

## Norway's Ambitious Climate Act: Implementation Potential of the Marine Resources Management Tools

By: Lena Schøning

Matter commented on: Norway's new [Climate Act](#)

In June this year, the Norwegian Parliament adopted the [Climate Act](#). In short, the Act establishes under domestic law Norway's objectives for reducing greenhouse gas emissions. The emissions covered by the Act are emissions and sinks reported by Norway under the [Paris Agreement](#). The objectives of the Act are to reduce, by 40% by 2030 and by 80-95% by 2050, greenhouse gas emissions to the level of the reference year 1990. The Act is not unique; UK, Denmark and Finland have adopted similar statutes.

A yearly reporting obligation on meeting these objectives is included in the Act. These ambitious objectives call for consistent strategies from general to more specific goals, across sectors and policy areas: Arild Underdal, "Integrated Marine Policy: What? Why? How?" (1980). Marine Policy 159. By strategies, I mean the overall plans including measures and tools to meet these objectives. Even though the Act is recent and will not enter into force until 2018, the political objective of reducing greenhouse gas emissions is not new. This post examines whether strategies to meet these objectives are already in place or could be facilitated through relevant marine resource management tools.

In this light I first investigated the [Nature Diversity Act](#) setting out that nature shall be taken care of by sustainable use and protection; the [Marine Resources Act](#), which regulates harvesting and use of wild marine resources; the [Petroleum Act](#) regulating petroleum activity related to undersea petroleum deposits subject to Norwegian jurisdiction; and the [Aquaculture Act](#) applicable to production of aquatic organisms. While none of these Acts concretely addresses climate change causes and effects, they do include broad discretionary power for the authorities to address climate change (Ingeborg Stene, "[Marin ressursforvaltning i et klimaperspektiv – med særlig vekt på vern av marine områder som virkemiddel for klimatilpasning](#)", 2011). Accordingly, there is some potential to develop appropriate strategies.

Second, I investigated [the integrated ocean management plans of Norway](#). The purpose of the plans is "to provide a framework for the sustainable use of resources and ecosystem services", and to set out the framework for the activities carried out in the sea area. The plans state that climate change is a major threat to the oceans, and consequently address the effects of climate change on the marine environment and the need for further research and monitoring of these. Nevertheless, [the plan for the Norwegian Sea](#) states that

"The Government's targets and measures for reductions of greenhouse gas emissions are not the subject of this white paper. However, a reduction in global greenhouse gas emissions will be of crucial importance for the state of the Norwegian Sea environment in the future."

Despite aspirations to provide a framework for activities and sustainable use, the integrated ocean management plans do not include or refer to strategies addressing the causes of climate change. Nor do the plans concretely address measures to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions or to adapt to climate change, although some of the measures included in the plans may in fact have that effect. Regardless, the plans open up new areas for petroleum activities. Although these activities

are subject to CO<sub>2</sub> tax and quota trading, they will result in greenhouse gas emissions upon consumption outside Norwegian territory, in addition to the operational emissions from Norwegian territory.

Third, I examined the [Planning and Building Act](#), Norway's overarching, coordinating planning statute. The Act is broader in scope than the statutes discussed above and provides that plans shall include climate considerations, but the Act only applies to sea areas one nautical mile from the base lines.

Last, I investigated the [Pollution Act](#), the objectives of which include to protect the environment against pollution and to reduce existing pollution. Although the most important Act to control polluting emissions, including greenhouse gas emissions, the government itself has [stated](#) that the Act is rarely used as a measure to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

The current Norwegian climate policy compromise, [the climate settlement of 2012](#), broadly covers both marine and terrestrial matters. My question is nevertheless whether strategies to address the causes of, mitigate greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to the consequences of climate change, should not also be implemented consistently, from general to more specific goals, across sectors and policy levels, including in the integrated ocean management plans. Based on the above investigations, there is great potential in existing marine resource management tools, to develop and include strategies to combat, adapt to and mitigate climate change, to meet the ambitious targets of the Climate Act.

*This post is based on a presentation on 13 June 2017 at the workshop "[Natural Marine Resource Management in a Changing Climate](#)".*

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