

Nature-based reef solution for coastal protection and marine biodiversity enhancement

Luca Monteleone is the project contact point for Life NatuReef on behalf of the Ente di Gestione per i Parchi e la Biodiversità – Delta del Po. He is specifically responsible for the project's replicability and its potential for adoption in different contexts. He is also involved in the project's citizen science activities.

Can you tell us about your work?

I am an environmental technical officer at the Po Delta Park Authority of Emilia-Romagna. In this role, in addition to following the various phases of the Life NatuReef project, I mainly carry out authorization-related tasks, such as issuing permits or conducting environmental impact assessments. Less frequently—though still part of my duties—I work outdoors during inspections, surveys, and monitoring activities.

What is your background?

I am a marine biologist. I have wanted to become one since I was a child. Water has always been a key element in my life: I grew up in a family where my mother is a swimming instructor and my father a scuba diving instructor. I myself have earned several certifications in freediving and scuba diving. I am also a swimming instructor and a water polo player. Additionally, during my university studies I took a specific exam focused on training for scientific underwater research.

What do you like about your job? And what do you not like?

I enjoy working on environmental protection and issues related to ecology. This job allows me to find the balance between human needs and the needs of nature—an essential goal of environmental conservation. Helping people understand that these two needs are not so far apart, and often even align, is what motivates me the most.

I also enjoy being able to participate in various European projects and having the opportunity, through my work, to understand how they are structured.

What do I not like? Sometimes I wish I could work more in the field, be more hands-on, and spend less time in the office. Then there are the challenges that come with working within a public authority. I believe there should be more communication and collaboration between public and private entities, especially to optimize time, resources, and efforts to achieve shared goals.

Nature-based reef solution for coastal protection and marine biodiversity enhancement

Can you tell us about a challenge overcome or an unexpected success?

I consider my greatest achievement winning the public competition that allowed me to obtain this job in the field I had always wished for—environmental protection—and, above all, in the place I wanted to be, not only in my country but even in my own region. Many others in the same field have not been as fortunate and often had to compromise, work outside their area of expertise, or leave Italy altogether.

A wish for yourself or for nature?

For myself, I wish to be able to build my life always doing a job like this—engaging and closely connected to nature.

For nature, I hope that we can learn to appreciate even more how beautiful it is, and how beautiful it is to be part of it, without feeling like something separate or external to it.

A thought on Life NatuReef

It is a project I truly believe in, because it represents a meeting point between our needs and those of nature, and conveys the idea that protecting nature is essential—so that nature can, in turn, protect us.