Annual Report 2012/13

OSPAR COMMISSION

Protecting and conserving the North-East Atlantic and its resources

From the Chairman and the Executive Secretary

Sustainable Ocean Governance

Over the last year, OSPAR continued to make real progress in taking forward its work, as set out in the North-East Atlantic Environment Strategy. This has been accompanied by a tough working agenda, requiring a real commitment from OSPAR Contracting Parties (Contracting Parties) and the Secretariat, set against restricted resources. Such commitment has enabled progress in preparing the Strategy elements related to biodiversity recommendations and implementation of the ecosystem approach and the regional coordination of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) of the European Union (EU), which were key parts of the discussions at the 2013 Commission meeting at Gothenburg. OSPAR continues to be a leading example of collaborative governance, harnessing its unique Contracting Party driven process to deliver innovative regional approaches to strengthen national, European and global environmental protection initiatives.

In delivering the Strategy, OSPAR has sought to further elaborate Recommendations to protect and conserve features on the OSPAR List of Threatened and/or Declining Species and Habitats. A large number of new Recommendations were considered in 2013 for their potential to take OSPAR further towards its aims on conservation. These Recommendations continue to be refined to see how they can be drafted to focus actions to operate within OSPAR's own competence, while maximising opportunities to collaborate with other organisations with complementary responsibilities (such as fisheries management).

Achievements

The OSPAR Marine Protected Area (MPA) network is increasing in coverage and now covers 5% of the OSPAR Maritime Area. Recent work on assessment of the network's ecological coherence adds to our understanding of what further efforts need to be made. This work highlights the further challenge of developing an assessment of MPA management. This will help take OSPAR toward its 2016 target for a well-managed OSPAR network of MPAs.

In the case of MPAs in areas beyond national jurisdiction, OSPAR continues to take forward its cooperation with other regional and international organisations. It is doing this through novel approaches, such as the 'Collective Arrangement'. By this means, OSPAR, the North East Atlantic Fisheries Organisation (NEAFC), the International Maritime Organization (IMO), and the International Seabed Authority (ISA) can find ways to cooperate with each other, as each seeks to operate within its own competence (sectoral focus) in managing human activities and their impacts on impacts on marine ecosystems.

OSPAR is also progressing in its current collaboration with NEAFC to agree joint nominations of Ecologically or Biologically Significant Areas (EBSAs) to the Convention on Biodiversity (CBD). Working together with ICES as a source of technical advice, OSPAR and NEAFC are a step closer to being able to meet the CBD deadline for nominations on such areas.

The collaborative processes described above have been slowed down by the differing institutional frameworks that each regional or international organisation operates under, but the intentions are still valid. We are pleased that OSPAR's work with NEAFC has been highlighted internationally as a unique example of pragmatic action by a regional seas convention (Rsc).

Another major workstream has been the development of common indicators to assist Contracting Parties that are EU Member States in implementing the MSFD. This has been complex and difficult work, impacted by restricted resources, with a particular challenge in the field of biodiversity where there is a requirement for development of several new indicators. Nevertheless, Contracting Parties at the OSPAR Commission were able to agree a first suite of common indicators and prioritised candidate indicators for agreement in 2014. These indicators will take those Contracting Parties implementing the Directive a significant step further, in particular at the level of sub-regional coordination. This is where OSPAR's focus on discrete seas and ecosystems offers Contracting Parties real opportunities to apply the ecosystem approach in implementing the MSFD.

The Environmental Impact of Human Activities Committee (EIHA) has this year continued to take forward the development of the ecosystem approach, through its analysis of cumulative effects methodologies. EIHA has been equally active in delivering components for the OSPAR common indicators to meet the coordination needs for the MSFD. EIHA was also able to deliver another key product through its ground-breaking report on Regional Economic and Social Analysis, which, significantly, also meets a requirement of the MSFD.

OSPAR was well represented at the Berlin Conference on Marine Litter by a number of Contracting Parties, the Chair of EIHA and the Secretariat. Discussions at the Conference focused on the development of regional action plans (RAP),

Photo cover page: *Beroe cucumis* and kelp © Matt Doggett / www.earthinfocus.com

which EIHA has also been working towards. OSPAR has now agreed to establish a marine litter RAP, as a contribution to fulfilment of commitments made at Bergen and needed under the MSFD. EIHA has also continued close cooperation with HELCOM Maritime in the development and adoption of Joint Guidelines on the granting of exemptions from the IMO's Ballast Water Management Convention. This allows a consistent approach across both regions that reduces the risk of introduction of non-indigenous species.

The Hazardous Substances and Eutrophication Committee (HASEC) this year was able to finalise its review of the Eutrophication Common Procedure for the Identification of the Eutrophication Status of the Maritime Area (Common Procedure) and the Eutrophication Monitoring Programme. It established proposals for common indicators with regard to eutrophication and contaminants and their effects, taking into account ongoing OSPAR coordinated monitoring. In addition, it streamlined the web-based updated annual assessment of contaminants and their effects.

To assist it in its work, the Radioactive Substances Committee (RSC) has made significant progress on considering further definitions of 'historic levels' and 'close to zero', in particular with reference to environmental concentration of radionuclides associated with the nuclear sector. Progress has been made by the adoption of the definitions of "discharges associated with historical or legacy waste" and "discharges associated with operational activities". Steps have been taken for establishing a baseline period for discharges from the offshore oil and gas sub-sector, and for further refining the proposed IAEA methodology for defining radiological environmental assessment criteria.

The Offshore Industry Committee (OIC) reported on its review of Decision 98/3 concerning the decommissioning of disused offshore installations. This concluded that no new evidence had come to light to require a change to current derogations categories, so these would continue in their existing form. Now the EU has adopted its Directive on offshore safety, OIC plans a reassessment of the ICG-Drillex conclusion (on drilling in extreme conditions). This will assess if measures are needed in addition to OSPAR Recommendation 2010/18 on the prevention of significant acute pollution from offshore drilling activities. OIC also made progress in making the requirements of the OSPAR Harmonised Mandatory Control System (HMCS) and the EU REACH Regulation more consistent. Other technical work has continued in the key areas of ageing installations, the possible effects of regular lighting from offshore installations and the suitability of OSPAR measures to manage oil and gas activities in the Arctic.

Management

OSPAR has finalised and signed its memorandum of understanding with the North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organisation. It is also making progress on finalising a memorandum with the Abidjan Convention.

OSPAR 2013 confirmed its plans for the next North-East Atlantic Ministerial Meeting and Quality Status Report. More immediately it put in place arrangements for a 2017 Intermediate Assessment to feed into the next cycle of the MSFD. It also decided on a way forward for a significant enhancement to its data and information capability in order to service its Contracting Parties' needs.

This year, Contracting Parties and the Secretariat have agreed that, while OSPAR's meeting rules are adequate to the task of managing our business, some improvements to efficiency and effectiveness will be instituted. These include helping Contracting Parties to focus on key issues, cutting down on the numbers of work products being taken on by Committees and using Webex and other virtual meeting methods.

It should be noted that this year OSPAR said a fond farewell to Professor David Johnson at the end of his 6-year term. David handed over the work to Dr Darius Campbell as new Executive Secretary. The Secretariat continues to review its capability and plans for improving its service to Contracting Parties. It will continue work with Contracting Parties and other regional and international organisations to share best practice and look for opportunities to work more closely together.

Mr Victor Escobar Paredes
Chairman

Mr Victor Escobar Paredes is a senior adviser within the Marine Protection Division at the Spanish Ministry for the Environment and Rural and Marine Affairs. He is an experienced negotiator at international level and is personally devoted to the protection of the marine environment. He was elected chairman in 2010.

Dr Darius Campbell
Executive Secretary

Dr Darius Campbell joined the OSPAR Secretariat in 2012 following time as a Deputy Director in the UK's Environment Department, covering such issues as marine environment policy, marine science and climate change. He is experienced in international negotiations, and also developed expertise outside government in international development.

During 2012/13, each OSPAR Committee has continued to make good progress to implement the outcome of the Ministerial Meeting in Bergen, in line with the North-East Atlantic Environment Strategy.

Coordination Group

OSPAR's Coordination Group, by casting its view across the Committees' activities aims to add value by ensuring integration of OSPAR's work under its themes. It also aims to deliver the ecosystem approach, in line with the OSPAR Strategy.

The Group considered cross-cutting issues that will form the backbone of OSPAR's understanding of the marine environment and will inform OSPAR Ministers in their future initiatives to conserve and protect the North-East Atlantic.

These issues include identifying the science that OSPAR needs, as expressed in an OSPAR Science Agenda. By this means OSPAR clearly articulates its needs to the many science funding and directing activities, particularly in Europe. The Science Agenda will focus particularly on research that contributes to OSPAR strategies and fulfils OSPAR's coordination of the implementation of the MSFD.

In understanding the marine environment, Ministers will be informed primarily by the next OSPAR Quality Status Report in 2021 and the monitoring and assessment leading to this, as well as regional monitoring under the MSFD for Contracting Parties which are also EU Member States. As part of this, OSPAR agreed to deliver an Intermediate Assessment in 2017. The Coordination Group agreed to the development of the unifying elements of a Joint Assessment and Monitoring Programme (JAMP) 2014-2021 and an associated monitoring framework to deliver both the Intermediate Assessment and the Quality Status Report.

The Coordination Group also supervised development of other cross-cutting issues such as assessment and monitoring of ocean acidification, social and economic analysis, marine litter, the OSPAR Data and Information System and initiatives for progress on ecosystem assessment.

Eutrophication Progress

OSPAR adopted a revised version of the Common Procedure and a revised Eutrophication Monitoring Programme, on a proposal of HASEC. New features, which will be tested further, include better tools for trend assessment and confidence rating. While the next OSPAR-wide assessment was postponed until 2017, actual assessment work will already start with a focus on separate eutrophication indicators in a transboundary context in the upcoming years.

Eutrophication is still a problem in many areas of the North Sea, and Contracting Parties are addressing these 'Problem Areas'. Supporting eutrophication modelling work has been carried out to estimate "distance to target", that is, for modelling purposes, the nutrient input reductions required to move eutrophication effect parameters below their assessment levels in problem areas. The focus of this work was on the transboundary components in nutrient loading. It was concluded that, with respect to Eutrophication Problem Areas, all contributing transboundary nutrient transport areas should be included in future modelling and assessments. HASEC will discuss in 2014 how information related to countries' programmes of measures (under the MSFD and the Water Framework Directive) on nutrients might be used in 2015-16, together with modelling results, for the purposes of the OSPAR eutrophication strategy.

Eutrophication Strategy

Aims to combat eutrophication in order to achieve and maintain a healthy marine environment where eutrophication does not occur. For the purpose of the Strategy, eutrophication is defined as the anthropogenic enrichment of water by nutrients causing an accelerated growth of algae and higher forms of plant life to produce an undesirable disturbance to the balance of organisms present in the water and to the quality of the water concerned.

Photo: Biofilm, algae, Morgat, France, Wikipedia

Biodiversity Progress

By the end of 2012 the OSPAR MPA network had increased by a third over the previous year to cover an area of just over 700 000 km2 (the size of Germany, Portugal and Ireland combined), or just over 5% of the OSPAR Maritime Area and more than 10 % in the Greater North Sea. The North-East Atlantic Environment Strategy, agreed by Ministers in Bergen in 2010, set out objectives that look beyond just the area designated. The first of these was to ensure that the OSPAR network of MPAs should be ecologically coherent by 2012 – asking questions such as whether the network makes sense in ecological terms. Are the right species or habitats being protected? Are the sites connected or even big enough to do the job intended? In the early part of 2013 a team of consultants set out to find out to what degree this target had been reached. Despite data and knowledge gaps, there was sufficient information to say that as a whole, the OSPAR MPA network is not yet coherent. There are, however clear signs of progress particularly in Regions II and III. These results will provide direction to the future tasks of the Committee which will investigate how well these MPAs work. In order to inform future planned assessment work, France has initiated a project to update the OSPAR MPA database.

There has been a lot of focus this year on looking at action that should be taken to protect the 50+ species and habitats that OSPAR has identified as being under particular threat. To date, recommendations have been agreed for 19 of these species and habitats with negotiations underway for a further series including marine turtles, sharks, deep sea and shallow water habitats.

The work of ICG-COBAM has moved this year from the theory of developing approaches and methods to the practical. National biodiversity indicator experts of Contracting Parties (both EU Member States and non-member States) have been brought together to develop and test indicators suitable for application across the OSPAR Maritime Area. This is a work that is still very much in progress, and will form an important contribution to the intermediate OSPAR Assessment in 2017.

Work to describe areas of the North-East Atlantic that meet the criteria set out by the CBD process to define EBSAs has continued with the expectation that the first set of areas will be submitted to SBSTTA 18 in spring 2014.

Environmental Impacts of Human Activities Progress

During the 2012/2013 meeting cycle OSPAR has been actively cooperating with HELCOM in preparing for the entry into force of the IMO's Ballast Water Management Convention. One of the key elements that the Joint Task Group has been working on is the development of guidelines on granting of exemptions, allowed under the convention for ships on regular routes. The guidelines, which aim to minimise the risk of the introduction of new non-indigenous species, include advice on port sampling, risk assessment, target species identification, decision support and administrative procedures. They were adopted by OSPAR in June and will be considered at the HELCOM Ministerial Meeting in October providing a coherent approach across northern Europe.

Marine litter has also been in focus this year with the Berlin International Marine Litter Conference, organised by Germany and the EU, giving a further impetus to the development of an OSPAR RAP on Marine Litter. The conference was attended by eight Contracting Parties, the Chair of EIHA and the Secretariat and had a dedicated section on the OSPAR Region. Following from existing work in ICG-Marine Litter, the OSPAR Commission agreed a proposal to develop a marine litter RAP by 2014. The RAP will outline the main sources and types of marine litter, as well as measures to reduce them and regionally agreed targets.

Work on regional activities to support the implementation of the MSFD also continued with a workshop to identify common indicators for the descriptors covered under the Environmental Impacts of Human Activities Committee (i.e. non-indigenous species, hydrographic conditions, marine litter and noise). OSPAR also published a Regional Socioeconomic Analysis, based on Contracting Parties' submissions to the MSFD initial assessment. This was the culmination of a two-year project and provided recommendations on how to improve the coherence of socioeconomic data at the regional level, which will be essential for the development of programmes and measures under the Directive.

Biodiversity and Ecosystems Strategy

Seeks to protect and conserve the ecosystems and the biological diversity of the OSPAR Maritime Area which are, or could be, affected as a result of human activities. It also aims to restore, where practicable, marine areas which have been adversely affected. The implementation of the Strategy has a two-fold approach (1) under the Biodiversity Committee, protecting identified species and habitats and establishing marine protected areas; and (2) under the Environmental Impacts of Human Activities Committee, assessing human activities that take place in the marine environment and the impact they might have.

Photo: Fulmars©John Dunn

Offshore Oil & Gas Industry Progress

The Offshore Industry Committee (OIC) continues to have active and committed expert-level work on offshore chemicals. During the year, progress has been made to harmonise the requirements of the OSPAR Harmonised Mandatory Control System (HMCS) for the use and reduction of the discharge of offshore chemicals and the EU REACH Regulation. Arrangements for an expert group to address various aspects of the implications of REACH for the work under the OSPAR Offshore Industry Strategy and the HMCS in particular have been agreed. In addition, an updated version of the OSPAR List of Substances Used and Discharged Offshore which Are Considered to Pose Little or No Risk to the Environment (PLONOR List) has been adopted.

Work has continued in a number of new areas to consider if further OSPAR action is needed. These include oil and gas activities in OSPAR Region I (Arctic Waters), ageing installations and the possible effects of regular platform lighting on birds. Arrangements to make further progress in these fields have been put in place.

OIC finalised the review process of OSPAR Decision 98/3, under which the dumping of disused offshore installations is prohibited in the North-East Atlantic. Only for certain categories, which are listed in Annex 1 to the Decision, derogations may be considered. OIC concluded that the evidence available on decommissioning installations was not sufficient to enable Annex I to OSPAR Decision 98/3 to be tightened and set a new date for the review the Annex by 2018. This new timeframe would allow the gathering of additional evidence on decommissioning. The overview assessments of the implementation of OSPAR Recommendation 2001/1 for the management of produced water and OSPAR Recommendation 2006/3 on environmental goals for the discharge of candidates for substitution were also finalised.

Steps have been taken to strengthening cooperation with the RSC, so that all windows of opportunity for joint work could be seized. Regular participation of OIC in the EU Offshore Authorities Group has also been part of OIC's Agenda for this year.

Platform leg on Troll A © Harald Pettersen, Statoil

Offshore Oil & Gas Industry Strategy

Sets the objective of preventing and eliminating pollution and taking the necessary measures to protect the Maritime Area against the adverse effects of offshore activities so as to safeguard human health, conserve marine ecosystems and, when practicable, restore marine areas which have been adversely affected.

Hazardous Substances Strategy

Seeks to prevent pollution of the Maritime Area by continuously reducing discharges, emissions and losses of hazardous substances, with the ultimate aim of achieving concentrations in the marine environment near background values for naturally occurring substances and close to zero for man-made synthetic substances. Its timeframe requires the OSPAR Commission to implement the Strategy progressively by making every endeavour to move towards the target of the cessation of discharges, emissions and losses of hazardous substances by 2020.

Hazardous Substances Progress

The OSPAR Commission endorsed the proposal from the Hazardous Substances and Eutrophication Committee (HASEC) that the next major eutrophication assessment should be undertaken in 2016-2017 on the basis of a now updated 'Common Procedure', and based on eutrophication monitoring data from a revised monitoring programme. The publication of modelling work on 'distance to target' with regard to eutrophication demonstrated that the modelling tools used by Contracting Parties are now well capable of taking account of transboundary nutrient transport in the diagnosis of Eutrophication Problem Areas. OSPAR encouraged HASEC to make further progress on the question of nutrient reduction targets, taking

account of what countries were doing in implementing the EU Water Framework Directive and the MSFD.

With regard to hazardous substances, the HASEC work continues to deliver an annual assessment of the contaminants in the Maritime Area and some commonly monitored biological effects, under the Coordinated Environmental Monitoring Programme (CEMP). Contracting Parties are further examining how to combine chemical monitoring of contaminants with the monitoring of 'biological effects' due to contaminants, based on Guidelines adopted for a 3-year trial period. Final results of these practical trials are due in 2015. The monitoring programmes on inputs via water and via the atmosphere are undergoing further updating.

Monitoring of eutrophication and hazardous substances has been ongoing for a long time and this area of work provided a solid basis for the adoption of a series of 'common indicators' that OSPAR countries will also use for monitoring and assessment under the MSFD.

Radioactive Substances Progress

The Radioactive Substances Committee (RSC) has made good progress, mainly in refining the scientific understanding of various terms of the OSPAR Radioactive Substances Strategy (RSS). RSC concluded on the definition of the terms "overall historic levels", "discharges associated with historical or legacy wastes" and "discharges associated with operational activities".

Further understanding of the RSS will facilitate the evaluation of progress that Contracting Parties have made in reducing discharges of radioactive substances to the North-East Atlantic, in order to meet the objectives of the RSS. This overall evaluation of progress, known as the "Fourth Periodic Evaluation" (4PE), is a significant strand of work for RSC. Thorough consideration was given to the preparations for the 4PE by 2016, with detailed arrangements put in place for the coming years to further advance on statistical methods for assessment of discharges and concentrations, on assessment methodologies and on data management.

During the year, RSC and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) have deepened cooperation in defining radiological environmental assessment criteria under the OSPAR Convention. Work develops at a good pace in an expert group formed ad hoc under RSC to evaluate the potential application of the radiological environmental assessment method proposed by IAEA. RSC has also continued to follow developments concerning the possible implications of historic deep sea disposal of radioactive wastes in the North-East Atlantic.

Other issues RSC took action on included the follow-up of the implementation of PARCOM Recommendation 91/4 on radioactive discharges, which calls for OSPAR Contracting Parties to apply the Best Available Technology in nuclear facilities across the OSPAR Maritime Area. In addition, RSC and OIC have taken steps to promote closer cooperation in their shared area of interest concerning the discharge of naturally occurring radionuclides from offshore oil and gas activities.

Radioactive Substances Strategy

Seeks to prevent pollution from ionising radiation through taking the appropriate actions and measures to ensure that by the year 2020 discharges, emissions and losses of radioactive substances are reduced to levels where the additional concentrations in the marine environment above historic levels, resulting from such discharges, emissions and losses, are close to zero.

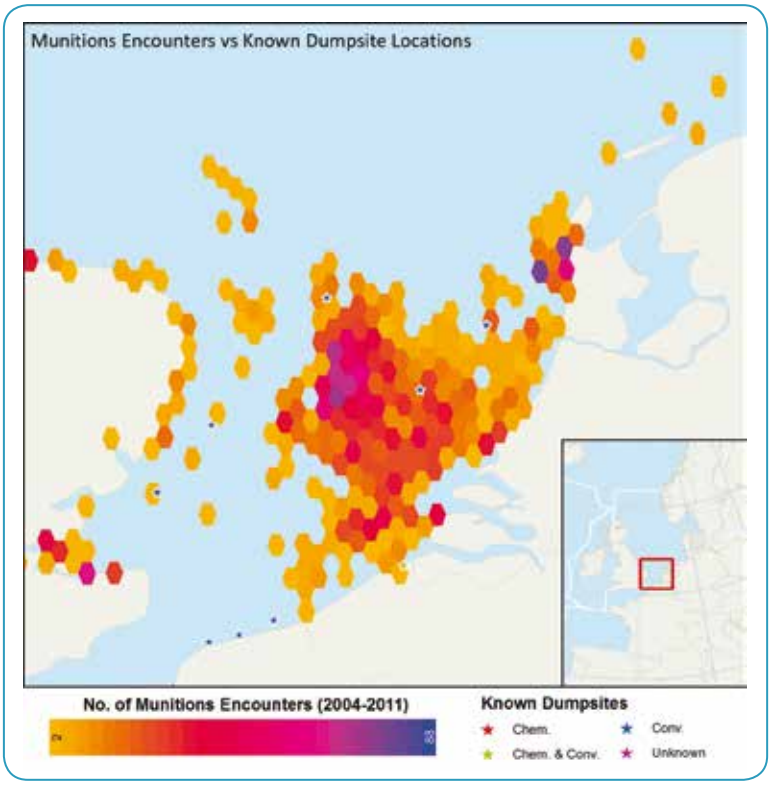
Photo: Nuclear Power Plant, Saint-Laurent des eaux, France, Wikipedia

Data and information management strategy

Assessment of the state of the marine environment is a major tool that is used to track the progress of the work of the OSPAR Commission. We have mentioned in previous articles the importance of data in this process, ensuring management of data over long periods of time – time within which people change jobs, technology advances and expectations change. The Secretariat has continued to work on this issue over the past year with the members of the Information System task group and we have some big steps forward to share with you.

Having taken stock of the current state of data management and given thought to the challenges that lie ahead, OSPAR has now been able to endorse a new data and information management strategy. The ambition of the strategy is to set in place a long term process for managing data and information – with data and information being managed in a decentralised fashion, this is a first attempt to articulate a common understanding of what we have to think about to ensure that the data that is collected is as useful as possible. The strategy sets out 9 components (see box 1).

Work to implement the first six components of the strategy is now well under way. There is still work to do, but now links to all OSPAR data sets can be found via the Data page on the website and many of the data sets can be downloaded. The improvements to the data so far have meant that the Committees can start experimenting with the types of analysis that are possible, looking at the data in different ways. The figure below shows an example looking at how observations of munitions are clustering. This can be further analysed to see how clusters move over time in relation to known disposal sites – a highly visual and intuitive graphic that can be understandable to specialists and non-specialists alike, allowing for easy application in decision making.



Development phase of the OSPAR data and information management system

Another exciting step forwards was the agreement by OSPAR at its June meeting to start work on the 7th component of the data and information strategy - developing an OSPAR data and information management system (ODIMS). The development phase will take place over 3 years, starting in January 2014 with a first version available in time to support the 2017 intermediate assessment. It is the ambition that this online system will increase the visibility and access of OSPAR's data and provide users both within and outside the OSPAR community greater information about the data to better understand how it can be used.

Box 1: The OSPAR Data and Information Management Strategy	
1.	To understand what the data and information management needs and expectations are for OSPAR
2.	To create a standard set of reference files for use across OSPAR (e.g. a standard shape file for the OSPAR Maritime Area)
3.	To develop OSPAR data standards (drawing on existing standards where these exist) to make analyses that require integration more feasible
4.	To ensure all data sets have adequate metadata and that this complies with INSPIRE so that OSPAR's data is readily discoverable and users can understand what it is that they are using
5.	That OSPAR data is available online, according to the data policy
6.	To put in place arrangements for sharing of data and its responsible use
7.	Development of a web interface tool that will increase the visibility, accessibility and use of OSPAR's data
8.	To establish transformation pathways to create products in a form that is useful for decision makers
9.	Sustainable funding: looking after data will need resources over the long term

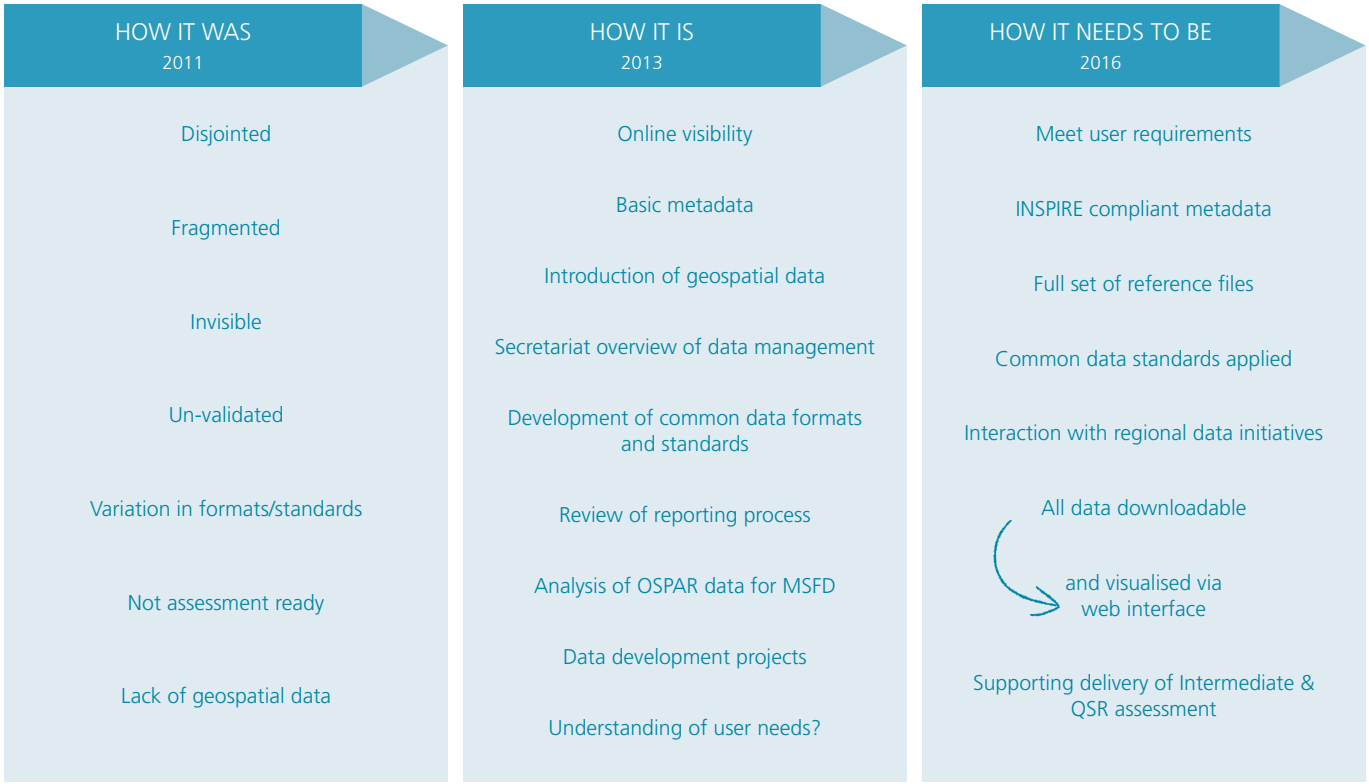


Figure 1: Breaking things down - by understanding the current state of data management and the challenges ahead, OSPAR's Contracting Parties were able to agree a new data and information management strategy.

The EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD)

The OSPAR Commission has continued to focus, as one of its highest priorities, on delivery of the MSFD requirements by those of its Contracting Parties which are EU Members States. A key requirement of the Directive (2008/56/EC) is regionally coordinated and coherent implementation of the Directive.

OSPAR, through its Contracting Parties and its Secretariat has engaged strongly with the MSFD Common Implementation Strategy and the various working groups that deliver the strategy. Active involvement continues in the Marine Strategy Coordination Group, the Project Coordination Group and the various data and technical groupings.

The Executive Secretary, in addressing the meeting of the EU Marine Directors held in May under the Irish Presidency, underlined the high degree of commitment by OSPAR to act as a co-ordination mechanism for the Marine Strategy Framework Directive. He also underlined the essential focus that a regional convention can offer, through monitoring, assessment and actions which are appropriate for the ecosystems and geography of the sub-regions covered by OSPAR. Nevertheless, the Executive Secretary also underlined the need to ensure that resources were targeted appropriately at the three levels of action needed for the MSFD: national, regional and EU-wide; each reflecting activities that are best delivered at that level. He also noted that implementation of the MSFD, by applying an ambitious ecosystem approach, will be an evolutionary process, with the regionally coordinated elements increasing through each of the 6-year cycles of the Directive. EU Marine Directors in their turn welcomed the continued role of the Rscs, underlining the need to enhance the synergies between the processes at national, regional and EU levels.

Common Indicators

In 2012-13, the focus shifted to the elaboration of monitoring programmes and the preparation of programmes of measures.

Building on work already ongoing to identify indicators for the biodiversity descriptors, all relevant OSPAR groups also carried out a comprehensive process focusing on all 'environmental status descriptors' (with the exception of D3 (fish) and D9 (seafood contaminants), where OSPAR expertise and competence is less well developed).

In 2012, the OSPAR publication '*Finding Common Ground*' found both commonalities and differences in Contracting Parties' 'Good Environmental Status determinations' and 'comprehensive sets of environmental targets and associated indicators' (under MSFD Articles 9 and 10). This variability might have complicated chances of achieving coherence in the next implementation steps. Nevertheless, the Contracting Parties were able to resolve some of these issues, within only a single meeting cycle, by developing a process to identify 'common indicators' as a basis for determining future joint OSPAR monitoring and assessment activities. These were mainly chosen in order to create joint assessment results ahead of the 2018 update of the MSFD (initial) assessment.

OSPAR 2013 agreed a first set of 'common indicators' as well as a series of 'candidate indicators' that would be used for structuring further monitoring and assessment activities.

Contracting Parties aim to ensure that their marine monitoring and assessment work can thus result in dual use for OSPAR and for MSFD requirements. The next Joint Assessment and Monitoring Programme (JAMP) 2014-2021 should plan for the delivery of indicator-related products (for instance monitoring and assessment tools and assessments) in a concrete way.

OSPAR 2013 confirmed that it would aim to prepare an Intermediate Assessment in 2017. This will be based on all identified common indicators, and on as many as possible of the 'candidate indicators', for which development work is still ongoing.

Monitoring programmes

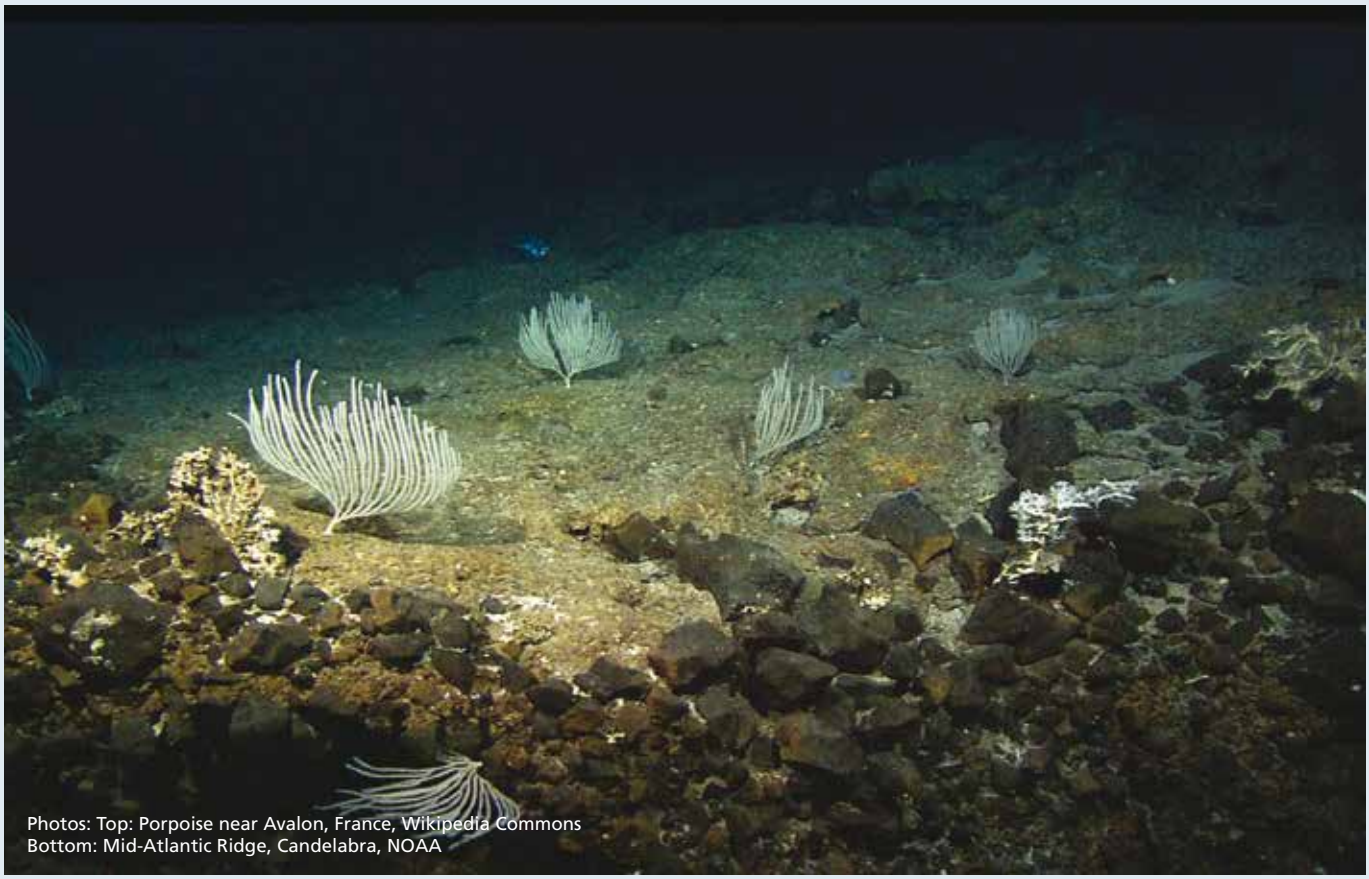
Ensuring that all marine features that merit monitoring and assessment can be monitored in a cost-effective way is a fundamental consideration for setting up long-term sustainable monitoring strategies. OSPAR provides a platform for managers of national MSFD monitoring programmes to discuss the design of their programmes in a transboundary perspective, also looking to save resource.

Monitoring is a long-standing activity in OSPAR, supporting the Convention requirements to carry out regular quality status assessments of the marine environment and to evaluate the effectiveness of measures taken for the protection of the marine environment (Article 6 and Annex IV). Regular OSPAR monitoring was initially established for the OSPAR thematic strategies Hazardous Substances and Eutrophication, followed by other pollutants. Monitoring for the thematic strategy 'Biodiversity and ecosystems' is more recent and still in development. To the extent that Contracting Parties wish to address these issues under the MSFD, monitoring under the OSPAR thematic strategies on Radioactivity and Offshore Oil and Gas Industry can also provide a basis for assessment. In 2012-13 the process of reviewing and, when necessary, adjusting the OSPAR monitoring programmes has continued. A dedicated OSPAR workshop investigated scope for

enhancing cooperation on actual preparation, design and execution of monitoring programmes.

Relevant Contracting Parties are now preparing their next MSFD implementation stage, the preparation of the programmes of measures and coordination issues are being addressed.

The OSPAR Commission is actively working to promote maximum synergy between the work under the Convention and the MSFD duties of its Contracting Parties that are EU Member States.



Photos: Top: Porpoise near Avalon, France, Wikipedia Commons
Bottom: Mid-Atlantic Ridge, Candelabra, NOAA

United Nations (UN) discussions 2013

Contracting Parties and the Secretariat attended a series of meetings at the UN headquarters in New York in 2013 to examine the issues related to marine biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction.

OSPAR has a keen interest in these issues, given its competence in biodiversity and a Convention Area that covers both national Maritime Areas and areas beyond national jurisdiction. OSPAR is fully aware that any decisions it makes regarding areas beyond national jurisdiction only are binding on the behaviour of its Contracting Parties and must fit within OSPAR's sectoral competence. In recent years, OSPAR has been able to designate a series of MPAs beyond national jurisdiction in close partnership with its Contracting Parties who have special interests in some of these related to submissions to the UN Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf. Given the limits to what OSPAR and its Contracting Parties can achieve in terms of real protection, it has been essential in this process that OSPAR has worked closely with other regional or international organisations with complementary competences, which include NEAFC, ISA and IMO. NEAFC has already introduced area-based management measures to protect areas that overlap some of OSPAR's MPAs in areas beyond national jurisdiction.

When attending the meetings at the UN, OSPAR's Contracting Parties and some non-governmental organisations were able to highlight the great progress that had been made by OSPAR and NEAFC in developing a way of working together in the high seas. They were able to highlight OSPAR and NEAFC's work as a pragmatic model for developing cooperation between complementary regional processes, which could offer progress under several scenarios.

OSPAR continues to develop its focus on new ways of working in areas beyond national jurisdiction. In the coming year it will aim to further develop its cooperation mechanism, the Collective Arrangement, as well as to work with NEAFC under the EBSA process described on page 2 of this report.

Skomer Island ©Chris Moulton

Year in brief

OSPAR has continued to focus on the strategic issues and the cross-cutting needs in order to take OSPAR's work programmes forward.

September 2012: A representative of the OSPAR Commission attended the Stakeholder workshop on marine genomics monitoring which brought together leading scientists from the field of marine genomics to marine policy makers to discuss how genetic information and analytical methods can contribute to a cost-efficient monitoring of marine ecosystems.

October 2012: The first meeting of Joint OSPAR/HELCOM Task Group on Ballast Water Exemptions met to develop joint guidelines for the granting of exemptions under the IMO Ballast Water Management Convention. A second meeting took place in February 2013.

OSPAR participated as an Observer organisation in the Meeting of Parties for the Agreement on Conservation of Small Cetaceans of the Baltic, North East Atlantic, Irish and North Seas (ASCOBANs). Issues of particular interest to the OSPAR agenda included the threats to small cetaceans from by-catch, noise, pollution (including marine debris) and ship strikes; progress in the implementation of the Conservation Plan for the Harbour Porpoise in the North Sea and the adoption of a new action plan for the Kattegat.

OSPAR hosted a side event on the protection of biodiversity in the North-East Atlantic at the meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (COP11),

November 2012: The ICG-MSP met to exchange best practices and share experiences with regard to Marine Spatial Planning relevant in a transboundary context.

OSPAR took part in discussions at the COP10 of the Abidjan Convention in the Republic of Congo, Funding environmental management provided the focus for an expert Workshop. The high-level segment concentrated on governance issues, noting progress on the draft OSPAR/Abidjan MoU and examples of marine protection in Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction.

December 2012: An ICES-OSPAR Study Group on Ocean Acidification met to ensure that all OSPAR coastal Contracting Parties wishing to take part in ocean acidification monitoring under the pre-CEMP have all the relevant information and guidance to operate the monitoring of carbonate chemistry parameters related to ocean acidification.

January 2013: OSPAR took part in the ODEMM project whose purpose is to develop a set of fully-costed ecosystem management options that would deliver the objectives of the MSFD, the Habitats Directive, the EC Blue Book and the Guidelines for the Integrated Approach to Maritime Policy. The key objective is to produce scientifically-based operational procedures that allow for a step-by-step transition from the current fragmented system to fully integrated management.

February 2013: A workshop was organised to identify a common set of indicators for each MSFD Descriptor under the remit of EIHA. It included identification of their monitoring needs and any gaps which might require the development of further indicators.

April 2013: The meeting of the ICES Council Steering Group on MSFD invited representatives from the Regional Seas Conventions and was successful in opening a dialogue regarding the roles and future collaboration needed to advance the implementation of and support the move towards the ultimate goal of attaining GES in all European marine waters by 2020.

OSPAR contributed to the International Conference on the Prevention and Management of Marine Litter in European Seas, Berlin to facilitate the establishment or further development of RAPs on marine litter in the regional seas or Rscs of European waters.

OSPAR attended the KnowSeas Project Advisory Board meeting, which aims to provide a comprehensive scientific knowledge-based and practical guidance for the application of the ecosystem approach to the sustainable development of Europe's regional seas.

May 2013: OSPAR participated in the STAGES project which focuses on capitalising on recent knowledge creation, clarifying gaps in knowledge and proposes a workable model for a science-policy interface.

OSPAR attended the Intersessional Workshop on Marine Genetic Resources, which was held to study issues relating to the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity beyond areas of national jurisdiction (UN BBNJ Working Group).

The Workshop to Review and Advise on EBSA Proposed Areas reviewed the ecological evidence supporting the ten proposed EBSAs from the OSPAR/NEAFC/CBD Workshop of September 2011.

June 2013: OSPAR attended the Regional Marine Pollution Emergency Response Centre for the Mediterranean Sea (REMPEC) eleventh Meeting of Focal Points as an observer.

Darius Campbell and Abou Bamba with the new Memorandum of Understanding between the OSPAR Commission and the Abidjan Convention

Contracting Parties

The work under the OSPAR Convention is managed by the OSPAR Commission, made up of 16 Contracting Parties. These are: Belgium, Denmark, the European Union, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

Observers

The OSPAR Commission may, by unanimous vote of the Contracting Parties, admit as an observer, any State which is not a Contracting Party to the Convention and any international governmental or non-governmental organisations whose activities are related to the Convention. These observers are entitled to participate in meetings of the Commission, its main Committees and its Working Groups. Observer organisations provide valuable expertise, draw attention to specific issues and facilitate networking with stakeholders. Full details of all these observers can be found on the OSPAR website.

The Agreement for Cooperation in Dealing with the Pollution of the North Sea by Oil and Other Harmful Substances 1983 (the Bonn Agreement) and the OSPAR Commission are formally observers at each other's meetings. This extends to the Bonn Agreement's Working Group on Operational, Technical and Scientific Questions Concerning Counter Pollution Activities (OTSOPA). Since all Bonn Agreement Contracting Parties are OSPAR Contracting Parties and since the two organisations share a common Secretariat, there has always been close cooperation.

OSPAR Secretariat

A professional Secretariat of 12 staff is based in London.

Committee Chairs in 2012/13

Vice-chairs of the OSPAR Commission

Ms Laura Píriz (Sweden)

Mr Richard Moxon (United Kingdom)

The following individuals chaired OSPAR Strategy Committees and Working Groups during the period 2012/13.

Biodiversity Committee (BDC)
Mr John Clorley (United Kingdom)

Environmental Impact of Human Activities Committee (EIHA)
Mr Lex W A Oosterbaan (The Netherlands)

Hazardous Substances and Eutrophication Committee (HASEC)
Mr Reinier Goud (The Netherlands)

Offshore Oil and Gas Industry Committee (OIC)
Ms Hanne-Grete Nilsen (Norway)

Radioactive Substances Committee (RSC)
Dr Justin Gwynn (Norway)

Working Group on Inputs to the Marine Environment (INPUT)
Assoc. Professor Berit Arheimer (Sweden)

Working Group on Monitoring and on Trends and Effects of Substances in the Marine Environment (MIME)
Mr Thomas Maes (United Kingdom)

North Sea Network of Investigators and Prosecutors (NSN)
Captain Jeremy Smart (United Kingdom)

Internship

During 2012/13, OSPAR hosted three student internships from Jessica Holterhof (Germany), Caroline Herviou (France) and Jaime Zamora-Carrillo (Spain) undertaking relevant professional placements on projects related to current work programmes.

Jessica worked on various Biodiversity projects, primarily on protection issues regarding the OSPAR List of threatened and/or declining species and habitats. Caroline and Jaime were both involved in the preparation of the meeting of Jurists and Linguists and the memorandum of understanding between the Abidjan Convention and OSPAR. Caroline also undertook research on dredged material and on the Arctic area whilst Jaime compiled and analysed the comments made on the draft OSPAR Recommendations on furthering the protection and conservation of species and habitats.

OSPAR 2013 meeting, Gothenburg. Courtesy: Darius Campbell

Reports and assessment sheets published by OSPAR 2013

The first three assessment sheets on the Status of the OSPAR Network of Marine Protected Areas in 2012, on Litter in the Marine Environment and Encounters with Chemical and Conventional Munitions were published on the OSPAR website. These and other reports listed below can be downloaded from the publications page at www.ospar.org.

Implementation Reporting

Overview assessment of implementation reporting on:

- Report on implementation of PARCOM Recommendation 91/4 on radioactive discharges by the Netherlands, 2008-2011
- Report in accordance with PARCOM Recommendation 91/4 on radioactive discharges - Sweden
- UK Report on application of Best Available Techniques (BAT) in civil nuclear facilities (2008-2011) - Implementation of PARCOM Recommendation 91/4 on radioactive discharges
- Overview assessment of Implementation of OSPAR Recommendation 2001/1 for the management of produced water from offshore installations
- Overview assessment of Implementation of OSPAR Recommendation 2006/3 on environmental goals for the discharge by the offshore industry of chemicals that are, or which contain substances identified as candidates for substitution

Biodiversity

Annual report on dumping of wastes or other matter at sea in 2011

OSPAR database on offshore wind-farms: Data 2012 (Updated)

Annual report on data and implementation of an OSPAR Marine Beach Litter Monitoring Programme

Report on the project on an overview of economic and social analysis in the OSPAR Maritime Area

Report on the Common Indicator Workshop

Background document on the Iberian guillemot *Uria aalge (U.a.ibericus)*

Background document on *Sabellaria spinulosa* reefs

Background document on Short snouted seahorse (*Hippocampus hippocampus*) (2013 update)

Background document on Long snouted seahorse (*Hippocampus guttulatus)* (2013 update)

2012 Status Report on the OSPAR Network of Marine Protected Areas

Assessment of the Ecological Coherence of the OSPAR Network of Marine Protected Areas

Hazardous Substances

Background Document on clotrimazole (2013 update)

Mercury losses from the Chlor-alkali industry in 2011

Monitoring and Assessment

Levels and trends of contaminants and associated biological effects – 2012 assessment of data of the Coordinated Environmental Monitoring Programme (CEMP)

Comprehensive Atmospheric Monitoring Programme (CAMP): Deposition of air pollutants around the North Sea and the North-East Atlantic in 2011

Riverine Inputs and Direct Discharges to Convention Waters (RID): OSPAR Contracting Parties' RID 2011 Data Report

Background documents and technical annexes for biological effects monitoring (2013 update)

Offshore Oil and Gas Industry

Annual report on discharges, spills and emissions from offshore oil and gas installations in 2011

2013 Biennial Update of the Inventory of Oil and Gas Offshore Installations in the OSPAR Maritime Area

Background document on BAT for produced water (2013 update)

Radioactive Substances

Annual report on liquid discharges from nuclear installations in 2011

Annual report on discharges of radionuclides from the non-nuclear sectors in 2011

Eutrophication

Report on "distance to target" modelling assessment

General

Annual report of the OSPAR Commission 2012/13

Rapport annuel de la Commission OSPAR 2012/13

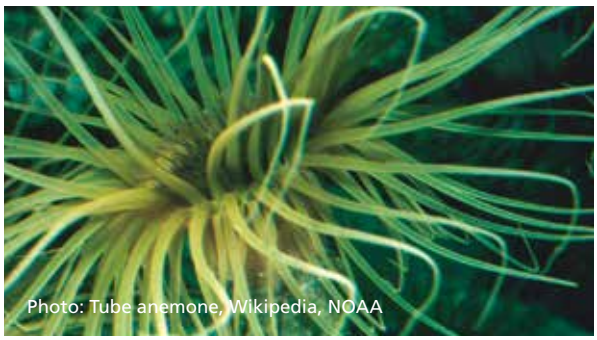


Photo: Tube anemone, Wikipedia, NOAA

OSPAR Publications

The 1992 OSPAR Convention is the current instrument guiding international cooperation on the protection of the marine environment of the North-East Atlantic. It combined and up-dated the 1972 Oslo Convention on dumping waste at sea and the 1974 Paris Convention on land-based sources of marine pollution.

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