

**EUROPE / NORTH AMERICA**

**THE WADDEN SEA**

**GERMANY AND THE NETHERLANDS**

# WORLD HERITAGE NOMINATION – IUCN TECHNICAL EVALUATION

## WADDEN SEA (GERMANY AND THE NETHERLANDS) – ID No. 1314

### 1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Wadden Sea is the largest unbroken coastal tidal and mud flat system in the world and characterized by a mosaic of sand and mudflats, tidal channels, salt marshes, seagrass meadows, mussel banks, sandbars and barrier islands extending over a transboundary area where natural processes proceed in a relatively undisturbed manner. The Wadden Sea World Heritage property comprises the Dutch Wadden Sea Conservation Area and the German Wadden Sea National Parks of Lower Saxony and Schleswig-Holstein. The site represents over 66% of the whole Wadden Sea and is home to numerous plant and animal species, including marine mammals. It is also a breeding and wintering area for up to 12 million birds per annum and it supports more than 10 percent of 29 species. The property was inscribed in 2009 under natural criteria (viii), (ix) and (x).

### 2. BRIEF SUMMARY OF PROPOSAL

The proposed modification is to include the Hamburg Wadden Sea National Park (Germany) in the property. This area is an integrated and contiguous part of the Wadden Sea and closes the “triangle” in site element 006 of the inscribed property to create a coherent and continuous tidal area within the property. The proposed extension is a national park and therefore under strict legal protection. At 13,611 ha, it would comprise ca. 1,4% of the inscribed property area (total area 968,393 ha).

### 3. IMPLICATIONS FOR OUTSTANDING UNIVERSAL VALUE

As it concerns the inclusion of land into the existing World Heritage property, the proposal is considered in its relation to the criteria under which the current World Heritage site is inscribed, and its contribution to the integrity, protection and management of its values.

The proposed enlargement of the property strengthens integrity in relation to all three criteria under which the Wadden Sea has been inscribed on the World Heritage List. The location of the proposed extension at the outer part of the Elbe estuary adds a distinctive estuary feature to the property in conjunction with a highly dynamic and extended open tidal flat area, which is also important for migratory and breeding bird species. The National Park is a retreat area for whelping and moulting Harbor Seals (*Phoca vitulina*). Harbour Porpoises (*Phocoena phocoena*) are also frequently seen. The natural

movement over the last 70 years of the dune island of Scharhörn, included in the proposed extension, testifies to the relatively undisturbed tidal processes in this area. Another impact of the natural dynamic system is the phenomenon of large shell assemblages of the mussel *Mya arenaria*. These so-called “mussel graveyards” indicate strong shifts of sediments within the tidal flat area. The proposed extension also includes the embanked area of the island of Neuwerk, where original salt marshes are being reestablished. The inclusion of the proposed area enhances the management of the property. Hamburg Wadden Sea National Park is under strict legal protection and entirely embedded in the trilateral protection and management scheme according to the Joint Declaration on the Protection of the Wadden Sea in conjunction with the Trilateral Wadden Sea Plan. 97,8% of the National Park is owned by the Federal Government, 2% by the City of Hamburg and the remaining 0,2% is privately owned. The park is staffed with six people including one ranger and supported by members of the Hamburg Port Authority and shipping police forces. The inhabitants of the island of Neuwerk have explicitly approved the inclusion of the island in the World Heritage property and the State Party has provided IUCN with an official Letter of Consent.

IUCN considers that the proposal to include the Hamburg Wadden Sea National Park meets the requirements for approval as a minor boundary modification of the property.

### 4. OTHER COMMENTS

Following the provision of supplementary information by the State Party on the effects of the deepening of the Elbe shipping lane outside the property, IUCN notes that the implementation of an integrated concept for the Tidal River Elbe, which aims at a sustainable stabilization of the tidal river system by managing the river mouth, should be evaluated in regard to its impacts on the World Heritage property.

IUCN also recalls the decision of the 33<sup>rd</sup> Session of the World Heritage Committee at the time of inscription, that also encourages the State Party of Denmark to submit a nomination of the Danish part of the Wadden Sea as soon as feasible to extent and complement the existing property.

## 5. RECOMMENDATION

IUCN recommends that the World Heritage Committee adopt the following decision:

The World Heritage Committee,

1. Having examined Documents WHC-11/35.COM/8B and WHC-11/35.COM/INF.8B2, and recalling Decision 33COM 8B.4;

2. Approves the minor boundary modification of the Wadden Sea (Germany/The Netherlands) to include the Hamburg Wadden Sea National Park (13,611 ha), in order to strengthen the integrity of the inscribed property and support its effective protection and management;

3. Notes with appreciation that the Hamburg Wadden Sea National Park is already fully subject to the agreements and decisions made in the framework of the Trilateral Wadden Sea cooperation, as detailed in the original nomination dossier for the Wadden Sea;

4. Encourages the State Parties to continue to strengthen their transboundary collaboration in managing the property, and with the State Party of Denmark, and to consider the potential for nomination of an extension of the property to include the Danish Wadden Sea, taking account of the Committee's recommendations at the time of inscription of the property on the World Heritage List.

**Map 1:** Area of proposed modification

**Figure 1:**  
Map of the proposed modification of the Wadden Sea World Heritage property.

