



WWF

NEWSLETTER

APRIL

2014

## WWF Baltic Ecoregion Programme

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# BALTIC ECOREGION NEWS

This is the first issue of the Baltic Ecoregion Newsletter in 2014. Read it to find out what has happened over the winter, see what is going on around the Baltic Sea, and check out upcoming events.

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### Is there HOPE for the Baltic Sea?

The European Commission arranged its Healthy Oceans – Productive Ecosystems (HOPE) conference on 3-4 March 2014 in Brussels. The event brought together a wide range of stakeholders and provided an opportunity to discuss the implementation of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive.

Tony Long, from the WWF European Policy Office, highlighted the need for a more integrated ecosystem approach to the protection, management and use of our seas and highlighted the Baltic case as one example.

While the conference revealed the uneven implementation of the directive and how many Member States still lag far behind schedule, it also brought out a renewed interest in regional seas conventions as platforms to apply a more ecosystem-based approach to the management of the sea. For more information, contact [Pauli Merriman](#), +46 767 886 185.

### And will life get better after 40?

The next day, on 5 March, HELCOM held its 40 years jubilee session in Helsinki, Finland. The Baltic Ecoregion Program was well represented and Pauli Merriman moderated the final panel session which included the heads of HELCOM, OSPAR, ICES, BONUS and representatives from Russia and the European Union.

The following Commission meeting discussed the future role of HELCOM where WWF and other NGOs argued against the weakening of the mandate of some of its working groups, something that would go against the trend toward increased importance for regional seas conventions. For more information, contact [Pauli Merriman](#), +46 767 886 185.

# 35%

OF FINNISH RESTAURANTS HAVE STOPPED  
SERVING FISH FROM THE RED LIST IN  
WWF'S SEAFOOD GUIDE.



# “AN IDEA WHOSE TIME HAS COME”

**“There is nothing more powerful...”**

“

The time, it seems, has come for integrated approaches to oceans management, or IOM. This powerful idea, one which we have seemingly pushed uphill for ages, is suddenly gaining traction and prominence around the globe.

This is due, in part, to the steady stream of reports regarding the dire state of the global oceans, and the accompanying realization of the threat this poses to ecosystem services, coastal communities and the ‘Blue Growth’ ambitions of governments around the world.

It has also led to a renewed interest in regional platforms, like HELCOM, to help facilitate this.

Our task now is to translate this interest into practical application in order to continue to fuel this momentum.

If, as Victor Hugo famously said “armies cannot stop an idea whose time has come” – we certainly ought to lead the (r)evolution in the Baltic region and help demonstrate exactly how this can be achieved and thereby provide a compelling case to serve as inspiration for others. The time has come!

Best wishes,  
Pauli and Stina



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## ONE STEP CLOSER FOR THE MSP DIRECTIVE

On 17 April, the EU Parliament endorsed the Commission's proposal for a Directive setting a framework for Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP).

The Directive will establish a common European framework for maritime spatial planning and integrated coastal management in EU marine waters, with a view to ensure that the use of resources at sea and along coasts, along with the growth of maritime and coastal activities, remain sustainable.

Once finally adopted by ministers, Member States must transpose the Directive into their national legislation by 2016 and have their national maritime spatial plans drawn up by 2021.

Contact [Jochen Lamp](#), +49 151 1885 4927, for more information.

# FOCUS ON THE EUROPEAN REGIONAL SEAS APPROACH

## THE FUTURE OF MARINE REGIONS

### WILL EU POLICIES SAVE THE BALTIC SEA?

In an attempt to meet the mounting environmental challenges of an ever-increasing human exploitation of its marine waters, the European Union is slowly but surely tightening its maritime regulatory framework.

Its main pillar, the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) is backed up with other policy responses, such as the Water Framework Directive, the Birds and Habitats Directives, the Nitrates Directive, and the, recently agreed in a draft format, Directive on Maritime Spatial Planning.

In the Baltic Sea, HELCOM, being one of the world's first regional seas conventions, has until now been the main policy instrument to regulate human impact on the sea. Now, what will stronger European legislation mean to the role of HELCOM? Will EU policies take over the role as the main regulatory framework for human use of the Baltic Sea?

### THE POWER OF THE MSFD

The MSFD entered into force in June 2008 with the objective of achieving Good Environmental Status (GES) of all European seas by 2020. At its core is the concept of implementing an ecosystem-based approach to the management of human marine activities.

EU Member States have now spent the first five years of MSFD implementation on data collection and analysis of the environmental state of their seas. A recent status report from the Commission shows that Member States' definition of good environmental status, as well as the path they set out to achieve it, are heavily lacking in ambition.

Other criticisms include failure to take into account existing obligations and standards as well as a shortage of coherence across the



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Union, even between neighbouring countries within the same marine region.

On the other hand, the whole exercise can be seen as a first important step in a pan-European progress towards sustainable use of the seas. It has set in motion a reorganisation of governance structures and processes at different levels to improve monitoring, knowledge-sharing and decision-making.

### HELCOM VS. THE MSFD

So, how does HELCOM stand up against European policy? Will HELCOM and other Regional Seas Conventions (RSCs) slowly pass into oblivion along with the implementation of the MSFD?

On the contrary, the MSFD refers heavily to RSCs as instruments for cooperation and coordination and requires Member States to "build upon relevant existing programmes and activities developed in the framework of structures stemming from international agreements such as Regional Sea Conventions".

In fact, the MSFD introduces for the first time the concept of "marine regions" into EU law, as it requires Member States to cooperate and coordinate their actions with other Member States in designing and implementing marine strategies

within a set of "marine regions", the Baltic Sea being one of them.

In this process, HELCOM has an important role to fill and the work is already well on its way. The 2010 HELCOM Ministerial Meeting decided that HELCOM shall be the coordination platform for the implementation of the MSFD and appointed a special working group to fulfil that role.

### INTEGRATION NEEDED

What HELCOM can do as a coordinating body is limited to what its Contracting Parties allows it to do. But using HELCOM and its Baltic Sea Action Plan as central tools can facilitate the implementation of the MSFD for all the Baltic Sea EU Member States.

One potential weakness of HELCOM can be its history as an exclusively environmental treaty. The MSFD focuses on the integration and mutual benefit of environmental, social and economic sustainability and growth.

For successful implementation, HELCOM will need to be accepted as the relevant arena for discussions about the management of the Baltic Sea by *all* sectors. The MSFD is providing new tools and mechanisms to develop a truly integrated approach to the management of the Baltic Sea. Will the region grab the opportunity?



# INTEGRATED SEA USE MANAGEMENT AND MARITIME ACTIVITIES

## Joint seminar in Finland

WWF Finland and the Finnish Environmental Institute organized a two-day seminar in February which highlighted the benefits of Integrated Sea Use Management (ISUM). Former Finnish President Tarja Halonen was one of the speakers.

The program of the first day was designed for officials and researchers. On the second day there was a workshop for the business sector, which highlighted the [BCG report](#), and thus demonstrated the business case for a healthy Baltic Sea. For more information, contact [Sanna Kuningas](#), +358 50 401 7470.

## MSP in Estonia

Maritime Spatial Plan (MSP) projects for the Hiiu and Pärnu sea areas have now been made public for discussion. The Estonian Fund for Nature has contributed by modelling seafloor habitats and giving expert opinion about bats in sea areas.

For more information, contact [Mariliis Tago](#), +372 5623 1633.

## 600 students learn about ISUM

More than 600 high-school students were engaged in Mr Amber's educational school tour. During a period of 4 months, lectures were held in different parts of Latvia to explain and discuss Integrated Sea Use Management.

Every group that participated in the lecture studied one sector and learned about all the details to be



## LETTER AGAINST NITROGEN EMISSIONS

WWF Sweden together with the Swedish Society for Nature Conservation have sent joint letters to the Minister for the Environment, the Minister for Enterprise and the Minister for Infrastructure, urging them to take a more active role in setting stricter standards for nitrogen emissions from shipping.

The letters ask ministers to forcefully act against the Russian proposal to delay the already agreed measures to reduce emissions and take active steps to ensure that the introduction of the globally agreed standards will not be delayed.

Similar letters have been sent in other countries around the Baltic Sea. For more information, contact [Mattias Rust](#), +46 702 126 314.

able to present this sector in a "Baltic Sea Parliament" game that took place on 28 March. The aim of the "Baltic Sea Parliament" was to demonstrate the need for all the sectors to work together to plan and protect the Baltic Sea.

For more information, contact [Dārta Treija](#), +371 2 942 6313.

## Estonian oil spill

In early February, several kilometres of thick black oil spots were discovered on the Muraste beaches in Harju County, Estonia. Volunteers from the Estonian Fund for Nature have been active in the

cleaning of the coast but the full extent of the spill will not be known until all the winter ice has melted.

For more information, contact [Mariliis Tago](#), +372 5623 1633.

## Lawsuit against LNG terminal

The Estonian Fund for Nature, together with the Estonian Ornithological Society, are continuing their lawsuit against the plans for an LNG terminal in Paldiski because of its potential environmental impact. The case is now being tried by the court.

For more information, contact [Mariliis Tago](#), +372 5623 1633.

# BIODIVERSITY AND FISHERIES

## New fish guides

Updated seafood guides have been released in Finland, Poland and Sweden.

In Finland rainbow trout was moved from the yellow to the green category, giving Finns an opportunity to switch from (yellow) farmed Norwegian salmon to a local product.

In Sweden, the red-listing of North Sea shrimps caused a fierce media debate.

For more information, contact [Sampsa Vilhunen](#) (Finland), [Piotr Prędko](#) (Poland) or [Inger Näslund](#) (Sweden).

## More sustainable seafood in Finland

A poll conducted by WWF Finland shows that almost one third of Finnish restaurants have increased the amount of sustainable seafood in their menus. 27 percent of restaurants have made changes in their menus during the last two years. 72 percent of the restaurants that have increased the amount of sustainable seafood have done it by using more locally caught fish. 52 percent have increased the amount of MSC-certified fish on the plates.

35 percent have stopped serving fish that is on the red list in WWF's Consumers Seafood Guide. For more information, contact [Matti Ovaska](#), +358405503854.

## New ghost nets maps

As a result of the co-operation with the Hydrographical Office of the Polish Navy, the [interactive map](#) of



## LATVIA'S FIRST MSC SEMINAR

In February, Pasaules Dabas Fonds hosted the first ever MCS seminar in Riga, Latvia. The seminar was attended by all main stakeholders, including fishermen associations, the largest enterprises in the sector and the biggest retailers, including Rimi (ICA), as well as governmental officials and marine scientists.

Today, six enterprises have certified their production within the MSC standard in Latvia and the first Latvian fishery is undergoing the certification process. Contact [Dārta Treija](#), +371 2 942 6313, for more information.

objects located underwater that could trap fishing nets, has been supplied with more than 250 new objects.

Now fishermen have access to new information, which enable them to navigate safely and avoid places where they could lose the nets. For more information, contact [Piotr Prędko](#), +48 608 633 319.

## New smart gear project

Together with gear technologists, fisheries research institutes, fishermen and underwater acoustic experts, WWF experts from Germany, Denmark and Poland will develop and test alternative

techniques that can satisfy both nature conservation demands (low bycatch) and fishing sector viability.

New alternatives to the conventional gill net fishing gear will be developed in order to reduce bycatch of endangered marine mammals (e.g. harbour porpoises) and protected sea birds.

A successful development of a new net will help EU Member States fulfil their obligations to develop management plans for their designated Natura 2000 sites. The project is supported with EU funding and its first phase will continue until February 2015. For more information, contact [Piotr Prędko](#), +48 608 633 319.

## Salmon management in the Luga river

The Luga is one of the largest rivers flowing into the inner part of the Gulf of Finland. It is also an important environment for anadromous (migrating) Atlantic salmon (*Salmo salar*) populations, both those that are naturally and those that are artificially hatched.

The Baltic Fund for Nature has engaged in a project to assess the sustainability of wild populations of salmon by means of abundance estimation of wild and artificially hatched individuals.

One of the most remarkable results so far is that in 2013, during seasonal spawning migration, the study revealed more «breeders» (adults ready for spawning) from the wild population than from those of hatchery origin. For more information, contact [Eugene Genelt-Yanovsky](#), +7 921 978 0177.

# BIODIVERSITY AND FISHERIES

## Fish and seal conflicts

A seminar with local fishermen was organized in the end of January by the Lithuanian Fund for Nature (LFN). The seminar is one component of a bigger LFN project funded by Nordic Council of Ministers. It was the first serious attempt to look at the grey seal and coastal fisheries conflict in Lithuania.

Even if there are better and “seal-safe” fishing gear available, these are more expensive and thus financially out of reach for most Lithuanian fishermen. LFN believes that fishermen will need both financial support to afford the seal-safe gear, and financial compensations for damages to gear and catches by seals.

Provisions from the new European Marine and Fisheries Fund (EMFF) may help to mitigate the conflict by allowing the government to introduce such schemes in Lithuania. For more information contact [Vaida Survilienė](#), +370 66211047.

## New Marine and Fisheries Fund

The final agreement on the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF) was reached on 28 January 2014 by the European Parliament, the Fisheries Council and the European Commission.

6.7 billion Euro will be available in 2014-2020 for implementation of responsible and sustainable fishery practices and for the recovery of the overfished stocks, something that WWF worked hard to ensure.

For more information, contact [Piotr Prędko](#), +48 608 633 319.



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## MAJORITY OF FINNS WANT TO PROTECT FREELY FLOWING WATERS

A poll conducted by WWF Finland shows that the majority, 67 percent of Finnish people, want to protect freely flowing waters that are especially important for anadromous (migrating) Baltic fish species. Only 12 percent of the Finns do not consider protecting freely flowing waters important.

The results relate to a discussion around the possibility of revising the law protecting the last freely flowing rapids and rivers. There is a strong will by the energy companies to build more hydroelectric power plants. For more information, contact [Sampsa Vilhunen](#), +358405503854.

## Round Table #14

WWF Poland's 14<sup>th</sup> Baltic Fisheries Round Table was held on 10 December in Szczecin. The meeting focused on problems related to diadromous (migrating) fish, such as river connectivity and poaching. Several recommendations aimed at reducing the problem of poaching were agreed upon and sent to the respective Ministries. For more information, contact [Piotr Prędko](#), +48 608 633 319.

## ICES staff to blog on eel

At the end of February, the Danish Eel Expedition 2014 set sail, bound for the Sargasso Sea, spawning grounds of the European eel, to plug the gaps in our knowledge about the breeding habits and early life of the critically endangered eel.

Staff from ICES have joined the expedition and will keep us up-to-date with their adventures at sea via their [blog](#) – the first of its kind on the ICES website.



# BIODIVERSITY AND FISHERIES



## Reported porpoise bycatch

On 5 February the WWF Blue Patrol in Poland received information about a harbour porpoise found on the beach in Unieście. This was the first time the bycatch of this rare marine mammal was reported by fishermen to the Blue Patrol.

By reporting bycatches of marine mammals fishermen help scientists gather data on harbour porpoise population in the Baltic, and implement measures aimed at reducing this by-catch. For more information, contact [Monika Łaskawska-Wolszczak](#), +48 795 536 009.

## More harbour porpoise

Harbour porpoises are now clearly shown to be present in a large part of the Baltic Proper. This information is based on two years of logging harbour porpoise echolocation clicks, carried out by the [SAMBAH](#) project.

The highest porpoise detection rates were found in the Danish waters to the Southwest. Moving towards the East, higher detection rates were found along the southern Swedish and German coasts than along the coasts of Poland. For more information contact [Stina Nyström](#), +46 7 07682155.

## Year of the ringed seal

2014 is the Year of the Ringed Seal in Estonia. Appropriately, the live [seal camera](#), set up by the Estonian Fund for Nature in the Gulf of Finland, is now operational again.

It is also the Year of the Gulf of Finland, the goal of which is to bring together the collaborative efforts of marine researchers in Finland, Russia and Estonia.

As a result, a lot of attention will be drawn to the sea and to seals this year and Estonian Fund for Nature will be heavily involved. For more information, contact [Mariliis Tago](#), +372 5623 1633.

# EUTROPHICATION AND AGRICULTURE

## New Farmer of the Year Award

The [Baltic Sea Farmer of the Year Award](#) has now been launched in all nine countries around the Baltic Sea.

The aim of the competition is to highlight best practices in “Baltic-friendly” farming and to recognize farmers who are advancing innovative measures to reduce runoff from their farms.

Applications should be submitted to: [balticfarmeraward@wwf.se](mailto:balticfarmeraward@wwf.se), or to national partner organizations, by no later than 30 April 2014.

For more information, contact [Stina Nyström](#), +46 7 07682155.

## CAP Communications award

At the EU “Telling the story” conference, organized by the European Commission on 9 December, to improve communication of the EU Structural and Investment Funds, the WWF Baltic Sea Farmer of the Year project won the CAP Communication Award, in the category of “Communications to Stakeholders”.

The annual CAP Communication Awards aims to showcase the very best communication projects related to the Common Agricultural Policy.

The 2013 nominees were pre-selected by an independent jury and presented their projects to an international audience of more than 400 communication and CAP experts at the Awards Ceremony in Brussels.

For more information, contact [Stina Nyström](#), +46 7 07682155.



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## Copa-Cogeca workshop on runoff

On 24 March in Brussels, Copa-Cogeca arranged a workshop on measures to reduce nutrient runoff. Marta Kalinowska participated in the event where she presented the Baltic Sea Farmer of the Year Award. She also invited participants to this year's Greener Agriculture for a Bluer Baltic Sea Conference, which will be held in Poland in the end of September.

For more information, contact [Marta Kalinowska](#), +48 785 120 175.

## New agri-environment platform

WWF Sweden has been awarded funding from the Swedish Institute for the project Platform for Agri-Environment Cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region. The project consists of a broad partnership with 13 partners from five countries (Sweden, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland) around the Baltic Sea.

The funding is for one year and the primary goal is to initiate the development of a platform to share and discuss experiences and best agri-environmental practices and science within the agriculture sector in the Baltic Sea catchment area with the aim to reduce nutrient runoff and other negative impacts from agriculture.

For more information, contact [Lennart Gladh](#), +46 702 210 367.

## Modelling retention measures

Experts from the Estonian Fund for Nature have made a first-of-its-kind retention measures model of diffuse agricultural pollution for the Porijõe area in Tartu county.

The model contains eight methods to help reduce agricultural pollution.

The ambition is to use similar models in other regions of Estonia soon. For more information, contact [Alex Lotman](#), +372 50 60 879.



# BITS AND PIECES FROM THE BALTIC SEA REGION



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## Bigger Blue Patrol

WWF Poland's volunteer-based Blue Patrol environmental monitoring group has already grown to 200 volunteer members.

The Blue Patrol is a pioneer movement in the Baltic Sea region, regarding social involvement in nature conservation. For more information, contact [Katarzyna Pietrasik](#), +48 22 849 84 69.

## Let's do it in Estonia

An Estonia-wide community activities day "Let's do it!" will take place on 3 May. There will be approximately 1500 activities gathering an estimated 50 000 people all around Estonia.

Read more [here](#) or contact [Mariliis Tago](#), +372 5623 1633.

## MARELITT

WWF Poland has been invited to participate in the [MARELITT](#), a project financed by the European Commission.

During 2013, MARELITT assessed existing marine litter removal projects in Europe's four regional seas, identifying good practices that can be adopted by marine litter projects to help ensure success. These good practices have been captured in a 'Code of Good Practice' and will be further developed into a toolkit for use in setting up new projects and maintaining existing ones.

MARELITT has nominated WWF Poland the host organisation in the Baltic.

For more information, contact [Piotr Prędko](#), +48 608 633 319.

## Volunteer Work Camp in Finland

WWF Finland will offer citizens a chance to do real marine research this summer as it organizes the first ever Marine Research Volunteer Work Camp in August.

More than 150 people applied and 15 were chosen to participate in the camp. The aim is to test how people with no special skills are able to gather information that can be used in further research of the Baltic Sea.

The camp is part of the Gulf of Finland Year 2014. The Gulf of Finland year 2014 brings together experts, decision-makers and citizens from Finland, Estonia and Russia to work together for the creation of a healthier and safer gulf. For more information, contact [Sampsa Vilhunen](#), +358405503854.

# INSIDE WWF BALTIC ECOREGION PROGRAMME

## CALENDAR EVENTS

**6-8 May**

Seafood Expo  
Brussels, Belgium

**19-20 May**

Maritime Day  
Bremen, Germany

**26-28 May**

Baltic Programme Team meeting  
Viinistu, Estonia

**1-5 June**

Baltic Sea Days  
Turku, Finland

**2-4 June**

BDF Summit  
5th EUSBSR Annual Forum  
Turku, Finland

## FACES IN NEW PLACES

Ottilia Thoreson is on a study-leave in France until mid-June. Meanwhile, [Stina Nyström](#) is covering her position. Welcome back Stina! Contact Stina at [stina.nystrom@wwf.se](mailto:stina.nystrom@wwf.se).

[Vanessa Ryan](#) at WWF Finland will be on Maternity leave and is expecting her first child in May. While Vanessa is on leave, her position will be covered by [Sanna Kuningas](#). Also, WWF Finland has a new communicator on marine issues, [Joonas Fritze](#). Welcome Sanna and Joonas! Contact Sanna at [sanna.kuningas@wwf.fi](mailto:sanna.kuningas@wwf.fi) and Joonas at [joonas.fritze@wwf.fi](mailto:joonas.fritze@wwf.fi).

In Poland, [Karolina Tymorek](#) is now back from her maternity leave. Welcome back Karolina!

Both [Charlotta Järnmark](#) and [Jenny Fors](#) have transitioned into new roles within WWF Sweden. Lotta will be working on water stewardship in the textile industry and Jenny will be focused on policy work related to the upcoming election in Sweden.

## Team meeting and excursion

The first Programme team meeting this year will take place in Viinistu, Estonia, situated about 78 km from Tallinn.

Viinistu is located in the Lahemaa National Park and the meeting will start with an excursion around the park.

Lahemaa is the oldest and largest national park in Estonia, representing nature and cultural heritage typical of North Estonia. It was established in 1971 and covers an area of 72,500 ha – of which 25,090 ha is sea.

The park is well known for its nice manor-houses and old forests, and during the excursion, the team will visit the coasts of Hara, Käsmu and Vergi where they will meet seal expert Mart Jüssi in the middle of his field-work.

For more information about the team meeting, contact [Stina Nyström](#), +46 707 682 155.

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### Why we are here

To stop the degradation of the planet's natural environment and to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature.

[www.panda.org/baltic](http://www.panda.org/baltic)

## STAY TUNED

We plan to publish the next issue this summer. Don't forget to send us your contributions.

[Pauli](#) and [Stina](#)

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