Cetacean-Friendly Maritime Spatial Planning: Draft Guidelines

Dr. Cormac Walsh
Maritime Spatial Planning

• A public process of analysing and allocating the spatial and temporal distribution of human activities in marine areas to achieve ecological, economic, and social objectives that usually have been specified through a political process

• Management of marine resources and protection of marine ecosystems, avoidance / minimisation of conflict
Maritime Spatial Planning

• Area-based
• Ecosystem-based
• Forward-looking
• Science-driven
• Transparent
• Participatory and integrated
• Adaptive

• **Regulatory role:** coordination of use of sea space

• **Strategic, forward planning role:**
  • setting out a cross-sectoral, integrated future vision
  • driving ecosystem-based marine management
Draft Guidelines

1. Introduction
   1.1 Current Status and Policy Context
   1.2 Ecosystem-Based MSP and Cetacean Conservation
   1.3 Building on Existing Good Practice

2. High-Level Recommendations

3. Threats to Cetaceans and Appropriate MSP Measures
1.1 Existing Commitments

• The parties to ASCOBANS agreed to “to cooperate closely in order to achieve and maintain a **favourable conservation status** for small cetaceans” (ASCOBANS 1992)

• FCS based on Convention on Migratory Species (1979)

• “the general aim should be to minimize (i.e. ultimately to reduce to zero) anthropogenic removals (i.e. mortality), and in the short term, to restore and/or maintain biological or management units to/at 80 per cent or more of the carrying capacity” (ASCOBANS Resolution 8.5, 2020)
1.2 Core Principles

- **Ecosystem-based MSP**: working within carrying capacity of, and ensuring integrity of marine ecosystems

- **Precautionary Principle**: anticipatory and preventive planning, to err on side of caution, missing data / evidence base does not mean potential impacts can be disregarded

- **Best Available Technology and Best Environmental Practices**: methods / measures with least adverse impact must be chosen, also when they incur additional costs

(HELCOM, OSPAR, EU)
2. High Level Recommendations

- Application of ecosystem-based MSP
  - Mapping of cetacean distribution and assessment of trends
  - Demonstration of alignment with international commitments
  - Functional understanding of marine ecosystems
  - Assessment of cumulative impacts
  - …

- Cetacean conservation areas
  - Area-based and temporal restrictions
  - Embedded within comprehensive MPA networks
  - …
2. High Level Recommendations

• **Mitigation, Compensation and Adaptation**
  - Application of mitigation hierarchy
  - Remediation with net benefit for cetacean population
  - Adaptive, dynamic, iterative process

• **Transboundary coordination and cooperation**
  - Assessment of cumulative impacts and carrying capacity at sea basin scale
  - Common assessment methodologies
  - Harmonised monitoring
  - Integration across the land-sea divide
3. Threats to Cetaceans and MSP Measures

- Matrix of threats, geographical distribution, species and sectors (based on ICES 2019)

- **Widespread**: e.g. contaminants, overfishing

- **relatively location specific**: shipping noise, military activity

- **highly location specific**: e.g. pile-driving
1.3 / 3. Underwater Noise

• Combination of impulsive and continuous noise (both significant and relevant)

• MSP should ensure critical thresholds are not exceeded (e.g. TG NOISE – EU MSFD)

• Use BAT and BEP: e.g. alternatives to pile-driving in wind turbine installation

• **Relatively Location Specific**: sonar, seismic surveys, underwater explosions, shipping noise,

• **Highly Location Specific**: Pile-driving
Expert Review

• Comments from seven organisations: HELCOM, OSPAR, IWC, Animal Welfare Institute, Finland, Germany, Poland – THANK YOU!

• Plus – internal review among guidelines preparation team

• Overall very constructive and helpful

• Specific comments re. assessment methods may be addressed in guidance on cumulative effects assessment