

Naturvårdsverket
106 48 Stockholm

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registrator@naturvardsverket.se
kopia: espoo@naturvardsverket.se

Statement regarding – Authorities and public participation of the Federal Maritime and Hydrographic Agency on the Site Development Plan and the environmental reports (North Sea and Baltic Sea) within the framework of the strategic environmental assessment

The Swedish Meteorological and Hydrological Institute (SMHI) acknowledges the opportunity given by the Federal Maritime and Hydrographic Agency (BSH) to supply a view on the revision of the Site Development Plan and the environmental reports. The statement from SMHI will focus on the environmental effects in the Baltic Sea, disregarding those in the North Sea.

Cumulative effects

In the sea areas of both Sweden and Germany, as well as those of other countries bordering the Baltic Sea, a large number of wind farms are planned. Although the impact on the marine environment from each individual facility may be considered to be of negligible importance, the combined consequences can be significant. If these plans are realized, large-scale transboundary impacts on ocean mixing and stratification are likely to occur largely as a result of reduced wind energy¹. This can

¹ Arneborg, L., Pemberton, P., Grivault, N., Axell, L., Saraiva, S., Mulder, E., Fredriksson, S. 2024. Hydrographic effects in Swedish waters of future offshore wind power scenarios. Report Oceanography No. 77. ISSN: 0283-1112 © SMHI

SMHI – Sveriges meteorologiska och hydrologiska institut

Postadress SMHI 601 76 • Norrköping • Växel 011-495 80 00 • Fax 011-495 80 01 • E-post registrator@smhi.se

SMHI huvudkontor

Besöksadress Folkborgsvägen 17
601 76 Norrköping

SMHI

Besöksadress Stationsgatan 23, 6 tr.
753 40 Uppsala

SMHI

Besöksadress Göteborgskaderns plats 3
426 71 Västra Frölunda

have consequences for primary production, as well as for fluxes of greenhouse gases and oxygen between the ocean sediments, water column, and atmosphere.

International conventions and frameworks

As one of the Contracting Parties to the Helsinki Convention, Germany is committed to prevent and eliminate pollution, in order to promote the ecological restoration of the Baltic Sea area and the preservation of its ecological balance. Also, as an EU member state, Germany is obliged to adhere to the Marine Strategic Framework, which states that permanently altered hydrographical conditions shall not adversely affect marine ecosystems.

Although the principles in the Draft Site Development Plan, through the regulations in the Offshore Wind Energy Act, the Act on the Assessment of Environmental Impacts as well as other national and international laws and agreements, including the Helsinki and OSPAR conventions, shall ensure that the marine environment is not endangered, the SMHI stresses that these principles should include measures preventing large-scale consequences for the entire Baltic Sea area.

International cooperation

The increasing planning of wind farms and other large infrastructure installations in the Baltic Sea can lead to cross-border environmental effects, the solution of which lies in international cooperation. The SMHI suggests that an international marine council should be given the opportunity to map the cumulative environmental effects of large-scale installations in the Baltic Sea. This would facilitate the individual countries' decisions about projects within their Exclusive Economic Zone.

Director of the Department of Community Planning Services Magnus Rödin has decided on this matter prepared by Jörgen Öberg.

For SMHI

Magnus Rödin
Director of the Department of Community Planning Services

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