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WWF Manifesto for a European Maritime Policy





Europe needs a single, comprehensive Maritime Policy. WWF welcomes the process the European Union has begun to achieve this goal.

WWF believes it is possible to establish a policy that addresses the needs of all those whose livelihoods depend on our seas and those who enjoy the use of them for leisure activities, and that also keeps them healthy for future generations. If fish stocks continue to plummet, and if the ecosystems in which they live continue to decline, maritime sectors from fisheries to tourism will falter and fail.

The solution WWF proposes – ecosystem-wide management and marine planning – is not only economically viable and environmentally responsible, it is essential to the survival of coastal communities and marine-based businesses throughout Europe.



James P. Leape

Director General, WWF International

The world's oceans have been deteriorating for decades. Too much fishing, dumping of waste and human-induced climate change are all taking their toll. Together they are leaving our seas in a state of profound and alarming neglect.

Europe needs to act now by agreeing a Maritime Policy that protects its seas and oceans from further decline, guarantees the abundance of marine resources and safeguards the livelihoods of all who depend on them.



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- More than 80 per cent of European fish stocks are overfished.
- As a consequence, the EU is importing 60 per cent of the fish needed.
- Climate change is predicted to generate a rise in sea level of between 25 to 95 cm in the North East Atlantic by 2100.
- Climate change with increased rainfall and severe storms will multiply flooding in coastal areas, including cities, and lead to increased coastal erosion.

The Maritime Policy: an opportunity for Europe's oceans and seas

The European Commission is proposing a Maritime Policy for Europe that seeks to meet the needs of the various sectors depending on the seas and oceans. The following is a summary of WWF's contribution to the debate invited by the European Commission by the publication of its Green Paper in June 2006 on the future EU Maritime Policy.

The European Union's challenge is to ensure that the two pillars of this new policy – the economic pillar underpinning the drive to make Europe the most competitive and dynamic economy in the world and the environmental pillar underpinning the EU Marine Strategy Directive - are properly balanced. This is essential to ensure that the marine valuable resources are properly conserved now and in the future. If we fail to strike this balance, maritime economic sectors and marine livelihoods are condemned to decline.

What is the problem with the oceans?

Fighting for space

There are many pressing and often competing demands on the world's oceans. They range from commercial fisheries to shipping, oil and gas development, aquaculture, tourism, sand and gravel extraction and places to store unwanted pollutants. New activities such as wind farms, tidal and wave energy developments, and storing unwanted carbon dioxide under the seabed are all fighting for space. A system of planning and management similar to that practised on the land is urgently needed to meet all these demands.

Piecemeal management

Until now in Europe, there has been no overall plan to coordinate the needs of all marine activities. Attempts to regulate activities at sea have concentrated on the needs of each individual sector, for instance fisheries, shipping or marine pollution. For too long, policy makers have failed to tackle the cumulative effect of multiple activities on marine ecosystems. This piecemeal approach has left Europe's seas in a state of neglect.

There has also been an apparent lack of political will to implement some of the tools that are already in place and that could have solved or ameliorated this piecemeal approach. For instance, Heads of Government, meeting at the United Nations (UN) World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg in 2002, agreed to apply what they called an "ecosystem approach" to the management of seas. This was to be achieved by 2010. But now, five years after the UN Declaration and just three years before the deadline,



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official discussions seem to be deadlocked on what needs to be done. Action to put the first steps in place is still missing. This is where the EU can take the lead. For the first time, a single EU Maritime Policy is a real possibility to break the deadlock by bringing together all the existing management tools that could protect Europe's seas.

WWF wants an EU Maritime Policy that:

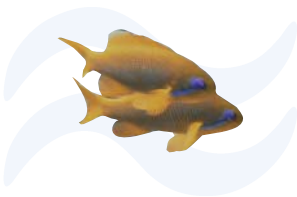
- **Creates a single legislative framework that pulls together the huge number of regulations that already exist.**
- **Manages the needs of existing and future maritime activities and environmental protection by looking into future threats and already anticipating them in new legislative requirements.**
- **Introduces a system of marine "spatial planning" similar to the spatial planning system that exists on the land and that can balance all marine user interests.**
- **Extends relevant EU environmental legislation like the Habitats Directive and its Natura 2000 Framework for protected areas to marine areas.**



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Ecosystem-based Management

The goal of ecosystem-based management is to promote the sustainable development of the oceans by assessing the sometimes competing environmental, social, and economic values against each other. This is done by making decisions about the whole marine environment, rather than on a sector-by-sector basis. By looking at the big picture, the needs and interests of the various sectors can be better balanced. The stresses each create for the marine environment can be better tackled by weighing them together rather than separately.



Key tools for the EU Maritime Policy

Marine Spatial Planning

We are used to the idea of planning in our towns and countryside. But it is still a largely unknown idea for our oceans. The principles should be the same on land or sea. Marine spatial planning looks at all maritime sectors, identifies risk and needs, and then recommends areas to be set aside for different activities. It is a kind of zoning. This reduces the impacts on the marine environment and the potential for conflicts between marine users. Areas essential for environmental protection and even strict conservation are properly identified and safeguarded through the agreement of all the affected interests.

Finding the solutions

1. Commercial fisheries

Long-term mismanagement has put fish stocks, habitats and fishing communities – indeed the whole ecosystem – at risk. Demand for seafood is outstripping supply.

Illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing (IUU) is recognised as a significant threat to marine biodiversity and sustainable fishing worldwide. It causes large losses of fish stocks to coastal communities and undermines the rights and rewards of those who fish legally.



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An integrated Maritime Policy must:

- Close certain areas, such as spawning and nursery habitats, for fisheries management purposes.
- Develop comprehensive recovery plans for depleted fish stocks.
- Develop long-term management plans for those stocks not in need of recovery plans.
- Improve monitoring, control and traceability of fishing to eliminate illegal catches.
- Minimise potential for clashes between users through designation of areas for protection under nature conservation laws.
- Improve the fishing gear used by the European fleet so that non-targeted fish and other marine life (bycatch) are not caught and then discarded.

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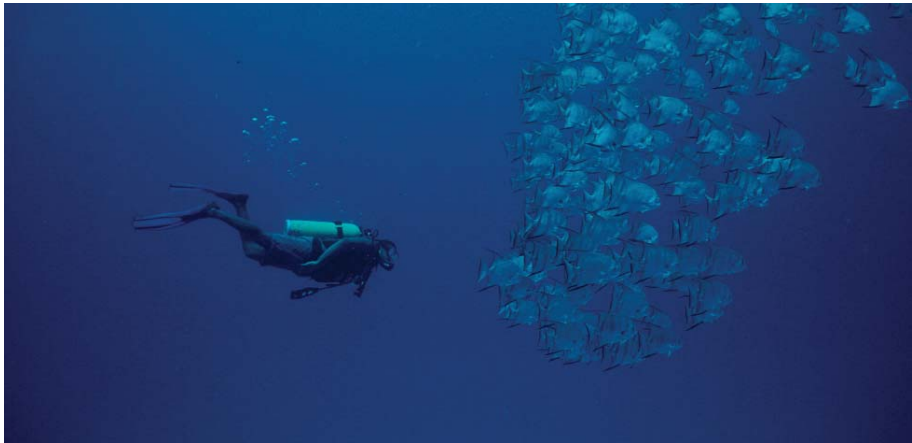
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2. Shipping and seaports

Shipping is an extremely important industry for Europe. The shipping and port sectors see potential for growth, but often need to be able to extend their site areas. Environmental concerns, particularly the protection of coastal wetlands, are often a constraint.

- A planning system that identifies conservation priorities along with preferred development zones for infrastructure and other users would minimise the potential for conflict.



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3. Offshore energy (oil and gas, wind, tidal, wave)

Investment in offshore oil and gas development in the North Sea – already the fourth-largest production area in the world – is increasing. Offshore renewable energy is seen as an emerging opportunity. Wind energy “farms” have already been developed in the shallow waters of northern Europe while tidal and wave energy facilities are expected.

Offshore energy needs access to essential resources (oil and gas deposits, tidal flows, wind and waves), and a clear and consistent regulatory framework in which it can operate and grow.

- Environmental assessment would identify sensitive habitats or wildlife populations and use these to determine no-development zones. Equally, this kind of planning would establish preferred development zones based on the offshore energy sector’s needs.



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4. Tourism and recreation (including sea angling)

Tourism is a huge industry in Europe and is getting larger. The cruise sector is expected to have the fastest growth. More and more people are using the seas and oceans for recreation. Europe has about 20 million seagoing boat users and 8-10 million sea anglers. Many more people use the coastline for walking or beach visits.

- Marine spatial planning will help reconcile interests by identifying separate areas for recreation and others where activity should be restricted for environmental reasons or because of the potential for conflict with other users.



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5. Fish farming

Fish farming, or aquaculture, needs a healthy environment to support the resource and space in which it operates. But its presence in sensitive areas could destroy local habitats and wildlife populations through such things as pollution from feed, faeces, chemicals and antibiotics, as well as the introduction of non-native species and diseases.

- A system of preferred development and aquaculture-free zones could be set up using marine spatial planning.



Aquaculture depends on an adequate supply of fish feed to expand. Though efforts are being made to use vegetable supplements for fish meal, there is a huge demand for wild-caught fish to feed farmed fish. This puts unsustainable pressures on global fish populations and has potentially devastating knock-on effects for the marine ecosystem. In addition, aquaculture that uses wild fish, such as tuna ranching in the Mediterranean, should be carefully regulated to ensure that it does not cause further depletion of wild fish populations.

6. Sand and gravel extraction

Dredging for sand and gravel is an important sector, especially in overcrowded, shallower, near-shore waters. This sector needs clearly zoned areas in which to work.

- Marine spatial planning could help deliver this and eliminate uncertainty amongst marine users.



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Next steps for the EU Maritime Policy

WWF is looking forward to the Commission's white paper and the legislation that will follow. We will press for a strong EU Marine Strategy Directive and continue working towards an EU Maritime Policy which has environmental protection at its heart. The following principles will guide our work.

The EU Maritime Policy must:

- Bind together existing regulations into a coherent whole and fill in any gaps.
- Commit to urgent investment in the restoration and maintenance of the oceans to achieve a healthy environment and secure jobs and economic development.
- Agree to management on an ecosystem-wide basis so that all needs are considered.

- Strengthen the draft EU Marine Strategy Directive so that seas can be restored and protected.
- Link planning on land to spatial planning at sea.
- Ensure that policy and management decisions take account of scientific advice.
- Require the EU and its member states to meet their commitments on time.
- Subsidise only those ventures based on sound environmental practice.
- Commit to providing education and training so that Europe's seas are managed sustainably.
- Fund marine research so that ecosystems can be managed in a holistic way.

Ecosystem-based management, with marine spatial planning, are the key tools to achieve these principles. Both are practical approaches. Using them will ensure that Europe's seas remain healthy, economically viable, and there for all to enjoy.



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To see the detailed submission, go to:

http://www.panda.org/eu/maritime_submission

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WWF is one of the world's largest independent conservation organisations, with almost 5 million supporters and a global network active in more than 100 countries. WWF's mission is to stop the degradation of the planet's natural environment and to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature, by:

- conserving the world's biological diversity
- ensuring that the use of renewable natural resources is sustainable
- promoting the reduction of pollution and wasteful consumption.



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