



Defending Our Oceans

"Greenpeace is committed to defending the health of the world's oceans and the plants, animals and people that depend upon them."

Marine Reserves for the North and Baltic Seas

"We are facing a gathering wave of ocean extinction...the seas have reached a tipping point, with scores of species of ocean-dwelling fish, birds and mammals edging toward extinction."

Pew Institute for Ocean Science 2005.





The North and Baltic Seas are in crisis. Pollution from land-based sources, excessive nutrients from agricultural runoff, airborne inputs originating from a variety of sources such as traffic, fish-farming, oil and gas exploration, sand and gravel extraction, and fishing have all left their imprint on these important marine ecosystems. Many important habitats for fish and other marine life have been destroyed and large areas of the Baltic Sea bed have become anoxic. In addition, shipping traffic is increasing rapidly. Several hundred thousand ships cross the North Sea each year. In the Baltic, it is several tens of thousands annually and especially the transportation of oil is set to increase dramatically over the next decade. These Seas are in our backyard. If we continue to treat them this way then we will lose the unique variety of animals and plants that call these seas home. The way out of the crisis is twofold:

- Implementation of marine reserves: these are areas akin to marine parks on land, where no extractive or disposal activities are allowed.**
- Ecologically sustainable and socially responsible use of the seas outside of the marine reserves and the reduction of land based pollution**

The North Sea

The endless beaches of the Southern North Sea are well known tourist sites. What is less well known is that the North Sea is one of the world's most productive ecosystems. Fed by cold nutrient and oxygen-rich water from the north and warmer water from the eastern English Channel, it has a diverse physical nature which provides an equally diverse range of habitats. Some 10 million seabirds and around 230 different species of fish are to be found almost year-round. Even more importantly though, while the North Sea represents only 0,002% of the world's marine surface area, approximately 4% of all the fish caught around the world is taken from here.

The Baltic

The Baltic's distinct ecology is largely determined by the fact that it is almost totally enclosed by land, and only connected to the North Sea by narrow and shallow straits around Denmark and Sweden. This limits the exchange of water with the open sea. It typically takes about 25-30 years for all the water in the Baltic Sea to be replaced. More than 200 large rivers bring fresh water into the Baltic, making it the world's biggest brackish sea. Compared to other seas these specific conditions have made food webs simpler, since only a few species can survive.

The last ton of fish?

In 2002 total fish landings from the North Sea amounted to 2.3 million tonnes, almost a quarter of its total estimated fish biomass. This overexploitation has left stocks of cod, haddock, whiting, saithe, plaice and sole close to or beyond safe biological limits. Similarly 75% of the commercial fish species in the Baltic are similarly overexploited, in particular cod. Baltic spawning stocks of herring have also decreased steadily since the 1970s, and the central Baltic herring stock is assumed to be outside of biological limits.

Scientific advice from the International Council for the Exploration of the Seas (ICES) has repeatedly recommended a complete ban on cod fishing in the North Sea. Since 2005 ICES has repeatedly advised a zero catch of cod in the Kattegat and eastern Baltic, since these stocks are both seriously depleted and are clearly being overfished. In addition, illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing also known as pirate fishing is a serious problem in the Baltic region. Due to ICES 38% above the official Eastern Baltic cod quota is landed without any documentation.

Marine Reserves for the North and Baltic Seas

The solution to the crisis facing these European Seas is the establishment of large scale marine reserves – areas where all extractive and waste disposal activities are prohibited. These reserves would ensure the conservation of fragile ecosystems and their biological and physical components. They would also give depleted fish stocks the chance to recover. Because the reserve boundaries are not closed off from the rest of the sea areas, in a relatively short period of time, replenished stocks could cross the borders of the reserves and benefit the fisheries outside of them.

Greenpeace proposes 17 marine reserves for the North and Baltic Seas that represent around 40% of the total area.

Defending Our Oceans

Greenpeace is currently on a 14-month global expedition 'Defending Our Oceans - the most ambitious expedition ever. From whaling in the Southern Oceans to pirate fishing in West Africa, Greenpeace is exposing both the beauty and threats to our world's oceans. The Arctic Sunrise, along with her sister ships the Rainbow Warrior and Esperanza are part of this expedition. You can join us and help defend your oceans by becoming an Ocean Defender!

visit www.oceans.greenpeace.org



Greenpeace proposals for North and Baltic Seas Marine Reserves network

Map showing areas in the North and Baltic Seas proposed by Greenpeace as future marine reserves.

A marine reserve network covering 40% of the North and Baltic Seas is needed to ensure a future for the marine life of these seas and the people who depend on them.

For more information see:

- 1) Rescuing the North and Baltic Seas: Marine Reserves - a key tool.
- 2) Marine Reserves for the North Sea and Baltic

These reports available for download at www.oceans.greenpeace.org



Greenpeace is an independent, campaigning organisation, which uses non-violent, creative confrontation to expose global environmental problems, and to force solutions essential to a green and peaceful future

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