Report on Storm Damage at Kommos to the Heraklion Ephoreia

On Friday, February 20, 2026, I received notice from the foreman of my conservation team, Giorgos Misemikes, that the archaeological site at Kommos had been severely damaged by a powerful storm. Photographs of the damage show that strong waves, wind, and torrential downfalls of water swept away the beachside face of the berm we had reinforced with cement-lined sandbags in November 2025 (Fig. 1). This design was approved by the Ephoreia after we requested it (Γ. Νίνος, Εργασίες ενίσχυσης του δυτικού αναχώματος για την προστασία της περίφραξης, Νοεμβρίας 2025).

1

Over 60m of fence was undermined (Figs. 2-3). At the south the platform where cars park and where a bench and umbrella provide a resting place to view the beach, has been eroded and the sloping access to the beach no longer is accessible (Figs. 4-5)

2

3

4

At the eastern side of the Kommos site the great terrace wall that since its construction in the early 1990s was breached (Figs.5-6). As a result the integrity of the entire terrace and the overlying sand and roadway behind and above it are now threatened.

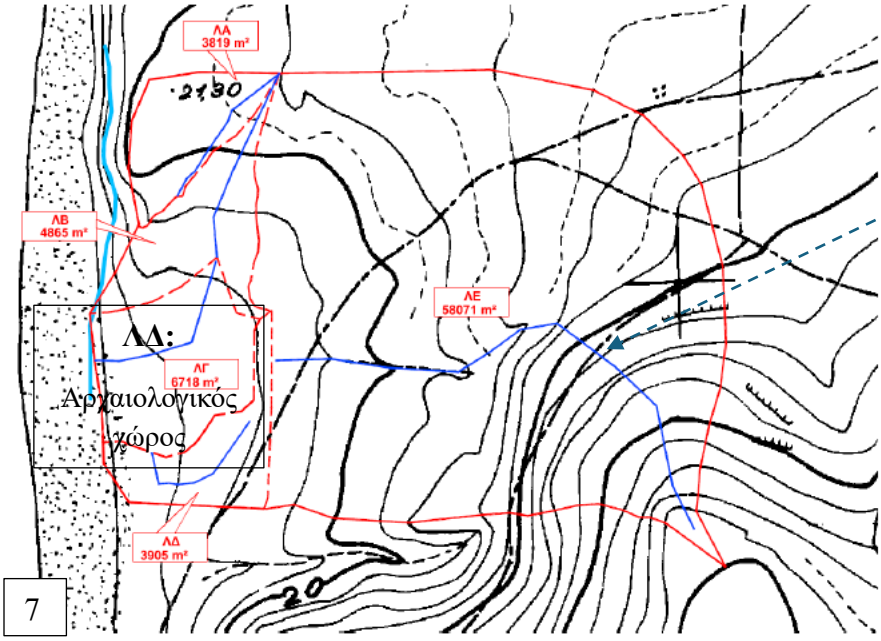
The consequences of this damage are enormous. The destruction of the berm and fence meana that the Kommos site is no longer secure: anyone can enter the site at any time. From a hydrological perspective, however, the consequences are dire. Further storms of this magnitude will collapse the road and the terraces and threaten especially the harbor installations and sanctuary remains of the Late Bronze Age through Roman times (Fig 6. Area in red in diagram).

5

6

After learning of this catastrophe I asked Giorgos Ninos to visit Kommos. He was accompanied by Michalis Kourakis, Engineer and Contractor, to assess the damage. This report includes their assessment.

It is important to understand that the hydrological conditions of Kommos were documented in the study by ΚΑΣΤΩΡ ΕΠΕ of February 2020, *Διαχείριση ομβρίων υδάτων στον Αρχαιολογικό Χώρο Κομμού, Κρήτης* that included a plan for managing water drainage, which was approved by KAS and signed by the Minister on 11/11/2013 (ΑΔΑ: ΨΜΒ446ΝΚΟΤ-ΦΕ5) This study identified Subbasin E (Fig. 7) as having the highest surface water flow relative to the Kommos site (ΚΑΣΤΩΡ, σελ. 29-33, Εικ. 12. Tables 6.2-6.5 ΛΕ: 58071 m^2)



7

Υπολεκάνη	παροχή (m3/s)
ΛΑ	0,063
ΛΒ	0,065
ΛΓ	0,059
ΛΔ	0,044
ΛΕ	0,874

Εικόνα 12: λεκάνες απορροής - υδρογραφικό δίκτυο θέσης Κομμού

This is the outer basin, which is located on the eastern side of the fenced archaeological site. In order to limit the runoff of rainwater towards subbasin C of the southern excavation sector, architect Georgios Ninos proposed the construction of a low-height embankment east of the excavation sector of the hillside. This

embankment would have drained the runoff of the northeastern slope to the northeastern corner of the wire mesh fence located on the existing eastern road. The basin in Fig. 7 has an area 58,071.00 m². Its maximum elevation is at +80.00 and its minimum is approximately +14.00. Its average elevation is approximately +48.00. The length of the theoretical mid-basin is 306 meters. Area ΛΔ is the location of the Kommos archaeological site. Area ΛΕ is the area outside the property lines of the archaeological site currently under expropriation by the Hellenic Ministry of Culture.

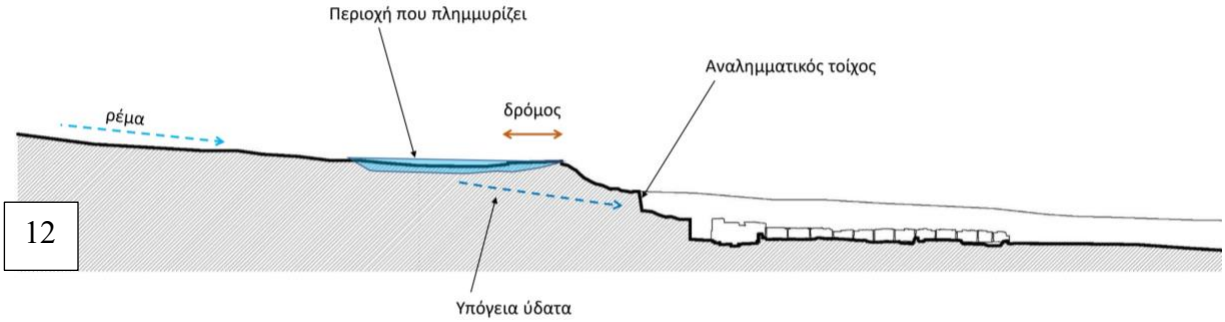
Where the road to the beach passes from North to South through the western area of ΛΕ as shown in the aerial map Fig 8, water gathers in a pond, and vegetation grows there. The three photographs (Figs. 9-11) below show how this area has flooded since the storm in February. The diagram of Fig. 12 shows not only how the water ponds in this area but also then saturates beneath the sand such that it ultimately builds up enough pressure to collapse the great Terrace wall (Figs. 5-6) that protects the antiquities of the Great Harbor Building T of the Neopalatial port at Kommos.

8


9


10

11



12

In May 2025 in conversation with our supervisor Maranthi Koukouraki, we learned that the entire Area ΛΕ is currently under expropriation by the Ministry of Culture. The hydrological information provided here and the evidence of flooding and its threat to the antiquities at Kommos should be important to submit to the court that is judging this case.

The information presented in this report demonstrates the serious threat of climate change to the Kommos site. The determination of how the site can be protected against further destruction is a matter of extreme urgency. It is not within the ability and scope of the Kommos Conservation Project to mount the resources and competent personnel to determine or implement measures to protect Kommos. We request that this report be

studied by the Ephoreia and submitted with commentary to the Department for the Restoration of Monuments and to the General Director of Prehistoric and Classical Antiquities.

Signed

James C. Wright

Professor emeritus, Bryn Mawr College
Director, Excavation at Kommos of the University of Toronto and the Royal Ontario Museum.