

Arctic Council
PAME, CAFF, AMAP, SDWG – Ecosystem Approach Expert Group
Fifth Ecosystem Approach Workshop

Methodology and status of development of ecological (quality) objectives for Arctic Large Marine Ecosystems

Venue and time: Bergen, Norway (tentative, TBD). 2.5 days in June – 15-17 June 2015 (tentative, TBD)

Introduction

The Ecosystem Approach to management (EA) is now widely accepted as a key management strategy or principle. It is defined as **integrated management** of human activities to achieve sustainable use of ecosystem goods and services and maintenance of ecosystem integrity. Application of the EA requires a focus on the **overall state of the ecosystem** and a corresponding set of **ecological objectives** that can guide management decisions toward achieving and maintaining good or acceptable status. The ecological objectives bridge the desired state of the ecosystem and acceptable levels of human activities and represent (either directly or following translation) management objectives for regulations and interventions. Setting an agreed set of ecological objectives is the step in the EA process where sustainability is defined in practical management terms.

EA was adopted as a principle by the Arctic Council as part of the Arctic Marine Strategic Plan (AMSP) in 2004. PAME established an EA expert group (EA-EG) in 2007 that was broadened with participation of AMAP and CAFF in 2011. The EA-EG has prepared a concept paper with a framework for implementing the EA by Arctic states and a map of 18 Large Marine Ecosystems (LMEs) for the Arctic area. As part of this work, the EA-EG has convened four EA workshops in 2011-2014, the last (4th EA workshop) in Vancouver in June 2014. The workshops have dealt with various issues including LME boundaries, EA framework and Integrated Ecosystem Assessment (IEA). Reports from the four EA workshops and progress reports from the EA-EG are available at the PAME webpage.

The 5th EA workshop will focus on the topic of ecological objectives and address this through summaries and reviews of existing management objectives related to living resources and the environment in current management systems and legislation, and by reviewing the state-of-the-art in developing more comprehensive sets of ecological objectives (e.g. the work in Europe in OSPAR and in implementing the EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive, MSFD). We will also take into account the perspectives of Permanent Participants of their value systems and use of traditional knowledge and respect as a basis for the subsistence harvest and use of nature by indigenous peoples of the Arctic.

Workshop objectives

1. Review existing management objectives for use of living and non-living resources, environmental protection and nature conservation in national legislation and management systems.

2. Review developments and methodologies for defining a comprehensive set of ecological objectives as a step in implementing a more holistic management approach, e.g. the EA.
3. Review/learn about the principles and values embedded in the use and management of living resources and the wider nature by indigenous peoples of the Arctic.
4. Identify next steps in the work to develop ecological objectives as part of the implementation of the EA for Arctic LMEs by Arctic states supported by collaborative efforts in the Arctic Council.

Further planning of the workshop

A detailed program for the workshop including presentations and discussion items will be drawn up by a planning group with representatives from AMAP, CAFF, SDWG and PPs in addition to the co-chairs and selected members of the EA-EG.

The co-chairs and planning group will prepare a background document for the workshop providing initial summaries of current status with regard to ecological objectives in national management systems and legislation (e.g. Canada, Norway and the USA/Alaska). The background document will also provide an overview of some of the relevant international processes where environmental standards and ecological objectives are being developed (e.g. OSPAR). It is envisioned that the background document will form the backbone of a report on the status of development of ecological objectives as part of implementing the EA for Arctic LMEs, further elaborated and informed by the outcome of the workshop. This report could be a potential deliverable to the Arctic Council at the end of the US chairmanship in spring 2017.