# NPWS

# Ballymacoda (Clonpriest and Pillmore) SAC (site code: 000077)

## Conservation objectives supporting document - coastal habitats

## Version 1 - supplement 1

**March 2026**

**IMPORTANT:** This supplement, published in 2026, includes details relating to the EU habitat **1410 Mediterranean salt meadows (Juncetalia maritimi)** which was added as a Qualifying Interest for the site after the Site-Specific Conservation Objectives (Version 2) were published. This document should be read in conjunction with the Version 3 Site-Specific Conservation Objectives (NPWS, 2026), and with the Conservation objectives supporting document - Coastal habitats Version 1 (NPWS, 2014). Any references to this/these habitats in previously published Site-specific Conservation Objectives (SSCO), or SSCO supporting documents, including the mapping, are to be considered **superseded** by these updates.

# Contents



Citation: NPWS (2026) Ballymacoda (Clonpriest and Pillmore) SAC (site code 000077) Conservation objectives supporting document - coastal habitats V1 - supplement 1. Conservation Objectives Supporting Document Series. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, Dublin, Ireland.

# 1. Introduction

1410 Mediterranean salt meadows (Juncetalia maritimi) were added as a Qualifying Interest to Ballymacoda (Clonpriest and Pillmore) SAC (site code: 000077) after the Site-Specific Conservation Objectives (Version 2) were published. This document sets out the SSCO(s) for the newly listed Qualifying Interest(s) for the site and acts as a supplement to the original SSCO Supporting Document.

# 2. Coastal habitats

## 2.1 1410 Mediterranean salt meadows (Juncetalia maritimi)

### 2.1.1 Site description of habitat

Ballymacoda Estuary is located near the eastern border of Co. Cork, 5km south-west of Youghal Town. The estuary flows into Youghal Bay. The Womanagh River flows into this estuary, which widens out and contains a significant area of intertidal flats, saltmarsh and other habitats, before the channel narrows again and flows into the sea. The estuary is sheltered from the outer bay by two sand dune spits. The landscape around this area is low lying and dominated by farmland. Several other smaller rivers and streams flow into the estuary. A substantial area of the land adjacent to the estuary has been reclaimed in the past and there are tall berms along the edges of the estuary shoreline. These berms extend along the Womanagh River. The estuary forms part of a larger coastal system and sand dunes have developed on either side of the narrow channel connecting the estuary to the outer Youghal Bay. There is scattered habitation around this area and Ballymacoda Village is located to the south of the estuary. Saltmarsh has developed in several areas in this estuary and was surveyed as a series of sub-sites. Saltmarsh has developed on the landward side of the sand dunes on the eastern side of the estuary. There are also several saltmarsh 'islands' within the estuary that contain estuarine channels on both sides at Clonpriest East. Saltmarsh is also present along the western side of the estuary and extends northwards into 'The Duck'. Newly forming saltmarsh is developing in former agricultural farmland in the north-west corner of the site near Crompaun Bridge.

### 2.1.2 Overall objective

The overall objective for '*Mediterranean salt meadows (Juncetalia maritimi)'* in Ballymacoda (Clonpriest and Pillmore) SAC (site code: 000077) is to '*restore the Favourable conservation condition*'.

This objective is based on an assessment of the recorded condition of the habitat(s) under a range of attributes and targets. The assessment is divided into three main headings: (a) Area (b) Range and (c) Structure and Functions.

The baseline survey for this habitat is the Saltmarsh Monitoring Project (McCorry and Ryle, 2009).

### 2.1.3 Area

Habitat area

Coastal habitats are generally dynamic and increase and decrease in area due to natural processes. These natural changes are not taken into account in conservation status assessments. Changes associated with human activities including destruction and restoration do contribute to the assessment of conservation status.

The total area of 1410 Mediterranean salt meadows in the SAC is calculated at 1.65ha. Losses due to human activities have not been reported.

Target: Area stable or increasing, subject to natural processes, including erosion and succession.

### 2.1.4 Range

Habitat distribution

There are no indications of any loss of habitat due to land-use changes, erosion or the spread of Common Cordgrass (*Spartina anglica*) within the current monitoring period. The more typical form of Mediterranean salt meadows dominated by Sea Rush (*Juncus maritimus*) has not been affected by accretion or the spread of Common Cordgrass (*S. anglica*) within the estuary. The development of the saltmarsh behind the embankment near Crompaun Bridge has led to the development of the rarer sub-type of Mediterranean salt meadows with Borrer's Saltmarsh-grass (*Puccinellia fasciculata)* (McCorry and Ryle, 2009).

Target: No decline in the distribution of this habitat, unless it is the result of natural processes.

### 2.1.5 Structure and Functions

Structure and Functions for Mediterranean salt meadows (Juncetalia maritimi) are assessed on the basis of:

**Physical structure: hydrology**

Target: Natural hydrology and processes of erosion and succession intact, no disturbance to creek and pan structure, as compared to baseline data.

**Vegetation structure: spatial transitions**

Target: No loss of natural transitions relative to baseline.

**Disturbed ground**

Target: Not present where not recorded by baseline.

**Signs of negative activities *e.g.* infilling, reclamation, turf-cutting, pollution**

Target: None recorded.

**Vegetation composition: typical species (positive indicators)**

Target: At least six species recorded in the habitat and at least two species occur at a frequency of at least 25% of plots (excluding *Juncus maritimus*).

**Vegetation composition: negative indicator species**

Target: Percentage *Spartina* spp. cover, or other negative species, within 5m radius of stop less than/equal to baseline at 75% of stops or more.

**Vegetation composition: negative indicator species: presence of *Spartina* spp. within vicinity of habitat**

Target: Not present where not recorded by baseline.

**Indicators of local distinctiveness: site-specific target features (including rare and notable species)**

This site contains the largest population of Borrer's Saltmarsh-grass (*P. fasciculata)* recorded by McCorry and Ryle (2009).

Target: No evidence of decline since designation.

All the attributes required for the condition assessment of the habitat reached their targets (McCorry and Ryle (2009). Although the presence of Common Cordgrass (*S. anglica*) was not significantly affecting the Structure and Functions or total habitat area at the time of survey, it was considered likely to do so in the future. The Future Prospects of this habitat are assessed as poor and the Conservation Objective is therefore Restore.

Further details can be found in McCorry and Ryle (2009).

## 3. References


Brophy, J.T., Perrin, P.M., Penk, M.R., Devaney, F.M. and Leyden, K.J. (2019) Saltmarsh Monitoring Project 2017-2018. Irish Wildlife Manuals, No. 108. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, Ireland.

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Martin, J.R., Daly, O.H. and Devaney F.M. (2017) Survey and assessment of vegetated shingle and associated habitats at 30 coastal sites. Volume 1: Main report. Irish Wildlife Manuals, No. 98. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, Dublin.

McCorry, M. and Ryle, T. (2009) Saltmarsh Monitoring Project 2007-2008. Unpublished report to the National Parks and Wildlife Service, Dublin.

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Perrin, P.M., Waldren, S., Penk, M.R. and O'Neill, F.H. (2017) Saltmarsh Function and Human Impacts in Relation to Ecological Status (SAMFHIRES). EPA Research Report, Wexford, Ireland.

Ryle, T., Murray, A., Connolly, K. and Swann, M. (2009) Coastal Monitoring Project 2004-2006. Unpublished report to the National Parks and Wildlife Service, Dublin.

## Appendix 1 – Distribution map of Mediterranean salt meadows (Juncetalia maritimi) in Ballymacoda (Clonpriest and Pillmore) SAC (000077)