

MARINE SPATIAL PLANNING: FISHERIES MEASURES IN A N2000 AREA IN THE BELGIAN PART OF THE NORTH SEA

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The Belgian Part of the North Sea (BPNS) is a relatively small (3454 km²) and shallow area. Nevertheless, the area is intensively used by a dozen of activities, including aggregate extraction, fisheries, wind energy development, shipping and dredging. In March 2014, Belgium approved a legally binding marine spatial plan. This plan provides a long term vision for the BPNS, translated into concrete objectives for the period 2014-2020. Within this plan, zones are delineated in which specific rules apply with respect to various human activities. For commercial fisheries, 4 areas are delineated within the protected area “Vlaamse Banken” in which a number of restrictions will be in force. To assess the possible consequences of such measures on existing habitats (restoration) and on the fisheries sector (loss of fishing grounds), a detailed overview of fishing activities in the area is required, including fleet dispersion (per state, fishing gear and species), as well as information about the target species over the past 3 years. This information was collected based on VMS & logbook data over the period 2010-2012. The analyses highlighted which métiers will be impacted most by these fisheries measures. Possible conflicts might arise in zone 1 and 2 for the Belgian shrimp fishery, zone 1 for the Dutch shrimp fishery, and zones 2, 3 and 4 for the Dutch beam trawl fishery. Fisheries measures might have an influence on the catches of shrimp, sole, plaice and flounder in the BPNS.

DEFINING A ROADMAP TO EUROPEAN CLEANSEAS

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Marine litter is a threat to Europe’s marine ecosystems. It is a major societal challenge because it impacts the vast natural marine capital that supports economies, societies and individual well being. Marine litter, of which plastic is a main component, is explicitly identified as a descriptor for determining Good Environmental Status (GES) under the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD). Europe aims to achieve GES by 2020 and CleanSea is providing key scientific knowledge and tools for marine litter monitoring and action plans. The project operates in the four marine regions on Europe’s coasts coordinating with and making use of the existing institutional structures established by the UNEP Regional Seas Programme.

CleanSea is a multidisciplinary and collaborative research project addressing marine litter from different perspectives. It aims at providing European Member States and other stakeholders with improved knowledge, methods and tools to be able to better define, monitor and achieve a marine environment free of harmful litter levels. In doing so, it will deliver a transparent and useful guidance to policy makers and stakeholders to deal with marine litter mitigation.

The result will be a Roadmap to Good Environmental Status for ML derived from a transparent, coherent synthesis of natural and social science research outcomes and stakeholder input.

The paper aims to present the results of findings of the first implementation phase of the project.