



CREATION OF A NATURE-FRIENDLY WATER SPORTS CONCEPT

1. Challenge/problem addressed

In recent years, Fehmarn Island has seen increasing tourism. Due to the ever-growing number of visitors; water sports activities, especially windsurfing and kitesurfing, have also spread on Fehmarn's coasts. Ecologically sensitive areas of the coastline started to get visited by water sports enthusiasts more frequently. Thus, the questions we tried to address were: "How many water sports activities are possible without harming natural habitats?" and "What measures have to be taken to align water sport activities on the coasts of Fehmarn with ecological requirements?". This thematic example was part on Interreg Land-Sea-Act project.

2. Main scale of governance involved: local / regional / national / international

Local

3. Description of what and where was done

- Stakeholder involvement in the form of the "Water Sports Roundtable" (representatives of the local surfing and kite schools, the tourism industry, nature conservation organisations, the municipality and the district were involved. Each group representative presented their group's wishes and concerns and discussed possibilities of ecologically sustainable water sports together)
- Mapping of water-bird populations (resting and breeding behaviour)
- Mapping of underwater vegetation
- Mapping of water sports activities
- Development of a nature-friendly water sports concept

4. What sectors were involved?

Tourism economy (especially water sports tourism), nature conservation

5. Which target/interest groups/stakeholders were reached?

- Water sports schools
- Higher planning authorities (district, country)
- Tourist service providers (tourism marketing organizations, owners or operators of campsites etc.)
- Municipality of Fehmarn

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- NGOs: Nature Protection Organization (NABU, BUND...)

6. What methods were applied?

- Mapping of water-bird populations (resting and breeding behaviour)
- Mapping of underwater vegetation
- Mapping of water sports activities
- Surveying of stakeholders
- Water sports roundtable with stakeholders
- Direct mailing campaigns to surf gear shops and equipment providers
- Workshops to raise awareness

7. Lessons learned

Contrary to what was initially assumed, the “nature-friendly water sports concept” led to the conclusion that water sports *can* take place in ecologically sensitive coastal areas. However, there is an upper limit to such activities that needs to be taken into consideration in order to protect the biodiversity and the overall ecological wellness of the affected areas. The assessment of the coastal and underwater habitats showed that the upper limit of pressure on the environment had already been reached by the time the investigation was done. Thus, a further expansion of water sports activities was unsustainable from an environmental point of view.

As a result, the concept recommends monitoring and channelling visitor traffic as well as limiting the parking facilities close to the surf spots. An important message of the concept was also that water sport activities, especially kite and surf sports are *not* problematic for vegetation or birds, unless the number of surfers exceeds a threshold and causes more damage than nature is capable to balance with adaptation and self-recovery. As a result, access to the water will be limited to a few properly equipped access points to minimise footfall damage to the vegetation.

It was heavily demanded by the higher authorities that water sports get restricted in sensitive coastal regions for some years. However, no evidence was provided to show how nature was truly affected by kite and surf type activities.

It was only through the above-mentioned studies that were carried out as parts of the Interreg project Land-Sea-Act, that it was possible to scientifically verify what effects water sports can have on the ecosystems. Thanks to the open and intensive dialogue between the various stakeholders, good compromises based on scientific evidence have been achieved. This was crucial to avoid conflicts and

enable a peaceful coexistence of nature conservation interest and water sports/tourism. This approach can be easily transferred to other regions with similar problems.

8. To which Multi-level Governance steps this valuable practice contributes?

- Step 2.b: Stakeholder involvement / Stakeholder discussions across levels by the “roundtable”
- Step 3.a: Looking for solutions
- Step 3.b: Adoption and implementation

Based on the studies and landscape mapping, a catalogue of measures has been developed to ensure that water sports in ecologically sensitive coastal areas can only be practiced with due regard for ecological considerations. In the long term, this will ensure that water sports and nature conservation do not hinder each other, but in the best case, even benefit from one another.

9. Links to further information about the practice/case

Film clip of the national German news:

<https://www.tagesschau.de/multimedia/sendung/tagesthemen/video-728323.html>

<https://youtu.be/prS3FrcpNUY?si=fe6txio6x0MQbHkE>

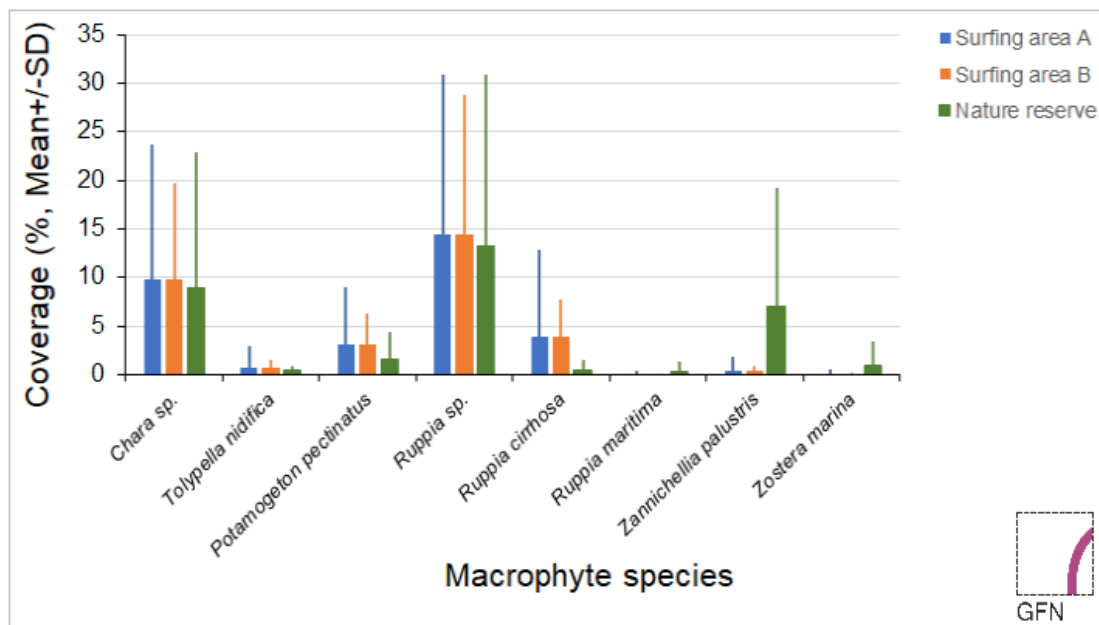
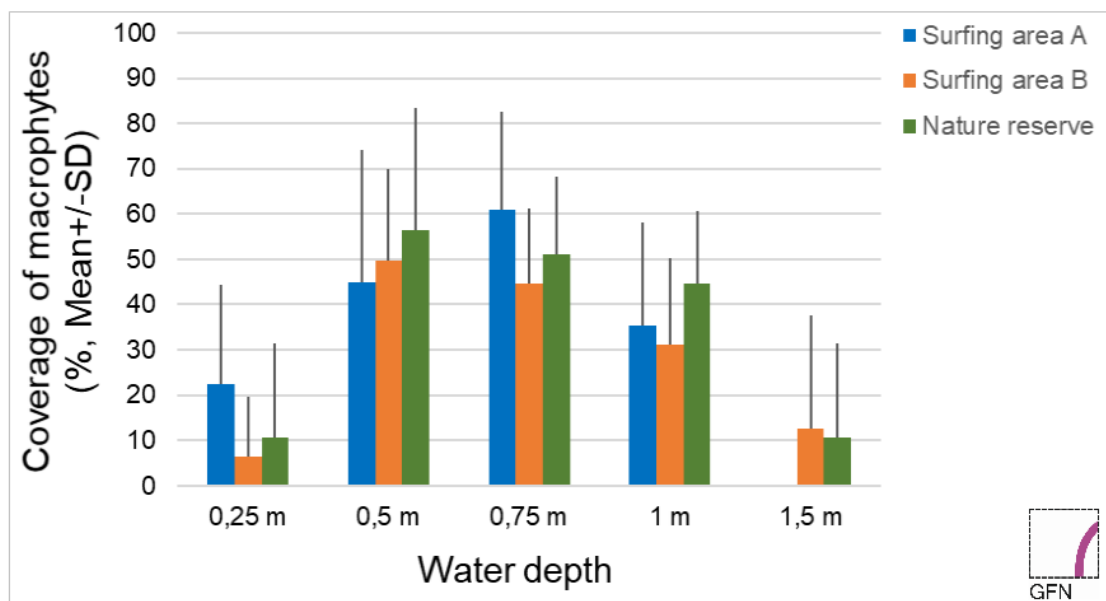
Watersports Website of the Municipality: <https://www.stadtfehmar.de/Umweltrat/Wassersport-und-Natur>

Study: “Underwatervegetation & Watersports”

https://www.stadtfehmar.de/media/custom/2114_2109_1.PDF?1637561251



Satellite view of the investigated area



Graphics concerning macrophyte density within the area

Abbildung 15 Wassersportzonen & Unterwasservegetation in der Orther Bucht

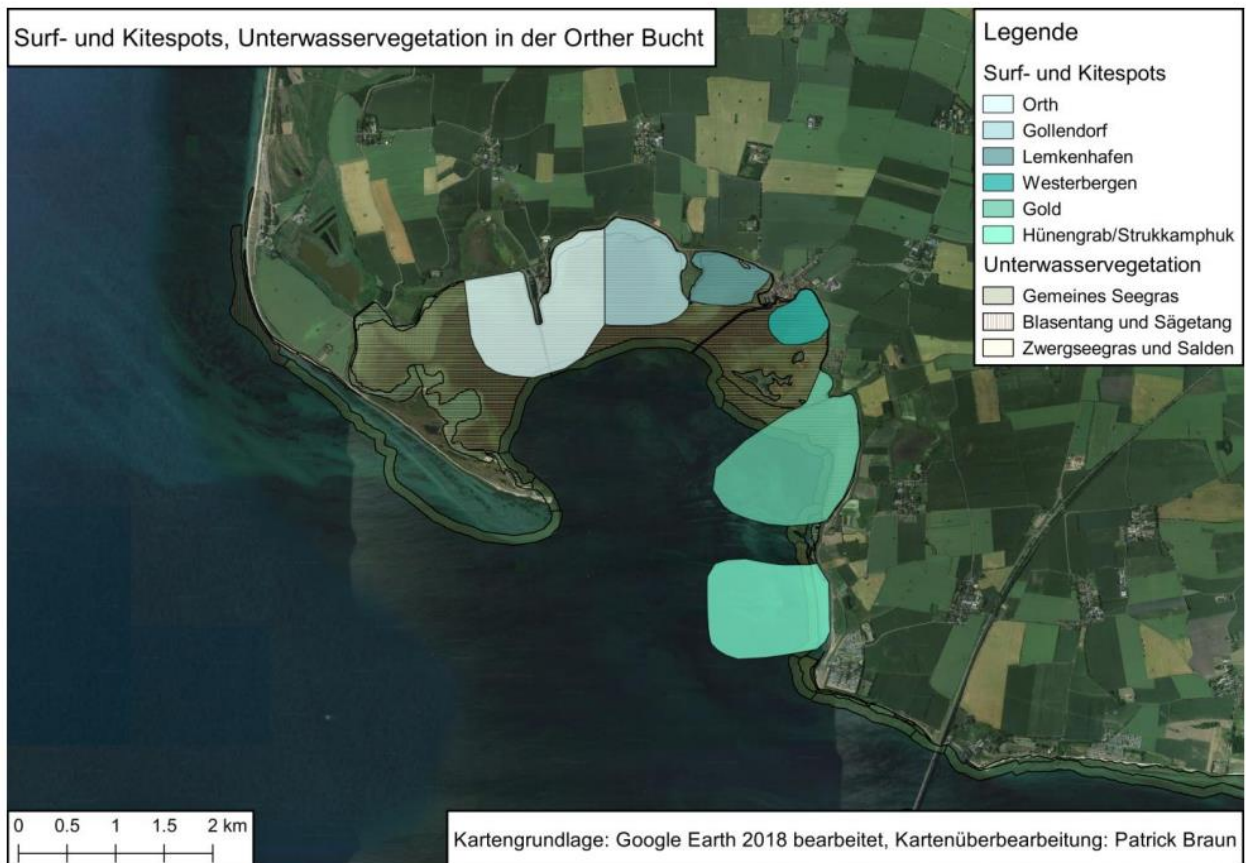


Abbildung 16: Wassersportzonen & Schutzzonen in der Orther Bucht

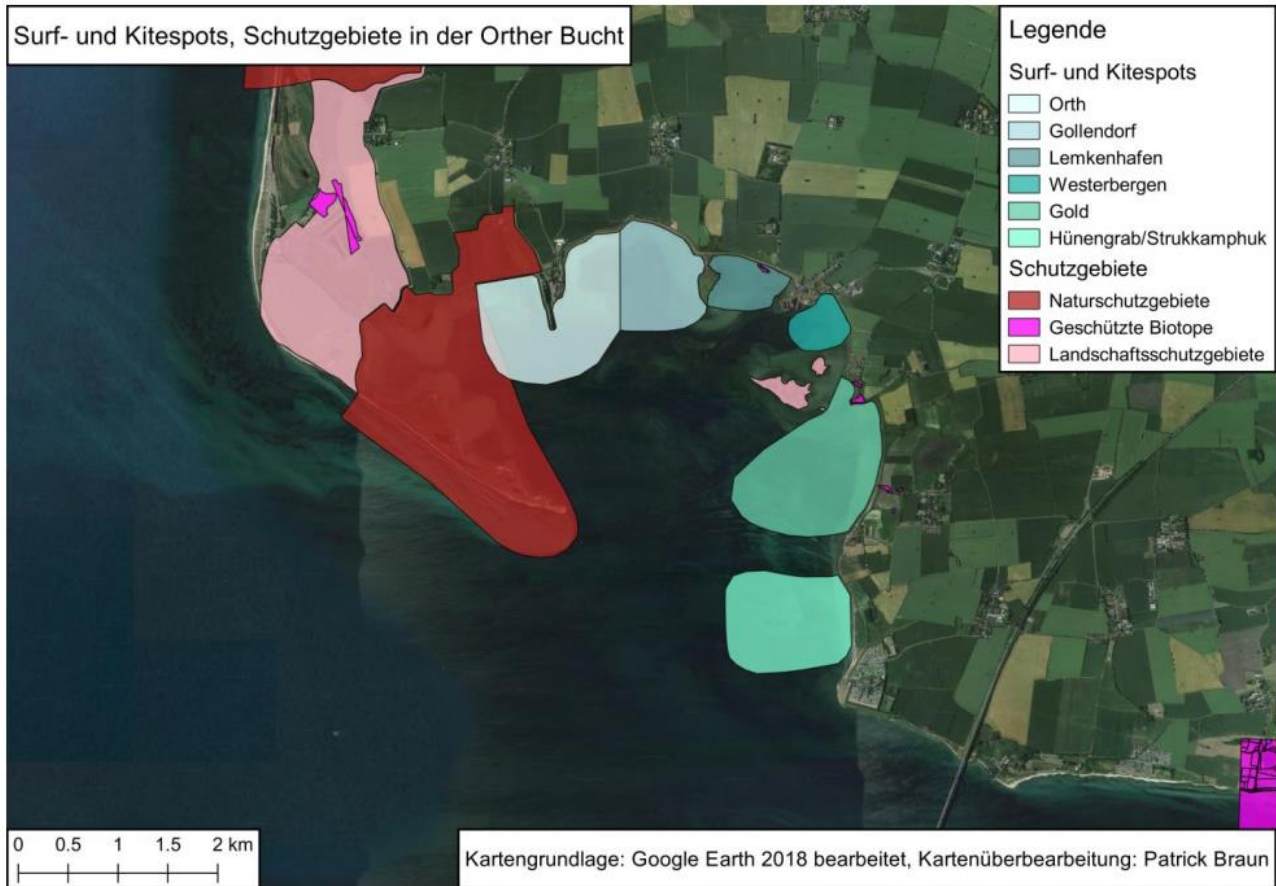


Abbildung 17: Brutvögel und -habitate in der Orther Bucht

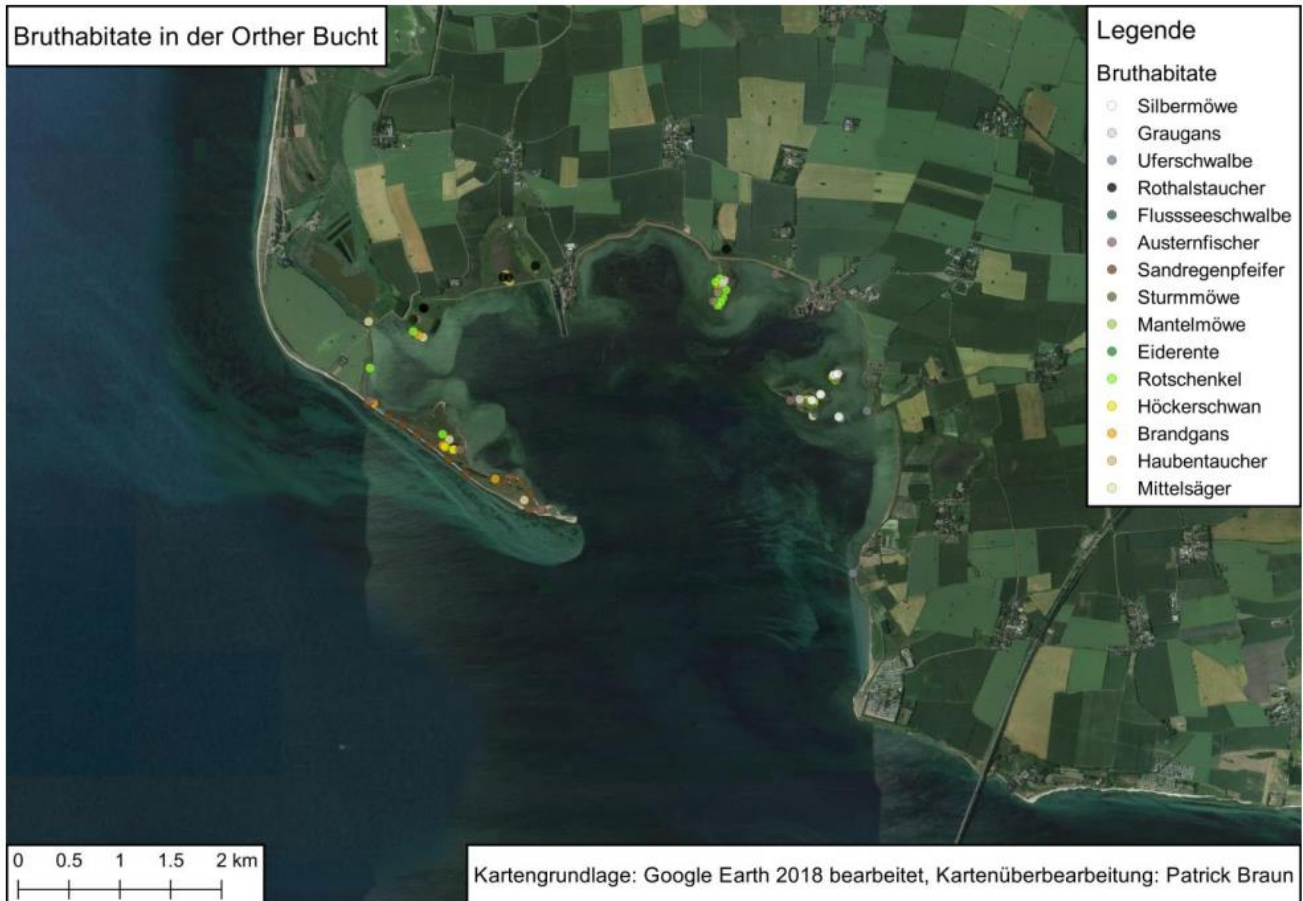
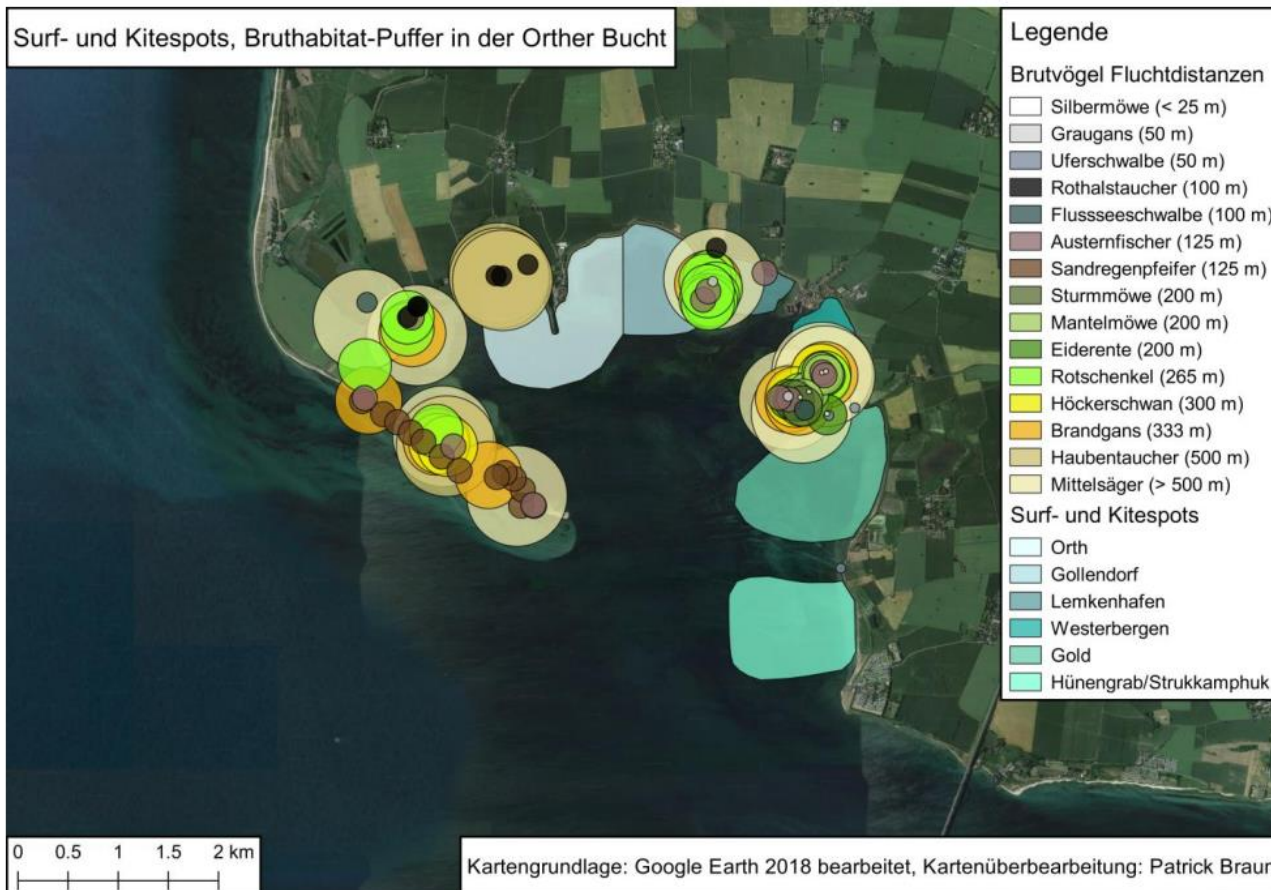


Abbildung 18: Wassersportzonen & Brutvögel Fluchtdistanzen in der Orther Bucht



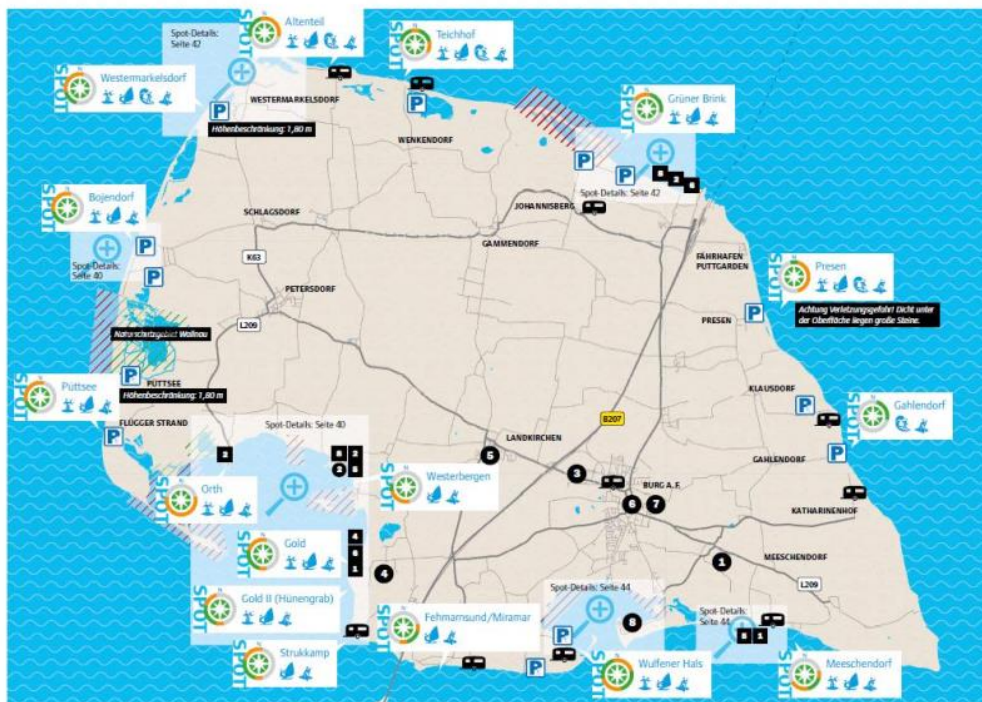
Maps of the intersection areas of water sport activities with local fauna and flora (maps by Patrick Braun)

Abbildung 19: Wasserportequipment auf dem kleinen Landhaken östlich Spitzenorth



Water sport equipment in conflict with underwater vegetation

Fehmarn



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Map of Fehmarn Island surf spots