

Site 14 – Lettermacaward to Clooney

Site description

Lettermacaward to Clooney is a large-sized saltmarsh site covering 514 ha, subdivided into five areas scattered throughout Gweebarra Estuary, Co. Donegal.

The site is part of the West of Ardara/Maas Road SAC (000197) (NPWS, 2013). Most of the site is within the SAC boundary, except for some polygons at Clooney that are situated outside.

Based on the currently available mapping, 8 coastal Annex I habitats occur within West of Ardara/Maas Road SAC, and all are listed as Qualifying Interests except for **1220 Perennial vegetation of stony banks** (Table 1).

Table 1. Annex I habitats present at West of Ardara/Maas Road SAC, the area they occupy (based on the most recent mapped available) and status as a Qualifying Interest of the SAC. An asterisk denotes a priority Annex I habitat and habitat that were not the target of this survey are excluded.

Habitat Code	Area (ha)	Qualifying Interest?
1210 Drift line vegetation	3.938	Yes
1220 Perennial vegetation of stony banks	0.333	No
1330 Atlantic salt meadows	11.202	Yes
1410 Mediterranean saltmarsh	7.952	Yes
2110 Embryonic shifting dunes	4.627	Yes
2120 Marram dunes (white dunes)	9.590	Yes
*2130 Fixed dunes (grey dunes)	174.572	Yes
*21A0 Machairs	71.912	Yes

Table 2. Habitat loss recorded during the desk and field surveys in hectares and % of total habitat area in the site.

Habitat	Within SAC?	Loss (ha)	Impact code	New habitat
1330	No	0.118	PM07	Reed and large sedge swamps (FS1)
1330	Yes	0.101	PM07	Reed and large sedge swamps (FS1)
1410	No	0.126	PM07	Buildings and artificial surfaces (BL3)
1410	Yes	0.227	PM07	Reed and large sedge swamps (FS1)
*21A0	Yes	0.260	PA10	Buildings and artificial surfaces (BL3)
*21A0	Yes	0.036	PF01	Buildings and artificial surfaces (BL3)
*21A0	Yes	0.138	PM07	Scrub (WS1)

Field data were recorded from 2 sub-sites:

- Gweebarra River salt marshes (16.53 ha)
- Roshin point (9.1 ha)

Conservation assessments were carried out within sub-site1 and 2 occupying a total area of 25.63 ha (Table 3). The habitat condition of the area within the SAC was similar to that outside of the SAC.

Table 3. Summary of Conservation Status for all habitats assessed at Lettermacaward to Clooney.

Subsite	Habitat	Area	Structure and Functions	Future Prospects	Overall assessment
14.01 Gweebarra River salt marshes	1330	Favourable (Stable)	Favourable (Increasing)	Favourable	Favourable (Improving)
14.01 Gweebarra River salt marshes	1410	Favourable (Stable)	Favourable (Stable)	Favourable	Favourable (Stable)
14.02 Roshin point	1330	Favourable (Stable)	Favourable (Stable)	Favourable	Favourable (Stable)
14.02 Roshin point	1410	Favourable (Stable)	Favourable (Stable)	Favourable	Favourable (Stable)

Sub-site 1. Gweebarra River salt marshes

Summary Information

Survey Date: 17-18 July 2022

Water Framework Directive Waterbody: Gweebarra Estuary

Previous survey identifiers: CMP151, SMP0152

Current survey details:

Table 4: Current survey details for Annex I habitats at Gweebarra River salt marshes

Habitat Code	Area	Monitoring stops
1330 Atlantic salt meadows	5.360	7
1410 Mediterranean saltmarsh	3.507	5

1330 Atlantic salt meadows

Area

The habitat **1330 Atlantic salt meadows** at Gweebarra River salt marshes extended on 5.4 ha and no habitat loss due to human activities has occurred since the last report. 0.1 ha have been lost due to natural causes and/or differences of interpretation and mapping method and they have been replaced by reeds and large sedge swamps (Heritage Council Habitat FS1). This is consistent with an Area assessment of Favourable and the trend is stable compared to SMP II.

Structure and Functions

Seven monitoring stops have been recorded and no indicator has failed the assessment. In the last report, the loss of zonation due to grazing has caused Structure and Functions to fail the assessment because only two vegetation types have been recorded. During CHNW21, 5 vegetation types have been recorded and this has allowed monitoring stops to pass the assessment. This is consistent with a Structure and Functions assessment of Favourable and the trend is therefore increasing, compared to SMP II.

Community types recorded during CHNW21 were SM3, SM4, SM5, SM6 and SM7.

Future Prospects

Old drainages has been considered neutrals, since it was unlikely that they were significantly altering the conditions of the habitat. Non-intensive grazing has been considered a low intensity positive impact that affected about 30% of the habitat. In the last report grazing had been considered a negative pressure that promoted the erosion of the saltmarsh margins in the upper reaches of the estuary but during CHNW21 grazing seemed to have reduced to acceptable levels. Future Prospects were therefore assessed as Favourable, and, compared to SMP II the trend was assessed as increasing. Natural erosion was recorded as a neutral impact, which means that it was not affecting the conservation of the habitat.

Conservation assessment

The conservation status assessments of the three parameters are as follows:

- Area: Favourable (stable)
- Structure and Functions: Favourable (increasing)
- Future Prospects: Favourable (increasing)

Since all the parameters were assessed as Favourable, the overall conservation assessment for **1330 Atlantic salt meadows** at Gweebarra River was Favourable. Given that during SMP II, the overall assessment was Unfavourable - Inadequate, the trend is therefore improving.

Overall Conservation Status: Favourable (improving)

Condition of the habitat by area

100% of the habitat area was considered to be in good condition.

1410 Mediterranean saltmarsh

Area

1410 Mediterranean saltmarsh has decreased from 4 ha to 3.5 ha over the most recent reporting cycle but no habitat loss due to human activities has occurred since last report. 0.2 ha have been lost due to natural causes and/or differences in interpretation and mapping methods and they have been replaced by reeds and large sedge swamps (Heritage Council Habitat FS1). This is consistent with an Area assessment of Favourable and trend is stable compared to SMP II.

Structure and Functions

Five monitoring stops have been recorded and no indicator has failed the assessment. For this reason, the Structure and Functions were assessed as Favourable and compared to SMP II assessment, the trend is stable.

Future Prospects

Old drainages have been considered neutrals, since it is unlikely that they were significantly altering the conditions of the habitat. Therefore, Future Prospects were assessed as Favourable, and the trend, compared to SMP II, is stable.

Conservation assessment

The conservation status assessments of the three parameters are as follows:

- Area: Favourable (stable)
- Structure and Functions: Favourable (stable)
- Future Prospects: Favourable (stable)

Since all the parameters were assessed as Favourable, the overall conservation assessment for **1410 Mediterranean saltmarsh** at Gweebarra River was Favourable. Since during SMP II the overall assessment was Favourable, the trend is stable.

Overall Conservation Status: Favourable (Stable)

Condition of the habitat by area

No impacts or threats have been recorded, so 100% of the habitat was considered to be in good condition.

Site 14 Subsite 1- Gweebarra River salt marshes Appendices

Appendix 1 Area

Total habitat area recorded during reporting cycles to date.

Habitat	2007	2013	2019	2025
1330	NS	NS	5.364	5.360
1410	NS	NS	4.035	3.507

Favourable Reference Area and cumulative changes in area due to human activities (restoration and loss) recorded during reporting cycles to date. Natural fluctuations are not taken into account.

Habitat	Favourable Reference area (ha)	2007 change (ha)	2013 change (ha)	2019 change (ha)	2025 change (ha)
1330	5.364	NS	NS	0	0
1410	4.035	NS	NS	0	0

Appendix 2. Structure and functions

Positive indicator species and notable species

Habitat	Species name	Cover (%) (if recorded)
1330	<i>Agrostis stolonifera</i>	
1330	<i>Armeria maritima</i>	
1330	<i>Aster tripolium</i>	
1330	<i>Atriplex prostrata</i>	
1330	<i>Carex extensa</i>	
1330	<i>Cochlearia species</i>	
1330	<i>Festuca rubra</i>	
1330	<i>Glaux maritima</i>	
1330	<i>Juncus gerardii</i>	
1330	<i>Limonium humile</i>	
1330	<i>Plantago maritima</i>	
1330	<i>Puccinellia maritima</i>	
1330	<i>Spergularia media</i>	
1330	<i>Triglochin maritimum</i>	
1410	<i>Aster tripolium</i>	
1410	<i>Cochlearia species</i>	
1410	<i>Glaux maritima</i>	
1410	<i>Juncus gerardii</i>	
1410	<i>Juncus maritimus</i>	
1410	<i>Leontodon autumnalis</i>	
1410	<i>Plantago maritima</i>	
1410	<i>Triglochin maritimum</i>	

Structure and Functions Assessment Criteria

Habitat	Indicator	Pass/Fail
1330	Positive indicator species	Pass
1330	Vegetation height – Standard deviation	Pass
1330	Vegetation height – Average height	Pass
1330	Negative indicator species	Pass
1330	Disturbed ground	Pass
1330	Signs of negative activities, e.g. infilling, reclamation, turf-cutting, pollution	Pass
1330	Human disturbance to hydrology	Pass
1330	Natural transitions to semi-natural terrestrial habitats on landward margin	Pass
1330	Presence of <i>Spartina</i> spp. within vicinity of habitat	Pass
1330	Presence of site-specific target species	Pass
1330	Number of zones (SM2, SM3, SM4, SM6BCD, SM7/driftline) covering 1% or more of 1330 area	Pass
1410	Positive indicator species	Pass
1410	Negative indicator species	Pass
1410	Disturbed ground	Pass
1410	Signs of negative activities, e.g. infilling, reclamation, turf-cutting, pollution	Pass
1410	Human disturbance to hydrology	Pass
1410	Natural transitions to semi-natural terrestrial habitats on landward margin	Pass
1410	Presence of site-specific target species (indicators of local distinctiveness)	Pass
1410	Presence of <i>Spartina</i> spp. within vicinity of habitat	Pass

Appendix 3. Impacts and Activities

Impacts recorded

Habitat code	Impact code	Impact description	Relative importance	Influence	Source	Timing	Trend	Area
1330	PA08	Non-intensive grazing	Low	Positive	Inside	Ongoing	Stable	30.0
1330	PA22	Old drainage	Low	Neutral	Inside	Ongoing	Stable	1.0
1330	PM07	Natural erosion	Medium	Neutral	Inside	Ongoing	Stable	5.0
1410	PA22	Drainage	Low	Neutral	Inside	Ongoing	Stable	0.5

Appendix 4. Condition of the habitat by area

Summary of habitat condition

Habitat code	% remaining habitat in poor condition	% remaining habitat in good condition
1330	0	100
1410	0	100

Sub-site 2. Roshin Point

Summary Information

Survey Date: 17 July 2022

Water Framework Directive Waterbody: Port arra Estuary

Previous survey identifiers: CMP150, SMP0128

Current survey details:

Table 5: Current survey details for Annex I habitats at Roshin Point

Habitat Code	Area	Monitoring stops
1330 Atlantic salt meadows	2.551	7
1410 Mediterranean saltmarsh	4.392	6

1330 Atlantic salt meadows

Area

1330 Atlantic salt meadows has increased over the most recent reporting cycle from 2.4 ha to 2.5 ha due to natural process of coastal erosion and differences in interpretation or mapping method. This is consistent with an Area assessment of Favourable. Compared to SMP, the trend is stable.

Structure and Functions

Eight monitoring stops have been recorded and no indicator has failed the assessment. This is consistent with a Structure and Functions assessment of Favourable and compared to SMP, the trend is therefore stable.

Community types that have been found are SM3, SM4, SM6 and SM7.

Future Prospects

Old drainages has been considered neutrals, since it is unlikely that they were significantly altering the conditions of the habitat. Undergrazing has been also considered a neutral impact that affected a small proportion of the habitat. During SMP11, this impact had been considered negative, but on the basis of the results of monitoring stops and field-survey, it has been decided that it was best to consider it as neutral. The swamp has increased on 3% of the habitat but it was likely to be due to a natural process or a different interpretation. It hasn't been considered a relevant dynamic in relation to Future Prospects, anyways. The only negative pressure that has been recorded was the presence of some vehicle tracks but it affected a small proportion of the habitat and it couldn't lead to the failure of the assessment. Future Prospects were therefore assessed as Favourable, and the trend was assessed as stable compared with SMP report assessment.

Conservation assessment

The conservation status assessments of the three parameters are as follows:

- Area: Favourable (stable)
- Structure and Functions: Favourable (stable)
- Future Prospects: Favourable (stable)

Since all the parameters were assessed as Favourable, the overall conservation assessment for **1330 Atlantic salt meadows** at Roshin Point was Favourable. Compared to SMP, the overall assessment trend is stable.

Overall Conservation Status: Favourable (stable)

Condition of the habitat by area

Because of the presence of some vehicle tracks, 1% of the habitat was in poor condition and the remaining 99% was in good condition.

1410 Mediterranean saltmarsh

Area

1410 Mediterranean saltmarsh has decreased over the most recent reporting cycle from 4.5 ha to 4.4 ha due to natural process of coastal erosion and differences in interpretation or mapping method. This is consistent with an Area assessment of Favourable. Compared to SMP assessment, the trend is stable.

Structure and Functions

Six monitoring stops have been recorded and no indicator has failed the assessment. This is consistent with a Structure and Functions assessment of Favourable and, compared to SMP, the trend is therefore stable.

Future Prospects

Old drainages has been considered neutrals, since it is unlikely that they were significantly altering the conditions of the habitat. The only negative pressure that has been recorded was the presence of some vehicle tracks, but it affected a very small proportion of the habitat (less than 1%) and it has been considered negligible for the Future Prospects assessment. Future Prospects were therefore assessed as Favourable, and the trend is assessed as stable, compared to the SMP report assessment.

Conservation assessment

The conservation status assessments of the three parameters are as follows:

- Area: Favourable (stable)
- Structure and Functions: Favourable (stable)
- Future Prospects: Favourable (stable)

Since all the parameters was assessed as Favourable, the overall conservation assessment for **1410 Mediterranean saltmarsh** at Roshin Point was Favourable. Compared to the overall assessment of SMP, the trend is stable.

Overall Conservation Status: Favourable (stable)

Condition of the habitat by area

Considering that drains were very old and the effect of human activities was negligible, 100% of area was considered to be in good condition.

Site 14 Subsite 2- Roshin Point Appendices

Appendix 1 Area

Total habitat area recorded during reporting cycles to date.

Habitat	2007	2013	2019	2025
1330	NS	2.188	2.431	2.551
1410	NS	4.787	4.509	4.392

Favourable Reference Area and cumulative changes in area due to human activities (restoration and loss) recorded during reporting cycles to date. Natural fluctuations are not taken into account.

Habitat	Favourable Reference area (ha)	2007 change (ha)	2013 change (ha)	2019 change (ha)	2025 change (ha)
1330	2.188	NS	0	0	0
1410	4.787	NS	0	0	0

Appendix 2. Structure and functions

Positive indicator species and notable species

Habitat	Species name	Cover (%) (if recorded)
1330	<i>Agrostis stolonifera</i>	
1330	<i>Armeria maritima</i>	
1330	<i>Aster tripolium</i>	
1330	<i>Carex extensa</i>	
1330	<i>Cochlearia species</i>	
1330	<i>Festuca rubra</i>	
1330	<i>Glaux maritima</i>	
1330	<i>Juncus gerardii</i>	
1330	<i>Limonium humile</i>	
1330	<i>Plantago maritima</i>	
1330	<i>Puccinellia maritima</i>	
1330	<i>Spergularia media</i>	
1330	<i>Triglochin maritimum</i>	
1410	<i>Aster tripolium</i>	
1410	<i>Cochlearia species</i>	
1410	<i>Glaux maritima</i>	
1410	<i>Juncus gerardii</i>	
1410	<i>Juncus maritimus</i>	
1410	<i>Leontodon autumnalis</i>	
1410	<i>Plantago maritima</i>	
1410	<i>Triglochin maritimum</i>	

Structure and Functions Assessment Criteria

Habitat	Indicator	Pass/Fail
1330	Positive indicator species	Pass
1330	Vegetation height – Standard deviation	Pass
1330	Vegetation height – Average height	Pass
1330	Negative indicator species	Pass
1330	Disturbed ground	Pass
1330	Signs of negative activities, e.g. infilling, reclamation, turf-cutting, pollution	Pass
1330	Human disturbance to hydrology	Pass
1330	Natural transitions to semi-natural terrestrial habitats on landward margin	Pass
1330	Presence of <i>Spartina</i> spp. within vicinity of habitat	Pass
1330	Presence of site-specific target species	Pass
1330	Number of zones (SM2, SM3, SM4, SM6BCD, SM7/driftline) covering 1% or more of 1330 area	Pass
1410	Positive indicator species	Pass
1410	Negative indicator species	Pass
1410	Disturbed ground	Pass
1410	Signs of negative activities, e.g. infilling, reclamation, turf-cutting, pollution	Pass
1410	Human disturbance to hydrology	Pass
1410	Natural transitions to semi-natural terrestrial habitats on landward margin	Pass
1410	Presence of site-specific target species (indicators of local distinctiveness)	Pass
1410	Presence of <i>Spartina</i> spp. within vicinity of habitat	Pass

Appendix 3. Impacts and Activities

Impacts recorded

Habitat code	Impact code	Impact description	Relative importance	Influence	Source	Timing	Trend	Area
1330	PA05	No grazing	Medium	Neutral	Inside	Ongoing	Stable	3.0
1330	PA22	Old drainage	Low	Neutral	Inside	Ongoing	Stable	1.0
1330	PA25	Vehicle track	High	Negative	Inside	Ongoing	Stable	0.5
1330	PF05	Vehicle track	High	Negative	Inside	Ongoing	Stable	0.1
1410	PA22	Old drainage	Low	Neutral	Inside	Ongoing	Stable	3.0
1410	PF05	Vehicle track	High	Negative	Inside	Ongoing	Stable	0.5

Appendix 4. Condition of the habitat by area

Summary of habitat condition

Habitat code	% remaining habitat in poor condition	% remaining habitat in good condition
1330	1	99
1410	0	100