

Fundación Cepsa and Fundación de Investigación de la Universidad de Sevilla launch study to tackle *Rugulopteryx* algae

- **The project will last four years and will analyze the strengths and weaknesses of this Asian species**
- **José Carlos García, biologist and professor at the University of Seville, will head up the program**

Fundación Cepsa and FIUS (*Fundación de Investigación de la Universidad de Sevilla* — University of Seville research foundation) have signed a collaboration agreement to study *Rugulopteryx okamurae* in the Bay of Gibraltar. This algae of Asian origin has appeared in the waters of the Bay of Gibraltar and the Strait of Gibraltar in general, causing a significant environmental impact, especially along the coastlines of El Estrecho Natural Park.

Biologist José Carlos García Gómez, from La Línea and professor at the University of Seville, will lead this research over a four-year period. He will also have the support of several diving clubs from the Bay and coastline of the Strait, including Club de Buceo CIES Algeciras and Club de Buceo Campo de Gibraltar from La Línea, Natureexplorer from Barbate, Centro de Buceo Nitrox from Seville and CUASS (*Club Universitario de Actividades Subacuáticas de la Universidad de Sevilla* — the University of Seville underwater activities club). Together with other diving clubs, these clubs have already actively participated in another program, still in development, on environmental monitoring and warning the sea beds of Campo de Gibraltar, Ceuta and the South Atlantic coast, up to the start of the Guadalquivir river. In this case, the participants remain vigilant to potential changes in biodiversity that could be attributable to local anthropic disturbances, or other more subtle, global changes, noticeable over the medium to long term (climate change).

Today, Fundación Cepsa presented the project in the I+D+i building of the Campus Tecnológico de Algeciras (Algeciras Technology Campus). García Gómez and Miguel Pérez de la Blanca, a representative of Fundación Cepsa in Campo de Gibraltar, highlighted the work that this institution does in different fields, including social, cultural, sports and scientific-educational, as well as environmental. José Carlos García confirmed that the species "has imposed authority" on the region, and described the project as "ambitious", pointing out that it is "creating expectations".

The objective of the study, in which the Fundación Cepsa and the FIUS are collaborating, is to analyze the strengths and weaknesses of this Asian species, which is covering the sea bed and causing tons of this algae to appear on beaches along the Campo de Gibraltar coastline.

José Carlos García and his team will lead a campaign to explore and classify specimens (different morphotypes) and to install fixed grids to monitor the evolution of the algae

and the positioning of the species on artificial plates. A study will also be conducted on stable isotopes and the outreach of the project, and a final report will be submitted to the Company with the results when the time comes.

The study provides social training and information activities, such as talks, conferences and collaborations with non-profit associations, such as the Asociación de Alumnas Algas del Estrecho (algae alumni association of the Strait), in order to ensure a greater social impact, as well as to generate increased public awareness about the serious problem of invasive species in the marine environment.

Through this research project, Cepsa once again demonstrates its concern for the environment and its support for Campo de Gibraltar, given that this is a problem that is having a negative impact on the flora and fauna of the Bay of Gibraltar, as well as costing the municipal treasuries of the towns involved in the removal of this algae from their beaches.

Fundación Cepsa

Fundación Cepsa is a general interest, non-profit entity that aims to carry out initiatives that serve the needs and priorities of the local communities where its founder, COMPAÑÍA ESPAÑOLA DE PETRÓLEOS S.A.U. (Cepsa), conducts its activities. The areas of action for Fundación Cepsa are social, cultural, environmental, scientific-educational, and support for amateur sports.

Cepsa Chairs in Andalusia

Cepsa continues to work alongside academia. Fundación Cepsa-managed chairs at the Universities of Huelva, Seville and Cádiz grow thanks to the contributions and involvement of professionals from both organizations, in the improvement of training, innovation and research.

The Cepsa Chairs in Andalusia have allowed thousands of students to gain first-hand experience of a real working environment, while bringing university professors closer to the reality of industry in Andalusia. Exchanges between technicians and professors have allowed them to hone their skills and apply their newly gained expertise in their daily work. For all these reasons, today Cepsa is a great ally of universities in Andalusia.

San Roque, February 14, 2019

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