

Marine Protected Areas in the Belgian Part of the North Sea: a governance analysis

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Belgium already has a long history of successful and less successful attempts to delineate marine protected areas (MPAs) in the Belgian Part of the North Sea (BPNS). A thorough governance analysis over the period 1984-2006 was published in the document 'Who rules the coast?'.

Since 2006, the zonation map of the BPNS, including the designated conservation areas, has changed considerably. In 2008, the designation of the 'Vlakte van de Raan' was cancelled. In 2012, the Special Area of Conservation (SAC) 'Trapegeer-Stroombank' was largely extended to approximately 1/3rd of the total BPNS, and renamed as area of Special Community Interest (SCI) 'Vlaamse Banken'. Both events follow several successive processes on both national and European levels.

In this study, as part of the large EU-project MESMA (Monitoring and Evaluation of Spatially Managed Areas), we examined the development of these governance processes and evaluated if lessons were learned from the past, e.g. who took the initiative, what were the driving forces, what is important for future marine policy?