



ACTIVITIES RELATED TO AREAS OF INTEREST FOR CETACEANS CONSERVATION IN THE ACCOBAMS AREA

This document was prepared based on the ACCOBAMS Resolution 4.15 on Marine Protected Areas of importance for cetaceans conservation and thanks to formal ACCOBAMS documents drafted by Chedly Rais, Erich Hoyt and Giuseppe Notarbartolo di Sciara.

The designations employed and the presentation of the material included in this document do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the ACCOBAMS Secretariat concerning the extension or delimitation of maritime areas subject to the sovereignty or jurisdiction of any State.

The Agreement on the Conservation of Cetaceans of the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea and Contiguous Atlantic Area (**ACCOBAMS**) is a legal conservation tool based on co-operative actions.

Its purpose is to reduce threats to cetaceans, notably by improving current knowledge of these animals. This intergovernmental Agreement embodies the drive of riparian Countries to preserve all species of cetaceans and their habitats (as specified both in the text of the Agreement - **Article II, 1** - and in its Annex II, Conservation Plan) within the geographical Agreement area.

However, it should be noted that ACCOBAMS is not a treaty that is specifically directed at the legal requirements for MPAs. It states clearly that developing protected areas for cetaceans should be done within the framework of the Regional Seas Conventions (OSPAR, Barcelona and Bucharest Conventions), or within the framework of other appropriate instruments.

In 2002, the ACCOBAMS Scientific Committee (SC) first proposed **four Areas of interest for cetaceans conservation**:

- Kalamos, (Greece) for common dolphins;
- Southern Crete (Greece) for sperm whales;
- Cape Sarych to Cape Khersones, SW Crimea (Ukraine) in the Black Sea, for bottlenose and common dolphins and harbour porpoises;
- Losinj, Kvarneric (Croatia) for bottlenose dolphins.

Concerning the area of Losinj, the preventative protection granted by the Croatian law in 2006 expired three years later, in July 2009, and was not renewed in the proposed category. Still, in 2007, the area was designated as part of the national ecological network (counterpart to NATURA 2000, but covering nationally important species) according to the same legislation (Nature Protection Act) with bottlenose dolphin as a conservation objective. This reserve is also recognized as a potential NATURA 2000 site. This designation ensures some protection measures, including the obligation to carry out appropriate assessments when plans or projects threaten dolphins in the area. However, without a responsible management authority, there is currently a lack of active management and implementation of conservation measures.

In **2006**, upon the request of the Parties, the 4th Meeting of the ACCOBAMS SC developed criteria and guidelines for setting up MPAs. The SC assembled proposals for 13 new **Areas of interest for cetaceans conservation**, with tentative boundaries based on current research conclusions.

- **Eight** proposed MPAs as part of the Mediterranean Common Dolphin Conservation Plan:
 - Waters surrounding the island of Ischia, southeastern Tyrrhenian Sea (Italy);
 - Waters surrounding the island of Malta and southeastern Sicily (Italy);
 - Eastern Ionian Sea and Gulf of Corinth (Greece);
 - Gulf of Saronikos and adjacent waters (Argo-Saronikos and Southern South Evvoikos Gulf, Greece);
 - Waters surrounding the Northern Sporades (Greece);
 - Northern Aegean Sea (Greece);
 - Waters surrounding the Dodekanese (Greece);
 - Alborán Sea (Spain-Morocco-Algeria).

The SC recognised in 2006 that for practical reasons, only the northern section of the Alborán Sea has robust scientific data to support MPA designation. However, there is evidence (mainly from fisheries by-catches, stranding records and observations at sea) to suggest that the southern section also holds large numbers of cetaceans. From an ecological point of view, the SC agrees that it is sensible to consider offering appropriate protection for the whole Alborán Sea (including international waters), as a SPAMI under the Barcelona Convention although smaller areas within the Alborán Sea should also receive protection under various other provisions such as SACs and special ocean reserves.

- **Three** cetacean areas proposed for protection by the Black Sea Commission's Round Table on Conservation of Black Sea Cetaceans (Istanbul, 2006):
 - The Kerch Strait for the bottlenose dolphin and the harbour porpoise (Russian Federation, Ukraine);
 - Cape Anaklia to Sarp for the common dolphin and the harbour porpoise (Georgia);
 - The Turkish Straits system (also used by all Black Sea cetacean species);
- **Two** additional important cetacean areas recommended by the 4th Scientific Committee based on the most recent conclusions of the cetacean research in the region:
 - Strait of Sicily including associated islands (Italy, Malta, Tunisia, high seas) - preliminary data suggest that this highly productive fishing area which links the Eastern and Western Mediterranean may be an important wintering feeding ground for fin whales and there is evidence of vessel collisions. It also contains resident bottlenose and common dolphins, as well as other dolphin species.
 - Amvrakikos Gulf (NW Greece) – about 150 bottlenose dolphins live in this semi-enclosed area that has one of the highest densities of bottlenose dolphins in the Mediterranean.

On 25th October **2007**, at the 3rd Meeting of the Parties of ACCOBAMS (Dubrovnik, Croatia), the countries adopted Resolution 3.22 supporting in principle the creation of all the **17 Areas of interest for cetaceans conservation as recommended by the Scientific Committee**.

The Parties agreed to initiate the process of working with local communities to designate areas as set out in the criteria and guidelines.

In November **2010**, **four** additional areas were proposed at the 4th ACCOBAMS Meeting of the Parties in Monaco, (*Table 1*):

- The Sazani Island – Karaburun Peninsula (Adriatic and Ionian Sea, Albania);
- North Western area of Sardinia (Italy);
- Tuscany archipelago (Italy);
- Sallum marine protected area (Egypt), sensitive marine ecosystems, including seagrass meadows, shallow and intermediate depth marine habitats.

To date, **22 areas of special interest for cetaceans** are identified in the ACCOBAMS area (Figure 1 and table 1). Geography, species and type of habitat covered are considered when identifying sites of special interest for cetaceans.

It is important to note that this figure also reflects the fact that, in the ACCOBAMS area some cetacean populations, their habitats and their geographical distribution have not been sufficiently studied. In addition, in some areas of the Mediterranean and the Black Sea, there is no data available at all. This issue will be addressed during the workshop on “the effectiveness of protected areas containing critical habitats for cetaceans” to be held in December 2014.

<p>All GIS information regarding areas of special interest for cetaceans are available in the ACCOBAMS interactive platform: http://accobams.geo2i.com</p>

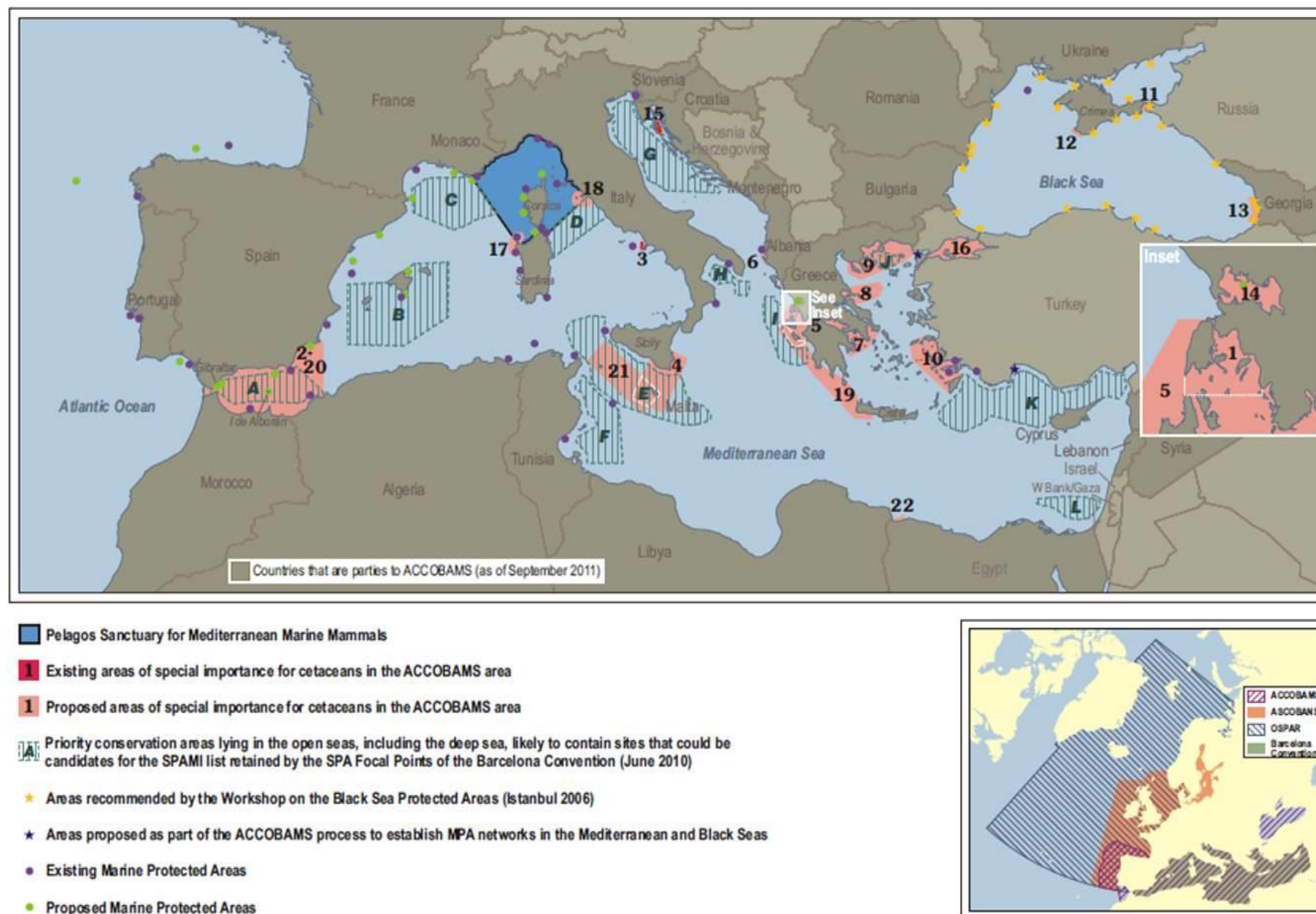


Figure 1: Proposed and Existing MPAs, Priority conservation areas lying in the open seas, including the deep sea (UNEP MAP, RAC/SPA. 2010, 2011) and Areas of Special Importance to Cetaceans in the ACCOBAMS region and overlapping ACCOBAMS/ASCOBANS (Map by Lesley Frampton and Erich Hoyt, WDCS. Adapted from Hoyt, E. 2011. *Marine Protected Areas for Whales, Dolphins and Porpoises*). See Table 1 for list of numbered MPAs.

Table 1 - Areas of special importance for cetaceans in the ACCOBAMS area

Areas of special importance for the common dolphin and other cetaceans

- (1)** Kalamos (Greece);
- (2)** The Alborán Sea;
- (3)** Waters surrounding the island of Ischia (south-eastern Tyrrhenian Sea, Italy);
- (4)** Waters surrounding the island of Malta and south-eastern Sicily, Italy;
- (5)** The eastern Ionian Sea and the Gulf of Corinth (Greece);
- (6)** The Sazani Island – Karaburun Peninsula (Adriatic and Ionian Sea, Albania);
- (7)** The Gulf of Saronikos and adjacent waters (Argo-Saronikos and southern Evvoikos Gulf, Greece);
- (8)** Waters surrounding the northern Sporades (Greece);
- (9)** The northern Aegean Sea (Greece); and
- (10)** Waters surrounding the Dodecanese (Greece).

Areas of special importance for Black Sea cetaceans

- (11)** The Kerch Strait for the bottlenose dolphin and the harbour porpoise (Russian Federation, Ukraine);
- (12)** Cape Sarych to Cape Khersones for bottlenose and common dolphins and the harbour porpoise (Ukraine); and
- (13)** Cape Anaklia to Sarp for the common dolphin and the harbour porpoise (Georgia).

Areas of special importance for the bottlenose dolphin

- (14)** The Amvrakikos Gulf (northwestern Greece);
- (15)** Waters along east coast of the Cres-Lošinj archipelago (designated as part of Croatian ecological network, proposed for protection as regional park, and recognized as a potential NATURA 2000 site) ;
- (16)** The Turkish Straits system (also used by all Black Sea cetacean species);
- (17)** North western area of Sardinia (Italy); and
- (18)** Tuscany archipelago (Italy).

Area of special importance for the sperm whale

- (19)** Southwest Crete and the Hellenic Trench (Greece).

Areas of special importance and diversity for various cetacean species

- (20)** The Alborán Sea and the Strait of Gibraltar, critical habitat and migration corridor for large numbers of ten of the region's cetacean species, being the most diverse cetacean habitat in the ACCOBAMS region;
- (21)** The Strait of Sicily for fin whales and common, bottlenose and striped dolphins; and
- (22)** Sallum marine protected area (Egypt), sensitive marine ecosystems, including seagrass meadows, shallow and intermediate depth marine habitats.