2020 TOP 100 GOOD PRACTICE STORY

Title of the Story: Red Lake Bled

Destination Name: (include any state, province or region)

Bled

Country: Slovenia

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Position: Head of Public Relations, Green coordinator

Nomination Category: (Please check the boxes that indicate the focus of your story)

☐ Culture & Communities
☒ Environment & Climate
☐ Nature & Ecotourism
☐ Islands & Seaside
☐ Immediate responses in dealing with the COVID-19
☐ Post COVID-19 recovery
☐ One of the 17 SDGs* (if yes, which one) Click or tap to choose

*The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), also known as the Global Goals, were adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015 as a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity by 2030. The 17 SDGs are integrated—that is, they recognize that action in one area will affect outcomes in others, and that development must balance social, economic and environmental sustainability. What are the Sustainable Development Goals?
https://www.unsd.org/content/unsd/en/home/sustainable-development-goals.html

For further information on Tourism for SDGs: http://tourism4sdgs.org/

Find detailed instructions for submitting good practices here
DESCRIBE YOUR GOOD PRACTICE STORY

Address each aspect of your good practice story in the different sections being specific including relevant quantitative and qualitative information.

Issues faced

What was Lake Bled
Lake Bled with the island is Bled’s largest natural attraction and one of the most recognisable faces of Bled and Slovenia. The view on this exceptional natural feature, which is part of Slovenia’s historical heritage, has been inspiring painters, poets and people around the world to take a closer look for centuries. The lake is small, having a surface area of only 1.45 km², it originates in the Alps and has poor flow-through. The fact is that all of the tourist activities in the Bled area depend on the lake.

1. Issue:
This winter, Lake Bled turned red due to the growth of cyanobacteria. Algal blooming of the lake is a natural phenomenon occurring every year, however, it was so intense this year that measures had to be taken. The algal sludge on the lake’s surface was somewhere even a few centimetres thick. Experts from the Slovenian Environment Agency, who are regularly present on the lake, which is owned by the state, are carrying out measurements in order to present the lake’s ecological and chemical state and explained that such an extensive algal blooming was the consequence of several factors, one of which is undoubtedly the input of organic nutrients into the lake. “A large quantity of organic substances in the decomposition process impacts oxygen deficiency in lower layers of the lake, resulting in the release of phosphorus from the sediment ....” /https://www.e-bled.si/za-obcane/blejskenovice, see December 2019, page 4)

the problem/issue solved with the good practice? Click to add your text
2. Resolution methods and steps:
The issue is not easily identifiable, but complex, for this reason a complex approach was required in order to resolve it. Lake Bled is owned by the Republic of Slovenia and numerous factors have an impact on the lake, which naturally take place in the local environment. First, we verified if the sludge on the water surface is poisonous. The National Laboratory for Health, the Environment and Food verified the content of microcystins in the water. The results were favourable, showing content lower than 1ug/litre of water. The sample was taken on 22/1/2020 in Mala Zaka.
The most important impacts on Lake Bled are: input of nutrients for carp-hunting purposes, poor flow-through, traffic by the lake, direct influence of tourism/visitors, inland fertilisation.
Upon defining all the most important impacts, mayor Janez Fajfar convened a consultation meeting of experts (Environment Agency), environmentalists, members of the Bled Society for Underwater Activities, members of the Fishing Club Bled and representatives of the Municipality of Bled. One of the main decisions adopted at the meeting was to save the lake together with experts, representatives of the state and of the local community. Meanwhile, the Municipality of Bled has already ordered the algae to be physically removed from the lake surface, which turned out to be a good move, since the algae had no time to sink and thus generate new food for new algae. The physical cleaning of the lake took place from January to April.
In March, the Municipality of Bled, despite the epidemic, convened a meeting with the representatives of the Ministry of the Environment and Spatial Planning, where the local community further defined the issue. The issue was to be addressed and solved jointly. At the same time, an open public letter on the state of the lake was addressed to the Slovenian public, the Government of the Republic of Slovenia and the National Assembly, asking for assistance and active involvement in saving the lake. The Minister of the Environment and Spatial Planning then received the mayor of Bled and the President of the Republic, Borut Pahor, also visited Bled.
At this moment, measures are being prepared at the state level, which will help saving the lake. These measures will be comprehensive and will address the using the lake for economic and tourist purposes as well as the traffic around the lake and in the immediate area, and will check the artificial pipeline system installed on the bottom of the lake and which helps discharging the water on the bottom out of the lake.
Despite all the above and the fact that Lake Bled is not even owned by Bled,
the Municipality of Bled has implemented numerous measures for its rehabilitation. The sewage ring around the lake is completed; nevertheless, the Municipality of Bled checked the sewer line by the lake using a camera. No leakage was identified. The Municipality of Bled has one of the most restrictive decrees in place on the fertilisation of grassland and farmland around the lake. Measures taken to reduce traffic in the area of Lake Bled: Moving parking areas from the shore, blocking a large part of the shore for motor vehicles, establishing a bike sharing system, new parking areas far away from the lake bowl, intensive greening, planting and replacing damaged trees with new varieties, preventing access to the lake shore with plantings, ecological skin care cream available in the Castle Bathing Area. One of the most efficient steps will be absolute embargo on input of nutrients for carp-hunting purposes and very restricted bath areas. The other, but with Slovenian legislation again very difficult realizable step, is to completely forbid fertilisation of grassland and farmland around the lake.

Key success factors
The final results will be available only after a few years, when measures at the state level will be adopted. During the last crisis, the Municipality of Bled and the Ministry of the Environment and Spatial Planning have finally started to cooperate and this very cooperation is currently one of the keys for success. Documents and measures are being drawn up, which will be implemented by both the Municipality of Bled and the Republic of Slovenia. The second major success is that with its measurements the Environment Agency has proven there is no faecal origin for the pollution of Lake Bled, that is why the bathing water remains excellent this year too. (https://www.mojaobcina.si/bled/novice/kopalne-vode-na-blejskem-jezeru-so-ze-vrsto-let-odlicne.html)

Lessons learned
As many times before it is clear that the project may fail due to insufficient communication and connection between the local community, stakeholders using and impacting the lake and country. The key is in discussing, cooperating and particularly in considering expert opinion. All the expert analyses of the state of the water in Lake Bled are known and available to the public on the web pages of the Environment Agency, and the Municipality of Bled as well as Tourism Bled have informed the locals and visitors about the state of the lake through media and their websites. Open communication and transparency are absolutely necessary in order to solve the issue.
Results, achievements and recognitions
For real results is too early. We have to wait and see.
Media covering:
https://www.mojaobcina.si/bled/novice/blejsko-jezero-ukrepi-zbirno.html
https://www.mojaobcina.si/bled/novice/ponovno-ciscenje-blejskega-jezera.html
https://www.mojaobcina.si/bled/novice/cvetenje-jezera.html

Additional references

https://www.mojaobcina.si/bled/novice/blejsko-jezero-ukrepi-zbirno.html