

## Marine spatial plan: sand (extraction) in Belgium

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The marine spatial plan (MSP) for the Belgian part of the North Sea is a plan organizing the desired spatial three-dimensional structure and temporal distribution of human activities, based on a long term vision and on formulating clear economic, social and ecological objectives. This plan aims at coordinating decisions having a spatial impact on the Belgian sea areas, and ensures every stakeholder to be involved in the process.

The MSP has been adopted in March 2014 and will be evaluated and revised after six years. There is a procedure for an intermediary revision.

The MSP has the following composition:

- Royal Decree establishing the marine spatial plan, including all the annexes;
- Annex 1 contains a spatial analysis of the Belgian sea areas. This includes:
  - a spatial location and a legal demarcation of Belgian sea areas;
  - the physical characteristics and existing environmental and natural conditions in the Belgian part of the North Sea (BNS);
  - inventory of the activities and use of the Belgian sea areas;
  - an overview of the spatial alliances and conflicts;
  - the planning and policy context.
- Annex 2 contains the long-term vision, objectives, indicators and spatial policy choices for the BNS:
  - core objectives and overall long-term vision;
  - spatial principles and a spatial structural vision for the BNS;
  - economic, social, environmental and safety objectives and indicators;
  - spatial policy choices for users and activities in the BNS.
- Annex 3 contains the actions for implementing the maritime spatial planning;
- Annex 4 contains all the maps.

Sand and gravel extraction is one of the historic activities taking place in the Belgian part of the North Sea and of vital importance for the construction sector and coastal defense. This important role has been validated by the MSP as follows.

The vision is that there is a need for an optimal and sustainable extraction of sand and gravel, both for the construction sector and for the use as a function of the coastal defense against flood risks and for other applications.

The aforementioned vision has led to the following spatial options:

- Preservation of the 4 existing extraction zones;
- New definition of the sectors of zone 2 as a function of the shipping safety and nature conservation;

- Introduction of an appropriate assessment as an additional part of the environmental impact reports for concession demands within the special area for conservation 'Vlaamse Banken' ('The Flemish Banks');
- Preservation of the maximum allowed extraction volumes, with a gradual reduction of the extraction within the special area for conservation 'Vlaamse Banken' ('The Flemish Banks');
- Potential for multiple use of space;
- Combination with other activities in the extraction zones is possible since sand- and gravel extraction are temporary activities.

The aforementioned spatial options have resulted in this map:

