

## KELP FOREST: A CARBON-SEQUESTERING HABITAT IN DECLINE

### Why is this important?

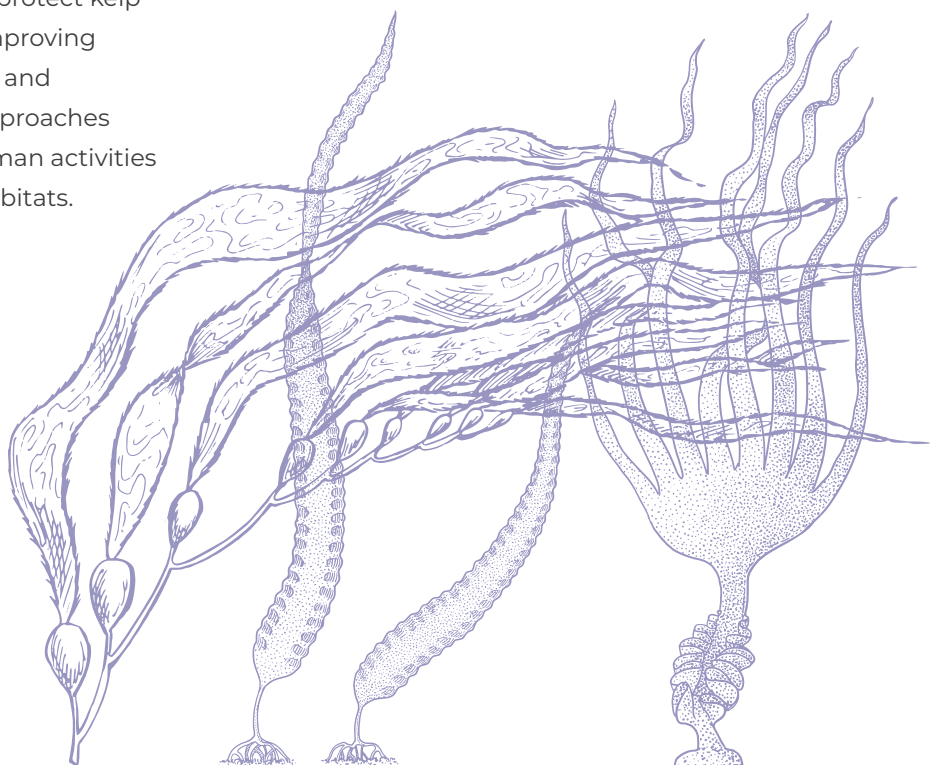
Kelp forests are an important habitat for a range of marine species and they play an important role in the sequestration of atmospheric carbon. Drastic losses of kelp forest habitat have already occurred in the southern part of the OSPAR Maritime Area with significant declines at several locations elsewhere. Kelp forests grow in coastal waters and are made up of several different species of kelp, some of which have shown a drastic decline and are known to be affected by destructive fishing practices and coastal pollution. Climate change is foreseen to add to the multiple pressures already impacting kelp forests.

### What is OSPAR doing?

OSPAR is adopting a new Recommendation to strengthen the protection of kelp forest habitat. The new measure will encourage relevant OSPAR Contracting Parties to take action to protect kelp forests and to collectively consider improving regional habitat maps of kelp forests, and promoting regional management approaches to minimise adverse effects from human activities and climate change on kelp forest habitats.

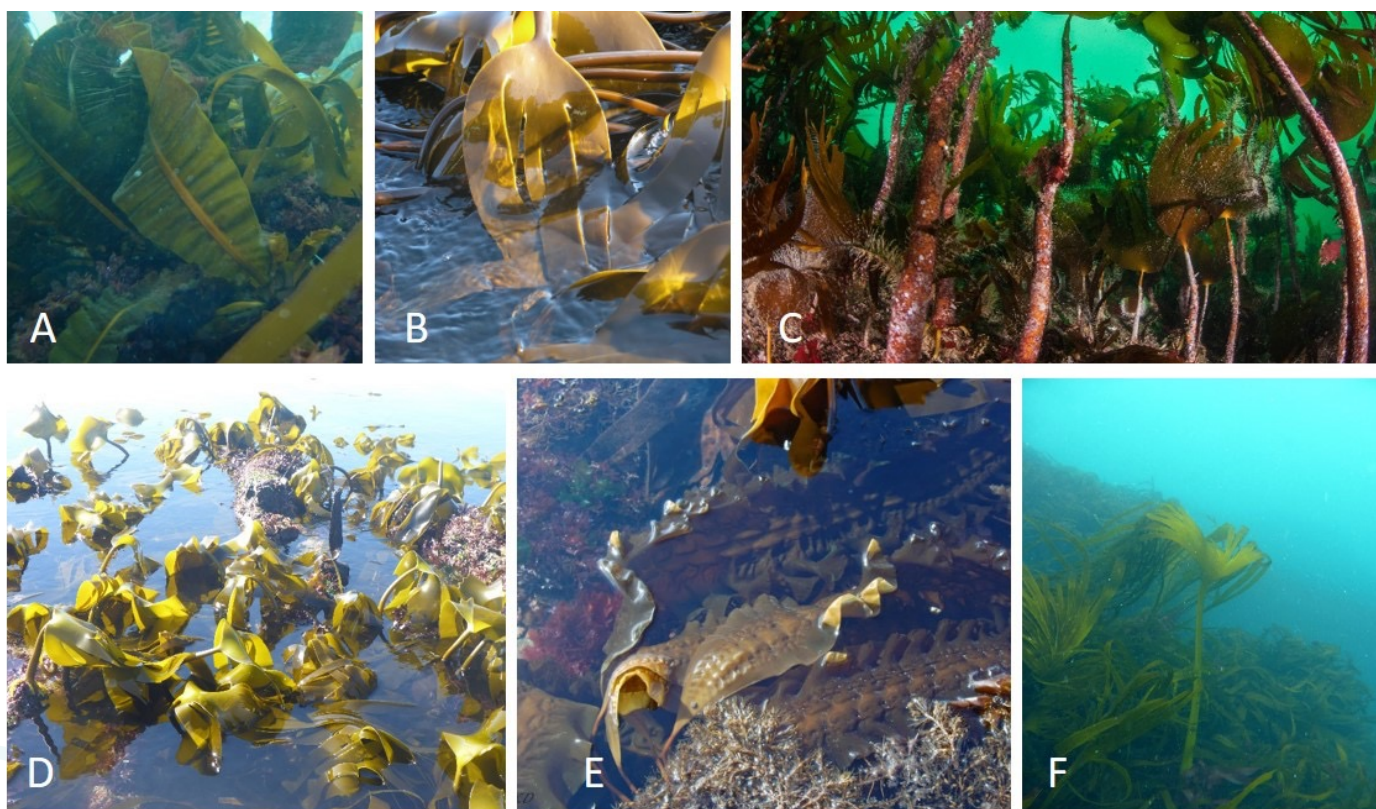
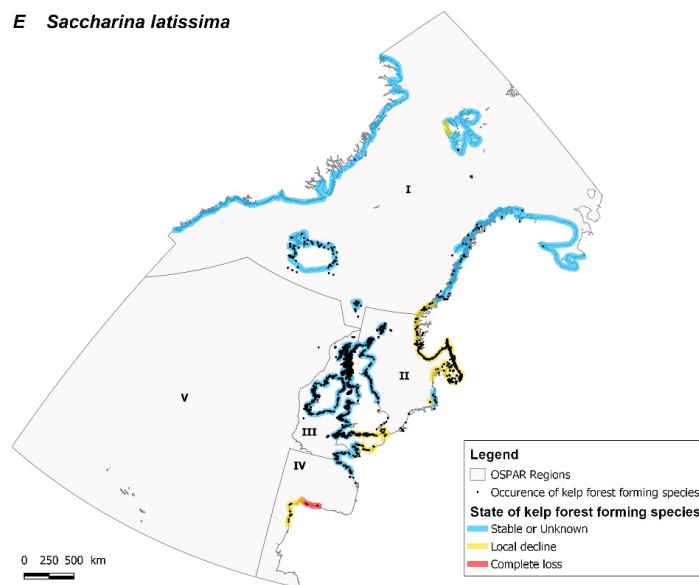
### How will this benefit the North-East Atlantic?

Kelp forests have the capacity to sequester carbon, filter and bind nutrient run-off and provide important habitats for many species. Projections of climate change show a contraction of the southern distributional limits of kelp forest forming species. Protecting kelp forest and taking coordinated regional action to reduce pressures from human activities will increase the resilience of this important habitat. Healthy kelp forests will help maintain a healthy North-East Atlantic ecosystem and contribute to climate change mitigation.



“The new measure will encourage relevant OSPAR Contracting Parties to consider improving regional habitat maps of kelp forests, and promoting regional management approaches to minimise adverse effects from human activities and climate change on kelp forest habitats.”

**E** *Saccharina latissima*



**Figure 1.** Illustration of different type of kelp forests in the North-East Atlantic dominated by the following species: A. *Alaria esculenta* (© MNHN Concarneau - R. Derrien), B. *Laminaria digitata* (© AWI Helmholtz Center for Polar and Marine Research - M. Molis), C. *L. hyperborea* (© SNH), D. *L. ochroleuca* (© CIIMAR - J. Franco), E. *Saccharina latissima* (© MNHN Concarneau - R. Derrien) and F. *Saccorhiza polyschides* (© MNHN Concarneau - A. Le Gal).

For more information on kelp forests, please visit the [OSPAR website](https://www.ospar.org)