

**Oceana's Contribution with respect to the Commission's  
Proposal to issue a Communication on an Integrated Maritime  
Policy for the European Atlantic Basin.**

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## **Introduction**

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Oceana considers that the Atlantic basin's characteristics differ enough from other marine regions to require a specific policy. Nevertheless, this policy will be even more useful if it incorporates more sectors where fishing, protection of marine habitats or energy are some of the main aspects.

The commission's introduction of a framework of integrated marine governability for the Atlantic will make it possible to define a holistic perspective of the way it manages. It will also be able to set common goals for member states, coordinate initiatives while making use of possible synergies and solving conflicts between sectors and countries. In short, drafting this document will make it possible to progress toward coherent development of the activities implemented in the European Atlantic Basin and its associated seas.

Oceana stresses the importance of this marine area. Its surface represents the largest marine area in Europe. It is distributed between four of the 27 European community countries, Portugal, Spain, France and England. In addition, these countries represent fishing and marine energy production powers, but when it comes to protecting marine habitats.

Oceana wishes to emphasize the need to unify policies and develop cross-border coherence for habitats, fisheries management and promoting marine renewable energies. These are sectors where the EU must correct deficient situations and improve its international leadership.

## **Fisheries management**

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The European fisheries in the Atlantic Basin exhibit a critical conservation situation where the majority of commercial stocks are overexploited or their conservation status is unknown. This situation requires management by the EU that prioritizes the recovery of these fish population stocks and improves scientific knowledge of them. Oceana's recommendations in this regard are:

- To apply the Marine Strategy Framework Directive in the Atlantic Basin as the basis and principal for all other sectors. To condition socioeconomic activities to the "good environment condition" of the marine environment and to the protection of relevant ecosystems.
- To integrate the new EU Fisheries Policy in the Atlantic Basin under conditions of sustainability and resource protection.
- To set the total catches and quotas assigned to exploiting fisheries resources while heeding scientific recommendations above and beyond short-term economic interests. It will thus guarantee sustainable exploitation and favor social, economic and environmental development.
- Exploitation under the principle of precaution. The Commission's objective of reaching level MSY in 2015 for all species is desirable, but the goal must be exploitation under the principle of precaution. One limit as well as the other require a big effort in evaluating species' condition and applying restrictive management measures.
- To eliminate discards by banning this practice and reducing bycatches by suppressing the use of fishing methodologies that are not very selective. This reduction in mortality will have a positive impact on the target species and those that share their habitats, and therefore greater fishing opportunities.
- To eliminate the use of destructive fishing gear that does not respect the integrity of the associated habitats, especially on vulnerable marine ecosystems, and cause damage that compromises the conservation of these ecosystems.
- Recovery of small-scale fishing in the Atlantic Basin. The economic and social relevance of small-scale fishing has been widely replaced in this area by the development of industrial fishing. This kind of fishing is ecologically less sustainable and has less social involvement. It

is necessary to boost and recover small-scale fishing in the area to the detriment of the industrial fleet.

- To manage fisheries within an ecosystemic focus that provides for direct and indirect effects on this activity and guarantees the structure, functionality and productivity of the environment where the activity takes place.
- To guarantee an efficient operating and regulatory control system that eradicates undeclared and unregulated illegal fishing and provides reliable information that makes it possible to implement sound adaptive management.

## **Marine renewable energies**

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The growing uses and activities in the ocean make it so the different marine sectors, routes and transportation, military activities, gas and oil prospection, wind and marine energy development, port development, fisheries and aquiculture, protected areas, etc. compete with each other.

At present, *offshore* wind power (within marine renewables, the most commercially developed and competitive) has grown by 56% in 2009 with respect to 2008. It reached an installed power of 2,396 MW at the end of June 2010.

In addition, the estimates made state the possibility of reaching 40 GW in the year 2020 and reaching 150 GW in the year 2030. This would contribute toward covering between 3.6% and 4.3% of the European energy demand in the year 2020, thus avoiding an annual emission into the atmosphere of 85 million tons of CO<sub>2</sub>. Likewise, the objectives for the year 2030 will contribute toward covering between 12.8 and 16.7% of the demand. This will avoid an annual emission into the atmosphere of 292 million tons of CO<sub>2</sub>.

This demonstrates on one hand, the degree of progress and the promising future of marine wind power in European waters. On the other hand, it demonstrates the importance of the sector's development as a key factor in climate change mitigation policies.

However, definite development of this sector needs coordinated action between the different marine uses and activities. At present, all of these activities are regulated by different agencies that in turn have different legislative packages. Therefore, it is difficult to coordinate the marine space in such a way that it accommodates the different uses.

In this regard, Oceana recommends the need to establish Marine Spatial Planning-MSP that promotes the rational and sustainable use of the space and the marine environment. To do so, the contributions and coordination of all involved agents is needed so that the different objectives are attained responsibly. The following would be necessary in order to do so:

- Zoning or classification of the areas in such a way that they encompass the different uses and avoid possible conflicts between them. In Europe, only a few countries have identified and classified the areas where marine wind power development is possible. However, each one has followed its own criteria and only a few have managed to integrate this development in a global framework that includes other uses.
- Development of transnational planning. It is one of the greatest challenges that marine wind power development faces on a global scale. Progress in this subject will give the agents involved a stable framework for developing the activity in the long term. This will doubtlessly foster the sector's progress.
- Creation of a Pan-European Grid that interconnects the different countries. The need to improve the existing grids so that they provide coverage to any marine wind farm no matter how remote its location. Through this interconnection, agents will manage to increase the energy exchange capacity between the different countries. This will cause an increase in European energy independence and therefore greater energy security and an increase in renewable participation in the energy mix. Additionally, this transnational interconnection will bring about more efficient management of each country's demand. To date, and due to the large concentration of projects in Northern Europe, development of this grid has begun in the

North and Baltic Seas, but implementation in the Mediterranean Sea and the Atlantic coast should continue soon.

Lastly, and to underscore the shortcomings that the sector is presently faced with, not on a global scale, but rather a more local one, we would like to emphasize the following necessary points in the same way to develop an integrated marine policy:

- Creation of databases in relation to: 1) Seasonal distribution and abundance of species. We will thus be able to know their respective locations throughout the year beforehand; especially during particularly sensitive seasons such as the reproductive season. 2) Migratory routes of different bird species, flight altitudes and possible routes on a local scale for each species. 3) Particularly sensitive species whether because they are threatened or in decline or because they need some type of protection. The reason they are in this especially sensitive state must be specified.
- Greater research on: 1) Negative effects that the construction, operation and dismantling phases may have on the different species. 2) Auditory sensitivity of different species and communities. 3) Possible impacts caused by different factors such as marine cables, the creation of artificial reefs, the emission of shadows, noises and electromagnetic fields or the increase of temperature in sediments. 4) Special and temporary assessment of each of the impacts in order to calculate both its significance and its threat. 5) Hydrodynamic models that, together with field studies, make it possible to predict changes in the dynamics of currents and sediments. 6) Cumulative impacts on the different species and communities. 7) Techniques and good practices that minimize possible impacts overall.

## **Habitat protection**

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Oceana underlines the fact that the marine surface of the Atlantic Ocean sea basin covers more than 50% of the total of the European marine surface. Nevertheless, its protection is still minimal and progress towards the designation of new marine areas for the Natura 2000 Network has been insufficient.

The EU has binding commitments to secure that all Member States designate the protection of new marine areas in the Atlantic and thus guarantee that communitarian and international regulations are complied with. The 6 areas in international waters newly designated during OSPAR Convention's Ministerial meeting held in Bergen last September, without a doubt constitute a small step towards proper marine conservation. However, it does not sufficiently meet the planned objectives, making it therefore necessary to increase efforts to protect European waters and more specifically, the Atlantic Ocean basin.

Oceana advocates for the strict compliance of the objectives established by the European Commission itself, as well as by the international conventions related to marine habitat and species protection. In order to meet these objectives, which are binding in most of the cases, Oceana proposes:

- To protect 20-30% of the marine surface of the Atlantic Ocean basin by 2020. The European Union is far from meeting the established objectives set by the Biodiversity Convention, which demand that 10% of every marine ecological region be protected by the end of 2010.
- To strengthen marine research. Scientific knowledge about the marine environment is essential to achieve suitable management of the Atlantic Ocean basin. Simultaneously, new marine protected areas should be urgently designated in order to move forward with the conservation of habitats and species that currently have no protection.
- To apply the Marine Strategy Framework Directive. In order for the Atlantic Ocean basin's resources to be used sustainably, marine habitat and commercial species conservation must be prioritized over those activities that are seriously harming the marine environment.
- To develop a management plan based on a precautionary approach. One of the main causes of marine environment deterioration, species extinction and overexploitation is the

development of various activities on habitats and/or species that have been insufficiently studied. Oceana demands that the development of those activities harmful to the marine environment, be conducted solely on those species or habitats that have been sufficiently studied and by considering the scientific advice.