



European Marine Strategy

WWF welcomes the Commission Communication *Towards a strategy to protect and conserve the marine environment (COM (2002) 539 final)* and believes that such a Communication, which summarises the present situation with regard to development and implementation of policies to control threats and sets environmental, operational and institutional objectives, is long overdue. The Communication represents the first step towards the building of a thematic strategy for the protection of the marine environment. The loss of degradation of biodiversity resulting from overexploitation of fisheries, changes in structure, loss of habitat, contamination by dangerous substances and nutrients are of such severity that it is essential this work is progressed with the greatest possible speed, and that the necessary resources are made available for development and implementation of the Strategy.

WWF broadly welcomes the objectives and believes that ensuring these are implemented across Europe's seas will be of great value. We do, however, consider that the current Communication could have been more progressive. For example, the commitments given by North Sea Environment Ministers at the Fifth North Sea Conference (5NSC) in Bergen 2002 and the Commitments given by all EU Member States at the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) are not reflected in the Communication. It will be important to ensure in the future that objectives are set which "push the boundaries" in terms of the management and protection of Europe's seas.

WWF strongly advocates the importance of stakeholder engagement throughout the process and welcome the opportunity for stakeholder involvement. WWF is an environmental stakeholder, with representation across EU countries and accession countries, with direct experience that can contribute to the process. WWF advocates the elaboration of all objectives and action with timelines. WWF welcomes the principle of a

Consultative Body as outlined at the Stakeholder Conference in Denmark, December 2002.

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An Ecosystem-Based Approach to Management

WWF considers the application of the ecosystem approach, incorporating the precautionary principle, as fundamental to achieve the sustainable use of the seas, and in seeking truly comprehensive and integrated governance. WWF endorses, therefore, the outcome from the Stakeholder Conference in Denmark, December 2002, that recognises an ecosystem approach as being core to the success of the Strategy, and the need to develop EU Guidelines on an ecosystem approach. WWF identifies six points as critical for the development and implementation of such an approach:

- The setting of a vision and environmental goals with stakeholder engagement
- Developing an integrated marine policy
- Assessing the resource and status of the resource (including the use of biodiversity, socio-economic and risk assessments, and threats analysis)
- Establishing a spatial planning system, incorporating mapping activities and a decision making process to identify what activities can take place where
- Identification of delivery tools, such as consents, permits and economic tools
- Developing a strategy for delivery incorporating a legislative framework to delivering an ecosystem approach



WWF Global 200 Ecoregions in Europe. Marine Ecoregions: Barents Sea, North-East Atlantic Shelf, Mediterranean Sea.

In taking forward the EU Marine Strategy WWF advocates:

Delivery of an ecosystem approach:

- A vision for the seas of Europe and reflecting our "footprint" outside European seas
- An integrated marine policy to assist management on a regional basis
- Inclusion of a mechanism for strategic assessment, some of which could be developed by the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Directive (2001/42/EC), and applied to the full range of activities both in protected areas and the wider marine environment on a regional or sub-regional basis
- A framework for spatial planning at a sub-regional level e.g. Southern North Sea or Adriatic Sea to deliver both protection and management of Europe's seas

**WWF Position
on a
European
Marine Strategy**

- Delivery tools for the management of the resource through EU guidance and regulations
- An overall strategy, set against a regulatory backdrop, to show how the above can be delivered, including fiscal measures, research, enforcement, monitoring and evaluation, and involving extensive stakeholder consultation and participation.

Delivery of an integrated framework between Europe and relevant regional and international bodies.

WWF proposes the inclusion of an overarching action to complement the overall objective set out in the Strategy, incorporating the development of an integrated marine policy in coastal and offshore waters.

Text prepared by Sian Pullen and Alison Champion

Further reading

EC (2002): EC Communication: Towards a strategy to protect and conserve the marine environment (COM (2002) 539 final). European Commission. Brussels.

WWF (2003): Position Statement on the... (above). WWF European Endangered Seas Programme. Godalming. May 2003.

Chemicals

WWF urges the EU in developing the EU Chemicals Policy to:

- Adopt a precautionary approach.
- Ensure that the new authorisation procedure is designed to phase out the use of chemicals of very high concern, only authorising their use if no safer alternative is available and there is an overriding societal need for use.
- Ensure that the definition 'of very high concern' includes chemicals that are persistent, bioaccumulative and toxic (PBT), very persistent and very bioaccumulative (vPvB) or have endocrine disrupting properties.
- Regulate the production and use of chemicals within Europe, and the import of chemicals, preparations and articles into Europe.
- Ensure the availability and accessibility of data on market volumes and patterns of use, therefore assisting with the identification of hazardous substances that may end up in the marine environment.
- Note the long-term strategy including the principles and standards, on hazardous substances adopted by the Regional Seas Conventions.

Maritime Transport

On maritime transport WWF would welcome:

- More explicit action on measures to prevent maritime pollution accidents, for example risk assessment and development of proposals including the IMO designation of Particularly Sensitive Sea Areas (PSSAs), and other risk reduction measures such traffic separation schemes and areas to be avoided.
- Consideration of an immediate ban of single-hull oil tankers within PSSAs.
- Speeding up the implementation of the Erika I and Erika II packages addressing port state control, activities of classification societies, phasing out single-hull vessels globally, establishing a European Agency of Maritime Safety, monitoring of traffic passing through European waters and payment of compensation to victims of oil spills.
- Review of the Erika I and Erika II packages to ensure that once fully implemented they would have prevented recent tanker disasters such as the Prestige, Erika and Baltic Carrier.
- Support a fundamental change in the way the shipping industry is operated and regulated globally.

Nature Conservation

WWF welcomes the commitment from the European Commission to pursue its efforts to fully implement the Habitats and Birds Directives in the marine environment. However, the implementation of the Natura 2000 network in the marine environment has been dramatically overlooked during the last ten years of the process resulting in further damage to sites and negative impacts to species.

WWF welcomes the proposed reference to integration of policy issues with nature conservation goals, and notes the need for sustainable management of areas of high biodiversity and productivity.

WWF welcomes the reference to adapt the annexes to the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992) noting the opportunity to increase the range of marine and coastal habitats and species, so increasing representivity in the marine environment. However, WWF wishes to stress that this should not deter Member States and the European Commission from increasing their efforts to effectively implement the existing provisions for the protection of the marine species and habitats. This refers in particular to the designation, protection and management of marine Natura 2000 sites for species and habitats already listed in the Directives, and the establishment of a system of strict protection of species and the monitoring of incidental capture and killing.

Coastal Zone Management

WWF note that the adoption of the EU Recommendation for the implementation of Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) in Europe (May 2002/413/EC) should also lead to a more integrated approach for management of the coastal environment and adjoining seas. It recommends management of the coastal zone with reference to the 6th Environmental Action Programme. Implementation of the Recommendation, for example by facilitating integrated working of stakeholders, can aid implementation of this Strategy. It will, therefore be advantageous to recognise the obvious links between this Strategy and the Recommendation, and plan to establish strong links between each set of actions.

Co-operation and Co-ordination

WWF recognise the importance of co-operation and co-ordination between the EU and relevant regional and international bodies, in particular the Regional Seas Conventions (OSPAR, HELCOM and BARCOM). Clarity on this issue is vital to ensure there is no duplication of effort and to recognise the validity and contribution of the Regional Seas Conventions to the management of Europe's seas. It is imperative that the EU and Regional Seas Conventions work in concert and not in variance to each other.

For example co-operation with the OSPAR strategy on hazardous substances on work covering priority and candidate list substances, and the allocation of a timeframe for action i.e. 2010.

Other issues addressed in WWF's Position

Statement: • Agriculture and EU Water Policy • Climate Change • Fisheries • Offshore Activities • Research, Knowledge Base and Access to Information