

Abstract

A participatory integrated assessment of sea grass meadows ecosystem services in the Gulf of Morbihan.

Author: D. Bailly

Address: UBO – AMURE, IUEM, 12 rue du Kergoat, CS 93837, 29238 Brest cedex 3, France

Email: denis.bailly@univ-brest.fr

Keywords: Gulf of Morbihan, ecosystem services, ecosystemic approach.

Building ownership of conservation needs is crucial to the efficiency and success of conservation policy. This should target both users who generate direct or indirect pressures on species or habitats of interest, as well as the general public. Sea grass meadow is typically an habitat that provides numerous ecosystem services and that doesn't enjoy the image of an emblematic habitat. Therefore, engaging into sea grass meadows protection doesn't raise spontaneous support and attempts to limit pressures on them are not easily implemented. Although the science of sea grass meadows is extensive, the processes leading to their regression or expansion are not well understood. The role of environmental conditions and of anthropogenic pressures in explaining observed degradation and regression of sea grass meadows is much less understood than the various ecosystem services they provide. As a precautionary approach, uses that take place on sea grass meadows are banned without necessarily evidence of their real impact. As a result such regulation raises strong protest, or is simply ignored when enforcement capacity is low. The VALMER project (Interreg IVA, Channel area) develops a knowledge visualization platform with researchers and stakeholders so to describe the ecosystem services provided by sea grass meadows as well as the impact of pressures on these services as a tool to raise awareness among stakeholders and the public and to engage them in discussions to develop monitoring and conservation plans. This is applied to the management of sea grass meadows in the Gulf of Morbihan, a hotspot for biodiversity on the French coast and also a place where numerous uses take place on the near shore waters and on land. The methodology applied and first results are presented.