punta de sa Creu in an expanse known by the same appellation between two other headlands, or “points”—Punta de la Fernanda and Punta des Far—that flank a rocky crag downhill from La Mola. Expected to pass review in a Friday November 16 meeting of the administration's “governing council” (*Consell de Govern*), the provision would give the stretch of coastline, deemed invaluable by ecologists and fishermen alike, special protected status. Not only is the area, as scientific studies suggest, home to a wealth of marine biodiversity, it is also crucial for the small-scale operations of local fishermen. As many as 23 distinct benthic habitats have been tallied there as well, such as posidonia seagrass meadows, photophilic algae and coralligenous assemblages cleaved upon hard substrate.

Visiting the site of the future reserve, the environment, agriculture and fishing minister of the region extolled the virtues of such safeguards and drew attention to the Balearic administration's track record on the subject—not only designating new expanses with protected status but bolstering patrols of the areas, too. Vicenç Vidal explained the role of the so-called “sustainable tourism levy” in bankrolling expansions to reserve surveillance personnel, which have gone from 7 to 14 in the last three years and are expected to hit a regional total of 17 with the green-lighting of a similar reserve at Tagomago. The planned reserve at Punta de sa Creu will have one patrol person as well as a dedicated boat.

The new reserve was advocated by a range of social collectives and public agencies, including the Formentera Council. To Jaume Ferrer, president of the local administration, Punta de sa Creu is a “promise that will be delivered on during this legislative session”. He also underscored the significance of the local fishermen's involvement in the process.

The surrounding area is a familiar backdrop for a host of activities directly related to the island's fishing resources. The time-honoured practices involve at least eight kinds of tackle and métiers—low-impact fishing boats typical in Eivissa and Formentera waters. The area of

coastline is an extremely popular destination for recreational fishing practices—whether at the surface (*volantí* and *curricà*) or underwater—and tourists keen on scuba-diving. Regulation of such activities is a particularly important part of ensuring they can continue to accommodate biodiversity and the marine resources that live there.