

# Shared vocabulary of protection-related terminology

## Version history

<b>Version 1.0</b>	<b>Published 26 January 2024</b>
<b>Version 2.0</b>	<b>Published 27 June 2024</b> Deleted terms: Coherence 16 added terms: Adaptive management (IUCN definition), Blue carbon, Carbon sequestration, Carbon sink, Climate adaptation, Conservation, Habitat, Healthy ecosystem, Managed retreat, Management effectiveness (of protected areas), Mitigation of climate change, (MPA) management plans, OECMs, Protection, Spatial protection network, Threatened habitat.
<b>Version 3.0</b>	<b>Published 10 December 2024</b> 2 modified term: Ecological coherence, Governance 12 added terms: Ecological function, Ecosystem services, Extent of occurrence, Functional groups, Goal, Management, Measure, Nature-based solutions, Outcome, Protected area, Target, Target indicator.
<b>Version 4.0</b>	<b>Published 21 May 2025</b> 2 added terms: Precautionary approach, Precautionary principle.

## Vocabulary of protection-related terminology

This vocabulary of protection-related terminology should be considered a living document and, the first step towards achieving approved regionally agreed definitions of terminology for the Baltic Sea region. Additional terms can be introduced to the vocabulary at any time. The original source of the definition(s) is presented in brackets. Terms are presented in alphabetical order. The draft vocabulary has been prepared with support from the PROTECT BALTIC project.

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### Abundance (ecological)

- The size of a population of a particular life form in a given area. (IPBES)

### Adaptive management

- A systematic process for continually improving management policies and practices by learning from the outcomes of previously employed policies and practices. In active adaptive management, management is treated as a deliberate experiment for purposes of learning. (IPBES)
- The ability to alter management to reflect lessons learned or changing conditions. It incorporates deliberate learning into professional practice to reduce uncertainty in decision-making. Specifically, it is the integration of design, management, and monitoring to enable managers to systematically and efficiently test key assumptions, evaluate the results, adjust management decisions, and generate learning (IUCN lexicon, adapted from CMP [\[2020\]](#)).

### Area-based management tool

- A tool, including a marine protected area, for a geographically defined area through which one or several sectors or activities are managed with the aim of achieving particular conservation and/or sustainable use objectives.

### Benthic

- Connected with, or living near, the sea bottom. (IUCN)
- Occurring at the bottom of a body of water; related to benthos. (IPBES)

### Biodiversity

- The variability among living organisms from all sources including terrestrial, marine, and other aquatic ecosystems and the ecological complexes of which they are part; this includes diversity within species, among species, and of ecosystems (CBD, IUCN).
- The variability among living organisms from all sources including terrestrial, marine and other aquatic ecosystems and the ecological complexes of which they are a part. This includes variation in genetic, phenotypic, phylogenetic, and functional attributes, as well as changes in abundance and distribution over time and space within and among species, biological communities and ecosystems. (Diaz et al. 2015. "The IPBES Conceptual Framework — Connecting Nature and People." Current Opinion in Environmental Sustainability 14: 1–16. doi:10.1016/j.cosust.2014.11.002)

### Blue carbon

- All biologically driven carbon fluxes and storage in marine systems that are amenable to management can be considered as blue carbon. Coastal blue carbon focuses on rooted vegetation in the coastal zone, such as eg. seagrasses. These ecosystems have high carbon burial rates on a per unit area basis and accumulate carbon in their soils and sediments. They provide many non-climatic benefits and can contribute to ecosystem-based adaptation. If degraded or lost, coastal blue carbon ecosystems are

likely to release most of their carbon back to the atmosphere. (IPCC)

### Carbon sequestration

- The process of storing carbon in a carbon pool. (IPCC)

### Carbon sink

- Any process, activity or mechanism which removes a greenhouse gas, an aerosol or a precursor of a greenhouse gas from the atmosphere (UNFCCC Article 1.8 (UNFCCC, 1992)).

### Climate adaptation

- In human systems, the process of adjustment to actual or expected climate and its effects, in order to moderate harm or exploit beneficial opportunities. In natural systems, the process of adjustment to actual climate and its effects; human intervention may facilitate adjustment to expected climate and its effects. (IPCC AR6 WGII Full Report Annex II (Glossary))

### Community (ecological)

- Assemblages of interacting populations of the species living within a particular area or habitat. (Encyclopedia Britannica)
- A group of actually or potentially interacting species living in the same location. Communities are bound together by a shared environment and a network of influence each species has on the other. (Nature)
- Populations of different species, includes the study of the interactions between species, such as mutualism, predation and competition, and the dynamics and structure of the community. (Nature)

### Connectivity (ecological)

- The unimpeded movement of species and the flow of natural processes that sustain life on Earth. [UNEP/CMS/Resolution 12.26 (Rev.COP13)].
- An essential feature of nature. It is necessary for the functionality of ecosystems, underpinning key ecological processes and features such as maintenance of genetic diversity, flow of energy and organisms, hydrological processes, nutrient cycling, pollination, seed dispersal and disease resistance across all biomes and spatial scales. It is key for the survival of wild animals and plant species and is crucial to ensuring their migration. (IPBES/9/INF/27)
- **Habitat connectivity:** The degree to which the landscape facilitates the movement of organisms (animals, plant reproductive structures, pollen, pollinators, spores, etc.) and other environmentally important resources (e.g. nutrients and moisture) between similar habitats. Connectivity is hampered by fragmentation (q.v.). (IPBES)

### Conservation

- The protection, care, management and maintenance of ecosystems, habitats, wildlife

species and populations, within or outside of their natural environments, in order to safeguard the natural conditions for their long-term permanence. (IUCN)

#### Critical natural capital

- Describes the part of the natural capital that is crucial for the functioning of the ecosystem, that cannot be replaced, and hence is vital for the provision of the ecosystem services.

#### Distribution

- The spatial occurrence of an ecosystem or species (IUCN).

#### Disturbance (event)

- An event that causes a change in environmental conditions that interfere with ecosystem function. (IUCN)

#### Ecological coherence

- Ecological coherence demonstrates the ecological relevant interactions between areas that support biodiversity and ecological processes while considering connectivity and interactions within and beyond those areas. It is an essential aspect of conservation planning and management in order to optimize an effective and robust MPA network.
- Additionally, an ecologically coherent network of MPAs may be designed to be resilient to changing conditions. (OSPAR 2006)
- Includes five sub-criteria: 1) ecologically and biologically significant areas 2) representativity 3) replication 4) adequacy 5) connectivity. (IC EG MPA 5-2024)

#### Ecological function

- The ecological performance that an ecosystem component contributes with to large-scale processes (ecosystem function), e.g. bacteria decomposing material feeding into the nutrient cycles. (IC EG MPA 5-2024)

#### Ecological integrity

- Maintaining the diversity and quality of ecosystems and enhancing their capacity to adapt to change and provide for the needs of future generations. (IUCN)

#### Ecological dynamics

- Those intrinsic ecological functions through which an ecosystem becomes self-regulating, self-sustaining, and capable of recovery from external forces (for example, damaging storm events). These intrinsic [processes](#) may cause continual change in biotic composition and structure at specific localities. Collectively, these changes represent internal flux, rather than substantive and permanent alteration of the ecosystem regionally. (Biology online)

### Ecosystem

- A dynamic complex of plant, animal and micro-organism communities and their non-living environment interacting as a functional unit. (Article 2, CBD, IPBES)
- Ecosystems are self-regulating communities of plants and animals interacting with each other and with their non-living environment (CBD)

### Ecosystem approach

- An ecosystem approach is based on the application of appropriate scientific methodologies focused on levels of biological organization. The ecosystem approach is based upon the hierarchical nature of biological diversity characterized by the interaction and integration of genes, species and ecosystems, which encompass the essential structure, processes, functions and interactions among organisms and their environment. It recognizes that humans, with their cultural diversity, are an integral component of many ecosystems. The ecosystem approach should be undertaken at the appropriate spatial and temporal scales. (CBD)
- A strategy for the integrated management of land, water and living resources that promotes conservation and sustainable use in an equitable way (IUCN)

### Ecosystem-based management (EBM)

- A process that integrates biological, social, and economic factors into a comprehensive strategy aimed at protecting and enhancing sustainability, diversity and productivity of natural resources. The ecosystems (biosphere) are considered the fundament for social and economic development.
- EBM emphasizes the protection of ecosystem structure, functioning and key processes; is place-based in focusing on a specific ecosystem and the range of activities affecting it; explicitly accounts for the interconnectedness among systems, such as between air, land and sea; and integrates ecological, social, economic and institutional perspectives, recognizing their strong interdependences (COMPASS Scientific Consensus Statement, used by IUCN).
- A process that aims to link the conservation of marine resources with an integrated management of different human maritime activities. This approach helps to reduce the cumulative impacts on the environment caused by multiple human activities. EBM is a key tool for sustainable management by balancing between economic, environmental, social and other interests in spatial allocations, by managing specific uses and coherently integrating sectoral planning, and by applying the ecosystem approach. When balancing interests and allocating uses in space and time, long-term and sustainable management should have priority. (HELCOM-VASAB)

### Ecosystem function

- The process through which the constituent living and nonliving elements of ecosystems change and interact (ForestERA, 2005, supported by IUCN)



- The flow of energy and materials through the biotic and abiotic components of an ecosystem. It includes many processes such as biomass production, trophic transfer through plants and animals, nutrient cycling, water dynamics and heat transfer. (IPBES, Adapted from <http://www.ecosystemserviceseq.com.au/ecosystem-functions.html>)

#### Ecosystem integrity

- The continuity and full character of a complex system, including its ability to perform all the essential functions throughout its geographic setting; the integrity concept within a managed system implies maintaining key components and processes throughout time. (IUCN)

#### Ecosystem resilience

- The capacity of a system to recover from stress and disturbance while retaining its essential functions, structure, feedbacks and identity. Resilient ecosystems sustain biological diversity and human livelihoods in times of severe and wide-ranging change. (IUCN)
- Ecosystem functioning and resilience depends on a dynamic relationship within species, among species and between species and their abiotic environment, as well as the physical and chemical interactions within the environment. The conservation and, where appropriate, restoration of these interactions and processes is of greater significance for the long-term maintenance of biological diversity than simply protection of species. (CBD)
- The capacity of an ecosystem to return to the pre-condition state following a perturbation, including maintaining its essential characteristics taxonomic composition, structures, ecosystem functions, and process rates. (Holling 1973)
- The level of disturbance that an ecosystem or society can undergo without crossing a threshold to a situation with different structure or outputs. Resilience depends on factors such as ecological dynamics as well as the organizational and institutional capacity to understand, manage, and respond to these dynamics. (IPBES)

#### Ecosystem restoration

- Recovery of the structure, function and processes of the original ecosystem. (IUCN)

#### Ecosystem services (ESs)

- Ecosystem services are defined as the contributions that ecosystems make to human well-being, and are distinct from the goods and benefits that people subsequently derive from them. These contributions are framed in terms of 'what ecosystems do' for people'. (CICES, Roy Haines-Young and Marion Potschin, 2018: iii).
- Ecosystem services are the direct and indirect contributions ecosystems make to human well-being, arising from the interaction of biotic and abiotic processes (Potschin & Haines-Young 2016).

### Ecosystem structure

- The individuals and communities of plants and animals of which an ecosystem is composed, their age and spatial distribution, and the non-living natural resources present (APEX, 2004, supported by IUCN).

### Extent of occurrence

- The scope of an area or volume where a habitat or species is currently present, excluding vagrancy.

### Functional diversity

- The number of functionally different groups of species. It consists of two aspects: one that affects the influence of a function within a scale (see 'levels of biological organization' above) and the other that aggregates that influence across scales. (Hooper and Vitousek 1997)

### Functional groups

- Assemblages of species performing similar functional roles within an ecosystem, such as filter feeders, providing similar ecosystem services and functions in the ecosystem (e.g. production or decomposition). (IC EG MPA 5-2024)

### Goal

- An aspirational, but achievable, outcome that is generally broad and long-term. It is the end toward which effort is directed, e.g. detailing a desired impact of a project, such as the desired future status, encompassed by a broad statement that focuses on the desired results and does not describe the methods used to get the intended outcome. A good goal meets the criteria of being *linked to strategies and outcomes, impact oriented, measurable, time limited, and specific*. (adapted from Conservation Standards and IUCN lexicon)

### Governance

- The individuals, groups, and institutions ultimately responsible for decision-making for an area or network of areas. Governance can also include the process of how decisions are influenced and made (adapted from Franks et al. [2018] and Springer et al. [2021]). IUCN currently recognizes four types of governance: private, government, indigenous peoples or local communities, and shared. (IUCN lexicon)

### Habitat

- The environment (physical habitat) where an organism or population (naturally) occurs because required features of the ecosystem is provided. A habitat is the combination of the physical habitat (abiotic) and the species (biotic).

### Healthy ecosystem

- Healthy ecosystems represent a desired result of management. Healthy ecosystems have the ability to maintain their structure and ecological function over time in the face of external stress.

### Managed retreat

- The strategic relocation of structures or abandonment of land to manage natural hazard risk. (Hino et al 2017: <http://www.regionalclimateperspectives.com/uploads/4/4/2/5/44250401/hinoetal2017managedretreatoverview.pdf>)

### Management

- The individuals, groups, and institutions responsible for deciding on and implementing actions for an area or network of areas needed to achieve the ultimate outcomes and goals established by the governing body (adapted from Franks et al. [2018]).
- Management is distinct from governance. Management is about what is done to achieve the goals and includes defining and allocating lower level objectives, responsibilities, and accountabilities. This term often refers to the managers of both individual areas as well as the overall network within a given jurisdiction. (IUCN lexicon)

### Marine protected area (MPA)

- An area of sea (or coast) especially dedicated to the protection and maintenance of biological diversity, and of natural and associated cultural resources, and managed through legal or other effective means. (CBD)
- An area with sustainable use consistent with conservation objectives.

### Measure

- Measures have a direct impact by reducing the pressures or improving the state of the Baltic Sea. (Additional-information-on-the-actions-in-the-updated-Baltic-Sea-Action-Plan.pdf (helcom.fi)), and is different from supporting actions, e.g. assessments or awareness raising. (IC EG MPA 5-2024)

### Mitigation

- An intervention to reduce negative or unsustainable uses of biodiversity and ecosystems. (IPBES)

### Mitigation of climate change

- A human intervention to reduce emissions or enhance the sinks of greenhouse gases. (IPCC AR6 WGII Full Report Annex II (Glossary))

### (MPA) management plans

- The management plans regulate or compensate harmful human activities through different actions, such as restricting activities during a certain time or in a certain area, prohibiting certain activities completely, restoring degraded areas, maintaining sustainable and traditional use when appropriate and substituting certain materials or substances with less harmful ones. (HELCOM)

### Natural

- Existing in or derived from nature; not made or caused by humankind. (Oxford Dictionary)

### Nature-based solutions

- Nature-based solutions are interventions that use the natural functions of healthy ecosystems to protect the environment but also provide numerous economic and social benefits. (IC WG BIODIV 3-2024)
- Actions to protect, conserve, restore, sustainably use and manage natural or modified terrestrial, freshwater, coastal and marine ecosystems, which address social, economic and environmental challenges effectively and adaptively, while simultaneously providing human well-being, ecosystem services and resilience and biodiversity benefits. (UNEA 5 resolution)

### Other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs)

- A geographically defined area other than a protected area, which is governed and managed in ways that achieve positive and sustained long-term outcomes for the in situ conservation of biodiversity with associated ecosystem functions and services and where applicable, cultural, spiritual, socio-economic, and other locally relevant values. (CBD, 2018, this definition also used in the IUCN lexicon)
- In the Baltic Sea, an area which is identified in accordance with regional common understanding of the CBD criteria for other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs).

### Outcome

- The desired outcome of the actions or activities within a protection strategy, i.e. the desired future state of a threat or opportunity factor, outcomes also represent necessary components to achieving the overall protection goal. (adapted from Conservation Standards)

### Precautionary approach

- An approach according to which the absence of adequate scientific information should not justify postponing or failing to take management measures to conserve target species, associated or dependent species and non-target species and their environment. (Article 6, UN Fish stocks Agreement)
- Where there are threats of serious or irreversible damage, lack of full scientific

certainly shall not be used as a reason for postponing cost-effective measures to prevent environmental degradation. (CBD)

- Precautionary approaches often have a focus on pollution control and remediation, while policies based on the principles are usually preventive. Precautionary approaches are goal and alternatives oriented, using technology innovation, pollution prevention, and impact assessment to reach their goal.

### Precautionary principle

- Take preventive measures when there is reason to assume that human activities, substances or energy introduced, directly or indirectly, towards/into the marine environment may create hazards to human health, harm living resources and marine ecosystems, negatively impact protection goals, damage amenities or interfere with other legitimate uses of the sea, such as fisheries, even when there is no conclusive evidence of a causal relationship between inputs and their alleged effects. (Amended from Helsinki Convention, 1992)

### Protected area

- A protected area is a clearly defined geographical space, recognized, dedicated and managed, through legal or other effective means, to achieve the long-term conservation of nature with associated ecosystem services and cultural values. (IPBES)
- An area of land and/or sea especially dedicated to the protection and maintenance of biological diversity, and of natural and associated cultural resources, and managed through legal or other effective means (IUCN, 1994)

### Protection

- The term protection is synonymous with conservation (see term above).

### Quality (of habitats & biotopes)

- The ability of the environment to provide conditions appropriate for individual and population persistence. (Hall et al. (1997:175))

### Representativity

- Representativity is captured by a network when the network consists of areas representing the different biogeographical subdivisions of the sea, which in turn reflect the full range of ecosystems, including the biotic and habitat diversity of those marine ecosystems.
- This also corresponds to the integrity, or the degree to which the area, either alone or in association with other protected areas, encompasses a complete ecosystem.

### Restoration

- Activities that initiate or accelerate the recovery of an ecosystem from a degraded

state.

- **Passive / natural restoration:** Ending degradation, e.g. removal of contamination source, restriction of water flow, modifying inappropriate grazing /fire regimes, cessation of logging, agricultural land retirement.
- **Active / assisted restoration:** A combination of the above strategy with abiotic and biotic interventions, e.g. *Abiotic*; Active remediation of substrate conditions (physical or chemical), habitat creation, reshaping watercourses, reintroduction of environmental water flows, applying artificial disturbance to promote seed germination. And *Biotic*; Invasive species management, reintroduction of species, augmenting or reinforcing depleted populations of species.
- **Reconstructive restoration:** A combination of the above strategies with the reintroduction of a major proportion of the desired biota. Possibly mimicking natural successional dynamics.  
(Atkinson & Bonser 2020, Restoration Ecology)

#### Risk assessment (ecological)

- The process for evaluating how likely it is that the environment might be impacted as a result of exposure to one or more environmental stressors, such as chemicals, land-use change, disease, and invasive species. (EPA)  
<https://www.epa.gov/risk/ecological-risk-assessment>

#### Spatial protection network

- A collection of individual MPAs operating cooperatively and synergistically at various spatial scales and with a range of protection levels that are designed to meet objectives that a single reserve cannot achieve.

#### Sustainability

- A characteristic or state whereby the needs of the present and local population can be met without compromising the ability of future generations or populations in other locations to meet their needs. (IPBES, from: Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, <https://www.millenniumassessment.org/documents/document.59.aspx.pdf> )

#### Sustainable development

- Development that meets the needs and aspirations of the current generation without compromising the ability to meet those of future generations. (CBD)

#### Sustainable use (of biodiversity and its components)

- The use of components of biological diversity in a way and at a rate that does not lead to the long-term decline of biological diversity, thereby maintaining its potential to meet the needs and aspirations of present and future generations. (CBD, 1992, IPBES)

#### Target

- The specific measurement that is desired to be achieved. Targets should ideally be

quantifiable and measurable to provide direction for upcoming work as well as define when an Outcome has been reached. A good target meets the criteria of being: *results oriented, measurable, time limited, specific, and practical*. If the work is well conceptualized and designed, realization of an efforts targets should lead to the fulfilment of the associated outcomes, goals and ultimately the vision identified in a protection framework. (*adapted and further developed from the IUCN lexicon*)

#### Target indicator

- A measure of a given variable, or a measurable entity related to a specific information need used to assess progress toward the target under a goal. Indicators, using the agreed targets against which to measure progress as thresholds, should provide clear and real-world ways of repeatedly tracking progress and allow implementers to modify actions and improve efficiency where needed. Conservation Standards define indicators as a good indicator meets the criteria of being: *measurable, precise, consistent, and sensitive*. (*adapted from Conservation Standards and IUCN*)

#### Threatened habitat

- Area assigned on the basis of quantitative thresholds to one of the three following IUCN categories for ecosystem assessment: Critically Endangered (CR), Endangered (EN), and Vulnerable (VU). (IUCN)

#### Threatened species

- Any species which is likely to become endangered within the foreseeable future throughout all or a significant portion of its range. (IUCN, CBD)
- In the IUCN Red List terminology, a threatened species is any species listed in the Red List categories Critically Endangered, Endangered, or Vulnerable. See <https://portals.iucn.org/library/efiles/documents/RL-2001-001-2nd.pdf> (IPBES)

#### Thrive

- to grow or develop successfully: to flourish or succeed (The Britannica Dictionary)

#### Viable population

- A population large enough for long-term survival (IUCN)