The Denkmalschutzgesetz des Landes Schleswig-Holstein (Law for the Protection of Cultural Heritage) was first decreed in 1958, corrected in 1972 and 1996. Archaeological monuments are defined as “mobile or immobile cultural monuments under the ground, in bogs or water” (§1.2). Monuments of recent history are also included. The Archaeologisches Landesamt Schleswig-Holstein is responsible for enforcing the law. There are five orders mentioned: Registration, Protection, Conservation, Excavation and Research. The registration of Archaeological Monuments first started in 1923. Until now about 300,000 Sites and Monuments are registered, among them 800 (estimated) in the Baltic Sea (length of the Coastline: 350 km). Transfer to a digital register has started using Arc View as Standard GIS.

Investigation of monuments in the Baltic Sea only exists in certain areas and subjects. In 1997 the Fehmarn-Belt Area was investigated within the scope of a feasibility study (Fehmarn Belt Bridge Project), executed in cooperation with the Danish National Forest and Nature Agency. As one of the results it was recognised that about 300 wrecks of unknown quality are recorded in this area. A lot of anomalies recorded by sonar and by local fishermen have not been investigated.

In the Schlei-Region, a narrow bay 40 km in length, conditions are much better. Hans Joachim Kühn has investigated 40 wrecks and wreck-sites, and this research-project, connected with the excavation of a medieval wreck (Karschau-Wreck), is still going on. In the same area sonar-investigations of an Early Viking Age sea-barrier (“Reesholm Schleisperrwerk”) are taking place. Finally, Soenke Hartz in the Ostholstein area is registering Mesolithic and Early Neolithic sites. In 2000 he started excavation of one of them near the harbour of Neustadt, Ostholstein. A further characteristic of underwater archaeology in Schleswig-Holstein is the use of digital documentation and 3d-visualisation. Thus we are able to make our cultural heritage more understandable.