

Region Under Threat:
Arctic Waters, North Sea, Celtic
Seas, and Bay of Biscay and
Iberian Coast

Habitat: Maerl Beds

OSPAR Recommendation 2014/13:

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

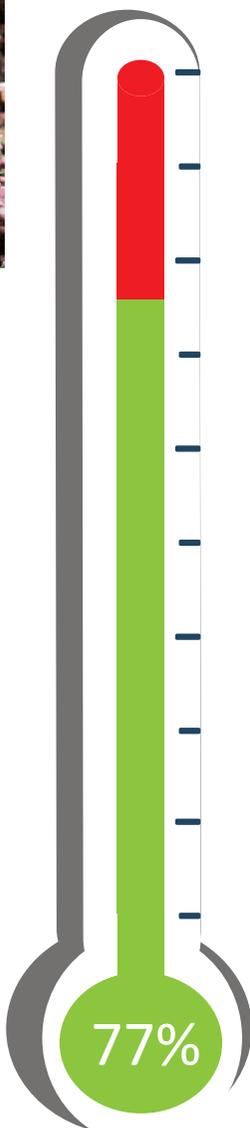
Measures taken by Contracting Parties to protect Maerl beds include national legislation, additional monitoring and designation of MPAs



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Description

Maerl is a collective term for various species of non-jointed coralline red algae (*Corallinaceae*) that live unattached. These species can form extensive beds, mostly in coarse clean sediments of gravels and clean sands or muddy mixed sediments, which occur either on the open coast, in tide-swept channels or in sheltered areas of marine inlets with weak current. As maerl requires light to photosynthesize, the depth of live beds is determined by water turbidity, from the lower shore to 20 m or more. Maerl growth requires light for photosynthesis. Smothering by fine sediment, lowered oxygen concentrations and the presence of hydrogen sulphide are particularly damaging to maerl-forming. Maerl beds can harbour high densities of broodstock bivalves and act as nursery areas for the juvenile stages of commercial species of fish, crabs and scallops.



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. Recent examples include:

1. France and the UK have national legislation for the conservation of maerl beds;
2. There are monitoring, surveillance, and mapping programmes in France and the UK;
3. The UK collates data collected by citizen scientists and also data used for EIA purposes;
4. The UK has 16 maerl bed protected areas, and has put fisheries measures in place;
5. France has a project involving fishermen and scientists to better understand impacts of fishing gears.

Engagement

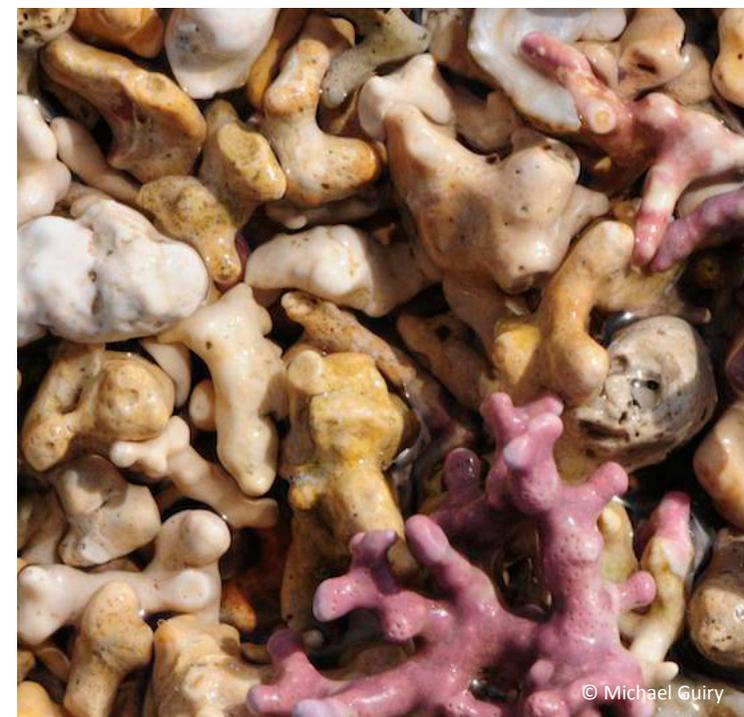
The engagement index (left) measures how well Contracting Parties have engaged with the national measures in the Recommendation. The higher the score the greater the number of actions that Contracting Parties, which have reported, have taken to implement the measures in the Recommendation. Click here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

References:

Background Document for Maerl Beds (OSPAR Publication 491)
OSPAR Recommendation 2014/13
OSPAR List of Threatened and/or Declining Species and Habitats (Agreement 2008-06)

Condition

Maerl beds have undergone well-documented declines in condition and have been removed for commercial use in all regions other than the Wider Atlantic. Commercial extraction, scallop dredging, construction projects and fish-farming currently impact certain maerl beds. As only a limited number of maerl beds are protected in the OSPAR area further declines in their condition are expected over the next decade due primarily to commercial extraction, mariculture and demersal fishing activities.



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