

List of claims/suggested strategies to protect the harbour porpoise in German waters.

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Within Natura 2000 sites (hereafter referred to as *protected areas*) all activities causing destruction, alteration or disturbance of harbour porpoise habitats have to be excluded. In doing so, a zoning concept is needed to realize that at least 50% of sites are set aside of any humans use.

The ASCOBANS Action Plans for the protection of harbour porpoises (North Sea Action Plan, Jastarnia Plan and Gap Area Plan) have to be implemented as soon as possible, as they are a necessary part of the European environmental legislation.

The following proposed measures address two major threats to harbour porpoises: fisheries and underwater noise. On top of this and according to the ecosystem approach there is urgent need for action concerning the regulation of shipping, military exercises, exploration of resources and pollution with organic and inorganic substances.

When management measures are to be developed it has to be taken into account that those threats can have both accumulative as well as synergistic effects on harbour porpoises. Where knowledge gaps exist because of unknown interrelations between threat factors or due to lack of scientific data, the precautionary principle must be applied.

Fisheries

WDC, NABU and OceanCare call for:

- By applying both technical and operational measures, harbour porpoises by-catch in gillnets has to be reduced as effective as possible in order to achieve the long-time goal of zero by-catch.
- Gillnets need to be replaced by more environment-friendly fishing methods. In the long term this should be established also beyond protected areas. A transitional period of 3 to 5 years is advised.
- To keep the animals away from nets, pingers may be only be used during the transitional period. Pingers are no appropriate method to permanently avoid by-catch.
- All bottom fishing activities need to be banned from protected areas, especially from the protected habitat types "reef" and "sand bank".
- Research into alternative fishing methods and their promotion has to be encouraged and according incentives are required.
- All fisheries within protected areas need to undergo an environmental assessment under Article XX of the Habitats Directive.

Underwater noise

WDC, NABU and OceanCare call for:

- Noise prevention has priority over noise reduction.
- An environment-friendly concept for the further expansion of offshore wind energy has to be developed as soon as possible. Low-noise foundation methods must be considered and cumulative effects have to be taken into account.
- Noise pollution through military use of sonar and other military activities must be banned from protected areas. Mitigation measures recommended by ASCOBANS always must be applied.
- Seismic exploration of oil and gas resources must be banned in German waters. Alternative technologies (e. g. Marine Vibroseis) already exist.
- For inevitable loud activities a buffer zone of 20 km width around each protected area needs to be established.
- For decommission of ammunition from past wars and in order to avoid noise from underwater explosions a strategic plan must be developed. Within as well as around protected areas explosions must not take place.
- The German Government's "Sound Protection Concept" has to be expanded to the Baltic Sea. The concept needs to be updated regularly. The Baltic Sea should be excluded from further large-scale expansion of offshore wind power.
- Measures to reduce noise from shipping, stricter regulation of shipping traffic as well as speed limitations need to be developed.