

## Draft Minutes

### Joint NWWAC/PelAC Focus Group Spatial Dimension

Virtual | 07 November 2024

Goncalo Carvalho (Chair)	Sciaena
Enda Conneely	IIMRO
Sophie de Reus	North Sea Foundation
Falke de Sager	Rederscentrale
Ed Farrell	KFO
Blanca Garcia Alvarez	CINEA
Jérôme Jourdain	UAPF
John Lynch	ISEFPO
Mo Mathies	NWWAC
Alexandra Mueller	CNPMEM
Patrick Murphy	ISWFPO
Aodh O'Donnell	IFPO
Alexandra Philippe	EBCD
Irene Prieto	OPPF4
Dominic Rihan	KFO
Paul Thomas	PelAC
Nicolas Sturaro	DG MARE
Matilde Vallerani	NWWAC
Gert Van Hoey	ILVO

#### 1 Welcome from the Chair (G. Carvalho)

The Chair welcomed all participants to the meeting, and a quick tour de table followed. No apologies were received in advance of the meeting. The agenda was adopted. One item was added under AOB regarding updating the FG members on the PelAC work regarding spawning habitats XXX

- Action points from the last meeting

	What	Who
1	Circulate the Blue Forum position paper to FG members once published	Secretariat
	<a href="#">Position paper #1</a> <a href="#">Position paper #2</a>	
2	Discuss the Blue Forum paper during the planned joint PelAC/NWWAC Horizontal Focus Group in March in Dublin	PelAC/NWWAC Members
	<a href="#">Add to agenda of one of the upcoming FG meetings</a>	

3	Co-Chairs of the ICES working group WGOWDF to provide regular updates on their work at future Spatial Dimension FG meetings.	Andrew Gill, Secretariat.
	<a href="#">To be invited to webinar</a>	
4	Develop a recommendation from both ACs to the Commission asking for an update on the Member State pledges on MPAs under the marine Action Plan and their timelines – and present this as a recommendation to the joint Horizontal WG in March	NWWAC & PelAC Secretariats, FG Chair.
	<a href="#">To be kept on agenda for upcoming meeting/webinar</a>	
5	FG Secretariats to keep track of Member State processes on MPAs and their progress, fed by input from members.	NWWAC, PelAC Secretariats, FG members
	<a href="#">Combine with Action point 4</a>	
6	Develop a recommendation from the two ACs underlining the need to have an activity mapping in every sea-basin towards the Commission and Member States – and present this as a recommendation to the joint Horizontal WG in March	NWWAC & PelAC Secretariats, FG Chair.
	<a href="#">Review and keep on agenda for upcoming FG meeting</a>	
7	Present recommendations on FG priorities to the joint Horizontal WG in March in the following order of importance: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Broader activity mapping from an MSP angle</li> <li>2) MPA designation processes with the sensitive areas aspect tied to this.</li> <li>3) ORE developments should be monitored as a continuous priority</li> <li>4) Sea-bed mining monitored in the background while awaiting further developments.</li> </ul>	NWWAC & PelAC Secretariats, FG Chair.
	<a href="#">Combine with Action point 6</a>	
8	Invite speakers to the next Working Group in March to address how the different MPA processes on a national level fit in the broader MSP agenda	NWWAC & PelAC Secretariats
	<a href="#">Include in webinar agenda</a>	
9	Present FG recommendations to the Horizontal WG in March and refine FG TOR could following this discussion.	NWWAC & PelAC Secretariats, members.
	<a href="#">To be reviewed</a>	

**ACTION:** Secretariat to combine action points from the last meeting and include in this meetings actions for follow up.

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**2 Study on the spillover from MPAs to adjacent fisheries** - Gert Van Hoey (ILVO), Blanca Garcia-Alvarez (CINEA), Nicolas Sturaro (DG MARE)

The Chair welcomed the participants from DG MARE and ILVO and thanked them for their availability despite the short notice.

Nicolas Sturaro, DG MARE, explained that the study was launched at the end of 2022 and published this September ([link](#)). The initial idea was to respond to the need to better understand how marine protected areas can work in the context of fisheries and in particular, what the role of marine protected areas is for fisheries. This is in line with the Commission priorities in the last years, particularly the Green Deal and in the context of the Biodiversity Strategy. The main aim of the study is to provide an overview of the role that marine protected areas may play for fisheries through spillover effects in EU waters. There was a big gap on factual elements on the topic of spillover, and it was important to have an overview of the extent of spillover in EU seas, the drivers that may promote spillover (related to MPAs but also to the species), the methods used to give robust evidence and some concrete examples of case studies. The study was implemented by two consortia composed of a total of nine partners covering eight Member States and having expertise in the different sea basins.

He added that another study on MPAs (MAPAFISH) is being finalised and will be published in the next weeks. This is focusing on the characterisation of fishing activities within and around MPAs in the EU. Finally, the [EMFAF Info Day on Scientific Advice for Fisheries - European Commission](#) will be held on 22 November.

Gert Van Hoey explained that the study provides an overview of the role MPAs can have for local fishermen through spillover effects as one of their benefits is that they not only create benefits for the wider ecosystem, but also possibly for local fisheries in the area. As part of the work, existing studies were examined including the methodology regarding how to measure these effects. Case studies were included to provide some proof of concept or real working examples on that. An Excel based tool was also developed which attempts to define the likelihood of having spillover based on certain MPA and species characteristics.

Overall, in the 127 unique combinations of publications, MPAs and species, there is a positive detection of spillover in 83% of the cases, though a larger number of cases would form a better basis for analysis. Yet, analysis was based on the best available existing information. Van Hoey commented that what was lacking is the reporting of negative results where spillover effects were not detected. It was noted that this was less published than any positive effects. In addition, it is regularly mentioned in the scientific literature that spillover occurred and that there are species showing benefits, but the real scale and / or magnitude of the spillover is less quantified. He added that the majority of spillover cases had a commercial relevance and that European cases remained dominant in the literature.

One important characteristic on the possible influence an MPA may have on the spillover effect is related to how long it has already been established. This was investigated as part of the second aim of the study relating to the analysis of the drivers of spillover, which also included several factors such as the MPA area, protection level, network status, type of species, their mobility, reproductive strategies and more.

Van Hoey described the outcomes of the analysis made on the methodological approaches (related to the study design, field methods, variables measured). Data collection needs to be adjusted for wider ranging species in comparison to sessile shellfish species for example, and tagging would be recommended for future studies. The spillover effects reviewed are based on four types of sampling, commercial data, invasive sampling, non-invasive sampling, and tagging.

As part of the project a conceptual tool was developed pulling together environmental, social and economic factors as these can contribute to the occurrence or magnitude or detectability of spillover. Based on literature and the analysis, the tool can be applied for any relevant species and allows users to explore various MPA configurations and their contribution to spillover. This Excel based tool called

SPILLEST is available with the report ([link](#)). The report also includes 15 case studies which were investigated regarding spillover, which could be detected or potentially detected in 50% of these. The stakeholder consultation which was carried out as part of the study painted a slightly different picture.

Outlining the conclusions from the project, Van Hoey explained that:

- The study substantially increased the availability of information on spillover in EU waters and other temperate regions worldwide. It also identified the areas that need further research.
- There is **evidence for spillover from MPAs to adjacent waters in Europe**. On the one hand, the combination of three **MPA characteristics**: its **age**, **where it is situated** (estuarine, surrounding an island, or in open water) and whether it is **part of a network** of MPAs is important. On the other hand, the way that **species move around and reproduce have an influence on its ability to spillover**.
- **Spillover patterns are species-specific** and that **spillover effects may take a relatively long time** (multiple years) **before they benefit fisheries**.
- To improve the knowledge on spillover, larger datasets of studies are needed, including both studies that did and did not detect spillover. Therefore, **further field studies** are needed that should be **published in primary literature**.
- The field studies should quantify the **magnitude**, the temporal **frequency** and **spatial scale** with which spillover occurs. Additionally, to improve the knowledge about the relation between fishing activities and spillover, a requirement is the **collection and documentation of more catch and effort data** inside the protected area and outside, with varying distances to the protected area.
- Comparing data before and after implementation of an MPA, measured inside and outside the area (“BACI design”) is the **recommended approach**. Gradients over time and distance to the MPA need to be included in this approach. This in combination with tagging studies is advised.

He added that the report includes numerous recommendations regarding future work for better understanding of spillover. These can be found in the presentation [here](#).

The Chair thanked Van Hoey for the detailed presentation and opened the floor for questions.

Patrick Murphy questioned the concept of spillover and wondered how the fish originate, if they spill into the protected area first and grow, or if the spawning grounds move.

Van Hoey clarified the spillover process and explained that certain species have feeding or reproductive areas within the MPA where they develop without disturbance and therefore can move out into outside areas.

Murphy asked if the fish stay in the area as there are spawning grounds and they grow in the area as well and wondered if that has been proved scientifically. He felt that MPAs are very rarely designated to protect spawning grounds for commercial species.

Van Hoey commented that it would be hoped that most MPAs would take into account if the area is important for reproduction, resting or spawning of fish and shellfish species. He mentioned that some examples exist in Europe, and described a successful case with lobsters.

Jérôme Jourdain felt that the effects are very different based on the type of MPA and species protected. He added that different effects will be seen regarding the restriction of fishing activities as well as regarding the mobility of species. He wondered how the effect of shifting fishing effort away

from areas closed to fishing are evaluated. He felt that the economic consequences are not explicitly defined and taken into account depending on spatial access to areas or fishing rights held by different Member States. “How are the benefits to fishers evaluated if they have to move to other areas?”

Van Hoey responded that the MAPAFISH study referred to by Sturaro is concentrating more on this topic.

Sturaro commented that the spillover study was not aimed to reply to this question, but that the MAPAFISH study is addressing this in more detail. One goal of this study is to assess the the potential spatial reallocation of fishing activities in response to the designation and implementation of MPAs. He felt this study would provide more insights on this question once it is published. A more important question though he felt is how the fishing activities around an MPA might affect the spillover itself which could be an important factor to consider for another study (in addition to the MPA and species features). Sturaro added that an additional study focused on the Mediterranean and Black Sea (SPILLOVER-MED) is concentrating more on this question.

The Chair explained that Sciaena was one of the partners of the MAPAFISH study and that once this is published the Focus Group would ask for a presentation. He added that these two studies highlight that the monitoring around MPAs needs to be stepped up and that they clearly pointed the way forward where further research is needed.

John Lynch agreed that shellfish respond well to less disturbance. However, regarding finfish he wondered how natural migration and spillover could be distinguished. In addition, there have been closed areas for spawning cod for many years in Irish waters which have not shown any effects. “Would a positive stock assessment not be a better indicator of how successful an MPA is or isn’t?” He felt that spillover research and stock assessment should go hand in hand.

Van Hoey agreed that the difference is hard to distinguish especially for highly migratory species, therefore the study recommended tagging for future work. Data collected for stock assessments and the relation with MPA location and the wider dynamic is an important aspect, yet it was not the focus of the SPILLOVER study.

**ACTION:** Members to send any additional questions on the topic of this presentation to the Secretariat for written response.

Sturaro thanked the AC for the invitation and Van Hoey for the presentation and added that DG MARE is available for further support. He highlighted that the report includes details of the outcomes, the methodology and analyses, as well as several annexes on the case studies which might supply more insight. Additionally, the study provides an advisory protocol which might be useful for scientists, MPA managers and other stakeholders to improve spillover assessment.

**ACTION:** The Chair will follow up on the publication on the MAPAFISH study.

### 3 Draft advice Ecological Sensitivity Analysis Celtic Sea

Mathies pointed out that the draft document circulated had in the majority been authored by Ed Farrell and that the Secretariat had only made minor adjustments to include necessary background on the work of the two ACs as well as recommendations previously included in the NWWAC response to the Ecological Sensitivity Analysis Irish Sea.

Ed Farrell explained the background to the study and explained that the premise was to identify sensitive areas in order to ensure that no developments would take place on these. He felt that actual methods they use to identify the sensitive areas were quite good, which was identified in the text. He

provided a brief analysis of the main figures in the document. The main concern is that the study did not include an overlay of SC DMAP areas with the sensitive areas, and that the SC DMAP areas were factored in from the beginning as a cost layer similar to existing fishing operations. The DMAP areas are effectively used as exclusion zones in what are particularly sensitive areas and the effect of any development here is uncertain. The SC DMAP areas are also not included in the network of MPAs neither of which are in any of the coastal areas. Instead, it seems that the potential MPA areas are enlarged to compensate for including the SC DMAP in sensitive areas “which is contrary to any decent science.” Farrell also highlighted that the summed solution only included 10 of the 27 scenarios that were run as part of the study, some of which excluded ORE activity as a cost layer. He added that the analysis was carried out in a very small part of the Celtic Sea and only in the Irish EEZ and does not take into consideration aspects for a network of MPAs including developments in adjacent UK waters and the Irish Sea.

“The main point and the main recommendation out of it is that the results, i.e. the selected areas, should not be used as the basis for the MPA network.”

The Chair thanked Farrell for the explanations and enquired regarding the inclusion of the recommendation of skates & rays. He also added a suggestion regarding equipping inshore vessels with VMS and logbooks. He referred to improvements seen in Portugal where inshore vessels were using these tracking systems so that data was available for areas that were important for inshore fisheries. This provided a strong argument then regarding any proposed development in these areas.

Mathies explained that the recommendation regarding skates & rays had been included in the previous submission regarding the Irish Sea study and was copied over.

Lynch volunteered to review the suggestion and provide the Secretariat with new wording.

Murphy wondered if Farrell could comment on the Habitats and Birds Directives and their use in the study.

Farrell explained that species under the Habitats Directive were excluded from the study as they are already protected under this legislation. Neither industry nor NGO stakeholders agreed with this, however, the team preparing the study were instructed to do so. He commented that this highlighted a big issue as many species which could be considered within the potential MPA network are being left out, and that this should be reconsidered.

Murphy requested that this comment is included in the recommendation.

Farrell agreed to supply wording on this and that this had already been submitted as part of the feedback from the public workshops held earlier in the year. He added that BIM has been working with inshore fishermen to develop a new App for recording fishing activity. He felt a recommendation regarding this App could also be included as inshore data is lacking greatly in the current analysis.

Falke de Sager wondered if there was a difference made in the study between the actual fishing effort and vessels passing through the area towards ports.

Farrell explained that the study used VMS data which includes international effort as reflected in the Marine Institutes 2018-2022 Atlas of Commercial Fisheries.

**ACTION:** Members to review the draft advice and send comments using track changes to the Secretariat. Deadline 12:00 CET 14 November.

Paul Thomas referred to the planned PelAC advice on herring spawning habitat and that this would reference the advice to the Irish government on the ecological sensitivity analysis.



#### 4 Marine Spatial planning

- Update from recent MSP event – Paul Thomas, PelAC

Thomas suggested circulating a short report to FG members which could then be discussed at a later meeting.

**ACTION:** Thomas to send the MSP event report to the NWWAC Secretariat for circulation to members.

- NWWAC ExCom action point: addressing socio-economic assessment of developments within MSP

Lynch explained that this came about in the latest dialogue with DG MARE during the NWWAC Executive Committee meeting in October. In response to his question, he was referred back to the MSP Directive in which it is not very clear who is required to these assessments. He felt that this was currently treated as optional and not carried out to any great extent and added that this should be brought more to the front of any guidelines regardless of what type of development is proposed.

The Chair felt that there were two ways to address this, either individually or in context with another advice that is to be developed by this Focus Group.

Mathies stated that the action points from the previous meeting included suggestions for draft advice and that this could be included.

**ACTION:** Secretariat to add NWWAC ExCom point to draft advice as per last meeting's action point 7.

#### 5 Webinar on ORE impacts on fisheries

Due to lack of time it was decided to review and amend this document via written procedure.

**ACTION:** Secretariat to circulate draft ToR to members again for comment.

Lynch added that he could add some input on the impact on fisheries from ORE.

The proposed date agreed by FG members is 05 or 06 March.

#### 6 Next steps

Timelines were included in previous discussions

#### 7 AOB

The Chair explained that the PelAC is developing advice addressing wind farm developments and herring spawning grounds. The draft will be shared with members of the Focus Group to establish a joint AC way forward.

**ACTION:** PelAC Secretariat to share draft advice on herring spawning grounds with Focus Group members for review.

## 8 Timeline and summary of actions agreed

1	Members to send any additional questions on the topic of this presentation to the Secretariat for written response.
2	The Chair will follow up on the publication on the MAPAFISH study.
3	Members to review the draft advice and send comments using track changes to the Secretariat. <b>Deadline 12:00 CET 14 November.</b>
4	Thomas to send the MSP event report to the NWWAC Secretariat for circulation to members.
5	Secretariat to add NWWAC ExCom point to draft advice as per last meeting's action point 7.
6	Secretariat to circulate draft ToR to members again for comment.
7	PelAC Secretariat to share draft advice on herring spawning grounds with Focus Group members for review.
8	Discuss the Blue Forum paper during the planned joint PelAC/NWWAC Horizontal Focus Group in March in Dublin
	<a href="#">Add to agenda of one of the upcoming FG meetings</a>
9	Co-Chairs of the ICES working group WGOWDF to provide regular updates on their work at future Spatial Dimension FG meetings.
	<a href="#">To be invited to webinar</a>
10	Develop a recommendation from both ACs to the Commission asking for an update on the Member State pledges on MPAs under the marine Action Plan and their timelines – and present this as a recommendation to the joint Horizontal WG in March. FG Secretariats to keep track of Member State processes on MPAs and their progress, fed by input from members.
	<a href="#">To be kept on agenda for upcoming meeting/webinar</a>
11	Develop a recommendation from the two ACs underlining the need to have an activity mapping in every sea-basin towards the Commission and Member States recommendations on FG priorities to the joint Horizontal WG in March in the following order of importance: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Broader activity mapping from an MSP angle</li> <li>2) MPA designation processes with the sensitive areas aspect tied to this.</li> <li>3) ORE developments should be monitored as a continuous priority</li> </ul> Sea-bed mining monitored in the background while awaiting further developments.
	<a href="#">Review and keep on agenda for upcoming FG meeting</a>
12	Invite speakers to the next Working Group in March to address how the different MPA processes on a national level fit in the broader MSP agenda
	<a href="#">Include in webinar agenda</a>
13	Present FG recommendations to the Horizontal WG in March and refine FG TOR could following this discussion.
	<a href="#">To be reviewed</a>