



**Northwest
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Action Plan**

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Northwest Pacific Action Plan
Pollution Monitoring Regional Activity Center

The Twelfth NOWPAP POMRAC Focal Points Meeting
Busan, Republic of Korea, 4-5 September 2014

2014-2015 Workplan of POMRAC activity

Development of the Ecological Quality Objectives for the NOWPAP region

1. Background

During the NOWPAP establishment in 1994, the overall goal of the Northwest Pacific Action Plan was defined as “the wise use, development and management of the coastal and marine environment so as to obtain the utmost long-term benefits for the human populations of the region, while protecting human health, ecological integrity and the region’s sustainability for future generations”. Three complementary goals were also defined as follows:

- i) The control, halting and prevention of any further degradation and deterioration of the coastal and marine environment and its resources;
- ii) The recovery and rehabilitation of coastal and marine environments that have been degraded and which still have the potential for such a recovery;
- iii) The long-term sustainability of coastal and marine environmental quality and resources as assets for the present and future human populations of the region.

Taking into account emerging marine environmental problems in the NOWPAP region as well as the original Action Plan adopted in 1994, the following thematic elements for the 2012-2017 NOWPAP Medium-term strategy (MTS) were adopted after the 16th NOWPAP Intergovernmental Meeting held in 2011:

- Integrated coastal and river basin management;
- Regular assessments of the state of the marine environment;
- Pollution prevention and reduction, including harmful substances, hazardous waste and marine litter;
- Biodiversity conservation (including alien invasive species);
- Climate change impacts.

For the Theme 1 (Integrated coastal and river basin management, ICARM), one of the suggested activities was “Setting Ecological Quality Objectives for marine and coastal environment based on the regular assessments”.

The 11th NOWPAP POMRAC Focal Points Meeting (Tianjin, China, 9-10 October 2013) discussed and agreed that the development of the Ecological Quality Objectives (EcoQOs) for the NOWPAP region should be included into POMRAC workplan for the 2014-2015 biennium. It was also agreed that POMRAC in 2014-2015 should focus on the following new issue, “Joint Activity for WG1, WG2 and ICARM WG with cooperation with RACs, RCU and relevant organizations (PEMSEA, COBSEA, WESTPAC and others): Development of the Ecological Quality Objectives for the NOWPAP region with regional workshop combined with the 12th NOWPAP POMRAC FPM”.

The 18th NOWPAP Intergovernmental Meeting (Toyama, Japan, 4-6 December 2013) discussed the NOWPAP Programme of Work and budget for 2014-2015. The IGM approved the budget for NOWPAP POMRAC for the 2014-2015 biennium as US\$ 125,000, including the Development of the Ecological Quality Objectives for the NOWPAP region with regional workshop combined with the 12th POMRAC FPM.

2. Development of Ecological Quality Objectives and further steps

The Ecological Quality Objectives (EcoQOs) are usually based on the **vision** reflecting the common broadly accepted description of ecological status of the region. Vision for the NOWPAP region is suggested as follows: **“Healthy marine and coastal ecosystems in the NOWPAP region that are productive and biologically diverse and can continue to support sustainable use of marine resources for the benefit of present and future generations”**.

Several steps are suggested for the development of Ecological Quality Objectives. These steps include:

- preparation, discussion and approval of the set of EcoQOs;
- elaboration of the Operational Objectives for each EcoQO;
- agreement on indicators and targets for each Operational Objective.

During the 2014-2015 biennium, preparation, discussion and approval of the list of EcoQOs are suggested. Experience of some individual Regional Seas programmes (such as HELCOM, MAP and OSPAR) as well as relevant international organizations and projects (such as PEMSEA, PICES, WESTPAC and YSLME) will be taken into account.

The initial elaboration of operational objectives could be also started for some EcoQOs in 2014-2015 biennium, pending reaching consensus among national experts, NOWPAP RACs and regional partners of NOWPAP working on similar issues, but the main activity on Operational Objectives will start in 2016-2017 biennium, after approval of the NOWPAP Programme of Work by the 20th IGM.

The main work on indicators and targets could start only after approval of Operational Objectives, i.e. in the 2016-2017 biennium and beyond, though preliminary outline of possible indicators and targets could begin in 2014-2015 biennium.

After completing the steps outlined above, the following steps could be taken, depending on political will of NOWPAP member states:

- analysis and recommendation for revision (if necessary) of existing monitoring programs;
- continuous assessment of the state of the marine and coastal environment using agreed indicators and targets;
- development and review of relevant action plans and programs (e.g., on marine litter, eutrophication, etc.).

3. Suggested Ecological Quality Objectives for the NOWPAP region

Taking into account the analysis of current environmental situation in the NOWPAP region and considering successful work on EcoQOs by several leading Regional Seas programmes (such as MAP, HELCOM, and OSPAR for example), and discussion during regional workshop held on 3 September 2014, the suggested Ecological Quality Objectives for the NOWPAP region are as follows:

- Biological and habitat diversity are not changed significantly due to anthropogenic pressure;
- Alien species are at levels that do not adversely alter the ecosystems;

- Eutrophication adverse effects (such as loss of biodiversity, ecosystem degradation, harmful algal blooms, and oxygen deficiency in bottom waters) are absent;
- Contaminants cause no significant impact on coastal and marine ecosystems and human health;
- Marine litter does not adversely affect coastal and marine environments.

4. Suggested procedure for the elaboration of EcoQOs

POMRAC Secretariat will ask POMRAC Focal points and other RACs to nominate experts for each EcoQO listed above by the end of November 2014. One expert could work on more than one EcoQOs, if considered qualified. Nominated experts, along with NOWPAP RACs, RCU and representatives of relevant international organizations will be organized into expert groups. Nomination of experts and arrangement of their work will be carried out by correspondence. All expert groups will also work by correspondence.

As this activity will require involvement of all NOWPAP RACs, it is suggested to nominate a "leading RAC" for each EcoQOs (under overall coordination of POMRAC). For example, CEARAC will be asked to be a leading RAC for the development of EcoQOs related to biodiversity and eutrophication. DINRAC will be asked to be a leading RAC for the development of EcoQO related to alien species. MERRAC will be asked to be a leading RAC for the EcoQOs related to contaminants (including oil and HNS spills) and marine litter. Of course, it does not exclude any RAC from working on any other EcoQOs.

Leading RACs will arrange payments to the nominated experts through the MoUs. The funds from POMRAC budget will be transferred to leading RACs through small-scale funding agreements (SSFAs), under the coordination of NOWPAP RCU. POMRAC, in close coordination and consultations with other RACs, will provide the draft MoUs with nominated experts for the approval by leading RACs.

The careful review of each suggested EcoQO (listed above) should be the main output of this stage of work (4Q 2014-3Q 2015). Detailed review of each EcoQO should include: 1) Review of the experience of other international organizations and projects; 2) Analysis of national approaches (features); 3) Preliminary description of operational objectives and possible indicators.

Review of the international experience on the EcoQOs should include description (definition), operational objectives, indicators and targets, advantages and limitations, success stories (if any) and regional features using the knowledge of OSPAR, HELCOM, MAP, MSFD, PEMSEA and others.

Analysis of national approaches/features relevant to each EcoQO should include the review of national policies (if any) or experience of using marine and coastal resources in the NOWPAP member states. The experience of regional organizations such as PICES, YSLME, PEMSEA and WESTPAC should be considered as well.

Based on the review of international experience and taking into account features of national approaches, preliminary outline of the operational objectives and possible indicators could be suggested for each EcoQO.

5. Implementation Plan (suggested leading RACs are underlined)

EcoQOs	RACs and partners involved	Timing	Budget (US\$)
Biological and habitat diversity are not changed significantly due to anthropogenic pressure	National experts, <u>CEARAC</u> , <u>DINRAC</u> , <u>WESTPAC</u> , PICES, PEMSEA, YSLME	Nomination of members for BD expert group – 4Q 2014 Review of EcoQO – 1-2Q 2015 Compilation of review for FPM and IGM – 3Q 2015	8,000
Alien species are at levels that do not adversely alter the ecosystems	National experts, <u>DINRAC</u> , MERRAC, <u>WESTPAC</u> , PICES	Nomination of members for alien species expert group – 4Q 2014 Review of EcoQO – 1-2Q 2015 Compilation of review for FPM and IGM – 3Q 2015	5,000
Eutrophication adverse effects (such as loss of biodiversity, ecosystem degradation, harmful algal blooms, and oxygen deficiency in bottom waters) are absent	National experts, <u>CEARAC</u> , <u>POMRAC</u> , YSLME, PICES, <u>WESTPAC</u>	Nomination of members for eutrophication expert group – 4Q 2014 Review of EcoQO – 1-2Q 2015 Compilation of review for FPM and IGM – 3Q 2015	8,000
Contaminants cause no significant impact on coastal and marine ecosystems and human health	National experts, <u>MERRAC</u> , <u>POMRAC</u> , PICES, PEMSEA	Nomination of members for contaminants expert group – 4Q 2014 Review of EcoQO – 1-2Q 2015 Compilation of review for FPM and IGM – 3Q 2015	8,000
Marine litter does not adversely affect coastal and marine environments	National experts, ML FPs, <u>CEARAC</u> , <u>MERRAC</u>	Nomination of members for marine litter expert group – 4Q 2014 Review of EcoQO – 1-2Q 2015 Compilation of review for FPM and IGM – 3Q 2015	5,000
		Total:	34,000