

Zostera beds

EUNIS Code: A2.611, A5.533 and A5.545

National Marine Habitat Classification for UK & Ireland code: LS.LMP.LSgr and SS.SMP.SSgr

Two sub-types : 8.1 *Zostera marina* beds

 8.2 *Zostera noltii* beds

i. *Zostera marina*

Zostera marina forms dense beds, with trailing leaves up to 1m long, in sheltered bays and lagoons from the lower shore to about 4m depth, typically on sand and sandy mud (occasionally with an admixture of gravel). Where their geographical range overlaps, such as the Solent in the UK, *Z. marina* passes upshore to *Z. noltii*.

ii. *Zostera noltii*

Z. noltii forms dense beds, with leaves up to 20cm long, typically in the intertidal region (although it can occur in the very shallow subtidal), on mud/sand mixtures of varying consistency.

To qualify as a *Zostera* 'bed', plant densities should provide at least 5% cover (although when *Zostera* densities are this low, expert judgement should be sought to define the bed). More typically, however, *Zostera* plant densities provide greater than 30% cover. Seagrass beds stabilise the substratum as well as providing a habitat for many other species. As well as an important source of organic matter, seagrass beds may also provide an important nursery habitat for juvenile fish (ICES, 2003).

See OSPAR Agreement 2008-07 for references