

# THE STATE OF THE SEA

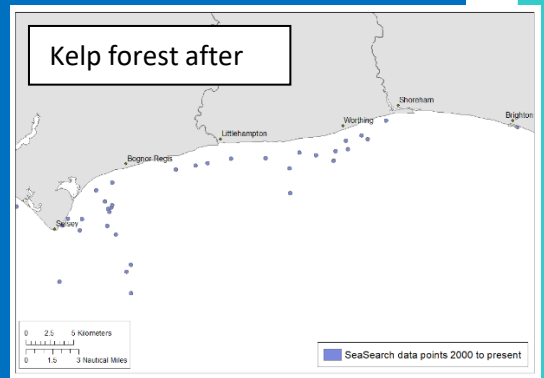
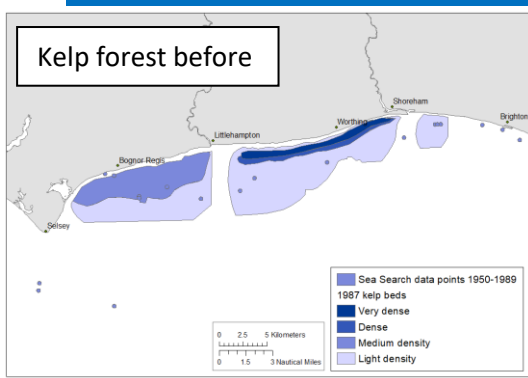
## Shifting Baselines Explained

The condition of the marine seabed habitats along the Sussex coastline have been in a slow but steady decline over the last few decades. What we currently see as 'the norm' was not the situation as little as 30 years ago. The term 'Shifting Baselines' refers to the most current view being used as the benchmark for the condition of the marine environment. By using this degraded state as a benchmark we forget what used to exist

One local example of this is the extensive area of dense kelp forest between Brighton and Selsey, which declined in the late 1980's and early 1990's, with the loss of many associated species. If we managed the marine environment based on the current habitat view, we would miss the opportunity to restore this important, productive ecosystem.

Sussex IFCA have been conducting extensive research into what the seabed might have looked like when there was an abundance of marine flora and fauna. This has come in the form of conversations with local residents who have lived and worked on the coast for many years, gathering information from reports written for scientific journals, historic articles and studying video footage recorded by divers over the years.

The shifting baselines concept underpins the ongoing trawling management review. Reducing fishing pressure on sensitive inshore areas will allow the recovery of productive, fragile habitats, including the historic kelp forest. In turn, the economically important fish species that use these habitats as nursery and feeding grounds will increase in number, contributing to a healthier and more enriched fisheries.



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