Peat exploitation in Peštersko polje dates from 1989 when the peat reserves of the Concession Field were estimated to last 35 years of successive exploitation with 50.000 m3 of peat exploited annually. Due to harsh climate and short exploitable periods, this rate was never fulfilled. In the following years, the state-owned enterprise went bankrupt and exploitation halted. The private company continued the exploitation works after a number of years and bought-out the land of the Concession Field. When in 2015 (December 31st) the Special Nature Reserve Peštersko polje was established by Government of Republic of Serbia by adopting the Decree on Proclamation of Protected Area of Special Nature Reserve „Peštersko polje“ („Official Gazette of the RS“, No. 114/2015), protected area of the First Category according to Serbian Nature Protection Law, two out of three protection regimes were defined: Level III Protection Regime over the area of the Concession Field and Level II Protection Regime over the rest of the PA around it. It needs to be noted that not all of the Peštersko polje peat bog is under the Concession Field/Level III Protection Regime and headed for exploitation, but the largest peat reserves are included in this area, which does make up the larger part of the peat bog. Nevertheless, the importance of this Ramsar site as the biodiversity hotspot, especially regarding the marsh and mire flora and fauna is not diminished by the peat exploitation. Even though the peat exploitation continues, the establishment of protected area over this area was essential to avoid that the exploitation have an impact on the ecological character of the surrounding areas. By the Decree on Proclamation, the exploitation works are only permitted in Level III Protection Regime (the Concession Field) as long as they don’t cause degradation of the area protected under Level II Protection Regime. Tourist Organisation of Sjenica was proclaimed as the manager of this protected area by the Decree on Proclamation of Protected Area of Special Nature Reserve „Peštersko polje“effectively since 2016. The capacities of the managers in these first years of their tenure were not yet sufficient and made the effective management not very specialized and operating under yearly management programs. Currently the manager has contracted the peat and mire vegetation expert (dr Predrag Lazarevic, Biological Faculty of Belgrade University), with great experience in researching this particular peat bog, to elaborate the management Plan for the 2020-2030 period, which development is advised and revised by the Institute for Nature Conservation of Serbia. The main objective of this Plan is to envisage protection measures and research needed to measurably determine that exploitation works in the Level III Protection Regime are not causing a negative impact on the ecological character of the Site, primarily by determining the drainage impact and proposing the restauration measures. As the harsh climate and available exploitation technology still preventing the exploiting companies to reach accumulative quota of 50.000 m3 (it is estimated to be up to 20.000 m3 currently) the state institutions are working on better control of the exploitation process, by ordering the research to determine remaining reserves, a new yearly quota and exploitation regime, upon which the adequate permits are to be issued to all of the exploiting companies. The managers of the protected area will be included in the peat exploitation control by establishing the control stations on the main access roads to the Concession Field.

