

# Rescuing Plan for the Caspian Sea Blind Areas

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## 1) Introduction

The microclimatic conditions of the Caspian Sea beaches create the beauties which are unique in the world: like the nearness of the mountain to the sea and to the green and dense forests and plains which cover the sea shores to the heights of Alborz Mountains (picture 1).

These beauties are great attractions for people. Especially Iranians are interested in spending their vacation or at least a big part of it at the seaside (picture 2). The extent of the Caspian Seaside and the lack of beach stations cause some dangers for people who travel to the seaside. There are some victims every year so we need to seek a special remedy. This remedy in all manners needs the cooperation of various organizations and special plans in order to save human life through appropriate and financial and prearranged supports in a timely manner. Here, the safety and health of people should first be taken into consideration, then enjoying the beauties of the sea and its beaches and weather for resting, entertainment, sport, recreation activities.



Picture 1



Picture 2

## 2) The status of the Caspian seaside:

The Caspian seaside, except in the middle part - which the sea and mountains are very close - are mostly sandy and dark. The sea level is not fixed and it has been changed between - 20m and -28m compared to the open sea level during the last centuries. These changes along with the progress of the water into the beaches (sometimes >500 m) such as the last 30 years, destroyed the installations which were carelessly made in the beaches and the results were alternative changes of water level. In some cases the owners of the villas and coastal public places have strengthened their building by stony docks (picture 3) to prevent them from destruction but in many cases the remains of these installations, building materials, rubbish, wood and iron girder are hidden under the water in the depth of 1 to 2 m and have created traps for people (picture 4).

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Picture 3



Picture 4

The sea bed slope in Iranian beaches contrary to the northern side of the Caspian Sea, increase strongly after 1 km advancement in the water. The changes of water level as a result of tide are about 1 m. Because of the separation from oceans and open seas, the Caspian Sea water saltiness is less than 1.4%. The Caspian Sea is the largest lake of the world; this is the reason why it is called a sea.

The temperature of coastal water changes between 15 and 25 °C during the year. Under normal conditions the coldest temperature of the coastal area in winter is 4 °C and the warmest temperature of the coastal area in summer is 30 °C. Iranian coastal lines of the Caspian Sea from Astara port in north-western to Torkaman port in north-eastern is about 740 km.

The beach stations are located along the seaside erratically. These stations are often provided with welfare facilities and sometimes reach to 3 star level.

The management of non-governmental beach stations is private and sometimes depends on the municipalities. These stations do not have stable management and the main objective of their establishment is lucrative. The total capacity of these stations is between 8600 and 12000 persons per night. The quality of the presence, activities and employment of a lifeguard depends on the management of the station. Lifeguards' duties at the beaches are at the second and sometimes at the third level of priorities related to the management. Generally, the beach stations have two separated parts for men and women. The environment of the beaches is often polluted because of unauthorized emptying of rubbish (picture 5). Also the sea water beside the estuary of the rivers is poisonous and polluted because of the entrance of sewage and agricultural drainage.

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Picture 5

In some estuaries, there are some aggressions to the bounds of the rivers (picture 6). Fishing is authorized in the Caspian Sea from mid-August to mid-April of the year. The most famous fishes of it are: Sturgeon, White fish, Carp, Salmon, Pike, Kilka, Eel, Sudak, Vimba and Barbel.

Most of the beautiful great places in the beaches have been turned into private places, (picture 7) so that the general approach of the people to them is impossible unless through some narrow angles to “Blind Areas” (picture 8). In the Caspian Sea beaches, there is a possibility to perform some sports such as water-skiing, sailing, diving and surfing (both in the low level).

In swim season on the average of 60 percent of the time, the sea is rough and thus swimming is forbidden (picture 9).



Picture 6



Picture 7

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Picture 8

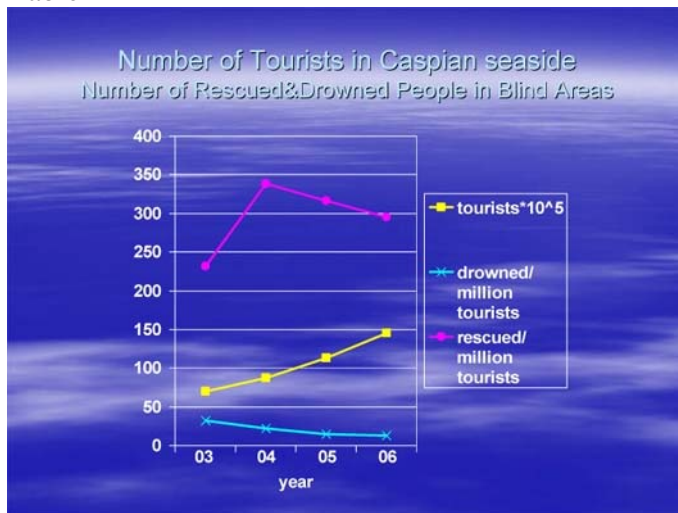


Picture 9

### 3) The number of tourists to the Caspian Sea provinces:

Most of the travels to the beaches of the Caspian Sea are in summer from the 15 of June to the 21 of September .Also, Iranians go to these beaches in the new year holidays extensively for other purposes except swimming. The number of travels on weekends during the year is as the same. Traveling of the Iranian and non-Iranian to these beaches has increased in the last 20 years (table 1).

Table 1



The extensive travels cause the rush to crowd the main entrance gates of the north, namely Rasht, Chalus, Haraz, Firoozkooh and seaside roads which join the coastal cities (picture 10).

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Picture 10

Total capacity of the hotels, motels, beach stations and forest camps is not sufficient compared to the huge number of tourists. Therefore, many people have to accommodate beside the beaches without suitable service facilities (picture 11).



Picture 11

#### **4) The organization and activities of the Iranian Lifesaving and Diving Federation in coastal provinces of the Caspian Sea:**

The headquarters of Iranian Lifesaving and Diving Federation is located in Tehran (picture 12). There are different committees which are active in various fields.

The lifesaving boards are in other cities of Iran and, especially in coastal provinces of the Caspian Sea, there are subsidiary lifesaving boards, too.

Iranian federation is a non-governmental association which receives the assistance of the Iranian Physical Education Organization but is authorized to have the allocated income, too. The people responsible for the federation are appointed by election for a period of 4 years (picture13).

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Picture 12



Picture 13

The educational lifesaving courses are held in lifesaving schools' boards every year (table 2). The lifeguards fulfill their duties in saving the human life professionally or as a part time job (for example in the summer).

Based on the federation By-Law, all of the aquatic environments such as pools, beach stations, rivers, behind the dams will be authorized to continue their activities, provided they employ the lifeguards (picture 14). All of the aquatic environments are supervised during the year and their problems and lack are reported. If certain extents have not been achieved or provided, their activities will be prevented.

Every year before the beginning of swimming season in the sea, the coordination meetings are held between lifesaving federation and other institutes for organizing the services.

Table 2



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Picture 14

### 5) The drowning statistics in the Caspian Sea provinces:

Most of the drowned are young men between 15 to 25 years old. The drowning statistics has been demonstrated in table 3. These tables show an increasing trend in the number of the drowned until 2000 and then a decreasing trend, in spite of the growing number of people who travel to the Caspian seaside. This is the result of enhancing the number of lifeguards at the beach stations and the pools, increasing the attention of the managers of these places to their responsibilities and respecting the approved By-Law. Considering that drinking alcohol is forbidden in Islamic Republic of Iran, the main reason of most drowning is to swim outside the beach stations (98% of the drowning).

All actions taken for preventing the entrance of people into the Blind Areas have not been successful and practically have not affected the number of drowning.

### 6) Analyzing the drowning statistics and exploration of the Blind Areas:

Regarding to the prevalence of drowning outside the beach stations and after analyzing the drowning statistics it was decided to specify the status of the Caspian seaside completely in the frame of a comprehensive plan. This plan was prepared in 2 phases: first of all by gathering information with the cooperation of lifesaving boards of provinces and cities; then, after an exact investigation and comparison of the reports with reality, the comprehensive map of the Caspian seaside was prepared (picture 15). The number of distinguished Blind Areas, namely the areas which are not registered as beach stations and there are no official protection on them are 170 in Gilan, 171 in Mazandaran and 9 in Golestan. According to the relative instability of the beaches, these areas can change but their basic geographical limits are fixed. The



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### **8) Discussion:**

Start of the plan was in 2003 and it has passed 4 successful years up to now. The results of the statistics of the last years are as follows:

- a) The number of people who traveled to the beaches and Blind Areas has increased.
- b) The number of the persons who have been rescued has increased (table 1).
- c) The activities of the lifeguards of Gilan province have been more effective.
- d) The relative number of drowning has decreased.
- e) All of the provinces desire to develop the application of the plan in more areas during longer time.

The weak point of this plan is the wrong interpretation of the people from the presence of the lifeguards in Blind Areas where they consider it as a formal protection and permission for swimming.

Certainly, it has been attempted to perform this plan with cultural contacts and without any violence.

### **9) The expenditures of the plan:**

These expenditures are as follows:

- a) The salary of the lifeguards.
- b) The salary of inspectors and managers.
- c) The cost of equipment.
- d) The cost of transferring injured people.

In comparison with the blood money of the persons who have been rescued, the ratio of the expenditures to the benefits of the plan is excellent.

### **General conclusion:**

The origin of the plan which is based upon exact analysis of drowning statistics is correct. The performance of this plan has not been equal in all of the provinces and some of them have paid more attention to this matter and gained better results. It is necessary for more beach stations to be developed in the future. The information which is gained from performing the plan can be useful for specifying and selecting the best areas for locating the next formal stations.

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