

Title (*tentative til Arktisk Råd konferanse i Fairbanks, Alaska august 2016*):

The Norwegian ecosystem approach management plan for the Barents Sea; strengths, flaws and further developments.

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Abstract

The purpose of the Norwegian management plans are to provide a framework for the sustainable use of natural resources and ecosystem services derived from our seas and at the same time maintain the structure, functions, productivity and diversity of the areas ecosystems. The management plans are thus tools for both facilitating value creation and maintaining the high environmental value of the areas,.

A Norwegian government white paper in 2002 introduced the Ecosystem Approach (EA) management in Norwegian EEZ areas. This is also in line with international developments in this field. An EA management plan was first implemented for the Barents Sea in 2006, followed by the Norwegian Sea in 2010 and the North Sea and Skagerrak in 2013. These plans clarify the overall framework and encourage closer coordination and clear management priorities. An important feature of the management plan system is that relevant management agencies and key research institutions cooperate in drawing up the scientific basis for the plans. .

This is of great importance to obtain a sound scientific basis for a management plan based on the best available knowledge. Thus, the plans have to be revised on a regular basis. The Barents Sea management plan has been evaluated and revised once and will be so again in 2020. The scientific data needed for an Integrated Ecosystem Assessment (IEA) are coordinated by the Forum for Integrated Marine Management and the Advisory group on Monitoring. These groups report regularly to an interministerial Steering Committee headed by the Ministry of Climate and Environment.

These groups provide information needed for doing an EA management like: risk analyses and impact knowledge for management aimed at balancing human activities (e.g. fisheries, petroleum-related activities and shipping) and reduces the levels of conflicts of interests within the frames of sustainable exploitation. Suggestions for improvements related to reduced data gaps and uncertainty, heightened insights and understanding of the ecosystem process, and ability to distinguish between man-made and natural drivers and impacts are essential to improve the management plans. Since priority should be on governance and mitigation measures, information on the human pressures are needed to follow up on the human impacts ought to be given high priority.

Based on ten years of EA management in the Barents Sea, and development in implementation and EA to governance internationally, this paper discusses the national plan in

an international perspective. The aim is to suggest how to improve on the Barents Sea management plan and governance. These suggestions will be related to development of IEA, by looking for functional methods to link monitoring with mitigation measures for reducing unwanted human impacts and evaluation of environmental aim achievement. In addition, alternative ways to include stakeholders and NGOs are also discussed.