

**Wadden Sea  
Quality Status Report  
2004**

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## Colophon

### Publisher

Common Wadden Sea Secretariat (CWSS)  
Virchowstr. 1  
D 26382 Wilhelmshaven  
Germany

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### Language Support

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### Cover photos

Landsat satellite image (2000-2002)  
(CWSS, Brockmann Consult)

### Lay-out

CWSS

### Print

Druckerei Plakativ, Kirchhatten, +49(0)4482-97440

### Paper

Cyclus – 100% Recycling Paper

### Number of copies

1500

### Published

2005

ISSN 0946-896X

This publication should be cited as:

Essink, K., Dettmann, C., Farke, H., Laursen, K., Lüerßen, G., Marencic, H. and Wiersinga, W. (Eds.), 2005. Wadden Sea Quality Status Report 2004. Wadden Sea Ecosystem No. 19. Trilateral Monitoring and Assessment Group, Common Wadden Sea Secretariat, Wilhelmshaven, Germany.

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**WADDEN SEA ECOSYSTEM No. 19**

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**2005**  
**Trilateral Monitoring and Assessment Group**  
**Common Wadden Sea Secretariat**



## Knowledge is the basis of good Wadden Sea policy



**Cees Veerman**  
Minister of Agriculture,  
Nature and Food Quality,  
Chair of the Trilateral  
Wadden Sea Cooperation

In order to make good decisions, politicians need a sound base of knowledge. This is especially true when the future of a unique nature area such as the Wadden Sea is at stake. In a region like this, governed by three countries and with many different interests jostling for attention, it is not enough to simply be aware of the state of the environment and nature. We must also understand the consequences of our political decisions. The Quality Status Report (QSR) provides us with this information: it describes and evaluates recent developments, including the effects of the policies implemented by the three Wadden Sea countries.

The QSR is an invaluable source of information, not only for policy-makers, but for the many interest groups in the Wadden Sea region as well. The QSR supplies objective data that helps interest groups form their opinion, contributes to their debates and enriches their dialogue with us policy-makers. Debate and dialogue are essential preconditions of sensible, broadly-supported policy.

I am pleased to note that, for the first time, the writers of the QSR have tapped into the operational data exchange system of the Trilateral Monitoring and Assessment Program (TMAP). This system plays a vital role in the Trilateral Wadden Sea Cooperation. It forms the basis of the periodic assessments of the Wadden Sea ecosystem, as well as the evaluation of the ecological targets set in the Wadden Sea Plan.

This QSR gives us reason to be optimistic on many counts, but there is also some cause for concern. It is good to see that many of our targets have been achieved: the salt marshes are developing well, there is enough food for fish-eating and plant-eating birds, and the seal population is healthy and viable, even after the 2002 distemper epidemic. Policy to reduce the input of nutrients

is also having the desired effect: the rivers flowing into the Wadden Sea are less polluted with nutrients and other contaminants, causing a gradual turnaround in the eutrophication of the Wadden Sea.

Causes for concern are reports of an increase in hazardous substances in the Wadden Sea, declining numbers of migratory birds and poor reproduction amongst beach-nesting birds.

Next to this inventory of developments, the QSR also identifies subjects that warrant further study and forecasts possible future developments. For the future of the Wadden Sea, the QSR underscores yet again the importance of international policy outside the trilateral cooperation. For example, policy on international shipping, the introduction of exotic species, climate change and possible changes in the composition of the sediment.

All in all, the report gives us plenty of food for thought. It will also make a vital contribution to the 10<sup>th</sup> Trilateral Governmental Wadden Sea Conference, on Schiermonnikoog, to be hosted by The Netherlands.

As Minister of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality in The Netherlands and chair of the Trilateral Wadden Sea Cooperation, I would like to compliment all those who contributed to the QSR. They have done an excellent job. I thank those who kept the TMAP running and the QSR Management Team, the Common Wadden Sea Secretariat (CWSS) and the many scientists and volunteers for contributing their expertise and enthusiasm. Thanks to this joint effort, our beautiful Wadden Sea region can count on sound policy which looks to the future.

### **Cees Veerman**

Minister of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality  
Chair of the Trilateral Wadden Sea Cooperation



In the Trilateral Wadden Sea Cooperation, a central role is played by the Trilateral Monitoring and Assessment Program (TMAP) which provides the basis for a periodic assessment of the status of the Wadden Sea ecosystem, and for an evaluation of the implementation status of the ecological targets formulated in the Wadden Sea Plan. A process to optimize the TMAP with regard to the EC Water Framework, Birds and Habitats Directives is presently ongoing.

In 2003, the Trilateral Working Group (TWG) commissioned the Trilateral Monitoring and Assessment Group (TMAG) to organize the drafting of a new Quality Status Report (QSR). This new QSR was intended to be an update of the 1999 QSR rather than a full new QSR. As a consequence, the structure of the 1999 QSR was largely kept. Only in a few cases information is presented in a new chapter.

For the compilation of this QSR Update 2004, for the first time a common TMAP data exchange system was used which has become operational during 2004. It provides access to harmonized monitoring data from the four TMAP data units in the Netherlands, Niedersachsen, Schleswig-Holstein/Hamburg and Denmark.

The QSR Update 2004 was prepared under the responsibility of the TMAG and organized by the QSR Management Team, an ad-hoc working group under the TMAG, and the Common Wadden Sea Secretariat (CWSS). The following persons participated in the QSR Management Team:

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This report consists of 13 chapters containing basic information on human activities in the Wadden Sea and on developments in physico-chemical and ecological conditions. The material presented was made available through the four TMAP data units and through involvement of experts from government institutes, universities, consultants and volunteers. Factual information more recent than December 1<sup>st</sup>, 2004 is not included.

In chapter 14 a synoptic overview is presented viewing at the Wadden Sea ecosystem. Finally, in chapter 15 an evaluation is given of the Targets of the Trilateral Wadden Sea Plan (1997).

These chapters are intended to provide a basis for discussions among experts, managers and policy makers in the preparation of the 10<sup>th</sup> Trilateral Wadden Sea Conference (Schiermonnikoog, November 3, 2005), where the focus and tasks for the next period of Trilateral Wadden Sea Cooperation will be defined.

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