

Approaches to classifying benthic habitat quality



"Implementing ecosystem-based management requires methods of assessing the quality of habitats to deliver the high-level objective of achieving healthy ecosystems. 'Habitat' has been interpreted in different ways and this has confused the debate over which attributes constitute 'quality'. Three definitions of quality for habitats are advanced: 'species', 'reference' and 'functional'. Operational measures associated with these are evaluated in terms of their utility to deliver policy objectives. It is concluded that functional definitions/measures of quality are most appropriate to deliver ecosystem-based management although measures of species and reference quality may support assessment of the functional quality of habitats."

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Obtenir le document : School of Biological Sciences, University of Liverpool

Mots clés : HABITAT, CLASSIFICATION, BENTHOS, MILIEU BENTHIQUE

Thème (issu du Text Mining) : MILIEU NATUREL

Date : 2008

Type de ressource : Article scientifique

Format : text/xml

Identifiant Documentaire : PRLM5949

Langue : Anglais

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