



## What is Doggerland Foundation?

Doggerland Foundation is a foundation based in the Netherlands set up in 2022 by environmental lawyer Thomas Rammelt and marine biologist Emilie Reuchlin to protect and regenerate nature, biodiversity, resilience and climate buffers of the North Sea. We combat violations of marine conservation law with legal interventions and the lack of ambition for marine conservation with active restoration, while contributing to the transformation of perspectives on nature conservation.

## Why is Doggerland participating in this Ocean campaign to ban bottom trawling?

The North Sea is the busiest sea in the world and has been heavily degraded by fisheries, oil and gas exploration, shipping, dredging, shell and sand extraction, windfarms and the cumulative negative impacts of the combination of all these human activities. As a result the source of our life: biodiversity, ecosystem services and goods such as oxygen, food, medicine; the functioning of this climate buffer via climate regulation, heat and CO<sub>2</sub> storage and the resilience of the North Sea ecosystem are under great pressure.

This has been known for decades and laws and regulations were adopted to protect and restore the degraded North Sea. The EU Birds- and Habitat Directives were adopted to implement a European Natura 2000 network of marine protected areas (MPAs). This network of MPAs is to contribute effectively to the protection and restoration of the North Sea ecosystem. However, despite the need for protection and legal obligation to protect a network of marine protected areas to combat the biodiversity and climate crises, not even 1% of the entire North Sea nature is effectively protected. Even through at least 30% protection is the scientifically based objectives of the *minimum* that is needed to give the seas and ocean, and therefore mankind, a future.

The fishing industry has been negatively impacting the North Sea for centuries, causing severe depletion of abundance and diversity of marine life, habitat loss, foodweb, seabed and ecosystem degradation and destruction. This has left the North Sea in a degraded state. The most destructive type of fisheries is trawling, which is still allowed inside Marine Protected Areas. Doggerland aims to ensure North Sea countries take measures to protect marine life and the ecosystems that marine life depends on, especially inside MPAs.

## Is Doggerland Foundation only advocating a trawling ban from MPAs?

Doggerland Foundation advocates a trawling ban from all MPAs, including nearshore (within 12 nautical miles of the Dutch territorial waters) MPAs, for all types of trawling gear: small and large trawlers. These inshore and nearshore areas are often the breeding and nursing grounds of many species and unselective gear such as trawling will alter the seabed, degrading shellfish reefs and bycatching many fish, shellfish, and other immature individuals. The Dutch nearshore or coastal sensitive area (between Bergen and Hoek van Holland) that qualifies as a Natura 2000 MPA should be protected against bottom trawling as well. Doggerland Foundation believes it is



important to ensure sufficient space and time for a sustainable transition of unsustainable fisheries into sustainable fisheries.

Besides a trawling ban, all destructive activities that prevent MPAs from protecting nature should not be allowed in or near MPAs. This includes large-scale industries such as offshore wind energy, oil and gas extraction, dredging, shell and gravel extraction, and the many other industries operating in the North Sea.

#### [What about small-scale fisheries in MPAs and vulnerable areas?](#)

Doggerland Foundation supports this campaign which has the objective to remove destructive bottom trawling fisheries from MPAs and other sensitive areas such as coastal breeding and nursing grounds or inshore areas.

All MPAs need a high enough level of protection to meet the conservation objectives of that MPA. This means that all types of fisheries and other maritime industries need to go through a rigorous process to prove and ensure they have no negative impact on the habitats, species and ecological processes that are to be protected within the MPA. This includes small scale fisheries. What constitutes small scale is not defined clearly and different definitions are used in different regions. What is clear however is that not any type of trawling can be qualified as small-scale fishery. However, another type of fishing method separately or in combination with other types of (small-scale) fishing can also have a detrimental impact. The impact depends on the fishing effort, the deployment of gear, the time and location fished and other factors. For example one small scale fisher deploying kilometers of gillnets or set nets inside a harbour porpoise protected area can be detrimental, as can be eel-fisheries that are labelled small-scale but that are still catching endangered species. As such, non-trawling fisheries gear can be detrimental too, and any non-trawling fishery that potentially compromises the integrity of an MPA should not be allowed within the MPA. An MPA is there first and foremost to protect and restore nature.

#### [What solutions is Doggerland Foundation proposing?](#)

Doggerland aims to ensure MPAs are effective tools to protect and restore our coasts, seas and oceans, according to EU law. We will hold the governments responsible to meet their obligation to protect the North Sea. Allowing industries to continue degrading activities within and near MPAs is a violation of EU law. This includes fisheries and other industries. As such, we will make legal interventions to ensure the minimum standards of protection are implemented at least inside MPAs.

Doggerland aims to increase the level of protection and ambitions for restoration inside MPAs by creating a vision and concrete plan for nature restoration. We will start with the heart of the North Sea: the Dogger Bank MPA. Here, we aim to unleash nature's potential, by applying both passive and active restoration of nature.

Doggerland will work with other organisations to end the era of poor damage control and to push governments to provide immediate and effective protection. We will work with government to rebuild and restore marine ecosystems for the benefit of all living creatures. After centuries of exploitation, we need to recognize our shared responsibility to protect and restore the ecosystems that all life depends on. We are excited to co-create a different future with all those who love the sea.