



Crab (*Eumunida picta*) in thickets of the deep-sea coral (*Lophelia pertusa*), Sandra Brooke/NOAA

The Ecologically or Biologically Significant Areas EBSA identification process

The recommendations from the 14th meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific and Technical and Technological Advice to the 10th CBD Conference of Parties request the outline of a process for developing an inventory of Ecologically or Biologically Significant Areas (EBSAs) in the open oceans and deep seas:

26. Requests the Executive Secretary to work with Parties and other Governments, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), and other relevant organizations and initiatives, such as the World Conservation Monitoring Centre of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP-WCMC) and the Global Ocean Biodiversity Initiative (GOBI), to outline a process for creating and maintaining a CBD global inventory of ecologically or biologically significant areas (EBSAs) in marine areas beyond national jurisdiction, and to begin [to] provisionally populate such an inventory; and to develop information sharing mechanism with similar initiatives, such as FAO's work on vulnerable marine ecosystems (VMEs) (from UNEP/CBD/COP10/3, 30 June 2010, p. 48, underlining added)

As an initial contribution to this discussion, the Global Ocean Biodiversity Initiative (GOBI) is here providing a brief discussion of a few key elements for creating and maintaining a CBD global inventory of EBSAs.



Siphonophore (*Marrus orthocanna*), Arctic Ocean
Kevin Raskoff

The identification of Ecologically or Biologically Significant Areas (EBSAs) in the open oceans and deep seas will require an objective and transparent process, leading to results that are robust and credible. Processes for seeking collective agreement on the value of proposed sites will be initiated and conducted at different scales and regions and may originate from a wide range of participants, necessitating repeatable procedures that can be implemented widely and are trusted by all relevant stakeholders. These should be iterative and dynamic, allowing for revision and improvement of proposals and proposed sites as new information becomes available.

Steps in the EBSA identification process

General steps in the EBSA identification process leading towards eventual consideration for management implementation can be outlined as follows:

- ① candidate EBSAs identified (both from expert and systematic sources);
- ② initial validation and corroboration;
- ③ additional analyses as required;
- ④ evaluation of site;
- ⑤ management assessment within the context of other existing sites and management measures.

In areas of high-quality data and significant baseline research, the supporting documentation for a candidate EBSA site may be well defined early in this process. In areas where baseline data are insufficient further analysis may be required to define the ecological quality, geographic boundary and status of a proposed site.

EBSA sites may be proposed because they are considered valuable due to their contribution to one or more than one of the seven EBSA selection criteria. In the case where more than one criterion is relevant, multi-criteria assessment tools and methods will need to be used to evaluate these sites. Also, evaluation of EBSAs will generally be assessed within a regional context. These regional analyses will necessarily require an assessment of the role of the EBSAs within the broader context of management networks, usually with several objectives and constraints.

GOBI supports the development of a regularised, open and adaptable process for identifying proposed EBSA sites to support the selection of robust and credible sites as well as help reduce potential resource conflicts.

Taking a small step towards such a process, GOBI has developed a web-based tool to allow individuals and organisations to propose candidate sites for further consideration as EBSAs (www.GOBI.org). This interactive, freely accessible web site will assist in gathering provisional information on proposed, candidate EBSA sites and provides a mechanism for publically sharing this information.