

Science and the Policy - Making World: the Protection of Species and Habitats in the North Sea Coastal Margins

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From his experience as Secretary of the North Sea Task Force, the author presents a short review of the available scientific information on coastal habitats and species around the North Sea. The review includes scientific works on coastal- and sea-bird populations, cetaceans, marine benthos, flora, together with information from inventories of specific protected sites in the North Sea coastal margins. It is further investigated how the scientific knowledge can be used to help develop coastal and marine conservation strategies.

The North Sea Task Force has based its work on sound scientific knowledge and has used strong supporting evidence to suggest orientations in policy-making. Despite the existing wealth of information, few comprehensive studies exist at the ecosystem level. A comprehensive and extended review of the large volume of information on marine and coastal habitats could provide a good basis for solving many management problems in the North Sea. The paper concludes in putting emphasis for any future inter-governmental group dealing with policy-making in the North Sea (in the framework of the Oslo and Paris Commissions), for example to develop a wider approach to coastal management (at the ecosystem level) rather than concentrate on pollution aspects.