



**Northwest  
Pacific  
Action Plan**

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Northwest Pacific Action Plan  
Pollution Monitoring Regional Activity Centre

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**Proposal of the POMRAC activities related to the preparation of  
SOMER-3  
Workplan and budget**

## 1. Background

Regular assessment of the environmental status and trends within the NOWPAP region was one of the key components in the original list of activities highlighted at the NOWPAP establishment in 1994. First “State of the Marine Environment Report for the NOWPAP region” (SOMER) has been compiled by POMRAC in close cooperation with other RACs and published in 2007. The main goal of that report was to give a holistic description, analysis and overview of marine environmental problems of the NOWPAP sea area.

In accordance with decision of 16<sup>th</sup> NOWPAP Intergovernmental Meeting, one of the NOWPAP POMRAC activities for 2012-2013 biennium was preparation of the second “State of the Marine Environment Report for the NOWPAP region” (SOMER-2). The specific goals of SOMER-2 included: 1) Assessment of the state of the marine environment in the NOWPAP area, with special attention to recent changes in the environmental conditions and the impacts of human activities on the marine and coastal environment; 2) Identifying current regional concerns and emerging issues which present major challenges; 3) Presentation of actions and measures to help decision makers to address these challenges at the national and regional level. SOMER-2 was prepared with valuable help and direct participation of all RACs and has been published in 2014.

SOMER-2 identified eight major regional environmental issues:

- Fragmentation, degradation and loss of habitats;
- Chemical contamination of waters, sediments and biota resulting from pollution from land-based sources;
- High risk of oil and hazardous and noxious substances (HNS) pollution incidents in the sea;
- Eutrophication caused by the increased input of nutrients into marine waters and associated harmful algal blooms (HABs) and increased hypoxia;
- Introduction of invasive non-indigenous species;
- Marine litter pollution.

Two important environmental problems remained outside of the NOWPAP scope due to existence of other regional institutions addressing these issues: 1) overfishing and destructive fishing practices; and 2) global climate change impacts on socio-ecological systems -.

Based on the findings of SOMER-2, the following list of five Ecological Quality Objectives (EcoQOs) was suggested, discussed and reflected in NOWPAP MTS 2018-2023:

- Biological and habitat diversity are not changed significantly due to anthropogenic pressure;
- Alien species are at levels that do not adversely alter the ecosystems;
- Eutrophication adverse effects (such as loss of biodiversity, ecosystem degradation, harmful algal blooms, and oxygen deficiency in bottom waters) are absent;
- Contaminants cause no significant impact on coastal and marine ecosystems and human health;
- Marine litter does not adversely affect coastal and marine environments.

Further more, the set of indicators for each EcoQO (with possible alignment with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) indicators) was elaborated as well as targets for several indicators.

According to the new NOWPAP MTS for 2018-2023, one of the major goals of NOWPAP continues to be providing the NOWPAP Member States with integrated periodic assessments of the state of the marine and coastal environment. Therefore, preparation of the third State of the Marine Environment Report (SOMER-3) seems logical and necessary activity with general responsibility of POMRAC as reflected in the MTS. At the same time, comprehensive and holistic nature of SOMER-3 implies that all RACs have to be directly involved in this activity.

## **2. Objective**

The integrated assessment of environmental problems, status and trends related to existing and changing natural and socio-economical conditions in the NOWPAP region.

## **3. Main features**

### **3.1. Integrative nature**

The broad range of ecological problems that should be reflected in SOMER-3 justifies the necessity to involve all RACs and other national and regional institutions in the development of this document. The establishment of several working groups is also an option. POMRAC will provide leadership during planning and synthesis of results, and will overview issues on inputs of contaminants from different sources. CEARAC will support preparation of chapters

addressing pressures on marine biodiversity and eutrophication. MERRAC will assist in assessing impacts of maritime activities on the environment. DINRAC will be concerned with data management and identifying gaps. Overall activity will be implemented in close partnership between all RACs and RCU and involve inputs from various national, regional and global institutions as well as individual experts. SOMER-3 will provide an important contribution to the second cycle of the Regular Process for Global Reporting and Assessment of the State of the Marine Environment (so called World Ocean Assessment). It will follow Regular Process methodology by adopting it for NOWPAP conditions.

### 3.2. The compatibility with Ecological Quality Objectives

According to NOWPAP MTS 2018-2023, regular assessments are necessary and important parts of all NOWPAP priority areas. Obvious links take place between assessment activities and integrated coastal and river basin management, which environmental aspects are based on the Ecological Quality Objectives (EcoQOs). Moreover, Ecological Quality Objectives developed for the NOWPAP region in 2012-2017, have been suggested from the outcomes of SOMER-2. Therefore substantive part of SOMER-3 should be directly related to the five EcoQOs, and the contents of respective chapters should allow to check the efficiency of suggested EcoQOs indicators. It does not mean that other important and emerging environmental issues (like climate change, acidification, microplastic pollution) will be ignored in SOMER-3.

### 3.3. The aligning with SDGs

After adoption of sustainable development goals (SDGs) by the UN General Assembly in December 2015, NOWPAP activities related to the assessment of ecological quality for the northwest Pacific also have to be aligned with the SDG indicators as much as possible.

SDG 14 “Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development” and SDG 15 “Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss” are the goals most closely related to the NOWPAP EcoQOs and to the topics addressing in SOMER-3. For the time being only 4 indicators of these SDGs are directly reflected by the operational criteria and indicators of NOWPAP EcoQOs:

- 1) 14.1.1. “Index of coastal eutrophication” – by indicators of EcoQO 3: **Eutrophication adverse effects are absent**
- 2) 14.1.1. “Floating plastic debris density” – by indicators of EcoQ 5: **Marine litter does not adversely affect coastal and marine environments**
- 3) 14.4.1 “Proportion of fish stocks within biologically sustainable levels” – by indicators of EcoQO 1: **Biological and habitat diversity are not changed significantly due to anthropogenic pressure**
- 4) 15.5.1. “Red List Index” – by indicators of EcoQO 1 **Biological and habitat diversity are not changed significantly due to anthropogenic pressure** and EcoQO 2 **Alien species are at levels that do not adversely alter the ecosystems.**

The advantages and limitations of using these SDGs indicators will be evaluated during the assessment of the NOWPAP environmental problems in SOMER-3.

#### **4. Main tasks**

4.1. Preparation of the draft structure of the SOMER-3 and discussion with RACs, RCU and nominated leading experts by correspondence

Experience during the development of SOMER and SOMER-2 have shown that one of the key factors is an early collaboration between all RACs supported by RCU, beginning from the stage of Report structure preparation. First version of structure prepared by POMRAC Secretariat will be presented at the 16<sup>th</sup> POMRAC FPM in 2019. Taking into account the possibility of different approaches to the SOMER-3 structure, it is suggested to have broad discussion by correspondence with RACs and RCU. **Simultaneously POMRAC FPs and RACs will be asked to begin nomination of appropriate experts for the SOMER-3 implementation.**

4.2. Organization of the Workshop in the second half 2020 for the final discussion and approval of SOMER-3 contents and structure

Results of the abovementioned discussion will be finalized during the 2020 Workshop of RACs and RCU representatives, and nominated experts **if any. Approved structure and contents of SOMER-3 is a major goal and outcome of this WS. Finalization of experts nomination should be based on the SOMER-3 structure approved at the workshop.**

4.3. Preparation of draft chapters of SOMER-3 by the leading experts and RACs

Nominated experts will prepare drafts of the different chapters for SOMER-3. Discussion by correspondence and comments from RACs and RCU for all chapters will be important part of this stage of SOMER-3 preparation.

#### 4.4. Compilation of SOMER-3

Compilation of SOMER-3 will begin by the international consultant hired by POMRAC after finalization of the separate chapters, and according to the approved structure.

### 5. Expected outcomes

Elaborated and approved different chapters will be major outcomes on the SOMER-3 activity for 2020-2021.

### 6. Schedule

Time		Actions	Main Body
2020	Q1	Discussion by correspondence of the SOMER 3 structure, and involvement of other RACs into the process of preparation	POMRAC
	Q2-Q3	Nomination of experts	POMRAC and FPs
	Q2-Q3	Workshop for the final discussion and approval of the SOMER 3 structure	Experts, RACs and relevant organizations
	Q4	Preparation of the drafts for the chapters of SOMER-3	POMRAC, FPs and experts/RACs
2021	Q1	Review of the chapters of SOMER-3	POMRAC, FPs and RACs
	Q2	Finalization of the chapters of SOMER-3	POMRAC, FPs and experts/RACs
	Q3-Q4	Preparation of Draft SOMER-3 with presentation at the POMRAC FPM	International consultant, POMRAC

**7. Budget 48,000 USD**

Contract	Timing	Output	To be completed	Counterpart	Budget
Workshop on SOMER-3 structure	2020 Q3	SOMER-3 structure	2020Q3	Experts, RACs, RCU and relevant organizations	18,000
Preparation of the different chapters of SOMER-3	2020 Q4	Different chapters of SOMER-2	2021 Q2	CEARAC, DINRAC, MERRAC, outside experts	24,000*
Preparation and compilation of SOMER-3	2021 Q3-Q4	Draft SOMER-2	2021 Q4	International consultant and POMRAC	6,000*
Total					48,000

\*- through the DINRAC SSFA