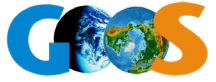


Essential Ocean Variable Specification Sheet

Benthic invertebrate abundance and distribution





The Global Ocean Observing System

DRAFT

DETAILED INFORMATION ON HOW TO READ THE SPECIFICATION SHEET CAN BE FOUND IN THIS [GUIDE](#)

Background and justification

Benthic invertebrates live on, near or beneath seafloors across the world, from polar seas to tropical reefs, and from intertidal mudflats to abyssal plains. They represent a huge number of taxa (27 phyla) and a large range of sizes (nanograms to kilograms).

Benthic invertebrates make up a significant proportion of global biodiversity across the ocean's most extreme gradients of temperature, oxygen availability, food supply, and pH. They play critical roles in ecosystem function, including food webs, carbon cycling, and habitat provision. Additionally, many species are of economic, social and cultural benefit, supporting food security, tourism, and indigenous values. Many taxa and habitats within this group are also protected under conservation frameworks.

Despite the importance of this group, collecting, integrating, and analyzing biological and ecosystem data for benthic invertebrates is challenging. Efforts are complicated by the lack of universally accepted size-range definitions and methodologies for quantifying benthic invertebrates, due to their wide size range and varied habitat conditions.

Advances in technology and methodology are significantly enhancing the availability of comparable and collatable benthic invertebrate data. Typical methods to quantify abundance and distribution include direct sampling methods and marine imagery, with newer techniques such as environmental DNA and drone imagery also proving useful. Broader adoption of best practices throughout the data lifecycle can revolutionize our understanding of benthic invertebrates by linking sampling and surveying techniques, body-size estimates, laboratory analysis, artificial intelligence and machine learning, metadata and taxonomic standards, integrative data management and cyberinfrastructure, modeling, and translational data and information products.

Integration with Global Observation Frameworks

The Global Climate Observing System (GCOS) developed the Essential Climate Variable (ECV) framework to define necessary observations for monitoring Earth's climate (Bojinski et al., 2014). Some EOVs, including ocean physics, biogeochemistry, and biology/ecosystems variables (GCOS, 2022a; GCOS, 2022b), are also ECVs.

The Essential Biodiversity Variables (EBVs) defined and curated by the Group on Earth Observations Biodiversity Observation Network (GEO BON) complement the GOOS biological and ecosystem (BioEco) EOVs (Muller-Karger et al., 2018; Bax et al., 2019). The EOVs represent the basic observations of a particular parameter or process. EBVs are time series of biodiversity observations across genes, species populations, communities, or ecosystems. Thus, EOVs may be seen as the building blocks for GEO BON EBVs. The EOVs can be used to synthesise the EBVs as time series of BioEco EOV sub-variables at one location, or as time series of gridded, mapped, or modelled EOVs (Jetz et al., 2019).

The GOOS Biology and Ecosystems Panel collaborates with the Physics and Climate and Biogeochemistry Panels to advance EOVs, advocating for the need for biological observations, information management, and applications. GOOS, MBON, GEO BON, and OBIS work together to standardise guidelines and data management for EOVs, EBVs, and ECVs.

Current observing networks and coordination

Diverse networks and communities are collecting observations of biology and ecosystems EOVs at different scales and in different regions. An initial baseline survey conducted in 2019/20 identified 203 active, long-term (>5 years) observing programs systematically sampling marine life. These programs spanned about 7% of the ocean surface area, mostly concentrated in coastal regions of the United States, Canada, Europe, and Australia (Satterthwaite et al 2021). This information can be found in the GOOS BioEco Metadata Portal, which is continually updated. To consult the latest information, please visit: <https://bioeco.goosocean.org>

Contributes to (please click on the symbol for more information):

Essential Biodiversity Variables, Marine Habitats, SDG 14 and CBD



1. EOVS information

ESSENTIAL OCEAN VARIABLE (EOV)

Benthic invertebrate abundance and distribution

DEFINITION

The quantity and spatial distribution of non-vertebrate animals living near (benthic-pelagic or hyperbenthic), on (epifauna), or beneath (infauna), the seafloor.

EOV SUB-VARIABLES - key measurements that are used to estimate the EOVS

Number of individuals per unit area
Biomass per unit area
% living cover
*Presence / absence

*occurrence (presence only) is a minimum requirement, but not recommended

SUPPORTING VARIABLES - other measurements that are useful to provide scale or context to the sub-variables of the EOVS

Environmental

[Sea surface temperature](#)

[Subsurface temperature](#) (near bottom)

[Surface currents](#)

[Subsurface currents](#)

[Oxygen](#)

[Particulate matter](#) - e.g. Particulate Organic Carbon flux

[Ocean Bottom Pressure](#) (depth)

Bathymetric Position Index

Substrate Type

Microbe biomass and diversity (pilot GOOS EOVS)

EOVS related

Body size

Functional traits

Life stage

Metabolic rates, including as proxy for activity (e.g. bioturbation, feeding)

DERIVED PRODUCTS - outputs calculated from the EOVS and sub-variables, often in combination with the supporting variables

Benthic diversity indices

Distribution maps




Habitat type

2. Phenomena to observe - what we want to observe with this EOVS

This section presents an example of 3 priority phenomena for GOOS that can be (partly) characterised by this EOVS's sub-variables. This list is not exhaustive but serves to provide general guidance on how observation efforts can structure their planning and implementation.

The GOOS application area(s) the phenomena are relevant for are depicted as follows: Climate , ocean health , operational services



PHENOMENA TO OBSERVE		Community or population abundance status and trends 	Changes in marine life distribution 	Changes in biodiversity 
PHENOMENA EXTENT	HORIZONTAL	Local, regional and global	Local, regional and global	Local, regional and global
	VERTICAL	On, near (+ 2 m), and beneath (-0.2 m) the seafloor (all depths)	On, near (+ 2 m), and beneath (-0.2 m) the seafloor (all depths)	On, near (+ 2 m), and beneath (-0.2 m) the seafloor (all depths)
	TEMPORAL	Seasonal (particularly shallow environments) to decadal (particularly deep sea)	Annual (regional species extinction) to decadal (changes in species range extension due to climate change)	Annual (resulting from stochastic events) to decadal (resulting from long-term environmental change)
RESOLUTION TO OBSERVE PHENOMENA	HORIZONTAL	Local: <100 kms Regional: 100-1000 km Global: 0.5° or 1° grid cells	Local: <100 kms Regional: 100-1000 km Global: 0.5° or 1° grid cells	Local: <100 kms Regional: 100-1000 km Global: 0.5° or 1° grid cells
	VERTICAL	Organism dependent, ~1 m above seafloor, ~5 cm below seafloor (meiofauna) - greater for larger infauna organisms	Organism dependent, ~1 m above seafloor, ~5 cm below seafloor (meiofauna) - greater for larger infauna organisms	Organism dependent, ~1 m above seafloor, ~5 cm below seafloor (meiofauna) - greater for larger infauna organisms
	TEMPORAL	Seasonal to decadal	Annual to decadal	Annual to decadal
SIGNAL TO CAPTURE		Change in IUCN category	Statistically significant changes in species occurrence observations outside their known natural range	Statistically significant changes in alpha, beta or gamma diversity

	<p>Statistically significant change in abundance per taxa</p>	<p>Species lost or gained</p>	
<p>SUB-VARIABLES NEEDED TO MEASURE</p>	<p>Taxonomic/functional group/size-specific:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individuals per unit area and/or • Biomass per unit area • Presence/absence • Occurrence 	<p>Taxonomic/functional group/size-specific:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individuals per unit area and/or • Biomass per unit area • Presence/absence • Occurrence 	<p>Taxonomic/functional group/size-specific:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individuals per unit area and/or • Biomass per unit area • Presence/absence • Occurrence
<p>SUPPORTING VARIABLES NEEDED</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sea surface temperature • Subsurface temperature (near bottom) • Subsurface salinity • Surface currents • Subsurface currents • Oxygen • Particulate matter • Depth • Bathymetric Position Index • Substrate Type • Microbe biomass and diversity (*pilot) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sea surface temperature • Subsurface temperature (near bottom) • Subsurface salinity • Surface currents • Subsurface currents • Oxygen • Particulate matter • Depth • Bathymetric Position Index • Substrate Type • Microbe biomass and diversity (*pilot) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sea surface temperature • Subsurface temperature (near bottom) • Subsurface salinity • Surface currents • Subsurface currents • Oxygen • Particulate matter • Depth • Bathymetric Position Index • Substrate Type • Microbe biomass and diversity (*pilot)

3. GOOS Observing Specifications or Requirements

This section outlines ideal measurements for an optimal observing system for this Essential Ocean Variable (EOV). It offers guidance on creating a long-term system to observe key phenomena related to the EOV. These values are not mandatory, and no single system is expected to meet all requirements. Instead, the combined efforts of various observing systems should aim to meet these goals. Observations at different scales are also valuable contributions to global ocean observation if shared openly.

EOV	Benthic Invertebrate abundance and distribution							
PHENOMENA	Community or population status and trends Changes in marine life distribution Changes in biodiversity							
EOV SUB-VARIABLE	Individuals per unit area				DEFINITION	Total number of individuals within a taxon, functional group, or size class identified from a quantified spatial area in the sample or imagery.		
	Resolution			Timeliness	Uncertainty Measurement	Stability	Sampling approach	References
	Spatial Horizontal	Spatial Vertical	Temporal					
IDEAL	Number of replicate sample informed by power analysis	-n/a	Number of replicate sample informed by power analysis	-n/a	within 95% confidence limits for imagery, quantify observer bias	-n/a	Underwater imagery (towed, remote, autonomous) for epifauna Samples (trawl, grab, box corer) or proxy imagery (e.g. sediment)	General: Eleftheriou 2013, Soucek et al 2023 Imagery: Benoist et al 2019, de Mendonça and Metaxas 202, Durden et al 2016a Sediment sampling: Danavaro 2010, Rumohr 2009, Gray and Elliott 2009, Rogers et al 2008

DESIRABLE	0.5 ° grid cells / 10-20 replicate samples per spatial unit*	-n/a	seasonal to annual / 10-20 replicate samples per temporal unit	-n/a	within 95% confidence limits for imagery, quantify observer bias	-n/a	traces) for infauna Combining techniques	Meiofauna: Somerfield and Warwick 2013 Sediment traces: Przeslawski et al 2012 Observer bias in imaging: Durden et al 2016b AI bias/machine learning: Bravo et al 2021 Spatial autocorrelation: Legendre 1993 Deep Sea: Clark et al 2016
	MINIMUM	1° grid cells / 3-10 replicate samples per spatial unit*	-n/a	Once (e.g. deep-sea)	-n/a	within 95% confidence limits		-n/a

EOV SUB-VARIABLE	Biomass per unit area				DEFINITION	Total mass of individuals within a taxon, functional group, or size class identified from a quantified spatial area in the sample or imagery. For imagery: require density of individuals for groups or categories of fauna, as well as individual size/mass information to allow extrapolation.		
	Resolution			Timeliness	Uncertainty Measurement	Stability	Sampling approach	References
	Spatial Horizontal	Spatial Vertical	Temporal					
IDEAL	Variable with body size and application	-n/a	Number of replicate sample	-n/a	Scale calibration (imagery),	-n/a	For imagery: estimation of individual body	General: Eleftheriou 2013, Soucek et al 2023

	<p>(e.g. meiofauna can be sampled with several cm² vs. megafauna requiring much larger areas</p> <p>Number of replicate samples informed by power analysis and collected within the spatial decorrelation scale of the data</p>		informed by power analysis		wet weight conversion		size by linear measurement with conversion to wet weight biomass and/or carbon biomass	<p>Autocorrelation: Legendre 1993</p> <p>Biomass estimation with imagery: Årje et al 2020</p> <p>Observer bias in imaging: Durden et al 2016b</p> <p>Weight-to-weight conversion factors: Gogina et al 2022</p>
DESIRABLE	0.5 ° grid cells / 10-20 replicate samples per spatial unit*	-n/a	seasonal to annual / 10-20 replicate samples per temporal unit	-n/a	within 95% confidence limits	-n/a		
MINIMUM	1° grid cells / 3-10 replicate samples per spatial unit*	-n/a	Once (e.g. deep-sea)	-n/a	within 95% confidence limits	-n/a		

EOV SUB-VARIABLE	% Living cover				DEFINITION		The percent of cover of living invertebrates (total or from a particular taxon) identified from a quantified spatial area in imagery or visual census	
	Resolution			Timeliness	Uncertainty Measurement	Stability	Sampling approach	References
Spatial Horizontal	Spatial Vertical	Temporal						
IDEAL	<1 m	-n/a	Seasonal	-n/a	<10%cover	-n/a	Underwater imagery (towed, remote, autonomous) for epifauna Measurements in quadrats or images, defined areas desirable	General: Eleftheriou 2013, Soucek et al 2023 Visual census: Mello et al 2023 Observer bias/imaging: Durden et al 2016b
DESIRABLE	<1 m	-n/a	Annual	-n/a	10-20% cover	-n/a		
MINIMUM	<5 m	-n/a	Decadal	-n/a	10 - 40% cover	-n/a		

EOV SUB-VARIABLE	Presence/absence				DEFINITION		The presence or absence of a taxon, functional group, or size class identified from samples or imagery from a known location.	
	Resolution			Timeliness	Uncertainty Measurement	Stability	Sampling approach	References
Spatial Horizontal	Spatial Vertical	Temporal						
IDEAL	Number of replicate sample informed by power analysis and collected	-n/a	Number of replicate sample informed by power analysis	-	within 95% confidence limits for imagery, quantify observer bias	-	Underwater imagery (towed, remote, autonomous) for epifauna Samples (trawl, grab, box corer)	General: Eleftheriou 2013, Soucek et al 2023 Imagery, including classification scheme: Untiedt et al 2021

	within the spatial decorrelation on scale of the data						or proxy imagery (e.g. sediment traces) for infauna	eDNA: de Brauwer et al 2023, Kopp et al 2023
DESIRABLE	0.5 ° grid cells / 10-20 replicate samples per spatial unit*	-n/a	seasonal to annual / 10-20 replicate samples per temporal unit	-	within 95% confidence limits	-	Combining techniques eDNA metabarcoding of bottom water samples or sediment samples	Imagery: Buhl-Mortensen and Buhl Mortensen 2014 Trawl and imagery: Mendonça and Metaxas 2021 Sediment sampling: Danavaro 2010, Rumohr 2009, Gray and Elliott 2009, Rogers et al 2008
MINIMUM	1° grid cells / 3-10 replicate samples per spatial unit*	-n/a	Once (e.g. deep sea)	-	within 95% confidence limits	-		Meiofauna: Somerfield and Warwick 2013 Sediment traces: Przeslawski et al 2012 Observer bias in imaging: Durden et al 2016 AI bias/machine learning: Bravo et al 2021 Spatial autocorrelation: Legendre 1993 Deep Sea: Clark et al 2016

* Observing benthic invertebrates in a quantitatively robust way requires observing a sufficient number of individuals to estimate density, biomass or diversity, which can take increasingly large numbers depending on the variance of a given community or assemblage (e.g. 100 + individuals per sample). And areas with less density can require observing larger areas to reach sufficient numbers of individuals for quantitative descriptions, where smaller fauna are in higher densities than larger fauna in line with the relationships described by the Metabolic Theory of Ecology (Brown et al 2004).

4. Observing approach, platforms and technologies

This table provides examples of approaches and technologies used to collect this EOV to help observe priority phenomena

APPROACH / PLATFORM	Underwater imagery & visual census	Sediment/infaunal sampling	Epibenthos sampling
EOV SUB-VARIABLE(S) MEASURED	Individuals per unit area Biomass per unit area % Living cover Presence/absence	Individuals per unit area Biomass per unit area Presence/absence	Individuals per unit area Biomass per unit area Presence/absence
TECHNIQUE / SENSOR TYPE	Camera (video/stills) Baited videos (BRUVs) Sediment Profile Imaging Time-lapse imaging	Box corers, grabs	Benthic sleds, trawls
SUGGESTED METHODS AND BEST PRACTICES	General: Bowden et al 2020 Photogrammetry: Reviewed in Durden et al. 2016a Observer bias quantification: Durden et al 2016b Standardised nomenclature (e.g. CATAMI): Althaus et al, Horton et al 2021) BRUVs (Langlois et al 2024) ROVs: (Monk et al 2024a) Towed Camera: (Carroll et al 2024) AUVs: (Monk et al 2024b) Visual census: Edgar et al 2020	Przeslawski et al 2024a	Przeslawski et al 2024b
SUPPORTING VARIABLES MEASURED			

APPROACH / PLATFORM	eDNA	Acoustics	Aerial Imagery
EOV SUB-VARIABLE(S) MEASURED	Presence/absence	% Living cover Presence/absence	% Living cover Presence/absence
TECHNIQUE / SENSOR TYPE	Water or sediment samples	Multibeam, sidescan, acoustic camera	Drone imagery, manned aircraft imagery, satellite imagery
SUGGESTED METHODS AND BEST PRACTICES	De Brauwer et al 2023, Pawlowski et al 2022	Conway et al 2005, Picard et al 2022	Drone imagery: Clarkson and Pollack 2022, Monteiro et al 2021 Satellite imagery: Sagar et al 2020, Espriella and Lecours 2023
SUPPORTING VARIABLES MEASURED			

5. Data and information management

Access to data and information is at the core of an ocean observing system. This section provides essential information on how to contribute data to the GOOS

GOOS approach to data management is aligned with open data and FAIR (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, Reusable)¹ practices. All EOVS data and information is valuable, thus effective data management practices are essential to ensure it remains accessible and (re)usable for future generations.

In this section you will be directed to resources that explain how you can contribute data to global ocean observing and ensure your data and information is accessible, interoperable and sustained. This resource has instructions for different scenarios: an individual submitting data, or existing data centres connecting to the system.

Please follow these practices carefully, as BioEco EOVS data FAIRness relies on compliance with these guidelines.

Before proceeding, please note these important points:

1. As a **minimum**, you must ensure information describing your EOVS data (i.e. metadata) are visible in the [Ocean Data and Information System \(ODIS\)](#)². Regardless of where the actual data is stored, evidence of its existence must be findable within ODIS.
2. BioEco EOVS data is successfully managed if it is discoverable in the [GOOS BioEco Portal](#). The BioEco Portal is the central point of access and coordination of BioEco EOVS observing programmes. Data visible in ODIS will automatically be visible in the BioEco Portal and vice versa.
3. If data is published to OBIS³, it will also be visible in ODIS and the BioEco Portal. You do not need to also add it elsewhere, unless there is extra information you would like to include.

The main data management steps are as follow:

1. Become discoverable: ensure the data producers (e.g., organisation, programme, project, etc.) and datasets are visible in ODIS
2. Prepare the required metadata about the data producer and the datasets
3. Publish EOVS data (e.g. OBIS)
4. Verify discoverability in ODIS

¹ Wilkinson et al. 2016 <https://doi.org/10.1038/sdata.2016.18>

² ODIS, part of IOC-UNESCO's International Oceanographic Data and Information Exchange (IODE), is a global federation of data systems sharing interoperable (meta)data about holdings, services, and other resources to enhance cross-domain data accessibility.

³ OBIS is a global biodiversity database and IOC-UNESCO IODE component, connecting +30 nodes, +1000 institutions, and 99 countries, interoperating with other major biodiversity hubs like GBIF and makes data visible in ODIS as an ODIS node.

Help Resources

- EOVS Metadata Submission tool: <https://eovmetadata.obis.org/>

ODIS

- General help <https://book.odis.org/index.html>
- Connecting to ODIS <https://book.odis.org/gettingStarted.html>
- ODIS Catalogue of Sources: <https://catalogue.odis.org/>
- Ocean Info Hub: <https://oceaninfohub.org/>
- Schema.org framework <https://schema.org/>

OBIS

- OBIS Manual: <https://manual.obis.org/>
- OBIS YouTube data formatting and publishing videos: https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLIqUwSvpCFS4TS7ZN0fhByj_3EBZ5IXbF
- Darwin Core term reference list: <https://dwc.tdwg.org/terms/>
- WoRMS taxonomy: <https://www.marinespecies.org/>
- Spreadsheet template generator <https://www.nordatanet.no/aen/template-generator/config%3DDarwin%20Core>
- BioData Guide with example code for transforming datasets to DwC: https://ioos.github.io/bio_data_guide/

GOOS BioEco Portal

- Documentation <https://iobis.github.io/bioeco-docs/>
- Access <https://bioeco.goosocean.org/>

Data on benthic invertebrate abundance and distribution can be obtained from whole biological specimens, imagery, or genetic samples, and this determines the most appropriate data management workflow (Durden et al 2024). Traditionally, data related to biological specimens have been delivered as presence-only taxonomic identifications, thus reducing the applicability of such databases for monitoring purposes. Data are often managed by individual museum scientists or curators and subsequently harvested by online platforms. Some of these platforms (e.g. Atlas of Living Australia) do not yet include absences or information related to sampling effort.

The primary global repository for all BioEco EOVS data is the [Ocean Biodiversity Management System](#) which often cross-posts data with the [Global Biodiversity Information Facility](#). The [OBIS Manual](#) describes example data schema for invertebrate abundance and distribution data, sub variables, and data products

collected by various sampling and imagery platforms. Taxonomic identity ontology and tracking uses tools of the World Register of Marine Species (WoRMS, <https://www.marinespecies.org/>) These ontologies include numeric identifiers that allow for reclassification as taxonomic knowledge improves. Importantly, OBIS is now able to store absence records and sampling effort, as well as to link species data to other related information (e.g. environmental data, images, sampling effort) using the OBIS ENV-DATA approach (De Pooter et al. 2017).

The OBIS ENV-DATA approach can also be used to capture body size to mass conversion information with the Extended Measurement or Fact extension (eMoF), linking multiple biometric measurements (weight, biomass) to a particular occurrence record or (sub)sample. In addition, eMoF can also capture processing details (e.g. automated versus human identification of invertebrates).

For image data, international tools and repositories are developing such as FathomNet (<https://fathomnet.org>) which is a global, open-source image and machine learning model repository. FathomNet partners with National Centers for Environmental Information (NCEI, <https://www.ncei.noaa.gov>) to offer long-term, web accessible image archiving, which allows for transfer learning and other artificial intelligence approaches to train models on novel combinations of training images and classification systems. Other international and national systems with long-term or ongoing support include Squidle+ (www.squidle.org) and Reef Cloud (<https://reefcloud.ai>).

In a global context, there are several initiatives that use benthic invertebrate data for research, observing, and statutory monitoring including the following:

- GEO BON,
- International Seabed Authority (ISA) for observing and model data to understand baseline and impact assessment for its Reserved Areas for prospective seafloor mining (Stratmann et al. 2018),
- Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC, Peck et al. 2018, Yool et al. 2017, Cooley et al. 2022),
- Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES),
- Convention on Biodiversity,
- Coastal and Estuarine Research Federation (CERF),
- OSPAR Commission,
- International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES),
- Deep Ocean Stewardship Initiative (DOSI), and those implementing the Deep Ocean Observing Strategy (DOOS, Levin et al. 2019).

Many national and regional initiatives also evaluate the status and trends in marine invertebrate variables (e.g. European Marine Strategy Framework Directive, US National Marine Sanctuaries Act, Australian State of the Environment reporting). While each has differing combinations of observing needs, size-specific information on benthic invertebrate biomass, including via a gridded time variant format, can address needs across these groups.

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Standards and reference materials

Nil

Integrated EOVS products and visualisations

Nil

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

CBD: Convention on Biological Diversity

EBV: Essential Biodiversity Variables

ECV: Essential Climate Variables

EOV: Essential Ocean Variables

GCOS: Global Climate Observing System

GEO BON: Group on Earth Observations Biodiversity Observation Network

GOOS: Global Ocean Observing System

IOCCP: International Ocean Carbon Coordination Project

MBON: Marine Biodiversity Observation Network

OBIS: Ocean Biodiversity Information System

ODIS: Ocean Data Information System

OCG: Observation Coordination Group

OOPC: Ocean Observations Physics and Climate Panel

SDG: Sustainable Development Goals

Glossary of terms

Bathymetric Position Index: a measure of where a georeferenced location with a defined depth, is relative to the neighbouring locations. BPI plays a significant role in characterizing benthic terrain for modelling and classification.

Benthic invertebrates: Animals without vertebrae that are associated with the seabed. This includes animals that live or extend up to 2 m above the seabed (e.g. habitat formers, demersal invertebrates) and those that live beneath the seabed generally no more than 0.5 m deep (e.g. infauna).

Derived products: outputs calculated from the EOV and sub-variables, often in combination with the supporting variables, that contribute to evaluating change in phenomena. For example, evaporation can be determined from sea surface temperature measurements; air-sea fluxes of CO₂ can be derived from inorganic carbon EOV; fish stock productivity can be determined from fish abundance.

Distribution maps: Maps showing recorded or predicted species occurrence, abundance, biomass, cover, habitat, or other sub-variables.

Diversity indices: Various metrics to assess biodiversity, e.g. richness, Shannon H; evenness

Functional group: Classification based on a particular ecosystem function or characteristic, which could include trophic level, habitat, size or other.

Indicators: An indicator can be defined as a 'measure based on verifiable data that conveys information about more than just itself'. This means that indicators are purpose dependent - the interpretation or meaning given to the data depends on the purpose or issue of concern.

Measurement Uncertainty: the parameter, associated with the result of a measurement, that characterises the dispersion of the values that could reasonably be attributed to the measurand. It includes all contributions to the uncertainty, expressed in units of 2 standard deviations, unless stated otherwise

Ontogeny: the developmental process of an organism. For benthic marine invertebrates, life stages can often be very different, including non-benthic periods (e.g. free-swimming larvae).

Phenomena: properties (e.g., of a species such as distribution), processes (e.g., of the ocean such as surface ocean heat flux), or events (e.g., such as algal blooms) that have distinct spatial and temporal scales, and when observed, inform evaluations of ocean state and ocean change

Stability: The change in bias over time. Stability is quoted per decade.

Substrate Type: The physical characteristics of the surface of the seafloor, including sediment or rock type and sometimes combined with relief, slope and bedforms.

Supporting variables: other measurements that are useful to provide scale or context to the sub-variables of the EOV (e.g., pressure measurements to provide information on the depth at which subsurface currents are estimated, sea temperature to understand dissolved inorganic carbon, water turbidity to support estimations of hard coral cover).

Sub-variables: key measurements that are used to estimate the EOV (e.g., counts of individuals to provide an estimate of species abundance (such as fish, mammals, seabirds or turtles), partial pressure of carbon dioxide (pCO₂) to estimate ocean inorganic carbon, or wave height to estimate sea state).

Timeliness: The time expectation for availability of data measured from the data acquisition time.

Appendix - Additional information

A1. Applications

This table provides examples of applications of this EOVS, including GOOS applications, contribution to other essential variable frameworks and contribution to indicators

EOV		
CORRESPONDING ESSENTIAL VARIABLES	ECV	
	EBV	
GLOBAL INDICATORS EOVS CAN CONTRIBUTE	SDG	
	CBD	
	CLIMATE	
	OTHER	
GOOS APPLICATIONS		

A2. Additional supporting material and literature

Suggested literature

Other material

A3. Readiness level assessment

Essential Ocean Variable Specification Sheet



The Global Ocean Observing System

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Coordination of this revision was partially supported by the European Union-funded BioEcoOcean project (Grant Agreement No. 101136748).