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**Eva Douzina:
"Fish farms
destroy the
seabed, the
Poseidonia
meadows and
release huge
amounts of waste
into the sea"**



We met Eva Douzina, president of "Katheti" on the occasion of the "Thalassa Mana" ("Mother Sea") concert which took place in Poros with great success. We were particularly moved by the fight of Mrs. Douzina and the island's residents against fish farms.

Interview with Aphrodite Daikou

Poros was recently in the spotlight again on the occasion of the excellent concert "Mother Sea" hosted by the cultural and educational center "Katheti". Can music, culture, more easily influence the mind and soul? How many years has "Katheti" been fighting against fish farms? Do you think your fight will be vindicated?

Music and art can often convey messages with emotion and in a way that words alone cannot. The concert was an opportunity to speak to the soul of the world about a very important topic, through the apt and moving words of Lina Nikolakopoulou, who herself was inspired by the beautiful waters of the Saronic as a child in Methana. The open, clear sea is something that inspires us all in countless ways – it inspires artists, leaders, all people throughout time – especially here in Greece.

"Katheti" has been actively participating in the fight against fish farms for two years, but the local community has been fighting for more than 15-20 years. It is a struggle in which many participate, and it is this unity that gives us strength to continue. I believe that we will be vindicated, as our opposition is based both on solid scientific data and on the will of the island's inhabitants. The island has not given up on this fight all these years, and we certainly won't give up now.

Once the truth about these types of fish farms is understood, most people don't want them. Information is very important, and we hope to inform the wider public as this is not just an issue for Poros – if the POAY plan is fully implemented our country will be affected more widely and on many levels: 25% of the coast ours is scheduled to be occupied <by fish farms> and Poros is only 1% of the national plan. The Saronic

will have 53,000 stremmata (13,000+ acres) of fish farms, the Ionian even more, as will other regions of Greece such as the Euboean Gulf, Lesbos and other eastern islands.

Most people have no idea how large these lands are, as they have not been discussed publicly.

Poros is the third "green island" of our country. Title earned after significant environmental actions. But how contradictory is the title in relation to the very threatening reality, that of the uncontrolled expansion of fish farms and not only in Poros but also in the Ionian and other areas? What are the effects of fish farms on the natural environment? Will we be able to swim in the future in our sea with pleasure? For its part, what position does the Greek state take regarding the plans of the fish farmers?

Calling Poros a "green island" and at the same time proceeding with the plan to install industrial fish farms on 25% of its coasts is completely contradictory!

Fish farms destroy the seabed, Poseidonia meadows and release huge amounts of waste, Styrofoam and plastics into the sea. Poros represents just 1% of the national plan for Greece, and here alone, if the plans go ahead, nearly 6,000 tons of waste will end up in the sea every year. A complete list of negative effects can be found on the [Aktaia](#) website.

Is there a way to develop the fish farming sector with less burden on the natural environment?

Yes. More and more fish farms [are being transferred to land-based facilities](#) , where there is no impact on the marine environment. This, of course, has other drawbacks, such as energy consumption and the ongoing problems with using wild fish to make fish feed.

The units can also be moved 2km off the coast, which will prevent damage to the Poseidonia meadows, but this will not stop thousands of tonnes of waste being dumped into our seas.

The Economist magazine recently reported that the future of fish farming is on land – when that happens, there will be no reason to farm fish far from the areas where they are consumed. It will make more sense to have facilities close to the main consumption markets, rather than shipping the fish from one end of the world to the other. There are serious long-term economic sustainability issues for fish farming, in addition to environmental unsustainability.

Open sea fish and farm fish. Which should we prefer to consume and why?

There is no reason to prefer farmed fish other than cost, but that cost comes with serious drawbacks – massive damage to the environment, loss of more wild fish, and consumption of all the drugs that farmed fish have been raised on. The best fish to eat are those that are caught locally and are lower on the food chain, such as sardines.

Tell us a little about yourself? Where do you get this undying love for Poros? What does "Perpendicular" mean? Her educational work even reached schools. Is there a possibility to cooperate with other cultural bodies in order to sensitize the entire Greek society?

I was born in New York and came to Poros for the first time right after I was born, when I was only two weeks old. My mother is American and my father from Poros, as were my grandparents, my great-grandparents and all previous generations of my family. Due to my father's great love and devotion to Poros, we definitely spent every summer and several years in Greece.

In my career, I have spent most of my career in the field of marine technology. I co-founded Veson Nautical in 2003 – started from my apartment in Boston and the company today employs over 500 people worldwide, including many in Greece.

When I decided to retire from the company in 2017, I wanted to return to the place I love, and so, together with my cousin, Fay Orfanidou, we started "Katheti". The purpose of "Katheti" was to bring more cultural and educational opportunities to Poros - especially to offer more opportunities for young people to have access to vocational workshops, which I found very useful at the beginning of my own career.

However, when we found out about the plans for the POAY in Poros, we immediately changed priorities as we recognized the seriousness of the issue. At the same time, I became the head of the Rauch Foundation, a family foundation on my mother's side, and because our strength is in research, we were able to devote resources to fully understand the type of fish farming that is done in Greece and the plans for the POAY. Since then, this has become a central issue for the foundation both in Greece and worldwide.

Poros is the place where I feel most at home and is closest to my heart. I love the history here, the authenticity of the place and the people, and the exceptional beauty of the sea, trees and mountains that heal the mind and soul. I personally feel a great responsibility to protect what was protected for us by our ancestors from far greater threats. I think of the Greece that future generations will experience if 240,000 stremmata (60,000 acres) of our coastline are allowed to be turned into industrial fish farms – Greece will no longer be Greece.

If the POAY plan goes ahead, we will be sacrificing our most valuable asset – the health and beauty of our country. We will create another serious problem, not a solution.