



Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission

Working Group on the State of the Environment and Nature
Conservation

STATE & CONSERVATION
5-2016

Tallinn, Estonia, 7-11 November, 2016

Document title	Status of HELCOM MPA database
Code	3N-3
Category	INF
Agenda Item	3N – HELCOM network of coastal and marine Baltic Sea Protected Areas
Submission date	31.10.2016
Submitted by	Secretariat
Reference	

Background

The HELCOM MPA database has been modernized according to the agreement in HELCOM Recommendation 35-1 on the system of coastal and marine Baltic Sea protected areas (HELCOM MPAs). The process started at STATE & CONSERVATION 1-2014 and the modernized database was published in October 2015. STATE & CONSERVATION 4-2016 discussed and agreed on modifications to be carried out by the end of April 2016.

This document provides an update of the current status of MPA database.

Action requested

The Meeting is invited to:

- take note of the current status of HELCOM MPA database web application
- take note of the possibility to update MPA information anytime as new information becomes available or new sites are nominated.

Status of HELCOM MPAs database

Revisions requested by STATE & CONSERVATION 4-2016

HELCOM MPA database modifications and improvement suggestions were discussed in STATE & CONSERVATION 4-2016. The Meeting welcomed that the following improvements have already been made to the database:

- a possibility to add a picture and description when reporting a site
- the full species list is available on the database and contains the whole macro species list in the Baltic Sea, including also 13 additional bird species proposed at S&C 3-2015
- additional biotope complexes have been included in the biotopes list
- a map feature has been implemented which shows species, biotopes/biotope complexes on a map
- an additional tab has been added for management plans

After STATE & CONSERVATION 4-2016, Secretariat prepared [short introduction document](#) and more comprehensive [video guidelines](#) about the use of the MPA database which can be accessed from HELCOM Secretariat YouTube channel:. The video contains demonstration of the functionalities of the web application, such as creating filters etc. Secretariat also prepared [full guidelines for entering data](#).

[Document 2N-1 Comments and improvements to the HELCOM MPA database](#) to STATE & CONSERVATION 4-2016 contained a table outlining revisions to the MPA database to be implemented by the end of April 2016. The table is updated to this document highlighting the revisions that have been carried out (Table 1).

Due to limited time allocated for testing in the first phase of the suggested revisions carried out in Table 1, the implementation of the revisions resulted in some issues with the web application which are outlined in Table 2.

Currently there are no resources allocated to carry out further modifications to the HELCOM MPA database web application. The aim is to carry out pending development and revisions when time allows on top of existing data collection obligations thus exact schedule on implementation cannot be confirmed. In case further development needs are identified, resources for implementation should be made available and a revision schedule planned taking into account resource demand of suggested revisions and proper testing of the modified functionalities. The first step would be to identify explicitly the requirements causing the modification needs in order to solve problems 2-5 in Table 2. Based on further defined modification needs, more exact resource estimation could be carried out.

Reporting of data to HELCOM MPAs database

HELCOM MPA database web application can be used for editing and adding new information by nominated members of Contracting Parties. Submission of spatial data related to the MPAs should be directed to HELCOM Secretariat (jonni.kaitaranta@helcom.fi).

To date, Secretariat has received information on nomination of two new marine protected areas in Lithuania. The process of updating spatial information to the map viewer and to the database is still pending input from Lithuania.

Table 1. Revisions required for HELCOM MPA database as outlined in STATE & CONSERVATION 4-2016.

	Type of revision	Objective	Rationale	Status 31.10.2016
Revisions to the content of the database				
1	Addition	MPA national name (optional).	A separate field will be added for the national name of the MPA. Providing the national name is optional, and the English name will remain the main reference within the database. Secretariat will correct this for those sites where both national and English name has already been provided.	Field added.
2	Addition	Description and picture of site (optional).	There will be an option to provide a short description text and picture for each MPA (Annex 2).	Description and picture fields added.
3	Addition	The species list.	The list of species will be expanded to contain the full check-lists of Baltic Sea macro-species.	Species list amended.
4	Proposal for clarification	The question “Does the species/biotope/biotope complex justify this sites designation as an MPA?” needs to be clarified.	This question is central as it informs whether the species is protected in the MPA, or whether it is only present in the MPA. Currently this help text is available when editing information: “If the HELCOM MPA is established to protect this species in particular choose yes. Otherwise choose no.” It is proposed to reformulate the question to “Is this species/biotope/biotope complex one of the main objectives for protection within the MPA?”	Column heading in the species table is still “Does the species/biotope/biotope complex justify this sites designation as an MPA?” , but question in the data entry form is “If the HELCOM MPA is established to protect this species type in particular, choose yes, otherwise, choose no.”
5	Requested addition	Map query on species/biotopes/biotope complexes.	The link “show sites” under the species tab shows all sites where the species in question is reported (including links to the site information). Finland requested the possibility to add a link “show sites on map” which would show the sites on a map. Secretariat is investigating whether the proposed addition can be implemented.	Map query implemented
6	Addition	Link to HUB biotope descriptions.	A link to HUB biotope descriptions will be added to the biotopes reporting site.	Link added
7	Addition	Tab with management plans.	A new tab will be inserted displaying all management plans listed in the database. This enables searching information directly between the management plans.	Tab added listing all management plans
8	Addition	Addition of an option for management plan status: “Developed but not yet implemented”.	Currently there are 3 options for the status of a management plan: “No plan”, “In development” and “Implemented”. An additional management plan status option for “Developed but not yet implemented” will be added.	Option “Developed but not yet implemented” added to the management plan status options
9	Proposal for	Change in management	Proposal to change the management	Option added for

	clarification	plan status option “No plan”.	plan status option “No plan” to “No plan, but regulations do apply”. This would clarify to the user that there activates are regulated on the site despite that the management plan is not in implemented.	management plan status options
	Addition	Addition of “Show MPAs on map” also for “Activities” tab	There is a need to see also to where each activity is regulated.	Implemented
Revisions to the layout of the database				
10	Clarification	Headings in larger font.	The font of the headings will be increased for improved clarity.	Implemented
11	Requested modification; solution provided	Lock the column headings when scrolling in large tables.	The request by Finland to lock the column headings when scrolling in large tables cannot be implemented in the database as such, but the same result can be achieved by using the functions in the database. The section break function (found under the Action-button) will repeat the column heading between groups of MPAs with similar features, e.g. country, size or status.	Unable to implement “Lock columns”, suggestion to use workaround by “Section break” function under actions tab.
12	Clarification	MPA name to show when editing information.	The name of the site will be shown in the edit mode to help keep track of the sites (for example “Edit biotope information” will become “Edit biotope information for site Lawica Slupska”).	Implemented
13	Clarification	Help boxes when editing information.	There are help boxes available for all data entry points (Annex 3). The link to the help boxes will be made blue and underlined for easier use.	Link exists, pending visual modifications
14	Clarification	Map legend and country borders.	The map will be clarified regarding the legend text and country borders.	Implemented
15	Addition	Shapefile attribute table.	Year of establishment will be added to the attribute table of the MPA shapefiles.	Implemented

Table 2. Identified problems resulting from further testing and revisions carried out after STATE & CONSERVATION 4-2016.

Problem/requirement	Description	Status 30.10.2016
1. The regulated activities, which countries have reported into the database, are not visible for any MPA fact sheets unless you are logged in (the majority of our users cannot log in).	Users cannot access information reported into the database due to incorrect permissions configuration.	Permissions fixed 9/2016
2. The status of the MPAs in the overview table is incorrect in some cases. The status options are: designated; designated and managed; designated and partly managed.	<p>MPAs overview table is result of a query interpreting responses saved to the database following the logic that was used prior S&C 4-2016. This problem is caused when two more options for management plan status were added after S&C 4-2016 meeting ("no plan, but regulations do apply" and "developed, but not yet implemented").</p> <p>For example, if an MPA has two management plans of which one is "implemented" and the other one is "no plan, but regulations do apply", the correct MPA status in the overview table should be "designated and partially managed". Currently it gives the status "designated", which is incorrect.</p>	Pending – query script would need to be modified and tested to take into account combinations resulting from new options
3. National protection status of MPAs search tool is not displaying whether the different statuses offer legal protection to the MPA.	Users cannot see if the MPA is under any legal protection provided by national protection programmes. Only the name of the protection programme is displayed.	Pending – query script would need to be modified to show content based on two columns
4. Legal protection of species, biotopes and biotope complexes is currently no clearly stated in the database. The question intended to give this information has been interpreted in different ways by different countries. This results in unreliable information.	When Contracting Parties provide information on species per MPA they will answer the question "Does the species justify the site designation as an MPA?" in the entry form. The response for this question is intended to inform whether the species is present within the MPA (Response: "no"), or whether the species is under direct legal protection and actual protection measures are targeted at the species within the MPA (Response: "yes"). The same logic applies for biotopes and biotope complexes. However, the Contracting Parties have informed the Secretariat that more detailed information is needed to convey the information correctly. State and Conservation 4-2016 discussed the issue and proposed that the question should be complemented with the question "Is this species/biotope/biotope complex legally protected within the MPA?". For the second option it was furthermore proposed to consider the option to specify the legal protection	<p>Not started – would require restructuring of the species page of the web application, and require input from experts. Two options have been discussed</p> <p>1) To add a drop-down field under the section for further information on species (biotopes & biotope complexes) for a limited number of options of the national protection type. These drop-down fields would, however, need to be country-specific, as the countries national protection types differ from each other 2) To add a free text field after</p>

		this question, so that countries can, if they want to, provide more detailed information on the type of protection.
5. The language and character length of an individual MPA name should be decided. Currently some long MPA names are causing malfunctions in the database.	Some subpages of the MPA fact sheet do not work when the MPA name is too long. All information on the subpage will be blocked.	Not started – would require modification of existing names or modification of application, requiring input from experts.