

MSC certified cod and haddock fisheries in the Barents Sea



“All MSC certified fisheries must provide science-based data and evidence to independent certifiers to demonstrate that measures are in place to ensure the habitats in which they fish remain healthy. MSC certified Barents Sea fisheries meet international best practice and have invested extensively in monitoring and management programmes to protect sensitive habitats and prevent irreversible harm”
Camiel Derichs, Director for Europe, MSC

Each of them has passed an independent expert audit taking into account current scientific advice which has earned them the well-deserved label of ‘sustainable and well-managed fisheries.’

All of the MSC certified vessels fishing in the Barents Sea are fishing legally and have committed to observe strict rules that ensure that if they encounter and incidentally catch sponges, corals or juvenile fish, they have to stop fishing and move at least two miles away before they set their nets again. They have also committed to recording these interactions so that other fishing vessels can avoid the area.

The MSC certified fisheries are all committed to monitoring their impacts on ocean floor habitats, and in some cases are furthering research efforts. This includes further developments to the Institute of Marine Research (IMR) coral reef mapping programme to include an assessment of fishing effort and impacts from fishing with gear other than trawl and Danish seine, in areas protected from fishing with these two gear types, as a measure to protect known cold water coral concentrations.

Marine protection

In 2003, the Norwegian Government, extended its 4 nautical mile exclusion zone around Svalbard to 12 nautical miles. Totalling around 74,000km², the protected area prohibits bottom trawl fishing, mining, oil and gas exploration and production, and other infrastructure development. WWF’s Arctic Programme has stated, “The Norwegian government has shown that it understands the environment is important by protecting Svalbard and Lofoten.”

Norway has also closed all areas over 1,000m in depth to bottom trawling, which covers a far larger area than the Svalbard MPA.

74,000km²

Marine Protected Area (MPA) around Svalbard. The same size as Denmark and the Netherlands combined

19

no trawl zones in the Barents and Norwegian Seas to protect corals with 36 more under consideration

2 billion NOK

invested in marine habitat research in Norwegian waters

Investment in world-class marine research

Started in 2005, the MAREANO (**M**arine **A**REA database for **N**orwegian waters) project maps depth and topography, sediment composition, biodiversity and habitats as well as pollution in the seabed in Norwegian offshore areas. In the context of fishing, the programme aims to provide answers to questions such as:

- **What does the seabed consist of?**
- **How is the biodiversity distributed on the seabed?**
- **How are habitats distributed on the seabed?**

To date, the project has mapped the biology of 60,000km² of seabed, an area three times the size of Wales. It is now working further north towards Svalbard in support of the fisheries’ continued MSC certification.

Catch breakdowns and fishing areas

The Norwegian Fleet and Russian Federation fleet use mixed gears including bottom trawl, Danish seine, gill nets and line caught. Trawling makes up around 40% of cod and haddock landings. Due to seasonal sea ice, the vast majority of this is caught south of the 76 degrees line.

Next MSC steps

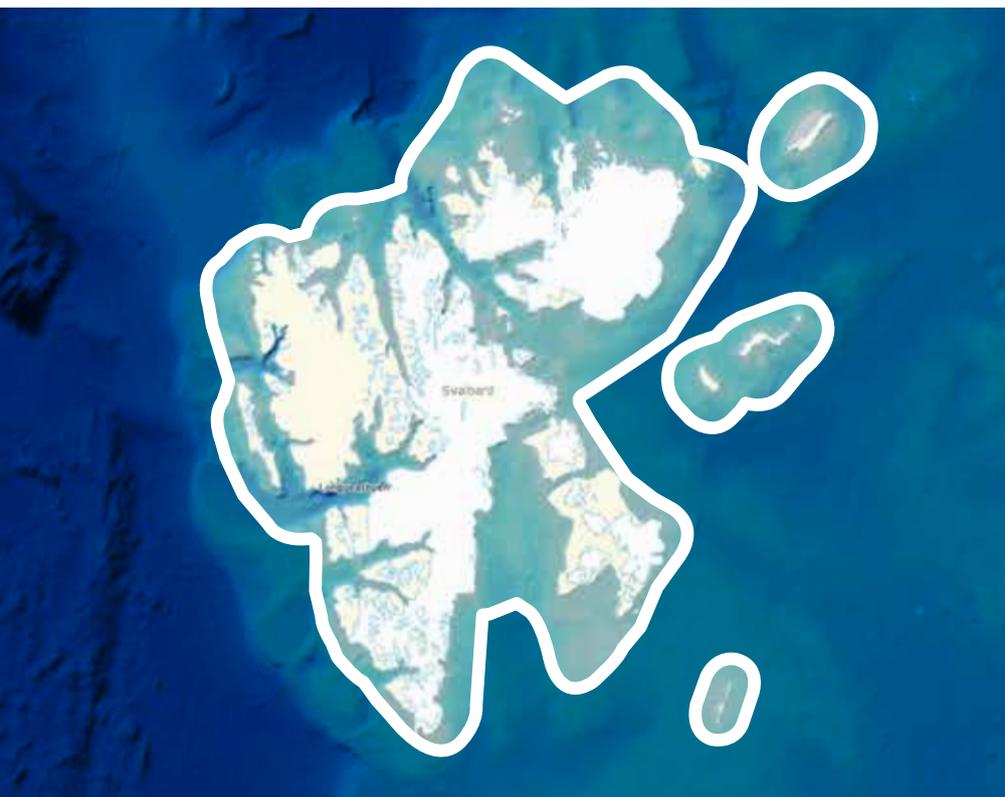
MSC requirements for the management of impact on seabed habitats have already led to the improvements in information and habitat management, as mentioned above. In the latest review of the MSC's standard, released in 2014, these requirements were strengthened further, incorporating new best international and national practice.

The implications of these new requirements for Barents Sea fisheries, and the implications for the fisheries and for management of retreating ice cover, will be discussed by a multi-stakeholder meeting on 4th April in Oslo. The meeting will make interested parties and industry clients aware of the new, more stringent requirements to protect sensitive ocean floor habitats which, inter alia, require active identification and avoidance by MSC certified fisheries of Vulnerable Marine Environments (VMEs) and

potential VMEs. All of the MSC certified fisheries in the Barents Sea will update to the latest MSC certification requirements when they enter recertification after 1st October 2017.

In conclusion

The MSC supports global efforts to ensure our oceans are well-managed, healthy and productive and works to catalyse improvements and innovation in fishing activities globally. MSC certified fisheries are committed to safeguarding the long term health of fish stocks, the wider marine environment and dependent species. Any major changes to the circumstances of any MSC certified fishery, including moving to new fishing grounds, would require the certifier to carry out an audit and determine that fishing by the certified fleet continues to meet the MSC's standard. This would require scientific evidence demonstrating that fishing in any new areas is well-managed and not causing irreversible harm to marine habitats and species. The MSC welcomes continued dialogue and scrutiny, and encourages concerned parties to share any new and relevant data with assessment bodies responsible for certifying fisheries, the details of which can be found for each fishery on www.msc.org/track-a-fishery



The line demarcates the marine protected area around Svalbard

Bottom trawl fishing, mining, oil and gas, and other infrastructure development are prohibited within this area.