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Attached is a document on “Thoughts on the development of the Single Integrated Management Plan (SIMP) for the Wadden Sea World Heritage Site: Where should the SIMP go beyond the description of the status quo?” prepared Hans-Ulrich Rösner, WWF. This document can serve an input for the SIMP development.



Thoughts on the development of the "Single Integrated Management Plan "(SIMP) for the Wadden Sea World Heritage Site: Where should the SIMP go beyond the description of the status quo?

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There is a risk that the SIMP could be kept politically small, i.e. that it only bundles the already established and agreed plans and strategies for the Wadden Sea, but not really brings anything new. Such an SIMP would not be sufficient. The big effort of the compilation and coordination of the SIMP only seems to be worthwhile if the new plan results in a real advantage for the nature of the Wadden Sea. This is supported by the decisions of the World Heritage Committee¹.

It is therefore suggested that the SIMP goes beyond the status quo. It should add relevant value concerning at least the following five topics:

1. There should be a clear ambition that at the regional levels there should be a harmonised management throughout the Wadden Sea, with a clearly understandable and broad competence. This would include also being a clear regional point of contact for stakeholders and the public. Corresponding with this, there are throughout the Wadden Sea – except for the Netherlands – already four National Parks that cover nearly all of the Wadden Sea area in the respective regions. With their goals and structure, these National Parks already put quite efficiently into practise the principles and objectives of Wadden Sea protection (though they are still not „finished“, but on the right course...). The SIMP should therefore give a clear push towards considering National Parks as THE implementation tool for World Heritage at the regional level.
2. It should be made clear that the biggest deficiencies with Wadden Sea protection are to be found in the underwater world, and that urgent improvements are required. The aim for these improvements, measured against the principles and objectives of Wadden Sea protection, should be named by the SIMP. The comprehensive influence of the fisheries on the ecosystem and on biodiversity should be given special attention.
3. It should be made clear that in the long run the greatest danger for the preservation and integrity of the World Heritage Wadden Sea and its OUV is

¹ The decision on the Wadden Sea by the World Heritage Committee in 2014 describes what the SIMP should be: „Also requests the State Parties of Denmark, Germany and the Netherlands to develop a single integrated management plan for the entire transboundary property in conformity with the requirements of Paragraph 111 of the Operational Guidelines, and to consider the options to strengthen the effectiveness of implementation of coordinated management within the property;“. An important basis for this is the Committee's note on the management of the property, as formulated in the decision on the enrolment of the Wadden Sea as a World Heritage Site in 2009 (and again in the decision in 2014): „Maintaining the hydrological and ecological processes of the contiguous tidal flat system of the Wadden Sea is an overarching requirement for the protection and integrity of this property. Therefore conservation of marine, coastal and freshwater ecosystems through the effective management of protected areas, including marine no-take zones, is essential. The effective management of the property also needs to ensure an ecosystem approach that integrates the management of the existing protected areas with other key activities occurring in the property, including fisheries, shipping and tourism.“

caused by climate change and the accelerated sea-level rise associated with it. Consequently, the importance of the trilateral „Climate Change Adaptation Strategy“ (2014) as well as corresponding regional strategies and local pilot projects should be highlighted in the SIMP. In this context it needs to be highlighted, that it is aimed for to keep the size of the Wadden Sea at least on the level of today, despite sea-level rise. The measures required for this should be mainly based on the principle of minimal intervention and, for pre-damaged habitats, also on the principle of quality improvement.

4. The principle that the Wadden Sea overall may not be harmed, therefore the OUV may not be violated, should be highlighted in the SIMP. At the same time the higher integrating ambition – in comparison to Natura 2000 regulations – of the SIMP should be named. For all relevant management issues the implementation of this principle should be illustrated by formulating the key points for the targeted management².
5. The Guiding Principle, already established in 1991, should be highlighted as THE basis for Wadden Sea protection also in the SIMP. This by itself would not yet go beyond the status quo. But in addition the SIMP should clearly contribute to the definition of the term „as far as possible“ in the Guiding Principle: For which strictly specified reasons the ambition „natural processes proceed in an undisturbed way“ can be restricted? E.g., these might be (1) security of people, (2) recovery of human-caused nature damage, and (3) species protection measures in cases of outstanding international importance. However, in all cases such deviations from the Guiding Principle may be subject to the principle of minimum intervention. Such explicit emphasis on the Guiding Principle in the SIMP would also be important to make it a higher priority in the context of local impact assessments.

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² What is meant? Here are two examples, with explicit mention of the key point for the targeted management:
- For „Wadden Sea Ports“: no additional deepening of the access channels & no additional use of Wadden Sea areas & supporting zero-emission shipping;
- For „Coastal Defense“: always the selection of the most environmentally friendly variant & generation of WinWin Situations with nature conservation.
This could be handled analogously for all relevant topics to be named within the SIMP.