

48th Meeting of the Wadden Sea Board (WSB 48)

Meeting Document No. WSB 48/5.2/3

4 March 2026
Online

Agenda Item	5.2 Manage and Communicate Effectively (Paras 44-56)
Document Title	WSB 48/5.2/3 ISWSS16 Synthesis Executive Summary
Submitted by	CWSS / LVVN / Waddenacademie
Submitted on	11 February 2026
Proposal	The WSB is invited to The meeting is invited to: 1. note the information. 2. consider this information in planning processes for the next Trilateral Governmental Conference and prioritisation the following Dutch presidency.

The Executive Summary outlines key policy recommendations from the 16th International Scientific Wadden Sea Symposium. The recommendations are designed to help safeguard the natural values of the Wadden Sea World Heritage Site through improved scientific engagement, advances to assess the current status of the Wadden Sea and forecast future scenarios (considering both present and future pressures), and the better integration of science, management and policies.

ISWSS16 Synthesis Executive Summary

The Wadden Sea in Transition: Cumulative Pressures and Conservation Groningen, The Netherlands | 28-30 October 2025

The Wadden Sea is undergoing rapid ecological and environmental change. At the [16th International Scientific Wadden Sea Symposium](#), trilateral experts explored how natural and human-induced forces interact and impact the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the Wadden Sea World Heritage Site. This executive summary highlights the most relevant and urgent policy recommendations from the 16th ISWSS to safeguard the natural values of the Wadden Sea World Heritage Site.

1. Foster and stimulate engagement within the scientific community

Continuous efforts to inform and interconnect the Wadden Sea scientists are needed to sustain their broad interest and strong involvement in Wadden Sea research. Underlying barriers restricting participation in events by relevant scientists should be identified and addressed to further strengthen the multidisciplinary and trilateral approach of the scientific community in the Wadden Sea.

2. Build scenarios for sustainable management of the Wadden Sea

Climate change and human countermeasures to deal with unwanted effects will put additional pressures on the Wadden Sea ecosystem. Developing science-based scenarios, considering multi-functional use of the Wadden Sea, is key to explore consequences of adaptation strategies towards sustainable management of a resilient Wadden Sea ecosystem.

3. Combine scientific methodologies to assess and forecast cumulative effects

Present and future pressures, including human activities and climate change, can have compounding effects that could trigger irreversible and undesirable ecosystem shifts. There is an urgent need to assess present and forecast future cumulative impacts. Hereto, various multiple learning algorithms can be combined to obtain better predictive performance (ensemble learning). Fostering cross-disciplinary collaboration on cumulation is critical here.

4. Coordinate implementation of nature protection and restoration laws

The Wadden Sea is subject to a suite of international, European, trilateral, national and regional conventions and directives which are differently implemented throughout the area. The upcoming EU Nature Restoration Plan should be taken as a starting point to develop an overarching trilateral view on and approach for nature protection and restoration activities, doing justice to the spirit of all conventions and directives.

5. Actualise monitoring and assessment of the status of the Wadden Sea

Present monitoring (Trilateral Monitoring and Assessment Programme; TMAP) and assessment (Quality Status Report; QSR) efforts do not fully comply to outlined needs from science and society. In addition to demands from scenario building and cumulative impact assessments, TMAP and QSR should be more explicitly targeting needs raised by UNESCO and the EU.

6. Implement an integrated, ecosystem-based approach

To assess the Status of the Wadden Sea, we need to consider bottom-up and top-down effects. In order to detect ecosystem shifts and receive early warnings, research and monitoring should include multi-species, ecosystem-based frameworks. These should take the interconnection of different components of the Wadden Sea ecosystem into account, also beyond the boundaries of the World Heritage Site.

7. Improve science-policy information exchange

Scientific outcomes are still not fully heard and taken up by relevant Wadden Sea stakeholders and challenges of these stakeholders not fully acknowledged by the scientific community. Science-policy exchange could benefit from stronger scientific outreach and from more explicit scientific requests by stakeholders.

8. Streamline integration of scientific knowledge for trilateral policies

Schedule the next International Scientific Wadden Sea Symposium in the spring of 2029. This allows sufficient time for integration of the symposium's outcomes into the preparation of the next Trilateral Ministerial Declaration.

15 January 2026