

Habitat: Carbonate Mounds

OSPAR Recommendation 2014/10:

Contracting Parties are required to report progress with implementation of recommendations every six years, with initial more frequent reporting until 2019.

Measures taken by Contracting Parties to protect Carbonate Mounds include fisheries measures at Hatton Bank (adopted by NEAFC), adoption of national legislation, designation of MPAs, and further research



Description

Carbonate mounds are distinct elevations of various shapes, which may be up to 350m high and 2km wide at their base. They occur offshore in water depths of 500-1100m with examples present in the Porcupine Seabight and Rockall Trough.

They typically provide a range of habitats associated with different substrate types including stabilised sediment, mobile sediments, cobble grounds, coral rubble, coral reef and consolidated carbonate hard-grounds, each supporting distinct faunal assemblages. The composition of this patchwork of habitats can vary considerably between mounds mainly due to differences in hydrodynamic conditions and the growth and activity stages the mounds are in.

69%

Action Highlights

Each Recommendation requires Contracting Parties to report on the methods used to implement the measures. The methods are Legislation, Administrative action and Negotiated agreement, or any combination of these. Some recent examples include:

1. Parties contribute to the ICES working group on deep-water ecology which provides up to date advice
2. Contracting Parties have cooperated through the competent authority NEAFC to adopt fisheries measures at the Hatton Bank
3. Spain is collecting data to improve their knowledge base
4. UK has introduced national legislation
5. Spain and the UK have designated MPAs
6. Spain and the UK have undertaken awareness raising.

Engagement

The engagement index (left) measures how well Contracting Parties have engaged with the national measures in the Recommendation. The higher the score the greater the number of actions that Contracting Parties, which have reported, have taken to implement the measures in the Recommendation. Click here for more information on the index.

References:

- Background Document for Carbonate mounds (OSPAR Publication 489)
- OSPAR Recommendation 2014/10
- OSPAR List of Threatened and/or Declining Species and Habitats (Agreement 2008-06)

Condition

The condition of coral carbonate mounds is not impacted by human activities. However, habitats that occur on certain mounds are impacted, most significantly by demersal fishing. Knowledge of the proportion of habitats present on coral carbonate mounds that have been impacted by fishing is scant, since the majority of these features have not been surveyed visually. However, many of the mounds that have been surveyed visually show signs of trawling damage such as smashed corals, overturned boulders and ghost. Additionally, analyses of vessel monitoring system (VMS) data indicates intensive demersal trawling activity in all of the areas where coral carbonate mounds are known to occur. On the edge of the Porcupine Bank off the west coast of Ireland, part of that fishing effort has been attributed to fishing vessels targeting orange roughy which aggregate on these features to spawn.

