

Paul H. A. Fels, Department
of Science, Technology and
Society of the Utrecht
University, NL

Implementation of the EU Habitat Directive for Monitoring and Reporting

Introduction

The main aim of the EU Habitat Directive is to protect biodiversity in Europe. In the frame of this Directive, Member States should therefore maintain or restore habitats and species of Community Interest to a Favorable Conservation Status. For the protection of the habitat types listed in Annex I, and the species listed in Annex II of the Habitat Directive, Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) should be designated. The SACs will form a large part of NATURA 2000, a coherent European ecological network.

The European Commission (EC) requires Member States to report on the implementation of the Habitat Directive every six years, formally starting in 2001. The national reports should include information about the status of the listed habitats and species and about the implementation and effect of applied management measures. Based on monitoring results, the status and the effect of management measures can be assessed.

Based on the national reports, the EC shall write a composite report including an assessment of the status of the habitats and species listed in the Directive on the European level. Based on this assessment, the contribution of NATURA 2000 to nature conservation in Europe will be reported as well.

Major parts of the Wadden Sea Area are designated as SACs. Therefore reporting for the Habitat Directive is also an issue in the Wadden Sea. Because of the border crossing habitats and the already established trilateral monitoring and reporting activities, it might be more effective to report on the Wadden Sea for the Habitat Directive in one trilateral report. An analysis of how the monitoring and reporting necessary for the EU Habitat Directive can be implemented for the Wadden Sea was the subject of a trainee job executed at the CWSS from June until October 2001 (Fels, 2001). This trainee job was done in the frame of the Science, Policy and Management course of the department of Science, Technology and Society of the Utrecht University (the Netherlands). The course was part of a MSc. graduation in Biology.

Wadden Sea Area

At this moment, it is difficult to give a detailed description of the required monitoring and reporting in the Wadden Sea because:

- A common monitoring and reporting strategy for the Habitat Directive has not yet been developed on the European level.
- The exact requirements of the EC are unknown.
- The Habitat Directive defines marine habitats only very broadly.

However, based on the general reporting requirements of the Habitat Directive, some comments on possible approaches can be made. In the frame of the current trilateral co-operation, the status of the Wadden Sea and the effect and implementation of the trilateral Wadden Sea policy and management are reported in, a.o. the Quality Status Reports (QSRs) and in the Policy Assessment Reports (PARs). These reports, which are based on the monitoring results of the Trilateral Monitoring and Assessment Program (TMAP), can therefore form a good basis for the report to the EC that should include information on the status of the listed habitat types and species and the effects of management measures thereon.

The current trilateral reports, e.g. the QSR of 1999, cannot be used directly for a Habitat Directive report. The habitats defined in the Wadden Sea, and used in the trilateral reports, do not always correspond with the habitat classification of the Habitat Directive. Furthermore, while some characteristics are reported too detailed to be used directly for the EC report, other important characteristics to determine whether the entire habitat type is at a Favorable Conservation Status are lacking. It is recommended to consider structuring future reports, such as the QSRs and PARs, in a way that they can easily be used for a Habitat Directive report. The reports could, for example, be structured using the habitat types listed in the Habitat Directive. Assessments of important characteristics, which are currently lacking and required to meet the requirements of the Habitat Directive, could be included. Based on the additional characteristics to report, the TMAP should be adjusted.

To adjust the current activities in the Wadden Sea to meet the Habitat Directive requirements, other European approaches could be used. Some monitoring and reporting approaches for the Habitat Directive have been developed. For example, for Marine SACs in the UK, Davies *et al.* (2001) have written a monitoring handbook. In Germany, a national approach has been proposed in Rückriem & Roscher (1999). Phil *et al.* (2001), they describe a preliminary assessment of the distribution and conservation status of Habitats and species covered by the Habitat Directive in Denmark. These approaches differ considerably and are regionally or nationally explicit. Therefore, they are not directly applicable as an approach for the Wadden Sea.

Conclusions and recommendations

To be able to unify the contents of the national reports of the Member States for a composite re-

port, it is recommended that the EC provides clear guidelines and that Member States co-operate to harmonize their approaches.

One trilateral report might be the most efficient way of meeting the reporting requirements of the Habitat Directive for the Wadden Sea. The current trilateral monitoring and reporting activities can be used as a basis to meet those requirements. The future trilateral reports, such as the QSRs and PARs, could be structured in a way that facilitates their usability for the Habitat Directive report.

Based on the important characteristics currently lacking, the approaches in other European regions and the guidelines to be given by the EC, adjustments and additions have to be made in the existing trilateral reporting and monitoring activities in the Wadden Sea.

References

Davies, J., Baxter, J., Bradley, M., Conner, D., Kahn, J., Murray, E., Sanderson, W., Turnbull, C. & Vincent, M. (eds), 2001. Marine monitoring handbook. A report to UK Marine SACs project on behalf of the Marine Monitoring Group. Joint Nature Conservation Committee, Peterborough, United Kingdom.

Fels, P., 2001.* Implementation of the EU Habitat Directive for monitoring and reporting in the Wadden Sea Area. Department of Science, Technology and Society, Utrecht University, The Netherlands, Common Wadden Sea Secretariat, Wilhelmshaven, Germany.

Phil, S., Ejrnæs, R., Søgaard, B., Aude, E., Nielsen, K.E., Dahl, K. & Laursen, J.S., 2001. Habitats and species covered by the EEC Habitat Directive. A preliminary assessment of distribution and conservation status in Denmark. Technical Report from NERI, Ministry of Environment and Energy.

Rückriem, C. & Roscher, S., 1999. Empfehlungen zur Umsetzung der Berichtspflicht gemäß Artikel 17 der Fauna-Flora-Habitat-Richtlinie. Bonn-Bad Godesberg (Bundesamt für Naturschutz). Angewandte Landschaftsökologie, Heft 22.

*This report can be order at the CWSS in pdf format or as a hard copy.

Paul H. A. Fels
Warande 192
NL 3705 ZP Zeist
P.H.A.Fels@students.bio.uu.nl