IMPACT REPORT

Marine Habitat Mapping

EMB Future Science Brief No. 11



The EMB Future Science Brief on Marine Habitat Mapping was written by a Working Group of 14 experts between April 2022 to June 2024, chaired by Prof. Simonetta Fraschetti (University of Naples Federico II & SZN, Italy) and co-chaired by Dr. James Strong (NOC, UK).

Several events allowed mutual exchange between the Working Group Chairs and EC staff on prority areas for mapping and costs, providing input for drafting the EU Nature Restoration Regulation (NRR) and for the Future Science Brief. For example, Prof. Fraschetti presented emerging messages from the document on the priority gaps in marine habitat mapping at the European Parliament event on "The Marine Dimension of the Nature Restoration Law" on 29 June 2023 organised by the SEArica parliamentary intergroup, and informal discussions were held between the Working Group Chairs and DG Environment staff in December 2023.

The Future Science Brief was launched on 17 June 2024 during an EMB Brown Bag Lunch event co-organised with DG ENV. The event was attended by staff from DG ENV, DG MARE, DG RTD, NGOs, and EU Member State representatives from DG ENV's Marine Expert Group who are responsible for the implementation of the MSFD and Birds and Habitats Directives, and eventual NRR implementation.

Key messages from the document were included in consultations informing the development of OSPAR's Regional Action Plan for Benthic Shelf Habitats, and for the 2026 revision of the MSFD. Key messages were also presented at the HELCOM Informal Consultation Workshop on benthic habitat mapping in May 2024.

The document informed the Horizon Europe Mission Ocean funding call on "*Large-scale demonstration for mapping the distribution and condition of marine habitats to implement the Nature Restoration Regulation*" and the Programme for Environment and Climate Action (LIFE) funding call on "*Guidelines for MAPping, ProtEcting, and Restoring Marine Ecosystems*" (LIFE MAPPER). Furthermore, the document was used by DG ENV to inform the Technical Guidelines for assessing and monitoring the condition of Annex I habitat types under the Habitats Directive and in shaping the implementation of Article 5 of the NRR, relating to targets for the restoration of marine habitats.

The document was included in the Mission Ocean & Waters Solutions Library that highlights solutions and best practices that can be replicated and scaled across Europe and beyond. It was also feautured in the Ocean Decade publication "*An Ocean of Life: How the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development is Supporting Implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework*" (launched at the United Nations Biodiversity Conference COP16), which included information on how the Future Science Brief advanced the goals of the Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF).

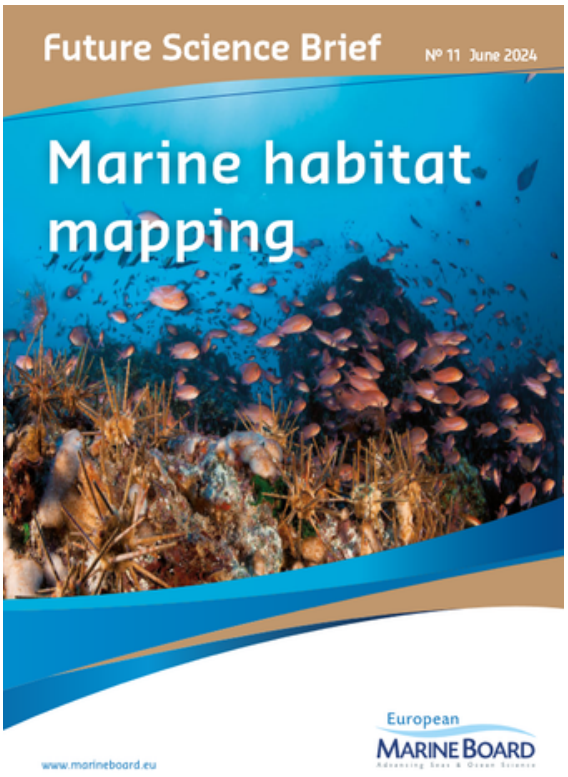
"This report reminds us that marine habitat maps are an essential bridge between our knowledge of the marine environment and our ability to protect and restore it. As we step up efforts to protect and restore marine nature across Europe, including through the implementation of the Birds and Habitats Directives and the Nature Restoration Regulation, reliable and accessible information on the distribution and condition of marine habitats is increasingly important. By bringing science, technology and policy needs together, this report provides an important contribution to ensuring that marine data can effectively support the implementation of EU nature policies and legislation."

- Andrea Vettori, Head of Unit, Nature Conservation, DG ENV

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