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Press release

Environmental protection and sustainable tourism: the project to consolidate and promote Tuscany's dune system

Legambiente and the Unipol Group present “I guardiani della duna” (“The guardians of the dune”) which will take place in Marina di Alberese (Grosseto) as part of the “Bellezza Italia” campaign: activities include the mapping of the coasts and the creation of informational and educational courses

This morning, fifty students were busy monitoring beach litter and cleaning Collelungo beach in Maremma Regional Park

Rediscovering and promoting Tuscany's coastal dune system. With a dual objective: to protect one of the most vulnerable and threatened ecosystems in Italy, which carries out a strategic role in mitigating the risk of erosion and reducing the effects of climate change, and to promote tourism that is attentive and respectful of the natural resources in the region.

This, in short, is the aim of the “**Guardians of the dune**” project, the latest initiative in the “**Bellezza Italia**” campaign – promoted by the **Unipol Group** and **Legambiente** - presented this morning at **Maremma Regional Park** in Alberese (Grosseto) by **Maria Luisa Parmigiani**, head of sustainability at the Unipol Group, and **Stefano Ciafani**, chairman of Legambiente. Also in attendance at the meeting were **Luca Agresti**, deputy mayor of the Municipality of Grosseto, **Lucia Venturi**, chairman of Maremma Regional Park, and **Lorenzo Moncini** of the “Leopoldo II di Lorena” CRISBA-ISIS Research Centre.

At the same time, at **Collelungo** beach in Maremma Park the **Legambiente Festambiente** club held a study tour involving around 50 lower secondary school students who monitored the **beach litter in order to analyse the type and origin of the rubbish. They followed this by cleaning the beach.** In fact, marine litter is a global emergency on a par with climate change and is destined to become even more serious unless we act quickly. The dune system is open to the public and therefore highly influenced by human activity: for this reason another aim of the project is to increase our **environmental awareness and understanding of the importance of the dunes.** For this reason various awareness and information activities aimed at the public authorities, the general public and, most importantly, the younger generations, will be carried out to highlight the various solutions available, which also include waste prevention, waste sorting and recycling.

“The dune systems are a remarkable part of our heritage and key allies of our regions in the fight against climate change - remarks **Stefano Ciafani, chairman of Legambiente** -. But it is an ecosystem that continues to suffer, that risks disappearing forever due to erosion phenomena and the constant effects of pollution and uncontrolled overbuilding. However, it is possible to combine land protection with the promotion of attentive and lasting tourism and we want to demonstrate it with this new initiative. A project with which to foster the redevelopment and widespread promotion of our coastal heritage, also in light of the challenge that climate change is posing in the Mediterranean, with significant impacts on ecosystems, the coast and urban areas.”

“The Dune project is an excellent example of synergies between the public and private sectors. It also encapsulates our commitment to helping address a crucial problem like climate change through concrete, tangible actions aimed at creating shared value and developed together with local stakeholders - comments Maria Luisa Parmigiani of Unipol. Tuscany is also a very important area to promote in terms of our Group.”

Thanks to the partnership with **Maremma Regional Park** and the “**Leopoldo II di Lorena**” **CRISBA-ISIS Research Centre**, the new project will be carried out in the area of Marina di Alberese, a protected zone of the Park at great risk of erosion, but will also represent a pilot project that can be replicated in other areas of the Tuscan coastline where the dune system is in danger. In fact, the first phase of the project will consist of research and data collection on the dune along the coast of the region which will make it possible to map its state of health, highlighting critical areas of the coastline (fauna, flora, water system, coastal erosion, state of conservation etc.) where similar conservation and cleaning projects are required.

The project seeks to conserve and promote the dune area and the pine forest so it can be accessed in total safety, further developing an attentive and informed form of tourism. Stop-off points and infopoints will be created along the route to provide information and details on the environmental elements present in the area.

“I would like to thank Unipol and Legambiente for choosing Maremma Park for this important pilot project – remarks **Lucia Venturi, chairman of Maremma Regional Park** -. Protecting the dune is essential both for preserving biodiversity and halting coastal erosion and therefore completes the work we carried out to consolidate the beach to the south of the Ombrone.”

In the last three years, the “**Bellezza Italia**” campaign has made it possible to carry out nine projects across Italy, salvaging and redeveloping degraded areas of the country which have now been restored to the public. Projects that have spread the culture of legality and rights, encouraging all possible synergies between civil society, businesses and institutions. These include the first trial stretch of **the Po River Park**, in an area of around a thousand hectares that crosses the municipalities of Villanova sull’Arda, Polesine–Zibello and Roccabianca in Emilia Romagna; the **greenstation of San Stino di Livenza** (Venice), which has become a cultural centre that promotes sustainable transport; the redevelopment of **Parco di Capoprati**, a park of around 7000 m² in the centre of Rome, one of the last natural areas in which you can discover the Tiber and its valuable ecosystem; and the **Path of the Argonauts in Paestum**, which has made it possible to improve the accessibility of the area and restore the original geography of this world famous archaeological site with its access to the sea.

However, “**Bellezza Italia**” is not the only form of cooperation between the **Unipol Group** and **Legambiente**, whose partnership actually covers various areas, with the dual goal of qualifying the Unipol Group’s environmental commitment in Italy and increasing the awareness of its direct stakeholders as regards the importance of safeguarding and promoting the country, and comprises a series of actions targeted at the development of active policies and suitable tools for improving resilience to climate change in Italy. In fact, Legambiente also works with Unipol on projects regarding **risks deriving from natural disasters, to highlight at-risk areas and risky behaviour and identify policies, measures and actions to promote the resilience and maintenance of the territory**, also participating in awareness and educational pilot projects.

For more information on “**Bellezza Italia**” visit www.legambiente.it/bellezza-italia

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Information on the partnership between Legambiente and Unipol Gruppo Finanziario is published on the national Legambiente website, www.legambiente.it, in the Companies and Sustainability area of <http://sostenibilita.unipol.it/bilanciosostenibilita> and in the Sustainability/Partnerships/Legambiente section of corporate website www.unipol.it.

For real time updates on current and future projects:

<http://www.legambiente.it/bellezza-italia>, <http://www.facebook.com/progetto.Bellezzaitalia>,

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Video images at: <http://www.youtube.com/bellezzaitalia>