Case Study
Northwestern North Sea Sandeel Fishery Closure

Understanding OECMs to achieve the 30 by 30 target
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During the early 1990s sandeel fishery developed off the Firth of Forth, east of Scotland.

The landings from this fishery peaked at over 100,000 t in 1993.

The Firth of Forth area is important for breeding seabirds and the large landings of sandeels coincided with declines in the breeding success of some seabirds.
ICES in 1999 recommended:

that the sandeel fishery west of 1°W in Area 3 (Wee bankie and Long) be functionally closed, because the recent breeding success of kittiwakes has been less than 0.5 fledged chicks per well-built nest (WP - SGESF), which is the recommended threshold for closure. Such a closure should stay in force until kittiwake breeding success exceeds 0.7 fledged chicks per well-built nest.
A precautionary closure of the area was agreed by EC and entered into force in 2000 as a technical measures for the protection of juveniles of marine organisms, although the primary purpose of the closure was intended to benefit seabirds.

Following the exit of the UK from the European Union in 2021 the closure has been retained under UK legislation.

The closure was reviewed in 2001, 2002 and 2007 and it was concluded that the closure had decreased the mortality of age 1+ sandeels.

It was not possible to show a clear link between sandeel abundance and kittiwake breeding success.
Chart showing the closed area. Nature conservation MPAs for sandeels also shown and fishing grounds from Jensen et al. (2011).
OECM?

Criteria A: Not a protected area

Criteria B: The area is governed and managed

Criteria C: Achieves sustained and effective contribution to in situ conservation of biodiversity

Criteria D. Associated ecosystem functions and services and cultural, spiritual, socio-economic and other locally relevant values