

After WWII there were approximately 1.4 million mines mostly along the coasts of Denmark. Almost all were removed or disarmed in 1945-46.

There was also deployed mines in the southern part of western Jutland, on an 10 km long peninsula named Skallingen. In 1946 the mine sweeping was ended leaving approximately 1.600 undetected anti-tank mines and 8.300 personnel mines of which, many were made of wood. But as Skallingen is not inhabited and mostly consists of a beach, sand dunes and marshland the mines did not constitute any direct risk.

Furthermore Skallingen is a very peculiar and dynamic landscape and thus scientifically interesting, as the North Sea from time to time changes the coastline of Skallingen and the wind change the profile (cross section). Therefore the Government starting in the beginning of this century has put preservation orders on major parts of the peninsula and has gradually acquired almost all of the areas where mines remain. Skallingen is furthermore in its entirety protected by the Ramsar Convention of 2 February 1971 and the Council Directive of 21 May 1992 on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of the Wild Fauna and Flora, (European Union).

During most of this century Nature has thus been left to it self in forming the shape of Skallingen including the remaining minefields.

Consequently big parts of the minefields in the last 55 years have been engulfed into the North Sea. After a heavy storm many mines will have surfaced on the beach or on the slopes, and through out the years many of these mines have been picked up and removed by officials or others. Furthermore many sheep and some cows have grassed on Skallingen every summer, and could have triggered the personnel mines. But so far no accidents caused by detonating mines have been recorded.

According to the judgement of the Danish Ministry of Defence most of the mines are ineffective today, but there still is a small risk of some being effective.

The mapping of the remaining mine fields:

There are only one or two reliable fix points on Skallingen, and the only available maps of the mine fields are copies of the old maps, and these maps were made in haste etc.

Therefore it is very difficult to fit those copies into current geography.

A new digital mapping with an estimate of the total remaining areas with mines is in full advance, but with the dynamic nature of Skallingen it is a very time consuming exercise.

When the mapping of the remaining minefields has been completed, digital maps showing these fields in relation to orders of preservation and international conventions will be forwarded without delay.

The areas consist of two groups:

- * some long narrow area stretching along the beach from north to south

- * and a major area at the southern end of Skallingen

Most of the first group is expected to be engulfed into the North Sea within the next two decades. A minor part of the area in the south is also expected to be engulfed within a foreseeable time.

When the mapping has been completed, a plan for the handling of the remaining mines will be worked out.