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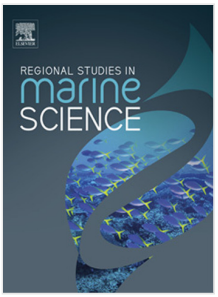

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Soft bottom macrobenthic communities in a semi-enclosed Bay bordering the English Channel: the Rade de Cherbourg.

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HIGHLIGHTS

- Assessment of macrofaunal structure in the Rade de Cherbourg (North Cotentin).
- Ecosystem characterized by high-energy hydrodynamics.
- Identification of six rich benthic communities.
- Macrofaunal structure close to that of the western English Channel.

ABSTRACT

This study aims to identify the composition and the distribution of macrobenthic communities in the Rade de Cherbourg (RdC), on the north coast of the Cotentin Peninsula (Normandy, France). The results show the presence of six main benthic communities: (1) *Crepidula fornicata* banks in coarse mixed sediment, (2) *Amphipholis squamata* and *Apseudopsis latreillii* in mixed sediment, (3) *Melinna palmata* in muddy sand, (4) *Melinna palmata* in mixed muddy fine sand, (5) *Spio decoratus* in fine sand and (6) *Spio decoratus* and *Apseudopsis latreillii* in very fine and fine sand (from EUNIS classification). The RdC appears as a rich soft bottom macrobenthic habitat in a semi-enclosed bay, surrounded by hard-bottom environments. However, current and future projects related to human activities