



NAFO Supplement #3

Ecologically or Biologically Significant Marine Areas: A WWF priority for protecting ocean life

The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) worked with experts and in 2008 adopted a set of criteria for the identification of Ecologically or Biologically Significant Marine Areas (EBSAs) that requires enhanced protection so as to ensure conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity.

At the 10th Conference of the Parties to the CBD (COP 10), member governments agreed to a scientific and technical process for describing areas that meet the EBSA criteria. In the same COP 10 decision, the CBD Executive Secretary has been requested to work with Parties and other Governments as well as competent organizations and regional initiatives, and where appropriate, **regional fisheries management organizations** (RFMOs), with regards to fisheries management, to organize regional workshops to facilitate the description of EBSAs through application of the scientific criteria in annex I of decision IX/20 as well as other relevant and compatible and complementary nationally and inter-governmentally agreed scientific criteria.

Role of RFMOs in identifying EBSAs

COP 10 emphasized that the identification of EBSAs and the selection of conservation and management measures is a matter for States and competent Intergovernmental organizations, such as **RFMOs**, in accordance with international law, including the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea and the Fish Stocks Agreement.

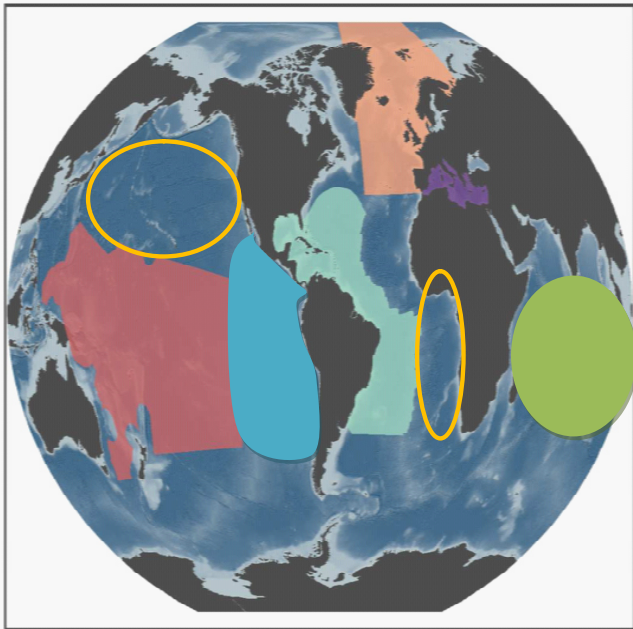
The role of the CBD is to: (i) facilitate the scientific description of areas that meet the EBSA criteria through the co-organization of regional workshops in collaboration with host governments and **regional organizations**, as appropriate; (ii) maintain a repository of reports describing areas that meet the EBSA criteria for scientific and technical information and experience related to the application of the criteria; and (iii) develop an information-sharing mechanism with complementary activities such as FAO's work on vulnerable marine ecosystems (VMEs). Whilst the initial description and listing of EBSAs is a role for the CBD, the actual development of appropriate management measures is the responsibility of those bodies with

the competency to do so. In the exclusive economic zones of states (EEZ) this is the role of appropriate agencies of the coastal state. In areas beyond national jurisdiction, the relevant international bodies regulating particular sectoral uses have this mandate to actually control that use: **Regional Fisheries Management Organizations** for fishing and biodiversity; International Maritime Organization for shipping; International Seabed Authority for seabed mining.

The organization of an EBSA regional Workshop for the Northwest Atlantic

As of today, five regional workshops on describing EBSAs have been organized, covering the North-East Atlantic, the Western South Pacific, the Wider Caribbean and Western Mid-Atlantic, the Eastern Tropical and Temperate Pacific, and the Southern Indian Ocean. In addition, areas meeting EBSA compatible criteria have been described in the Mediterranean. While further regional workshops are already planned for the North Pacific, and the South-East Atlantic (see map below), a recent meeting of the CBD Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice requested the CBD Executive Secretary to prepare a schedule for corresponding workshops in the remaining regions of our oceans.

The Northwest Atlantic is one of a few marine areas in the world where EBSA regional workshops have not been scheduled to date. The scientific work of the CBD to describe ecologically or biologically significant marine areas (EBSAs) is of high relevance to support NAFO's Convention objective to ensure the long term conservation and sustainable use of the fishery resources in the Convention Area and, in so doing, to safeguard the marine ecosystems in which these resources are found. As emphasized by CBD COP 10, this is a scientific and technical exercise only, and that areas found to meet the criteria may require enhanced conservation and management measures, and that this can be achieved through a variety of means, including through area based conservation tools such as impact assessments. The NAFO's performance review (2011) panel (PRP) noted that "NAFO has not articulated any specific plans aimed at developing ways to conserve biodiversity. The PRP sees the development of such plans as a strategic imperative for NAFO." Having a regional workshop scheduled for the Northwest Atlantic would be an important first step towards the development of NAFO's biodiversity plan, and the information generated in the workshop would also contribute to NAFO's ongoing activities, such as the development of its impact assessment by the Scientific Council and the roadmap to ecosystem approach to fisheries.



Marine Geospatial Ecology Lab, Duke University (2012)

Ocean area covered by the EBSA regional workshops: 179.6 million km² (about 49% of total estimated ocean area, 361 million sq.km)

What area gets the GO as an EBSA?

Governments at the CBD agreed on a set of seven criteria to be used when evaluating areas as having sufficient 'ecological or biological significance' to warrant inclusion in the CBD EBSA repository:

1. Uniqueness or Rarity
2. Special importance for life history stages of species
3. Importance for threatened, endangered or declining species and/or habitats
4. Vulnerability, Fragility, Sensitivity, or Slow Recovery
5. Biological Productivity
6. Biological Diversity
7. Naturalness

More information:

Dr Bettina Saier, Director, Oceans,
WWF-Canada bsaier@wwfcanada.org

Dr Daniela Diz,
WWF-Canada ddiz@wwfcanada.org

Dr Robert Rangeley, Vice President,
WWF-Canada, Atlantic
rrangeley@wwfcanada.org



Why we are here.

We are creating solutions to the most serious conservation challenges facing our planet, helping people and nature thrive.

wwf.ca