

# INTERNAL NEWSLETTER

APRIL 2025 - ISSUE #2

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## INTRO

Work is advancing rapidly across our Work Packages, bringing new insights, collaborations, and opportunities. In this issue, we share **key project updates**, exciting **events**, **recommended reads**, and **upcoming webinars**. Stay informed on the latest from the **Demonstration Sites** and beyond.

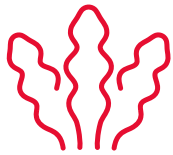
Enjoy the read!



## ★ HIGHLIGHT

BLUE CONNECT DEMONSTRATION SITES ARE DOING GREAT PROGRESS. LOOK INTO OUR NEW SECTION "UPDATES AND NEWS FROM DEMO SITES" AND THE "PAST EVENTS" ONE, FEATURING THEIR ACTIVITIES.





## WP UPDATES

### WP1

- We have a **new Project Officer**, his name is Alberto Zocchi, from CINEA C.C1.2

The next DS Board meeting will take place on April 22<sup>nd</sup>, to discuss with WP Leads (especially from WP2 and WP3), what the expectations from WPs to the DS will be for the tools and tasks to be deployed and tested in the Demo Sites. We will then have an overview of WPs and DS exchanges needed.

- D1.3 (Initial Data Management Plan) was submitted and published in our Website
- M2 achieved: DSIP for all DS. It's a Living document and LSWG will provide their feedback.

### WP2

- T2.1 - the plan for the review is finalised and the work is starting. Ways to overcome: frequent meetings with partners of T2.1 are being held to align on the work strategy, with shared living documents among all for edits/review.

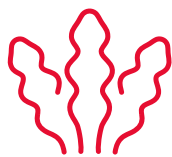


### WP3

- T3.1. is advancing with the methodology on the pressure analysis.
- T3.2: the Kickoff meeting took place last month and the work has started.
- Subtasks 3.3.1 and 3.3.2 are underway, with work plans and key concepts already developed.

### WP4

- Task 4.1 Scoping Analysis and first interview guides are uploaded to Teams. Screening in the second phase on the existing management and co-ownership schemes at global and national scale. Based on that, a common Methodology for adjustment of the screened co-management and co-ownership schemes for each Demo Site will be developed and applied by CCMS.
- Task 4.2: LSWGs established in all 12 DSs, public events and first consultations with local citizens are under preparation.



## WP UPDATES

**WP5** On 17.03. UMA organised a WP5 meeting with partners, where the Management effectiveness tools and criteria that will be used for analysis was presented and discussed. VLIZ also presented advances on Task 5.2. on Innovative monitoring approaches, which was followed by a discussion with partners on how to shape next steps.



### WP6

WWF Med has been having bilateral calls with WP leads (WP2, WP3 and WP5 pending and to be happening the first week of April) to understand what their outcomes will be, their key steps, tools produced and timelines, in order to integrate this into the Blueprint

concept to be developed. They will also be meeting soon with the BLUE4ALL Project technical team to assess technical aspects in order to use the BLUE4ALL Platform to host the BLUE CONNECT Blueprint. The Platform will be maintained and run in the long term by SUBMARINER.

### WP7

- The MPA Card game was developed and played at the EOD, it's a great opportunity to help promote MPA Community Network work and website that will bring together 6 Projects to begin with (BLUE CONNECT, BLUE4ALL, MSP4BIO, BIOPROTECT and MarinePlan).
- [Deliverables 7.1 and 7.4. submitted and uploaded to the Website.](#)



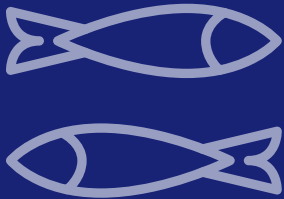
## INTERESTING NEWS



### TRANSNATIONAL ACCESS CALL TO RESEARCH INFRASTRUCTURES

The Sustainable Blue Economy Partnership has launched its first Transnational Access Call to Research Infrastructures (TA Call to RIs) on 28 February 2025, inviting applications from the pan-European blue economy community.

CLICK [HERE FOR MORE INFORMATION](#)



### MPA HELP MAILING LIST

To share with Stakeholders as an easy to reach platform for exchange on MPA topics:  
<https://octogroup.org/programs/mpa-help/>



### OTHER MARINE NEWS

- **Global sea level rose higher than expected last year.** [Here's why](#) – the Washington Post,
- **BOEM Rescinds Expanded Rice's Whale Protection Efforts,** read about it [here](#).
- **Smart Satellite Buoys Take the Stage at the European Parliament,** read about it [here](#).

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# NEWS & UPDATES FROM OUR DEMO SITES

## L'ALBERA

SUBMON has started the restoration activities by replanting recovered *Posidonia oceanica* shoots at L'Albera Demo Site. They plan to continue this action over the coming weeks, as long as we have healthy shoots available for replanting and good weather conditions.

Besides this, on 4 February, the project was presented to the local community in Llançà, where it was very well received. Following this, instructions on how to recover *Posidonia oceanica* shoots were shared with the community to encourage their participation.

Main achievements from the last 2 months:

- Establishing the LSWG of the Demo site of L'Albera.
- Working on the scoping analysis of the Demo Site.
- Establishing the methodology and materials to be used in the active seagrass restoration.



Read more about the establishment of the LSWG and presentation of the Project [in our Website](#)

## BURGAS BAY

In Burgas Bay DS the interviews have been conducted and the first public event with locals is under preparation.





# NEWS & UPDATES FROM OUR DEMO SITES

## RAET NATIONAL PARK

In the past month, a workshop organised by SALT and NIVA was held in Arendal on 7 March, focusing on identifying key issues and needs in the Raet National Park area, gathering stakeholder input on most pressing concerns and needs in Raet. Mentimeter was used to systematically gather the input from all stakeholders (Raet National Park manager, Agder County, County Governor of Agder, Norwegian Environmental Agency, The Norwegian Fishermen's Association and GCE NODE, an industry-driven cluster for ocean technologies) as a part of the Raet National Park scoping analysis.



## CETACEAN MIGRATION CORRIDOR

On March 14, UMA joined a workshop on governing the Mediterranean Cetacean Migration Corridor MPA, organized by the Ministry and Life Indemares project. Stakeholders discussed governance functions, management improvements, and participatory solutions. Insights from the event are shaping the Demo site implementation plan.





# PAST EVENTS

## BLUE CONNECT AT THE EUROPEAN OCEAN DAYS

BLUE CONNECT joined the EOD to explore the latest marine protection strategies, connect with stakeholders, and discuss collaborations. A highlight was the MPA Card Game, co-developed with project partners, which engaged attendees in decision-making for Marine Protected Area (MPA) management.

On March 6, Dr. Margarita Stancheva (CCMS) presented BLUE CONNECT's stakeholder engagement strategy at the 4th EU Blue Parks Workshop on Strict Protection. She emphasized the importance of early stakeholder involvement in ensuring effective protection measures and bridging science, policy, and community needs. Ream more about it in our [Website's Blog Post](#).



*Cape Verde Mission*

## MACARONESIA

The connectivity subgroup started by determining action objectives to complement the Macaronesia demo site's Action Plan. Besides, 1 LSWG met for the first time and 3 subgroups were created. Read about it [on our Website](#).

Also, the Cape Verde Mission for establishing connections and validate DS Plan with stakeholders took place from March 12 to 26.





# PAST EVENTS

## WDC/SMASS MARINE FORUM

The WDC/SMASS Marine Forum took place on March 1<sup>st</sup> in Edinburgh. UHI Shetland hosted an interactive BLUE CONNECT stall during the afternoon session of the event, where more than 200 people from across Scotland got together to discuss marine conservation and how to work together on initiatives such as BLUE CONNECT. UHI Shetland shared links to their Demo Site survey, and discussed how people can be involved in working with them over the next years.



## LOCAL STAKEHOLDER WORKING GROUP MEETING

LSWG in person meeting, at the Marine Forum in Edinburgh on 28th February. UHI Shetland took advantage of the opportunity that many of their LWSG would be attending the Marine Forum to host an in person meeting with the team whilst they were in Edinburgh. They had great discussions on projects progress, hopes and plans, and figured out how to can work together over the coming years. It was a brilliant few hours and really helped build the connections and bonds with some of their LWSGs.





# PAST EVENTS

## DEDICATED SESSION OF THE HELCOM WORKING GROUP ON BIODIVERSITY, PROTECTION AND RESTORATION

SALT & SUBMARINER participated on the 12th of February in the “Dedicated Session of the HELCOM Working Group on Biodiversity, Protection and Restoration” aimed at discussing the HELCOM regional common understanding for strict protection and review the state of play with national pledges for the EU Biodiversity strategy.





# OUTREACH ACTIVITIES BY PARTNERS



## SUBMON

"We have shared the instructions on how to recover *Posidonia oceanica* shoots on our social media channels to increase visibility and highlight the importance of this information.

We also took the opportunity to link it to World Seagrass Day, celebrated on Saturday, 1 March, to further emphasise the crucial role of seagrasses and promote awareness of their conservation."  
(<https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:7301174256032186372>)

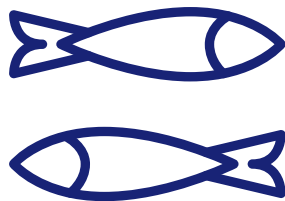
Posts in SUBMON's Instagram and LinkedIn channels about a visit of a school at the Demo site of L'Albera: [https://www.instagram.com/submon\\_/p/DDzW3CuxKzx/?img\\_index=1](https://www.instagram.com/submon_/p/DDzW3CuxKzx/?img_index=1)  
[https://www.linkedin.com/posts/submon\\_lalbera-mar%C3%ADtima-activity-7275873242681135104-MP\\_X?utm\\_source=share&utm\\_medium=member\\_desktop](https://www.linkedin.com/posts/submon_lalbera-mar%C3%ADtima-activity-7275873242681135104-MP_X?utm_source=share&utm_medium=member_desktop)

## CCMS

News & posts on the CCMS website and social media:  
<http://www.ccms.bg/en/news-and-events/past-events/489-blue-connect-at-the-european-ocean-days-2025>  
<https://x.com/ccmsbg>

## SUBMARINER

The submitted Deliverables are all published in our Project Website (as draft, until they are finally approved by the EC). Check them out here: <https://blueconnect-project.eu/publications/>



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# WEBINARS

## UPCOMING

### Exploring effective enforcement practices and technology in priority marine areas

*Presented by: Bob Farrell, WildAid*

Date/Time: Wednesday, April 2, 6 pm CEST- Hosted by: OCTO

Enforcement is a critical, but often overlooked, component of properly managing priority marine areas. The cost of enforcement can also be of concern. We will discuss WildAid's "BLUEPRINT for Marine Protection™" a highly effective tool designed to evaluate and focus capacity building effort for enforcement. We will also discuss the use of various technologies to enhance enforcement and mitigate cost. We will discuss the use of Skylight and Global Fishing Watch as potential sources of intelligence that are free to most users. We will also discuss our partnership with Open Ocean Robotics and the use of their on-water technology to support enforcement.

Register

[https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_oaEU2kNUTn-cKcJayN\\_Weg](https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_oaEU2kNUTn-cKcJayN_Weg)



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# WEBINARS

## UPCOMING

### Ecological considerations for managing fisheries within conserved areas: Introducing a new task force

*Presented by: Fabrice Stephenson of Newcastle University UK, Jenna Sullivan-Stack of Oregon State University, Beth Pike of Marine Conservation Institute, and Estradivari of the Leibniz Centre for Tropical Marine Research (ZMT) – all of IUCN WCPA. Hosted by: OCTO*

Date/Time: Thursday, April 24, 5 pm CEST

This talk will explore fishing in marine protected and conserved areas, highlighting the impact of different extraction levels—from strictly protected zones to multiple-use areas. It will introduce a new IUCN WCPA task force aimed at addressing knowledge gaps and advancing best practices for management. Key topics include existing guidance (such as the IUCN Protected Area Management Categories and MPA Guide), uncertainties around fisheries' alignment with conservation goals, and the definition of 'industrial' fishing. The task force seeks to clarify these issues and support effective conservation strategies.

**Register**  :[https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_eiA85jTHTk-9jUGFF7Q1Tg](https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_eiA85jTHTk-9jUGFF7Q1Tg).





# WEBINARS

## UPCOMING

### **The Global MPA Workforce - Building the Backbone of 30x30**

*Presented by: Christine Ward-Paige of eOceans and Mike Appleton of Re:Wild*

Date/Time: Wednesday, April 16, 6 pm CEST; Hosted by: OCTO

Protected areas rely on dedicated people—not just policies. While land-based conservation has long recognized the need for a strong workforce, the ocean lags behind. With 345,000 new MPAs needed to reach 30x30, scaling up skilled jobs is crucial. This webinar will explore the current state of the MPA workforce, key challenges, and what's needed to build a global network of well-supported marine protectors. Join the discussion and help shape the future of ocean conservation.

**Register**  : [https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_biKRL\\_sXQ\\_NCYdFQaBikM0g](https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_biKRL_sXQ_NCYdFQaBikM0g)

## PAST

**Cost-effective marine restoration webinar.** Watch it to explore actionable approaches to marine restoration:  [recording now available here.](#)

The Nordic Council of Ministers' NME and HELCOM have released a recording of their webinar on cost-effective marine restoration. Held late last year, it explored innovative restoration strategies in the Nordic region and their socio-economic impacts, aligning with the EU nature restoration regulation. The discussion offers valuable insights for policymakers, researchers, and environmental organizations.



# PUBLICATIONS /RECOMMENDATIONS

## ARTICLES

**Aburto-Oropeza O, Platzgummer V, Ferrer EM, López-Sagástegui C, Mirabent RdGA, Ávalos Galindo A, Favoretto F, Giron-Nava A, Mendoza Camacho I, Núñez Sañudo C, Plascencia de La Cruz M and Robles A (2025)** [🔗](#) *Marine Prosperity Areas: a framework for aligning ecological restoration and human well-being using area-based protections.*

**Calado, H., Gutierrez, D. & De Bruyn, A.** [🔗](#) *Navigating trade-offs on conservation: the use of participatory mapping in maritime spatial planning.* npj Ocean Sustain 4, 8 (2025).

**Stancheva M., Ramieri E., Stanchev H., Bocci M., Markovic M., Roberts T.** [🔗](#) *Exploring integration of land-sea interactions in maritime spatial planning in the Bulgarian context, Black Sea,* Marine Policy, Volume 171, 2025, 106416.





# PUBLICATIONS /RECOMMENDATIONS

## ARTICLES

**WEDDING, L.M., GISSI, E., (2024).** [🔗](#) *Key components of sustainable climate-smart ocean planning.* npj Ocean Sustain 3, 10 (2024).

### **“Protecting the Baltic Sea: Uncovering gaps in MPA management”**

The Baltic Sea’s fragile ecosystem faces growing pressure from human activity and climate change. While MPAs are key to safeguarding biodiversity, gaps in governance, management, and monitoring remain.

The PROTECT BALTIC project is enhancing the regional MPA Portal, improving data access, and strengthening transboundary cooperation. Estefania Cortez from Coalition Clean Baltic shares insights on bridging these critical gaps.

[🔗](#) Read more: [Protecting the Baltic Sea](#)

**Zaucha J., Gee K., Ramieri E., Neimane L., Alloncle N., Blažauskas N., Calado H., Cervera-Núñez C., Marohnić Kuzmanović V., Stancheva M., Witkowska J., Eskeland Schütz S., Ronco Zapatero J., Ehler C.N.** [🔗](#) *Implementing the EU MSP Directive: Current status and lessons learned in 22 EU Member States,* Marine Policy, Volume 171, 2025, 106425.



# UPCOMING EVENTS

# ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF THE EUROPEAN CETACEAN SOCIETY

The 36th Annual Conference of the European Cetacean Society

will take place in the beautiful city of Ponta Delgada, in the Azores (Portugal) from 12th to 16th of May 2025.



# MSP4BIO WEBINAR

Nature-Inclusive Marine Spatial Planning: Insights from MSP4BIO Test Sites  
9 of April 2025  
Registration opened!  
More information [here](#).



# EUROPEAN MARITIME DAY

The MPA Community Network will be present at the EMD with a Booth representing the community and its projects.

21-23 May, Cork, Ireland



## UPCOMING EVENTS

# BLUE CONNECT AT ONE OCEAN WEEK

On **April 9, 2025, at 15:00**, SALT will host the seminar “Where is the underwater “whistleblower”?” as part of **Bergen’s One Ocean Week**. The event will explore challenges in marine conservation, strict protection, and balancing ecological and economic interests. **Malin Jacob (SALT)**, will be presenting “**Blue Connect: Just and Effective Marine Protection in Europe.**”

# BLUE CONNECT AT UNOC SIDE EVENT IN NICE



SUBMARINER has been approved to host a side-event inside the German Marine Research Vessel “METEOR”, as part of the UNOC Conference to be held in June in Nice.

On June 11th, representing the MPA Community Network and its Projects, including BLUE CONNECT, we will be hosting the MPA Game in a different version: as a board game, where participants will be able to jointly design an MPA corridor.



Thank you for reading