

Choosing conservation objectives in relation to achieving Good Environmental Status (GES) in the Belgian part of the North Sea

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Choosing conservation objectives in relation to achieving Good Environmental Status (GES)

Presentation outline

- Introduction to the Belgian part of North Sea
- Maritime Spatial Planning
- Nature conservation zones
- Marine Strategy Framework Directive
- Conservation objectives and Good Environmental Status

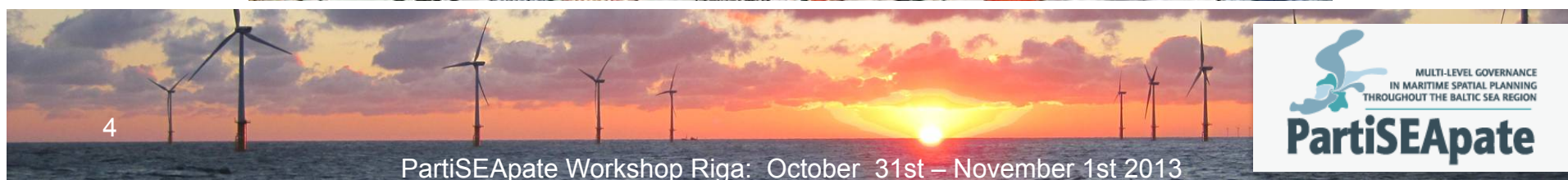
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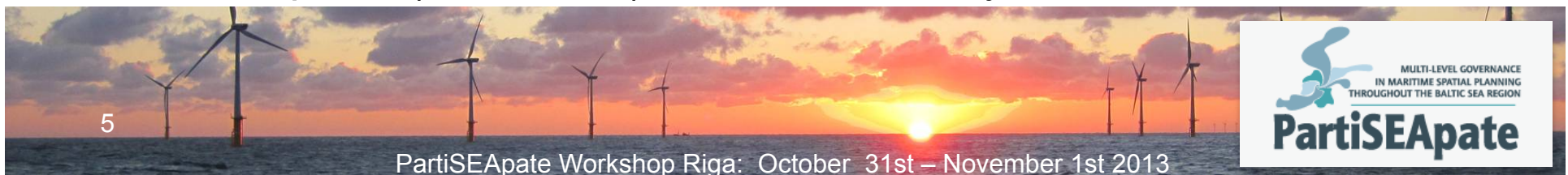
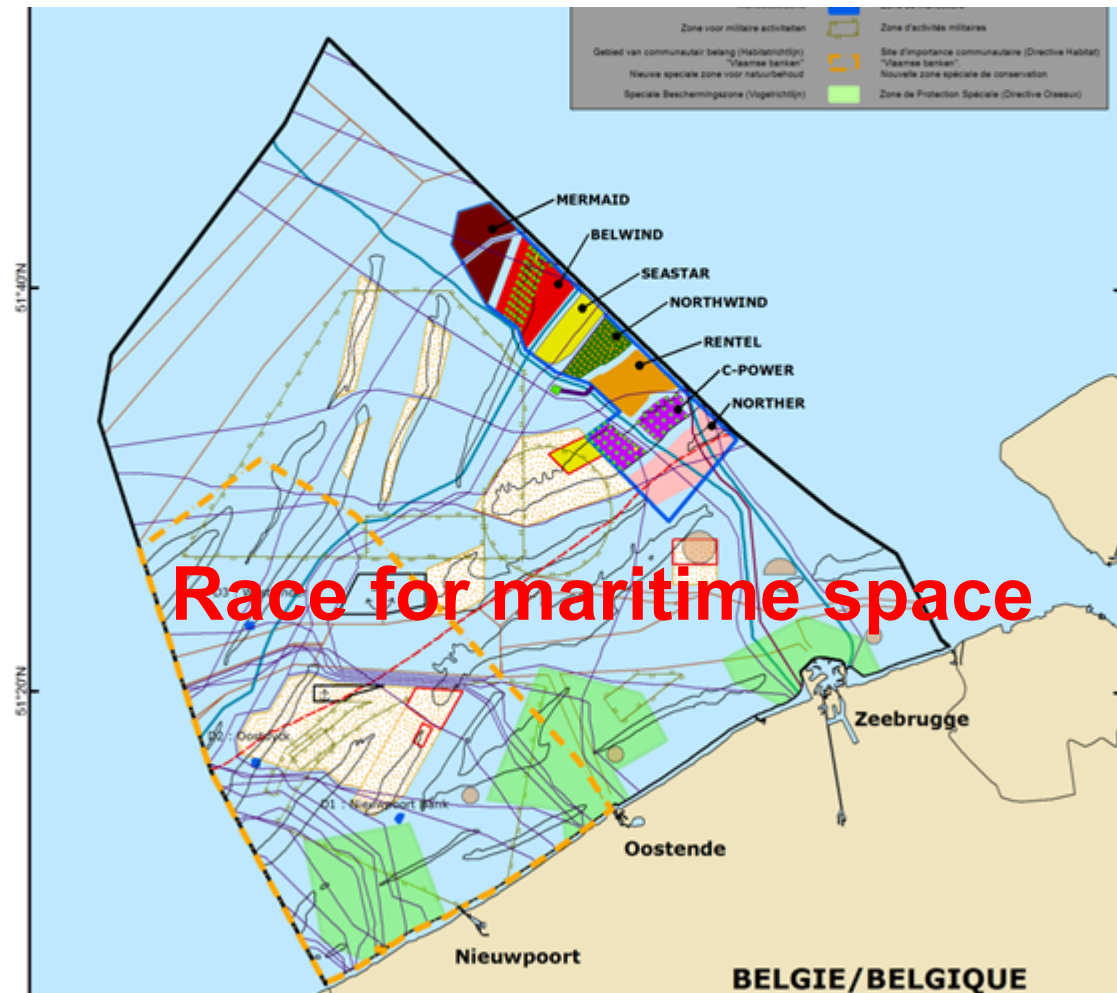
James Ensor, 1890



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Belgian part of North Sea

- ~ 3600 km² (66 km)
- 20-30 m depth
- 300.000 ship movements
- ~2-3.10⁶ m³ sand & gravel extraction
- 2000 MW by 2020
- Masterplan I (2003-2004) 'trans-boundary conflict'



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Maritime spatial planning

Spatial analysis



Long term vision



Economic, social, environmental and safety goals



Measures, means and actions to be undertaken to achieve these goals

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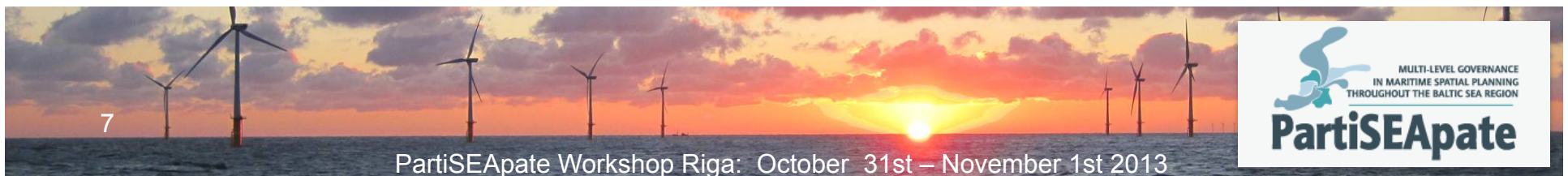
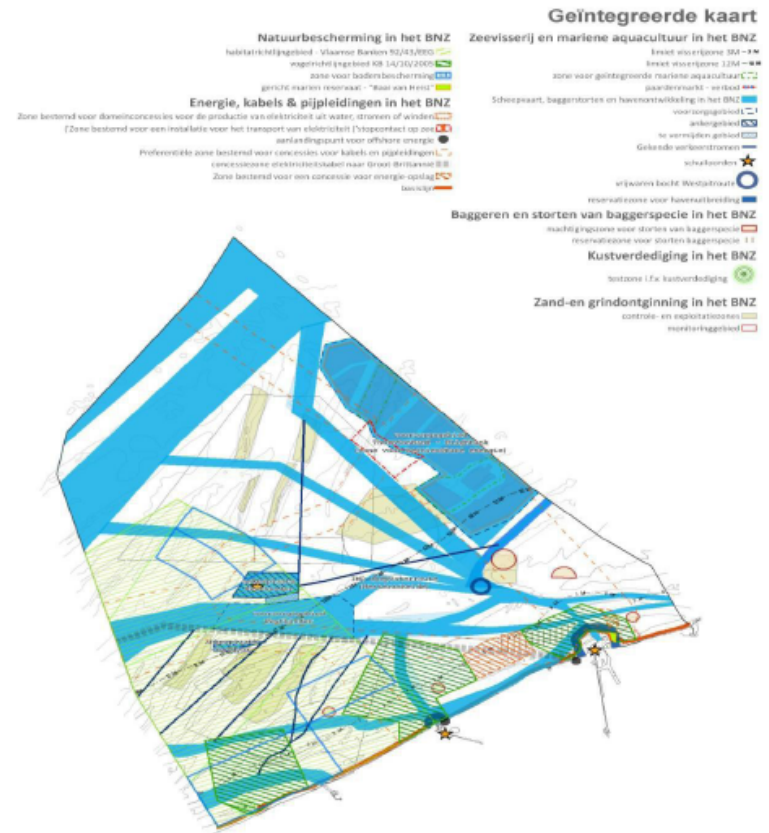
Maritime spatial planning

Principles:

- preventative action
- precautionary approach
- sustainable development
- polluter pays
- recovery

Timing:

- drafted in 2012-2013
- public consultation summer 2013
- final version to be made into law by Royal Decree early 2014
- continuous process (5 year evaluation cycle)

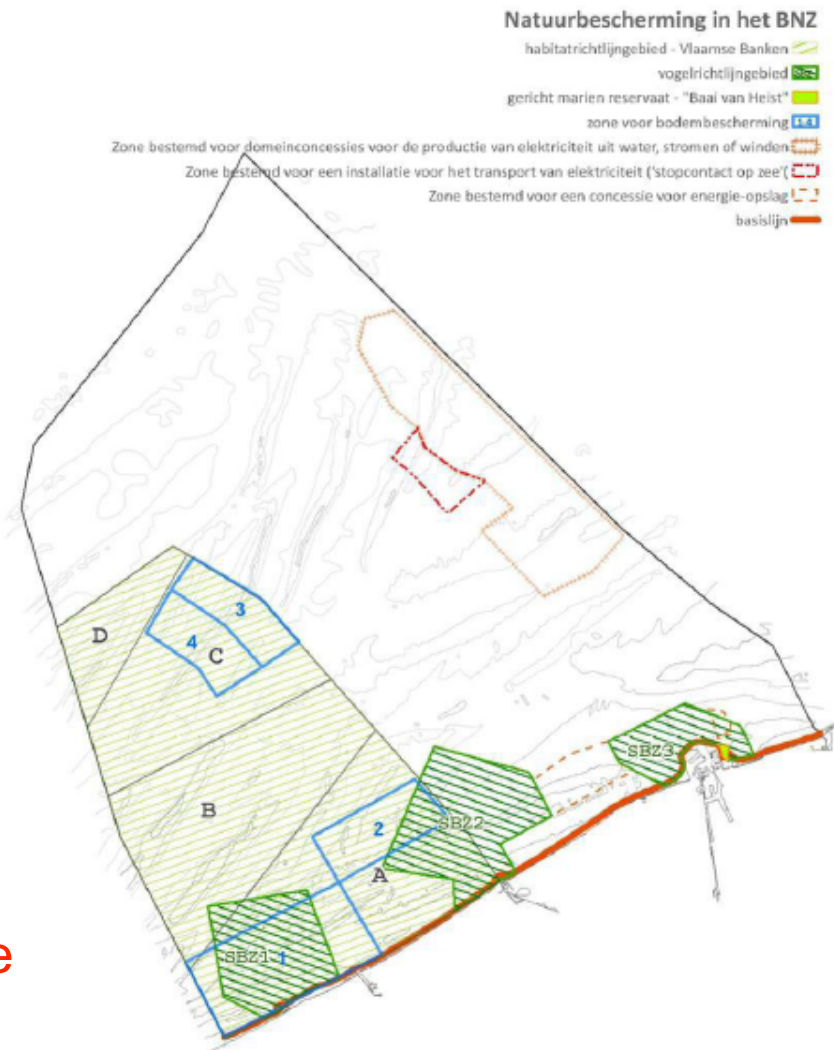


Choosing conservation objectives in relation to achieving Good Environmental Status (GES)

Nature conservation zones

- 3 Special Protection Areas (SPA) following the Birds Directive (since 2005)
- 1 Special Area of Conservation (SAC) following the Habitats Directive (since 2005 - expanded to 'Vlaamse Banken' in 2012)

→ ~1/3rd of BNS in conservation zone



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Nature conservation zones

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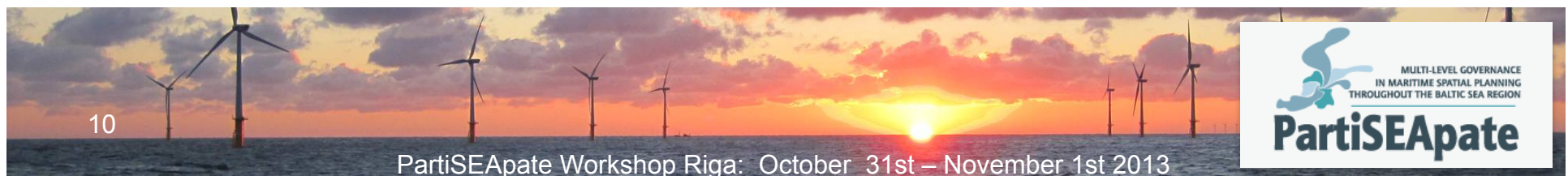
→ Conservation objectives yet to be defined



Marine Strategy Framework Directive

“The environmental status of marine waters where these provide ecologically diverse and dynamic oceans and seas which are clean, healthy and productive” (by 2020)

- In 2012, ambitious GES targets for the BNS were set after broad stakeholder participation
- More regional (NS) definition of GES targets was not successful
- The role of Nature conservation zones is considered in the framework of descriptors 1 (biodiversity), 4 (food webs), 6 (sea floor integrity) and 8 (contaminants)



Conservation objectives and Good Environmental Status

Case one. Great Crested Grebe (*Podiceps cristatus*)



- Conservation objectives relate to species range, population, (area and quality of) habitat for the species and future prospects

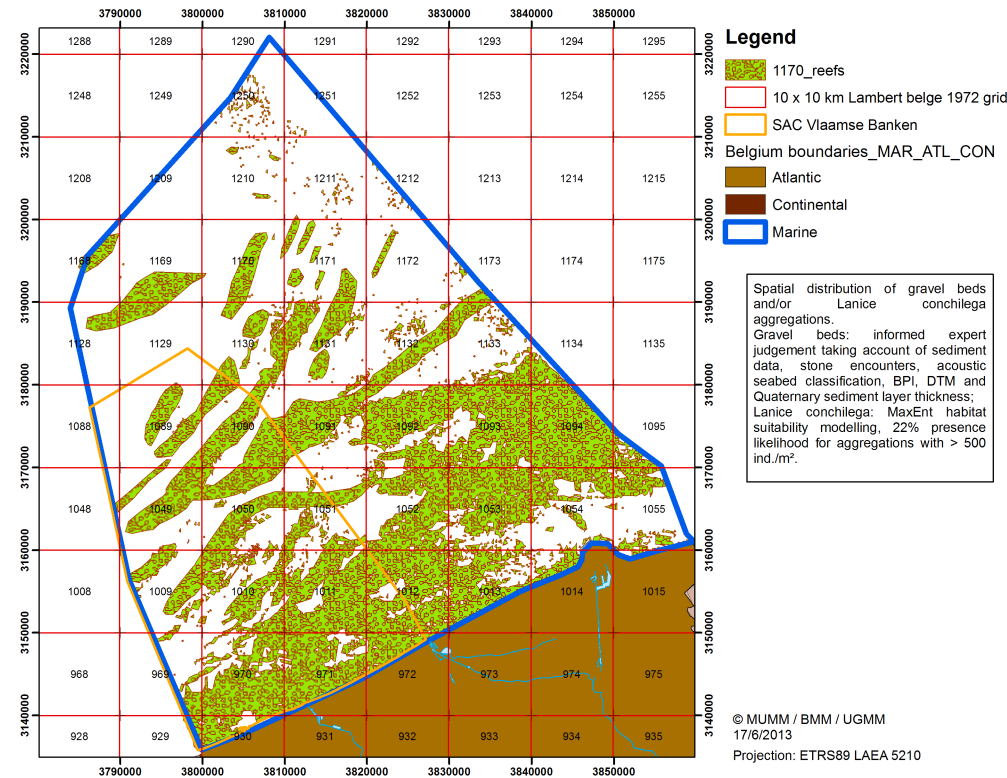
species range:	no reduction
population:	5 year averaged density not to decrease
habitat quality:	acceptable contaminant levels
future prospects:	avoid significant threats to the species

- Strong overlap with GES targets for population and habitat

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Conservation objectives and Good Environmental Status

Case two. 'reefs' (gravel grounds & *Lanice conchilega* aggregations)



Conservation objectives and Good Environmental Status

Case two. 'reefs' (gravel grounds & *Lanice conchilega* aggregations)

- Conservation objectives relate to habitat range, area, structures and functions and future prospects

habitat range: similar range

area: to remain stable

structures & functions: decrease in disturbance, positive trends
for specific species densities,

median size, biodiversity,
reduction in opportunistic
species

future prospects: avoid significant threats to the habitat

- Strong overlap with GES targets for descriptors 1, 4 & 6

Conservation objectives and Good Environmental Status

- In general conservation objectives to be compatible with GES targets
 - Descriptor 1. Biodiversity
 - Descriptor 2. Non-indigenous species
 - Descriptor 3. Commercial fish species
 - Descriptor 4. Food webs
 - Descriptor 5. Eutrophication
 - Descriptor 6. Sea floor integrity
 - Descriptor 7. Hydrographical conditions
 - Descriptor 8. Contaminants
 - Descriptor 9. Contaminants in seafood
 - Descriptor 10. Marine litter
 - Descriptor 11. Introduction of energy (including underwater noise)

Strong overlap Limited overlap No overlap

Thanks for your attention!

With thanks to Geert Raeymaekers

