

IOGP input to the consultation on the EU nature restoration plan

Introduction

The International Association of Oil & Gas Producers' (IOGP) shares the global ambition to reduce and reverse biodiversity loss in the framework of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity, the 2030 Agenda of Sustainable Development and supports the objectives of the EU's Biodiversity Strategy for 2030.

IOGP, through the joint IPIECA-IOGP Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services Working Group (BESWG) has been working for 20 years to continuously improve Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (BES) management with the oil and gas industry, including habitat conservation, restoration and (biodiversity) offsets. We support governments and civil society in achieving global and local restoration goals and contributing to enhanced scientific knowledge and science-based policy making. We are ready to continue working with all the relevant stakeholders, sharing our technical knowledge, experience, good practices, and assist in the improvement of the EU nature restoration regulatory framework.

We would like to emphasize that it is essential to involve all relevant stakeholders in a transparent and inclusive consultation process throughout the policy making process establishing the nature restoration framework. We welcome this early opportunity to share IOGP views, including policy recommendations:

1. Clarity of definitions and methodologies

IOGP supports the proposal to establish legally binding EU nature restoration targets and an EU-wide legally binding methodology and provisions to map, assess and achieve a 'good condition of ecosystems'.

We believe that nature restoration is essential, and IOGP would support a regulatory framework setting realistic, science-based objectives that thoroughly take into account the limitations and implication of the different stakeholders. We would like to emphasize that clarity is required for industry regarding what this would entail and how the restoration target can be measured and monitored.

To understand this objective, and therefore achieve it, a precise and clear definition of 'good condition of ecosystems' and how it can be reliably measured is absolutely necessary for all stakeholders. Any measures that are established in order to achieve the objective should be based on peer-reviewed scientific data.

2. Habitat conservation

Positive impacts on biodiversity conservation status through man-made infrastructure could also be considered in the revised EU regulatory framework.

Empirical evidence is growing on the decommissioning of offshore man-made structures and their ecological benefits due to the construction of artificial reefs. The industry is involved in several ongoing work programmes evaluating the benefits to biodiversity of offshore structures. We would be glad to share the outcomes and ongoing research from one of them, such as [INSITE Programme](#), with the EU institutions and other relevant stakeholders.

Some recent scientific papers and projects focusing on the potential positive impacts for artificial reefs, include:

- **ICES Journal of Marine Science Volume 77, Issue 3, May-June 2020:** Themed article set of 14 peer-reviewed papers on 'Decommissioned offshore man-made installations' - Introduced by Silvana Birchenough (CEFAS, UK) and Steven Degraer (RBINS, Belgium) contributes to the scientific knowledge base on the impacts of an-made structures on marine ecosystems with the specific aim to fertilize and facilitate an evidence-based debate over decommissioning. <https://academic.oup.com/icesjms/article/77/3/1075/5820932>
- **Midnight at the oasis: does restoration change the rigs-to-reefs debate in the North Sea?** The paper written by Danish think tank 'Centre for Blue Governance' discusses the evolution from a conservation/protection to restoration, referring to global restoration targets for ecosystems, and questions whether decommissioning via Rigs to Reef (RtR) could be seen as a form of marine ecological restoration. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/1523908X.2019.1697657>
- **OIC 20/6/4 paper that IOGP submitted to OIC 2020 on Marine ecosystems associated with Man-Made Structures:** to provide information on scientific advances related to habitat value and ecosystems associated with man-made structures.
- **ADRIREEF** EU-funded project, whose prime objective is to encourage and improve the natural and artificial reefs of the Adriatic through innovative Blue Economy business models, as well as promoting scientific research. <https://www.italy-croatia.eu/web/adrireef/about-the-project>
- **The Rich North Sea / De Rijke Noordzee** project explores the artificial reefs in wind farms. <https://www.derijkenoordzee.nl/>
- **MERCES project – Marine Ecosystem Restoration in Changing European Seas:** <http://www.merces-project.eu/>
- **Fine-scale monitoring of fish movements and multiple environmental parameters around a decommissioned offshore oil platform: A pilot study in the North Sea Automation of Marine Growth Analysis for Decommissioning Offshore Installations,** Ocean Engineering, Volume 126, 1 November 2016, Pages 481-487 <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0029801816303791>
- **Automation of Marine Growth Analysis for Decommissioning Offshore Installations,** University of Aberdeen, <https://gtr.ukri.org/projects?ref=NE%2FN019865%2F1>
- **Research on benthic ecology of hard substrates in the North Sea,** Wageningen Marine Research, https://www.linkedin.com/posts/neptune-energy_decommissioning-northsea-biodiversity-activity-6693826542792933376-vfr0/

Final Remarks

IOGP is looking forward to collaborating with the EU institutions and all the relevant stakeholders, to sharing industry experience and knowledge from restoration projects in order to establish a realistic, and achievable restoration objectives.

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