

## **A concept for biological valuation in the marine environment**

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### **ABSTRACT**

In order to develop management strategies for sustainable use and conservation in the marine environment, reliable and meaningful ecological information is needed. Biological valuation maps that compile and summarize all relevant and available biological and ecological information for a study area, and that allocate an overall biological value to subzones, can provide a very useful warning system for future management decisions.

This paper discusses a method for assessing the intrinsic value of marine areas, in terms of nature conservation and their importance for marine biodiversity. Socio-economic factors were not considered, since the main focus is restricted to ecological characteristics, hence biological valuation.

An objective marine biological valuation method has been developed, showing how a set of criteria could be applied to assess the biological value of an area. Several ecological valuation criteria already exist in the literature and were reviewed to select and compile those most relevant for a generally applicable valuation method.

As this biological valuation method is based on the consensus reached by a group of experts on marine biological valuation, we realize that refinement of the methodology could be necessary once it has been tested.