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Notes & News: Ocean Health Index - EBM case studies - EU marine spatial planning - Shifting baselines - UN Oceans Compact

Ocean Health Index scores marine ecosystems on sustainability of services

A new measurement called the Ocean Health Index evaluates the condition of marine ecosystems according to 10 human goals, representing an ecosystem-based assessment of the ecological, social, and economic benefits that a healthy ocean provides. The higher the score (on a scale from 0 to 100), the healthier the ecosystem: in other words, the more sustainably it can deliver a range of benefits to society now and in the future.

Developed by an international team of researchers and organizations led by Ben Halpern of the University of California at Santa Barbara, the index gauges ecosystems according to each of the following goals:

- Food provision
- Artisanal fishing opportunities
- Natural products
- Carbon storage
- Coastal protection
- Coastal livelihoods & economies
- Tourism & recreation
- Sense of place
- Clean waters
- Biodiversity

An ecosystem's index score is the average of its 10 goal scores. "We need an Ocean Health Index to help provide managers, policymakers, and the public with a way to pull together all the pieces of how we benefit from oceans and what affects them," says Halpern. Currently, the lowest score generated by the index is 36 for Sierra Leone's waters; the highest score is 86 for the waters surrounding uninhabited Jarvis Island, near Hawai'i. The global score for all EEZ waters is 60.

The project website - www.oceanhealthindex.org - walks visitors through each of the goals and how they are evaluated, and provides the index score for each of 171 coastal countries and territories. The Ocean Health Index is also described in detail in an article in Nature magazine, available at www.nature.com/nature/journal/vaop/ncurrent/full/nature11397.html.

New website offers dozens of case studies on marine EBM in practice

Launched in June 2012, the website "Marine Ecosystem-Based Management in Practice" provides a treasure trove of new research and analysis on marine EBM initiatives, including 20 in-depth case studies and 45 shorter "case snapshots" of EBM efforts from around the world.

Developed by research teams at the University of Michigan (headed by Julia Wondollock and Steven Yaffee) and Brown University (headed by Heather Leslie), the website documents the approaches and accomplishments of each EBM project, and analyzes the challenges the projects faced. The website also draws lessons across the 65 cases for improving the practice of marine EBM. The cases are searchable by various characteristics such as governance type, ecosystem scale, primary issues, and more.

The in-depth case studies involved detailed interviews of participating individuals, agencies, and other organizations. The shorter case snapshots involved web-based reviews and document analysis. The project was funded by the David and Lucile Packard Foundation. The website is at <http://webservices.itcs.umich.edu/drupal/mebm/>.

European wind energy producers call for EU directive on marine spatial planning

To help meet Europe's needs for offshore renewable energy, the European Union should draft a marine spatial planning directive to (a) ensure a level of consistency among national planning efforts and (b) make certain there is adequate ocean space for both offshore energy generation and traditional uses. That is the conclusion of a report by the European Wind Energy Association, funded by a grant from the European Commission to recommend policies for removing obstacles to offshore renewable energy generation.

According to national projections, EU member states are set to achieve around 45 GW of offshore renewable generation capacity by 2020 (from wind, wave, and tidal sources), amounting to a ten-fold increase of today's capacity in less than a decade. The report *Delivering Offshore Electricity to the EUs* at www.ewea.org/fileadmin/ewea_documents/documents/publications/reports/Seanergy_2020.pdf.

To combat shifting baselines, report collects reminiscences of reef scientists

A new report collects the memories of the older generation of reef researchers from their dives at particular sites in the 1960s and 1970s. Inspired by a discussion on the Coral-List listserv about what coral reefs were like decades ago compared to today, the report aims to combat the phenomenon of shifting baselines in ecosystem science: i.e., the tendency for each generation to build baselines anew, thus failing to recognize slower, long-term changes.

The report *Reef Reminiscences: Ratcheting back the shifted baselines concerning what reefs used to be* is published by the Institute for Water, Environment and Health at United Nations University. It is available at www.inweh.unu.edu/Coastal/Publications.htm.

UN's Oceans Compact sets strategic vision for improved oceans management

In August, United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon announced a new initiative called the Oceans Compact, setting a general vision for the UN system to address the "precarious state" of the world's oceans. Citing the threats of overfishing, pollution, climate change, and more, the Oceans Compact calls on countries to work together to achieve better oceans management, including through ecosystem-based management and MPAs.

To help in guiding strategies, the compact proposes creation of an Oceans Advisory Group, consisting of executive heads of involved UN system organizations, policymakers, scientists, industry and NGO representatives, and others. For more information: www.un.org/Depts/los/ocean_compact/oceans_compact.htm.

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