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The French MSFD marine mammal monitoring programme for 2022-2027

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Introduction:
 In France, the first 6-years monitoring cycle of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) took place in 2015-2021. The new monitoring programmes were adopted at the end of 2021 for the 2022-2027 cycle, aiming to fill in the data gaps that appeared in the 2018 evaluation of the Good Ecological Status (GES).
 For marine mammals, existing monitoring features are maintained or completed and new ones are proposed, provided they can contribute to 2030 GES evaluation.

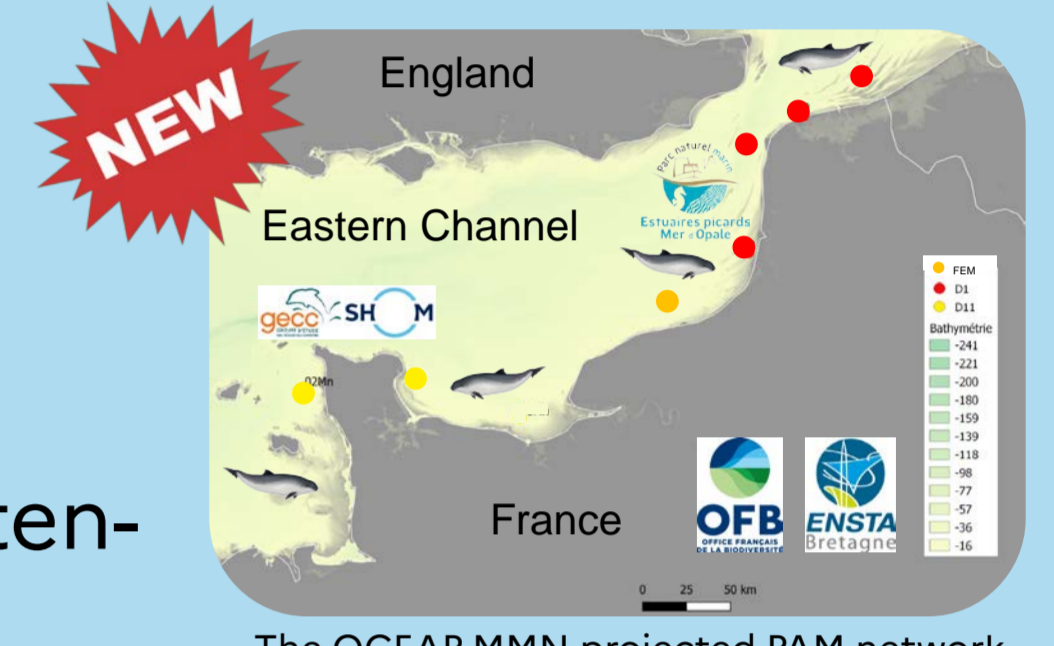
Sub-Programme 1: coastal cetacean populations

Coastal bottlenose dolphin groups/Photo-ID:
 In the Atlantic, 3 groups are mainly monitored by the GECC, Iroise marine nature park and more recently by OFB local units. In the Mediterranean, the TURSMed project led by MIRACETI aims to define coastal groups through monitoring by MPAs and NGOs.



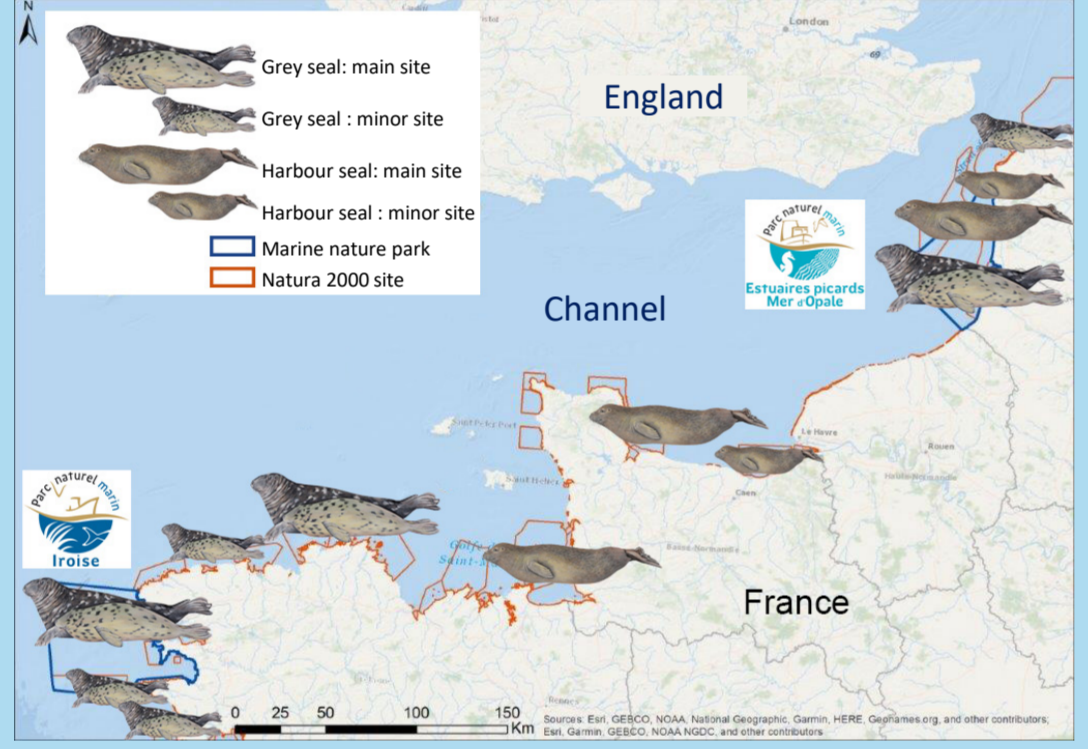
Bottlenose dolphin photo-ID in Iroise marine nature park (B. Guichard/OFB)

Porpoise populations/PAM (OCEAP-MMN project):
 In 2023-2027 hydrophones will be set up along the Eastern Channel coast (some with D11 for noise) to monitor cetaceans, specially porpoises. Data from marine wind farms will be investigated for their potential contribution to the monitoring programme.




The OCEAP-MMN projected PAM network

Sub-Programme 2: seal populations
Hauling sites /visual counts:
 The main hauling site are monitored from the land, air or sea by NGOs and MPAs.




Seal hauling sites in France

NEW Telemetry:
 Studies will be made to develop GES habitat use indicators (D1C5) from existing and upcoming telemetry data.




Young grey seal with a D-tag in the Somme Bay (B. Guichard/OFB)

Sub-Programme 3: offshore populations
Plane surveys:
 Once per cycle, national surveys (SAMB) will be carried out in winter and regional surveys (SCANS, ACCOBAMS) in summer.

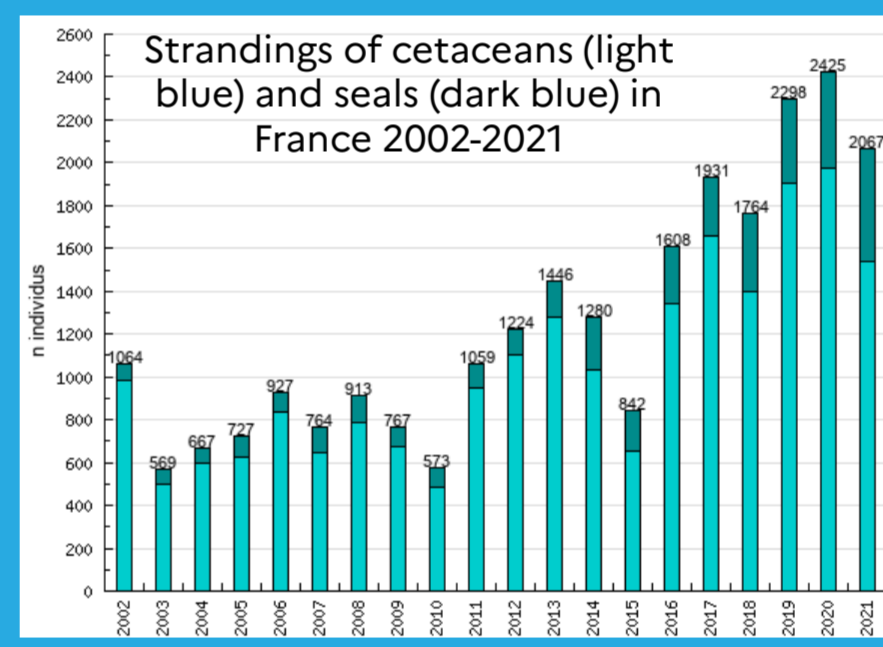


Blue whale observed in the Bay of Biscay during the SCANS-IV survey in summer 2022

Boat surveys:
 In the Mediterranean, Megascopie annual surveys will be supplemented with the MOOSE campaign, and ferries surveys by Eco'Océan will be used to complete datasets and inform GES indicators.




Sub-Programme 4: strandings
The French strandings network (RNE) provides data on strandings, that doubled in the past 10 years mostly due to winter bycatches.




Strandings of cetaceans (light blue) and seals (dark blue) in France 2002-2021

NEW Necropsies of freshly stranded animals will be increased to better inform causes of death and produce overviews on the health status of populations.




Necropsy of a freshly stranded common dolphin (B. Guichard/OFB)

Sub-Programme 5: interactions with human activities
 Bycatches are monitored by RNE and by a fisheries observation program (ObsMer), collisions of large cetaceans by RNE. Contamination of small cetaceans is monitored since 2017 by RNE, in relation with descriptor D8 (contaminants). Impact of noise is monitored by D11, whale watching is evaluated by surveys to inform a specific environmental objective.



Bycaught common dolphin (B. Guichard/OFB)



Disturbance by whale watching (B. Guichard/OFB)

Conclusion:
 Gaps in the 2018 GES evaluation for France included status of cetaceans in the Mediterranean, habitat use, health status of populations and interactions with a number of human activities. Some of these gaps will be filled in the 2024 evaluation, and it is expected that the marine mammal monitoring programme for 2022-2027 will bring additional data and indicators for the 2030 evaluation.

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