



# DEMO SITES NEWSLETTER

#1 – SEPTEMBER 25

RAET NATIONAL PARK

## AUTUMN GREETINGS

The leaves are turning yellow, and the thermometer reminds us that colder days are just around the corner.

It has now been one year since the Blue Connect project was launched. Over the past year, we have accomplished a great deal. In this newsletter, we would like to share some highlights from the year behind us, as well as a glimpse of the road ahead in the coming months.

Best regards,

**NIVA and SALT**



## ✦ NEXT MEETING

To avoid taking up too much of your time, we have decided to scale back the autumn meeting this year. The next meeting of the local stakeholder group will therefore take place around the turn of January/February 2026. A formal invitation and agenda will be sent by email.



## DEMO SITE UPDATES

### Spring

25



#### Scoping analysis

This spring, NIVA and SALT completed the so-called scoping analysis for Raet National Park. The analysis brought together existing knowledge on natural values, human pressures, and relevant legal and governance frameworks.

#### Survey

This spring, we conducted a survey among residents in Arendal, Grimstad, and Tvedestrand. Thanks to everyone who helped distribute the survey.

We received 200 responses. While acknowledging that this is a survey with a limited number of respondents, it nevertheless provided some interesting insights:

People are generally positive towards marine protection, but have limited knowledge of the conservation values.

Respondents highlight tourism, outdoor recreation, and nature-based experiences as the most important economic and social benefits of the national park.

### Summer

25

#### General Assembly in Arendal

In June, 50 European researchers gathered in Arendal for the Blue Connect General Assembly.

The highlight of the event was a boat trip aboard M/S Øya, to the national park. The trip was open to the public and was well attended. Thanks to Trygve Nordgaard from the Raet National Park Visitor Centre for an engaging and informative guided tour.





## DEMO SITE UPDATES

### Summer 25

#### The Skagerrak Sailing Race and Research Fair

In June, NIVA and SALT shared information about Blue Connect and engaged the public in a playful and informative mapping exercise during the Skagerrak Sailing Race event on 21 June. Participants were invited to draw what they believed to be the boundaries of the national park.



#### The citizen science project “Lurvejakten” (The Turf Algae Hunt)

In June, NIVA launched a pilot of the citizen science project “Lurvejakten”. The aim has been to raise awareness among local residents about the need for action to protect vulnerable coastal and marine ecosystems, while also helping researchers identify areas with poor ecosystem health or potential risk areas for more detailed sampling (relevant both to this project and to NIVA’s broader research activities).

With great support from you (the local stakeholder working group) and from the municipalities, we shared information about the campaign through flyers and outreach stands at local public events, such as *Kilsund-dagene* on 6 July and *Kystkulturuken* on 18 July. Posters with QR codes were also placed at strategic locations in coastal towns throughout the summer.

Following the pilot, we have held meetings with Agder County Council and the Institute of Marine Research to coordinate *Lurvejakten* activities for next year. This coordination comes at a good time, as we also learned some valuable lessons from this year’s pilot.





## DEMO SITE UPDATES

### Summer 25



#### Habitat mapping in Alvekilens Bay

In August, NIVA carried out a habitat mapping survey in Alvekilens Bay in Raet National Park. Alvekilens hosts extensive eelgrass meadows, making it highly relevant both for demonstrating modern mapping techniques and for collecting data that may reveal the effects of human pressure on the ecosystem.

NIVA used a flying propeller drone, first equipped with an RGB sensor to provide an overview and images for annotation, and subsequently with a multispectral camera for habitat classification.

Measurements of various environmental variables (including temperature, salinity, chlorophyll, CDOM, turbidity, and bathymetry) were also collected using an autonomous surface drone equipped with a GoPro camera and sensors, along with additional ground-truthing data from the intertidal zone.

### Autumn 25

Following a period of literature review, NIVA has begun inviting several of you (in the local stakeholder working group) to participate in interviews on two topics related to the governance and management of Raet, as well as the collaboration process within *Bevar Raet*.

These interviews will take place in October.

Further work is also planned, including aligning these interview data with TEOTIL data and a few additional activities, but more details will be shared at a later stage.

