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UNITED Project Final Event

How to assess the sustainability of ocean Multi-Use?

Date: Wednesday, November 15th, 2023

This workshop revealed the Ocean Multi-Use Blueprint and clarified its practical applications. Participants gained insights from planning authorities and industry representatives regarding the adaptability of the suggested multi-use solutions. The panel discussed how the blueprint solutions could be applied in the Mission Arena Region, among others.

In his opening remarks, Steven Degraer emphasized the importance of assessing the sustainability of ocean multi-use. The lecture pointed out the challenges in this assessment process, highlighting the necessity of an integrated framework for evaluating economic, social, and environmental impacts. Key questions revolved around finding the right balance between win-win situations and trade-offs and ensuring inclusiveness in the assessment.

1.UNITED Assessment Framework. The comprehensive UNITED Assessment Framework was introduced during the workshop, covering economic, social, and environmental assessments. The five-stage process was outlined, covering early stages such as context and priorities, prediction stages involving impact and meaningfulness, reporting stages including assessment and review, decision stage, and audit and monitoring stages. Economic assessments focused on determining costs and benefits, social assessments involved engaging a wide range of stakeholders, and environmental assessments compared single-use and multi-use projects.

2.SDG Relevance Tracing Approach. The discussion introduced a Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Relevance Tracing Approach to offshore multi-use scenarios, presented by Ian Overton. This approach aligns multi-use scenarios with SDGs, their targets, and indicators. The impact assessment is based on evaluating how multi-use projects contribute to achieving SDGs, providing a framework to align sustainability efforts with global development goals.

3.MULTI-FRAME. The MULTI-FRAME project and its toolkit were presented as essential resources for enhancing knowledge and capacity in ocean multi-use systems. The toolkit serves as a comprehensive guide for integrating multi-use activities into marine spatial planning and associated policies. Furthermore, an important output from the MULTI-FRAME project, the MUAA, was introduced in this session. The lecture emphasized the participatory nature of this approach for practitioners and community members to assess the sustainability of multi-use at the marine spatial planning level. Most importantly the MUAA involves integrating stakeholders into the assessment process, building trust, and fostering collaboration. Finally, the application of the MUAA was discussed based on the Swedish case study. The lecture highlighted the challenges arising from conflicting national goals, such as seafood and renewable energy targets. It emphasized the need for a network for planners and regulators in Sweden, proposed solutions including streamlined licensing processes and municipal vetoes, and emphasized the importance of guidelines for a precautionary approach.

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The following round table discussion brought together representatives from different sectors and spheres such as low trophic aquaculture farmers, policymakers, and offshore wind developers. Key questions focused on assessing multi-use from social, economic, and environmental perspectives. Participants shared insights into key impact categories, explored trade-offs experienced or witnessed in multi-use conceptualization/implementation, discussed approaches to manage and mitigate trade-offs, and considered how value is assigned to social, environmental, or economic impacts. Additionally, the discussion addressed the relevance of participative approaches in the assessment of sustainability and evaluated how the meaningfulness of impacts could be assessed, considering participatory approaches and predictive models.