

Joint Strategic Environmental Assessment on cumulative impacts of Danish, Dutch and German activities on the Wadden Sea:

Research scenario of regulated decrease of impacts human activities on Wadden Sea World Heritage site

The Netherlands Commission for Environmental Assessment (NCEA) advises to research the cumulative impacts of current and planned human activities on the Wadden Sea World Heritage site with a data-driven approach. Provide a clear overview of different pressures on the Wadden Sea. Research different scenarios, including one in which the impacts of human activities are decreased, to help ensure the protection of the natural values of the Wadden Sea. The trilateral Wadden Sea Board, formed by the site holders of the Wadden Sea World Heritage site, asked the NCEA to advise on the content of the joint Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) for the Wadden Sea World Heritage site.

The Trilateral Wadden Sea Cooperation is preparing a joint SEA to assess the cumulative impacts of all currently known plans, programs and projects in Denmark, Germany and the Netherlands on the 'Outstanding Universal Value' (natural values) of the Wadden Sea World Heritage site. This joint SEA is conducted in response to the request by the World Heritage Committee, who expressed concerns about these cumulative impacts. A first step in the SEA process was the creation of the scoping report in which the Trilateral Wadden Sea Cooperation formulated the intended assessment approach. The joint SEA will provide a trilateral overview based on a national component of each of the countries involved.

The NCEA agrees with the necessity of a joint SEA to ensure the protection of the natural values of the Wadden Sea. The joint SEA provides an excellent and needed opportunity to identify the largest threats to these values on a trilateral scale. The NCEA emphasizes that to properly answer the request by the World Heritage Committee, the joint SEA should follow best practice SEA principles. The joint SEA is conducted without a specific plan attached to it. This makes ownership of the results of the joint SEA essential to ensure accountability, follow-up, monitoring and achieving the intended objectives.

Kees Slingerland, chair of the advisory expert group, remarks '*The Wadden Sea is a valuable yet vulnerable ecosystem and we plan more and more economic and infrastructural activities in this region. It is therefore important to have a clear picture of the potential impacts of human activities on the Wadden Sea ecosystem and to see what options there are to avoid further damage*'.

The NCEA emphasizes the need for alignment throughout the SEA process between Denmark, Germany and the Netherlands. Select and substantiate a data-based approach to assess the cumulative impacts on the natural values of the Wadden Sea. The scoping report identified five human activities on which the research will focus (fisheries, tourism, shipping/ports, energy and coastal protection). To prevent lacunae, the NCEA advises to widen this scope of human activities with at least agricultural and industrial

Editor's note

The [full advisory report](#) is available on the NCEA website in English.

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activities, military activities, marine litter and invasive species. Add an additional scenario with regulated decline of or changes in human activities that ensures a decrease in the current cumulative impacts. This provides insight in what is needed to prevent further damage to the Wadden Sea and ways to strengthen its natural values.

The independent Netherlands Commission for Environmental Assessment advises on the content and quality of environmental impact assessment reports. It sets up a working group of independent experts for each advice. The NCEA does not write environmental impact assessment reports; this is done by the initiator, in this case the Common Wadden Sea Secretariat on behalf of the Wadden Sea Board. For more information, see www.commissiener.nl.