



Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission

Working Group on the State of the Environment and Nature
Conservation

STATE & CONSERVATION
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Note that this document was submitted after the established deadline.

It will be decided by the Meeting whether the document can be discussed or is postponed to the next meeting.

Background

STATE & CONSERVATION 4-2016 supported organizing a workshop together with the CBD Secretariat to explore the possibility to designate EBSAs for the Baltic Sea region and welcomed the offer from Estonia to look into the possibility to arrange such a workshop during the EU Chairmanship period in 2018. The meeting agreed to come back and discuss the issue in more detail at STATE & CONSERVATION 5-2016.

This document contains information on Ecologically or Biologically Significant Marine Areas (EBSAs) in the Baltic Sea and a suggestion on organizing a Baltic Sea EBSA workshop led by HELCOM.

Action requested

The HELCOM Contracting Parties are invited to agree on the following proposed further steps regarding the organization of the EBSA workshop:

- Discuss the topic at STATE & CONSERVATION 5-2016 in Tallinn (7-11 November 2016)
- Raise the issue at the HELCOM HODs (HOD 51-2016) with the aim to agree on the EBSA workshop with the proposed HELCOM involvement and with the Baltic Sea state's intention to establish EBSAs in the Baltic Sea – following the EBSA criteria
- If agreed by the STATE & CONSERVATION 5-2016 and HOD 51-2016:
 - HELCOM will host the EBSA Workshop, at the Secretariat or/and Marina Congress Centre to underline the connection to HELCOM and HELCOM data (and to ensure that HELCOM stays in the loop)
 - Baltic Sea EBSAs are proposed by the states around the Baltic Sea, independently – not by HELCOM – despite the involvement of HELCOM
 - Finland and Estonia would jointly cover the expenses for the EBSA workshop – with the exception of the involvement of the HELCOM Secretariat
 - Experts (in particular GIS experts) from the HELCOM Contracting Parties prepare themselves for the workshop by meeting the CBD Secretariat on this matter in Montreal a few months before the workshop (includes the involvement of the Duke University's GIS experts)
 - Finland and Estonia invite experts from the Duke University to participate in the EBSA workshop (their expertise is excellent and their previous engagement in the process is proof that they significantly contributed to the success of the EBSA workshop). Or if sufficient, then Finland, and Estonia, ask the CBD Secretariat to involve the Duke University in the Baltic Sea EBSA workshop
 - The HELCOM Secretariat facilitates the use of all existing HELCOM datasets that can be used for identifying EBSAs.

Note that the timing for the EBSA workshop, suggested by the HELCOM Secretariat, CBD Secretariat and Finland, is spring 2018, which will allow to benefit from the ongoing data collection and updating processes for the purpose of HOLAS II.

Identifying Ecologically or Biologically Significant Marine Areas (EBSAs) in the Baltic Sea by organizing a Baltic Sea EBSA workshop lead by HELCOM

What are EBSAs and what they are not?

EBSAs are special areas in the ocean that serve important purposes, in one way or another, to support the healthy functioning of oceans and the many services that it provides (www.cbd.int/ebsa/about). EBSAs are not MPAs, do not have the legal protection of MPAs.

Identification of EBSA

In 2008, the ninth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (COP 9) adopted the scientific criteria for identifying ecologically or biologically significant marine areas in need of protection in open-ocean waters and deep-sea habitats. The EBSA criteria are:

1. Uniqueness or Rarity
2. Special importance for life history stages of species
3. Importance for threatened, endangered or declining species and/or habitats
4. Vulnerability, Fragility, Sensitivity, or Slow recovery
5. Biological Productivity
6. Biological Diversity
7. Naturalness

For more details on the EBSA criteria, please see: <https://www.cbd.int/doc/meetings/mar/ebsaws-2014-01/other/ebsaws-2014-01-azores-brochure-en.pdf> . EBSA are not MPAs, despite some similarities in their criteria, and the application of EBSA criteria is a scientific and technical exercise. Although EBSA are not MPAs they can in some cases overlap with the existing MPAs – if the criteria fit the site.

Who identifies EBSAs

According to the CBD (www.cbd.int/ebsa/about) *“the identification of EBSAs and the selection of conservation and management measures is a matter for States and competent intergovernmental organizations, in accordance with international law, including the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).”* Therefore, in the Baltic Sea, the designation of EBSAs is a matter for the nine States around the Baltic Sea but HELCOM can participate in the process. However, also the CBD secretariat has participated in all previous EBSA workshops, and helped to facilitate the process, in most cases together with technical support from the Duke University GIS experts.

Benefits of EBSA

The fact that EBSA are not MPAs means that they do not have the same legal burden as MPAs but still provide useful information that can be used for safeguarding the species and habitats in these areas:

- a) All areas of ecological and biological importance in the Baltic Sea are identified (based on the current knowledge) and categorized in a structured way utilizing a recognized method offered by CBD;
- b) the identification of EBSA is an expert process and in practice is generally easier than for MPAs;
- c) EBSAs, and the data for identification of EBSAs, can be recognized and utilized when carrying out MSP, but there could more uses of the information;
- d) EBSA has become widely recognized and acknowledged in almost every marine topic dealt with by the CBD in the last years; if the Baltic Sea does not have any EBSA of its own then the Baltic Sea and HELCOM do not have representation in the future developments related to EBSA and could not benefit from opportunities it does and could offer;
- e) States or regions without EBSA will probably have less influence in the EBSA process.

The short history and present role of EBSAs in the CBD’s work

In 2010, COP 10 noted that the application of the EBSA criteria is a scientific and technical exercise, that areas found to meet the criteria may require enhanced conservation and management measures, and that this can

be achieved through a variety of means, including marine protected areas and impact assessments. The COP further noted that the application of the EBSA criteria is an open and evolving process that should be continued to allow ongoing improvement and updating as improved scientific and technical information becomes available in each region.

The first EBSAs identified were very large, in many cases larger than the Baltic Sea. Later on, in areas such as the Mediterranean and the areas around the southern end of Africa (South-East Atlantic Ocean EBSAs) the areas are much smaller. The size of EBSAs is not a reason for not identifying EBSA in the Baltic Sea.

Several regional workshops have been organized by the CBD Secretariat to facilitate the description of areas meeting the EBSA criteria. These are:

- *Western South Pacific (held in Nadi, Fiji, in 2011)*
- *Eastern Tropical and Temperate Pacific (held on Galapagos, Ecuador, in 2012)*
- *South Indian Ocean (held in Flic en Flac, Mauritius, in 2012)*
- *The Wider Caribbean and Western Mid-Atlantic (held in Recife, Brazil, in 2012)*
- *North Pacific (held in Moscow, Russian Federation, in 2013)*
- *South-East Atlantic Ocean (held in Swakopmund, Namibia, in 2013)*
- *Arctic (held in Helsinki, Finland, in 2014)*
- *North-West Atlantic (held in Montreal, Canada, in 2014)*
- *The Mediterranean (held in Málaga, Spain, in 2014)*
- *North-East Indian Ocean (held in Colombo, Sri Lanka, in 2015)*
- *North-West Indian Ocean and Adjacent Gulf Areas (held in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, in 2015)*
- *Seas of East Asia (held in Xiamen, China, in 2015)*
- Considered: North-Easter Atlantic

The last SBSTTA meeting spent a lot of time to identify details of the EBSA process and the results of the SBSTTA and recent EBSA workshops will be considered by CBD COP 13 in December 2016. EBSAs are also mentioned in connection of several other marine topics at the CBD which further increases the importance to know about EBSAs. For the Baltic Sea the absence of EBSAs will eventually lead to reduced influence and, eventually, questions about why the Baltic Sea hasn't made an effort to identify EBSA.

Map of EBSA sites (Source: EBSA <https://www.cbd.int/ebsa/>)



Finland hosted the Arctic EBSA workshop which turned out to be a success, against all odds. The Arctic was considered to be particularly difficult due to the fact that it is less known than many other regions and the

political interest towards the Arctic is high. The fact that the EBSA identification in the Arctic went smoothly is proof that much of the political anxiety involved with MPA designation does not apply to EBSA. Finland's experience from hosting the Arctic EBSA workshop is valuable when planning a Baltic Sea EBSA workshop.

Steps towards EBSAs taken in the Baltic Sea up until now:

- The topic was discussed at the State & Conservation meeting 4 -2016, in Germany and Finland was asked to discuss the topic further with the CBD Secretariat and Estonia was asked to check whether or not the EBSA workshop could be hosted by Estonia during the Estonian EU Chairmanship
- Estonia concluded that the EBSA workshop does not fit into the Estonian EU Chairmanship agenda
- Finland discussed this with the CBD Secretariat at the CBD SBSTTA meeting and the Secretariat was pleased and supported the idea to move forward
- The topic was discussed within Finland and with the HELCOM Secretariat
- Further discussions with the CBD Secretariat was carried out by the HELCOM Secretariat and Finland and a proposed timing for the workshop was suggested (see below).

The (anticipated) role of HELCOM in the EBSA process:

- Host the workshop
- Provide assistance by the HELCOM Secretariat Staff
- Provide the use of HELCOM datasets for the EBSA Workshop
- Liaison with the CBD Secretariat, FI, EE, SE, regarding the organisation of the workshop

More information on EBSAs from the CBD secretariat:

Brochure on the EBSA criteria

<https://www.cbd.int/doc/meetings/mar/epsaws-2014-01/other/epsaws-2014-01-azores-brochure-en.pdf>

Example of an EBSA workshop report

<https://www.cbd.int/doc/meetings/mar/epsaws-2014-01/official/epsaws-2014-01-05-en.pdf>

- This is the workshop report from the Arctic EBSA workshop. As discussed, the EBSA workshop reports are drafted, reviewed and agreed to by the workshop participants during the workshop. Of course, there is much preparatory work in compiling information used in the EBSA descriptions.
- The EBSA descriptions are contained in the appendix to annex VIII (on page 52)
- The workshop reports also contain syntheses of key issues that were addressed during the workshop. In this case, for example, the workshop addressed the unique regional significance of the Arctic (page 28), challenges related to the use of traditional knowledge (page 34) and socio-cultural information (page 43) and scientific information needs and knowledge gaps (page 49).
- This workshop also illustrates how different types of areas can be described as EBSAs, from small static features to large dynamic features (such as the Arctic ice edge ecosystem).

Article on Results of Efforts Under the CBD to Describe EBSAs

<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/cobi.12649/full>

- Provides an update on the EBSA work and characterizes different types of EBSAs that have been described

Article on Using EBSAs for MSP (attached)

- An article by our colleagues at CSIRO describing an approach for using the EBSA information to support marine spatial planning

Compilation of Experiences and Lessons Learned from Scientific Methodologies and Approaches for the Description of Areas Meeting the EBSA Criteria (SBSTTA information document)

<https://www.cbd.int/doc/meetings/sbstta/sbstta-20/information/sbstta-20-inf-20-en.pdf>

There are also various resources available on the CBDs EBSA website (<https://www.cbd.int/ebsa>).