



WWF®

NEWSLETTER

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Photo: Gerardo Salguero / WWF

WWF Baltic Ecoregion Programme

ERRORS CLOUD REPORTING OF DANISH NUTRIENT TARGETS

For over a decade Denmark has presented itself as on track to meeting national targets for improved water quality regarding nutrients in Danish lakes, streams and coastal waters, under HEL-COM's Baltic Sea Action Plan and the EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive. However, in March this image was tarnished when researchers from Aarhus University sounded the alarm that measurements have been taken incorrectly.

The analytical method used since 2010 by private laboratories in their measurements for Denmark's Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has consistently reported inaccurately low levels of both nitrogen and phosphorus. Aarhus University says that nitrogen content in 2017, for example, was underestimated by 13% on average.

The discharge of nitrogen from land sources (primarily agriculture) is measured in the estuaries. Here, results reported have been on average 7% lower than actual levels.



Dariusz Bogdal / WWF Poland

The government's national Agricultural Package, which includes ~30 initiatives to support the agriculture sector while meeting EU environmental regulations, estimated annual nitrogen emissions to be 56,760 tonnes during 2012–2016. Corrected for the error, the figure rises by almost 4,000 tonnes annually.

Professor Jørgen E. Olesen, from department of Agroecology at Aarhus University calls the new results 'very serious'. Minister for

Environment and Food, Esben Lunde Larsen, stated that these, errors will likely lead to requirement of further reductions in nitrogen emissions to the aquatic environment.

The current Agricultural Package aims at reducing net nitrogen by 1,700 tonnes over previous plans. Removing the additional 4,000 tonnes will require more than a doubling of the measures adopted. The current plan was expected to result in the achievement of 'good environmental status' for 50 of a total of 119 coastal water areas. But this is now highly unlikely.

How could this have persisted for so long without any verification? We had hoped that the Danish authorities would take this error reporting seriously, however it appears that the government has decided to postpone any action until the next generation of water plans – in 2021–2027!

Contact: [Thomas Kirk Sørensen](#)

GROUNDHOG DAY IN THE BALTIC SEA

You may remember a movie from 1993 called 'Groundhog Day' – an American fantasy-comedy film directed by Harold Ramis, starring Bill Murray and Andie MacDowell. Bill Murray plays Phil Connors, a TV weatherman who, during an assignment covering the annual Groundhog Day event in Pennsylvania, finds himself caught in a time loop, repeating the same day again and again.

We have a similar feeling with the situation in the Baltic Sea. At the third HELCOM Ministerial Meeting in March, Environment Ministers of the nine coastal Baltic Sea countries reaffirmed their commitments to improve the situation of the Baltic Sea. This is the third time since the launch of the Baltic Sea Action Plan (BSAP) in 2007 that we have witnessed such commendable ministerial statements – **yet we remain a long way from achieving a healthy Baltic Sea by 2021.**

Despite these recurring publicly expressed ambitions, the Baltic Sea countries are still not manifesting the political leadership necessary to achieve the BSAP goals. This is clearly demonstrated in the series of scorecards published by WWF since 2009. [WWF's Baltic Sea Scorecard](#) report, launched this March, details the latest failures to implement agreed joint targets.

All 9 countries have failed to meet the target deadlines in all areas of the BSAP, namely:

- Baltic Sea unaffected by eutrophication;
- Favourable status of Baltic Sea biodiversity;
- Baltic Sea undisturbed by hazardous substances;
- Environmentally friendly maritime activities.

The conclusions are confirmed by a sober reading of HELCOM's [own](#)



— Despite repeated commissions, the Baltic Sea countries are still not showing the political leadership necessary to achieve the BSAP goals, said Ottilia Thoreson.

[analysis](#), which provides a comprehensive and systemic update on the Baltic Sea environment. There are a few signs of improvement, but overall not a single sub-basin is in good condition. The greatest impact on marine wildlife is cumulative, due to high concentrations of nutrients, contamination, underwater noise and alien species, compounding the effects of insufficiently managed fishing.

So where does the responsibility lie for restoring the Baltic Sea? Governments must step up to their commitments. Responsibility also lies with all of the region's stakeholders – the commercial and industrial sectors, research and technology, leisure interests, civil society, as well as with each of us as [individuals](#).

The Baltic has often been a model for other parts of the world facing similar challenges. Let's seize the chance before it's too late to

continue this leadership. We owe it to our sea, to our children and to ourselves.

We hope you enjoy this edition of our newsletter which showcases the work that we as the civil society are doing toward improving the state of our cherished sea, and to shake the awful feeling of being stuck in a Groundhog Day.

Best regards,
[Ottilia Thoreson](#) and [Anu Suono](#)



Ottilia and Anu

A NEW APPROACH TO MANAGE COMPLEXITY IN THE BALTIC SEA

by Thorsten Blenckner



© Thorsten Blenckner

The Baltic Health Index project is led by Thorsten Blenckner at the Stockholm Resilience Centre (SRC) at Stockholm University, together with a team in Santa Barbara, California. It involves researchers from all around the Baltic Sea.

The Baltic Sea faces severe problems, for example eutrophication, hazardous substances, marine litter and overfishing in some areas. At the same time, it is a largely transboundary water with some 85 million people living in the surrounding countries of Finland, Russia, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Germany, Denmark and Sweden. With the exception of Russia, all countries belong to the EU, and therefore, the management of the Baltic Sea is formally driven by European Union legislation. However, due to different political priorities, different industrial structures and economic and social development levels, the management of the Baltic Sea is politically challenging.

Dominant and competent organizations such as the Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission, also known as the Helsinki Commission (HELCOM) and the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES)

have been undertaking efforts to assess the health of the Baltic Sea ecosystem. However, so far it has been difficult to integrate the human impact and the social dimension into the equation.

Here is where a new assessment approach comes in, one that evaluates current conditions comprehensively from social, economic, and environmental perspectives. In this approach, a

healthy ocean is defined as one that sustainably delivers a range of benefits to people now and in the future. This assessment method, the Ocean Health Index, has a global scope.

For the first time, we apply this approach to a regional transboundary water. We call it the Baltic Health Index project, where the focus is to measure progress towards a suite of key societal 'goals' representing the benefits and services people expect healthy oceans to provide: food provision, fishing opportunities, natural products, coastal protection, tourism, carbon storage, coastal livelihoods, sense of place, clean waters and biodiversity.

In a completely transparent process, which integrates existing major players such as HELCOM and ICES as well as interdisciplinary scientists, we calculate the status of the goals above. The main interest is to understand their interplay and the underlying processes. The calculations are a challenge. The Baltic Sea is complex, but the fascination of the Baltic Health Index is that it integrates system dynamics into the overall health, to make it communicable and manageable for a sustainable future.

About the project

The Baltic Health Index project is led by Thorsten Blenckner at the Stockholm Resilience Centre (SRC) at Stockholm University, together with a team in Santa Barbara, California. It involves researchers from all around the Baltic Sea. The research is inspired by and based on the [Ocean Health Index](#) which was created by this group of frontline researchers in Santa Barbara. The Baltic Health Index formally started in 2015; the results will be published in autumn 2018. The preliminary findings are

discussed, improved and presented to a wide group of researchers, management organizations and important non-governmental actors in the Baltic region, such as WWF.



INTEGRATED OCEAN MANAGEMENT AND MARITIME ACTIVITIES



Photo: Anu Siiano / WWF

Countries re-affirm their commitment to the Baltic Sea – but is it enough?

Brussels, 6 March: Ministers of the Environment and high-level representatives gathered to discuss the state and future of the Baltic Sea at the HELCOM Ministerial meeting in Brussels. The nine coastal countries and the European Union agreed to renew efforts for a healthy Baltic Sea. This includes updating the Baltic Sea Action Plan (BSAP) beyond 2021, intensified efforts toward achieving the goals of the existing plan, and a regional strategy for nutrient recycling. New challenges ranged from marine litter and climate change effects to using the UN Sustainable Development Goals – and in particular the Ocean Goal, SDG14 – as a framework for the updated Plan. Priority focal areas raised by the countries were marine litter, eutrophication, hazardous substances and marine spatial planning.

Despite all that is at stake, the meeting was a business-as-usual affair (see the Editorial). WWF, Coalition Clean Baltic (CCB) and Oceana gave a joint statement,

calling for a strong BSAP and for urgent implementation of the measures through an ecosystem and cross sectoral approach: *“Measures to improve the Baltic Sea must be seen as an investment in the region’s sustainable economic and social development. This is the only way to truly secure the healthy marine environment and its services we, collectively, so heavily depend on.”*

WWF and CCB organized a side event after the main meeting, which was attended by some 70 participants. European Commissioner for Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, Karmenu Vella, opened with a warm endorsement of the value of collaborating with NGOs. WWF presented their [BSAP Scorecard 2018](#), highlighting the urgent need for strengthened implementation, followed by CCB

presenting their [Civil Society Declaration](#). A panel discussion then explored bridging the gaps and improved cooperation between decision makers, finance and science.

Finnish Minister of Environment, Energy and Housing, Kimmo Tiilikainen, noted with appreciation how the Scorecard helps countries to clarify what needs to be addressed for BSAP implementation.

Finland takes up the HELCOM Chairmanship in June 2018. We hope they will fulfill their promise to set up a task force to get started in building momentum. The task force will need to both ensure that the SDGs guide and shape the post-2021 BSAP to deliver real change in the water, and make the most of the coming 3 years to deliver to the current BSAP.

Contact: [Ottilia Thoreson](#)

The results are bleak, showing insufficient progress across all four themes: eutrophication, hazardous substances, biodiversity and maritime activities.

INTEGRATED OCEAN MANAGEMENT AND MARITIME ACTIVITIES

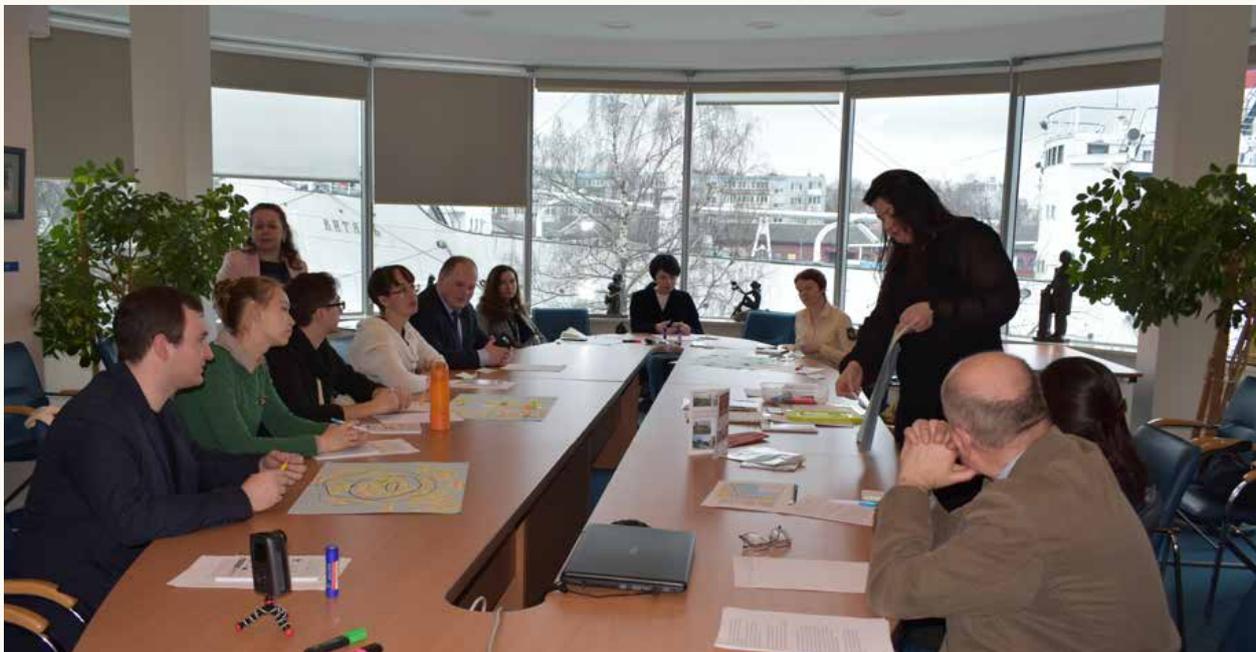


Photo: E. Genelt-Yanovsky

MSP in action at Baltic Sea Days in St Petersburg and Kaliningrad

In recent years the **International Baltic Sea Days Environmental Forum** has gathered Baltic Sea stakeholders and enthusiasts from all over the world in St Petersburg. For the first time, this year a parallel event was held in Kaliningrad, 22-24 March. The public initiative was supported by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment of the Kaliningrad Region, as part of the 2018 Baltic Sea Day Forum.

The Baltic Barents Nature People Programme (BBNPP) arranged a training on coastal and marine spatial planning (MSP). Set up as a business game using data from a real life example of the Netherlands' Wadden Sea, participants were familiarized with MSP approaches, prompting discussion around local MSP choices and decisions in the Kaliningrad region. Participants were asked to play the role of a variety of sectors including tourism, port authorities, local administrations and civil society.

The main event in St Petersburg focused on regional, national and transboundary HELCOM Hot Spots. The same interactive training game used in Kaliningrad was organized by, among others, the BBNPP. The programme focuses on "Building Capacity and Involvement of Civil Society in Environmental and Natural Resources Management in North West Russia and the Barents Sea" – a collaboration between Coalition Clean Baltic, WWF Russia and WWF Sweden, in cooperation with WWF's Baltic Ecoregion Programme.

The MSP game offered an excellent opportunity to stakeholders in both regions to understand the complexity of planning for sea use by multiple groups with different purposes and needs, from economic to social and environmental.

Contact: [Evgeny Genelt-Yanovskiy](#) or [Metta Wiese](#)

Baltic and Barents Regions – new connections and promising partnership

The Baltic and the Barents Sea ecoregions are closer than you might think from a quick glance at a map - at least in the context of nature conservation. A wonderful example of this closeness is the Barents-Baltic Nature and People Programme (BBNPP), running for over two years under WWF teams in Russia and Sweden and partner Coalition Clean Baltic. The programme has three main areas of focus:

- Integration of ecosystem-based management (EBM) in river basins
- Integration of EBM in processes of MSP
- Improvement of environmental performance of extractive industries.

Learn more in their [Facebook community](#) or contact: [Tanja Ehrenberg](#).

INTEGRATED OCEAN MANAGEMENT AND MARITIME ACTIVITIES



Baltic Sea Future Congress – climate, women and the UN 2030 Agenda

Stockholm, 8-9 March: The [Baltic Sea Future Congress](#) was organized in Stockholm for the second time. This year's focus was on climate, which drew a number of excellent presentations and interventions from attendees representing cities, municipalities, academia, civil society and the business sector. All showcased innovation and leadership within the Baltic region. One example was the presentation by Asta Puodžiūnienė, Chief Expert of Strategy Planning, Investment and Budget from Panevėžys City Municipality, Lithuania, on how local pioneers can address regional challenges. The city has set up a vision for a healthy Baltic with an emphasis on upgrading the waste water treatment systems and cleaning of coastal areas. This clearly shows how cities and municipalities can play an important part to contributing goals and targets in the HELCOM BSAP.

WWF's Otilia Thoreson presented the [BSAP Scorecard 2018](#) report, and participated in an all-women panel discussion on how to better connect the BSAP and the United Nations Agenda 2030 – a fitting recognition of March 8 as International Women's Day. The congress is becoming an annual event.

Contact: [Otilia Thoreson](#)

Blue Finance Principles unveiled to support ocean health and investment

Mexico, 7–9 March: At *The Economist* World Ocean Summit, the Sustainable Blue Economy Finance Principles were unveiled. These are a next step in WWF's work to transform the way in which humanity manages ocean resources, showing how profitability can go hand-in-hand with environmental and social stewardship.

The Principles were developed through a broad consultation led by the European Commission, WWF, the Prince of Wales's International Sustainability Unit and the European Investment Bank (EIB). If widely adopted, these principles could help pave the way to providing a framework for securing the long-term health of our ocean.

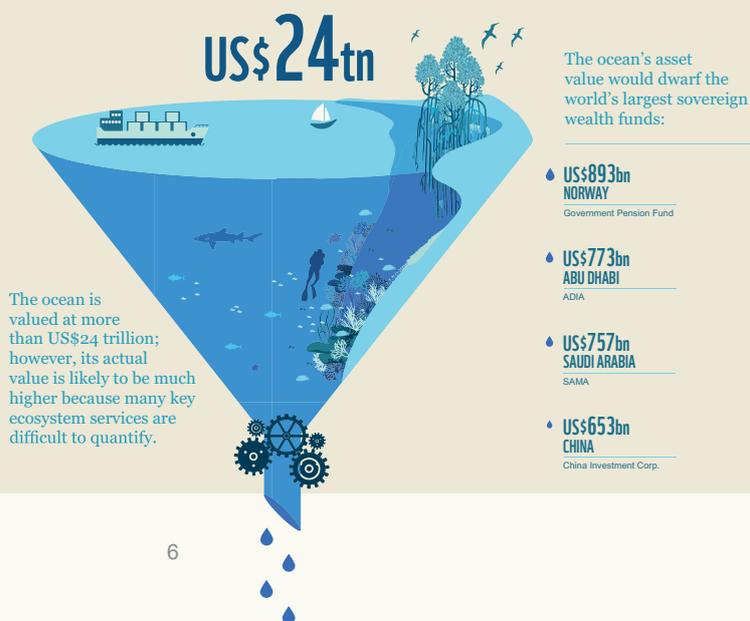
The Principles were endorsed in the January 2018 report of the EU High-Level Expert Group on Sustainable Finance, which includes representatives from Finland, Germany, Poland and Sweden. Therein, the Group recommended the adoption and implementation of the Principles by the finance community. The Principles are already supported by a number of high profile

public and private sector players.

The [OECD estimates](#) that by 2030, the blue economy (all economic sectors with a direct or indirect link to the ocean) could outperform the growth of the global economy as a whole. Conversely, business-as-usual risks destroying both the ocean's ecosystem and the resource base on which future economic growth depends. The 14 voluntary principles were designed to help address the rising impacts in the ocean, from habitat destruction and plastic pollution through to overfishing. These principles will be just as important in the Baltic and reflect much of what is already present in the BSAP.

"Reconciling economic development aspirations with ocean ecosystems that are already showing great stress is one of the great challenges facing humanity. The role of the finance and investment community to find a pathway to genuine sustainability is vital, which is why the new principles were created," said Pavan Sukhdev, President, WWF International.

Contact: [Louise Heaps](#)



INTEGRATED OCEAN MANAGEMENT AND MARITIME ACTIVITIES

Is Stockholm archipelago loved to death?

Stockholm’s archipelago, with its 30,000 islands, is a world-class marine natural landscape – rich in resources and attractions. This makes the area vulnerable as a target for short-term, fragmented, sector-driven initiatives with little care to maintaining or restoring



The number of activities along the coast – such as shipping, recreation, wind power, marinas, fishing, military, infrastructure– is largely unknown.

natural habitats and ecosystem value. The number of activities along the coast – such as shipping, recreation, wind power, marinas, fishing, military, infrastructure – is largely unknown. Together, however, they have cumulative impacts on the Baltic’s environment.

WWF’s report, “**Stockholms framtida havsområden**”, reveals the current lack of planning at sea, where “wild west” laws apply. The report points out that the short-term approach risks squandering the archipelago’s high ecosystem values, particularly where many parallel interests compete.

“The total pressure from our activities exceeds the limits of what the ecosystem is capable of. It is a threat not only to the marine and wildlife of the sea, but also to the ecological processes, ecosystem services and natural resources we all depend on as sustainable fish stocks, clean drinking water, climate regulation, recreation use, diversity of seabirds and other fauna, and not least income and



WWF’s report reveals the current lack of planning at sea.

employment”, says Tom Arnbom of WWF Sweden.

In the report, WWF calls for integrated marine spatial planning between sectors and across municipalities to strengthen conservation, create a network of marine protected areas, have well planned coastal exploitation and improved shipping and maritime traffic planning.

Contact: [Tom Arnbom](#)

World Cleanup Day – Let’s Do It!

Several countries have been involved in annual clean-up initiatives along the Baltic coastline. One of those is volunteer-led Let’s Do It! that began in Estonia in 2008 when 50,000 people united to clean up the entire country in just five hours. This has now achieved global momentum and become a civic-led mass movement. On 15 September, people in 150 countries will take action against the global trash problem.

World Cleanup Day has the potential to be the biggest civic action the world has seen yet. Imagine a “green wave” starting in New Zealand and ending in Hawaii with millions of volunteers taking positive action, together, on the same day.

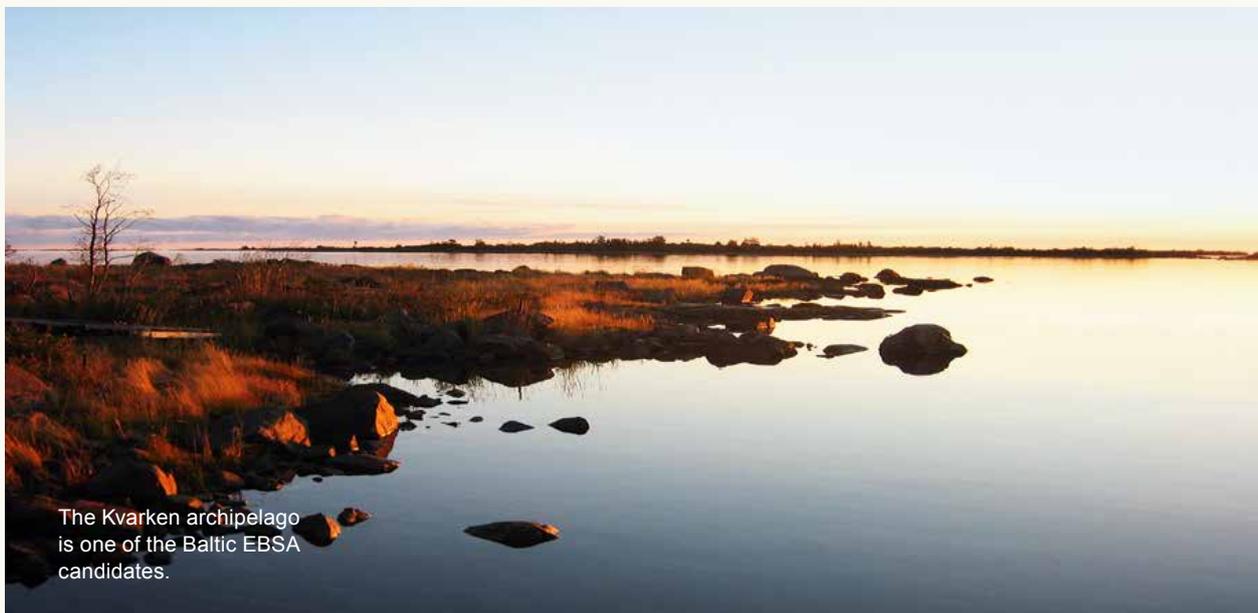
Let’s Do It! has never been *only* about cleaning up waste. The movement also aims to unite the global community, raise awareness and implement true change to achieve our final goal– a clean and



healthy planet. [Click here](#) for more information and tips on how you can participate.

Contact: [Kertu Hool](#)

INTEGRATED OCEAN MANAGEMENT AND MARITIME ACTIVITIES



The Kvarken archipelago is one of the Baltic EBSA candidates.

Photo: Metsähallus/NHS Finland

Ecologically and Biologically Significant Areas in the Baltic

Helsinki, 19-24 February: HELCOM hosted the 14th Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) regional workshop on Ecologically and Biologically Significant Areas (EBSAs), targeting the Baltic Sea. Representatives from 7 of the 9 coastal Baltic countries were joined by experts from WWF, BirdLife International, UNEP-WCMC, Coalition Clean Baltic, the Indigenous Peoples' and Community Conserved Areas and Territories Consortium, GOBI, Duke University's Marine Geospatial Laboratory and the CBD Secretariat. Janica Borg attended on behalf of the Baltic Ecoregion Programme.

Discussions considered a number of potential areas, honing in on nine candidate EBSAs. See text box for the candidates and [here for details on the selection criteria](#). The absence of Denmark and Poland in the room is evident in the geographies represented in the final list.

The workshop report will be presented and discussed at the upcoming

scientific-technical meeting of CBD, to be held in July, in Montreal. From there a proposal will go to the CBD at the next Conference of Parties in November for consideration. If accepted, the Baltic Sea will be recognized as a globally unique ecosystem of brackish-water habitats and species with 23% EBSA coverage.

EBSAs provide a valuable tool for future processes in the Baltic Sea – especially for marine spatial planning (MSP) – and provide guidance on the qualitative differences of our sea areas. As EBSAs are based on data driven processes, they are useful as scientific-based evidence to inform political discussions, where the lack of 'hard evidence' can often hinder progress in nature protection.

Lessons from EBSA processes in other regional seas in Europe have shown, however, that they can easily be forgotten or not used to their full potential. Civil society can play an important role in reminding governments and other stakeholders of their value and importance.

Contact: [Janica Borg](#)

Baltic EBSA candidates:

1. **Northern Bothnian Bay** (shared area between Finland and Sweden)
2. **Kvarken Archipelago** (Finland and Sweden)
3. **Åland Sea, Åland Islands and the Archipelago Sea of Finland** (Finland and Sweden)
4. **Eastern Gulf of Finland** (Finland and Russia)
5. **Inner Sea of West Estonian Archipelago** (Estonia)
6. **Southeastern Baltic Sea Shallows** (Latvia, Lithuania and Russia)
7. **Southern Gotland Harbour Porpoise Area** (Sweden)
8. **Fehmarn Belt** (Germany)
9. **Fladen and Stora and Lilla Middelgrund** (Sweden)

BIODIVERSITY AND FISHERIES

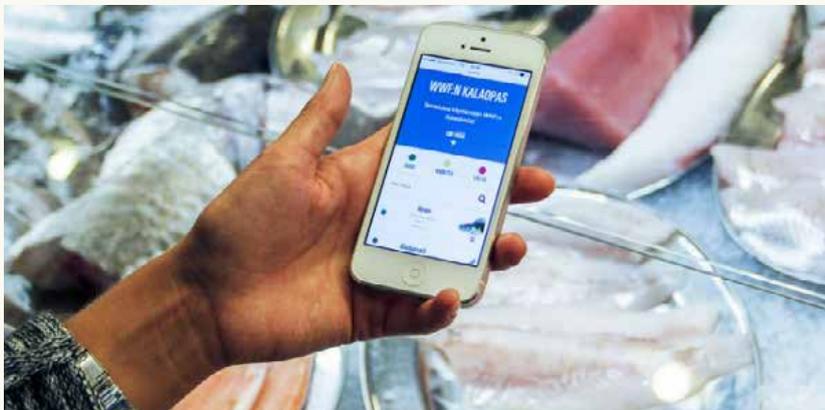


Photo: Joana Fritz



A beginner’s guide to seafood

WWF’s Seafood Guide offers consumers and traders recommendations on sustainable seafood choices. They enable users to make environmentally responsible choices and thus become a key lever

of change in the seafood supply chain. Through its Seafood Guide, WWF complements its work influencing authorities for more sustainable fisheries management by targeting the market directly through consumer choice.

Sustainability information is

depicted using a traffic light system of green (best choice), yellow (think twice) and red (avoid) lists. Recommendations are based on a methodology that WWF, in collaboration with the North Sea Foundation and the Marine Conservation Society, has developed to evaluate fisheries and aquaculture worldwide.

Check out the new guides launched in [Denmark](#), [Finland](#), [Lithuania](#), [Poland](#) and [Sweden](#) from May 23!

Contact: [Karin Glaumann](#)

Cod as cornerstone - WWF Sweden’s new campaign

As summer approaches WWF Sweden launched a Baltic Sea campaign, with a focus on cod as both a fishery resource and a species with an important ecosystem role.

Today Baltic cod populations live at the margin. Eutrophication has depleted large marine areas of oxygen. These spaces, better known as “dead zones”, now comprise an area almost twice as large as Denmark. Cod are negatively impacted by this phenomenon in a number of ways, from reproduction to food availability.

Intensive fishing is, however, the greatest pressure. Scientific advice has rarely been followed in setting the quota for cod in the Baltic Sea. Since the 1980s, catch has decreased significantly, as has the overall average size



Photo: Mike R. Jackson / WWF

of cod – an indicator for high fishing pressure on the stock.

Today, cod fishing is unprofitable and catch quality is poor. Researchers have repeatedly pointed out the acute situation yet countries continue to fish. This is despite the commitment of EU Member States to ensure under the EU Common Fisheries Policy

that fish stocks are achieving maximum sustainable yield (MSY) by 2020.

In addition to its focus on cod, the campaign will draw attention to the overall threats facing the Baltic Sea and species such as the highly threatened Baltic harbour porpoise.

Contact: [Metta Wiese](#)

BIODIVERSITY AND FISHERIES



Check out [here](#) WWF video recommending saying no to eel on your plate!

Slippery future for the eel

Last year NGOs pushed hard for a total ban on eel fishing across Europe. In December, the Fisheries Council instead agreed to limit eel fishing between September 2018 and January 2019, when only eel smaller than 12cm can be caught. The ruling applies to European

waters in the North Atlantic, including the Baltic Sea, and Skagerrak and Kattegat and the North Sea.

Yet eel is listed as critically endangered and illegal fishing for eel is a widely known and ongoing problem. The Swedish coastguard reported no fewer than 36 illegal gear and 160 illegal nets for eel in

Swedish waters in 2017 alone. To put a stop to this, Swedish authorities have invested in drones to improve surveillance of illegal activity. These are now being tested to see if the use of drones is effective to control and stop illegal fishing.

Contact: [Ottilia Thoreson](#)

Caught red-handed

The Sound (or Øresund or Öresund depending on which side of the water you come from) is a strait that connects the Baltic Sea to the Atlantic Ocean via Kattegat. Normally a cold and quiet spot, this body of water captured media attention in both Denmark and Sweden on March 14th when Greenpeace released film footage of a Danish vessel engaged in illegal fishing.

Trawling has been banned in the Sound since the 1930s, creating a sanctuary for cod against heavy fishing pressure. Yet Greenpeace's month-long surveillance of the area recorded six cases of illegal fishing. What's more, the fishing took place during the most vulnerable time for the cod: the spawning season which occurs between December and March, when schools gather near the seabed to reproduce. This of

course creates the opportunity for large catches with minimal fishing effort.

EU regulations ban fishing in this area from 1 February to 31 March. Greenpeace has provided the Danish Agency for Fisheries and Control with the GPS position, photos and footage of the trawling. A legal follow-up is under way.

Contact: [Ottilia Thoreson](#)

EUTROPHICATION AND AGRICULTURE

Training the trainers for Baltic-friendly farming

In January, under the patronage of the Agricultural Advisory Center, WWF Poland organized workshops on Baltic Sea-friendly agricultural measures. The workshops targeted agricultural advisors and took place in Brwinów, Radom, Kraków and Poznań. Key methods to reduce nutrient emissions from farms were presented and discussed, as well as legal obligations, funding opportunities and the Baltic Sea Farmer of the Year contest.

More than 160 advisors were trained in how to teach farmers to keep nutrients on the farm. In the next step, these advisors will transfer their knowledge to at least 3,200 farmers across the country. To help, a range of educational materials – a handbook, presentations, brochures and leaflets – have been produced and shared with the advisors for use in their work with farmers.

Contact: [Anna Sosnowska](#)



More than 160 Polish advisors were trained in how to teach farmers to keep nutrients on the farm.



Anna Sosnowska / WWF Poland

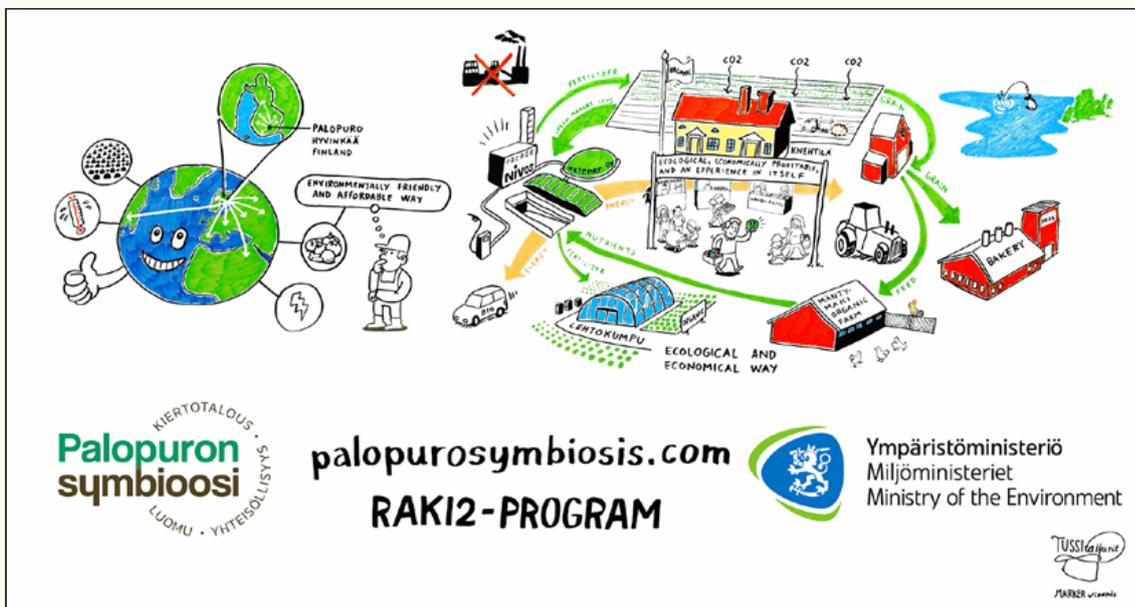
EU Budget takes a big step backward in agricultural sustainability

The European Multi Annual Financial Framework (MFF), which sets the EU budget levels, was decided and announced by the EU Commission on 2 May. It suggests that the budget for the Common Agriculture Policy (CAP) will be cut by 5%. The proposal is a significant step backward regarding ambitions to improve the policy's sustainability performance. The largest cuts appear to be to the Rural Development Programme where targeted environmental measures are hosted. Moreover, the deployment of eco-schemes for climate and environment in the first pillar is not mandatory, but rather left as a voluntary option for the more proactive Member States.

Stay tuned for the CAP legislative proposal, expected at the end of May. WWF's European Policy Office has met with European Commission staff and presented the report commissioned by WWF, "Impact of Direct Payments – Lessons from a quantitative analysis for CAP post 2020". WWF and partners will mobilize support in the Baltic and beyond to ensure the next phase of the CAP's Rural Development Programme includes incentives for strong environmental measures to reduce the agricultural sector's share of nutrient run-off.

Contact: [Jan Wärnbäck](#)

EUTROPHICATION AND AGRICULTURE



Award winner continues to pioneer sustainable farming practices

The search for the **Baltic-friendly farmers** is currently on across the region, to identify the 2018 winners of Baltic Sea Farmer of the Year Award. The competition was most recently held in 2015 when Finns Minna Sakki-Eerola and Markus Eerola were awarded for innovative techniques and activities at their organic farm, Knehtilä.

”The greatest advantage of the award has been the new networks and dialogue which have enabled us to develop our operations for broader application”, says Markus. Since winning the award, the farm has progressed steadily. It is now the center of *Palopuro agroecological symbiosis* – a cooperative food production system based on energy

and nutrient self-sufficiency. Its objective is to produce local, organic food using bioenergy and recycled nutrients. The system is the first of its kind in Finland and will serve as a model for a truly self-sufficient mode of organic food production and processing. Click [here](#) for more information.

Contact: [Jenny Jyrkänkallio-Mikkola](#)

Rising interest for sustainable meat production in Estonia

Estonian Fund for Nature (ELF) has undertaken an extensive exercise to collect data and map the meat sector in Estonia. With the results in hand, ELF has led discussions with a number of stakeholders around developing a meat guide based on a set of criteria developed by WWF for sustainable meat. The timing is right, as these discussions coincide with important decisions on reducing the use of antibiotics nationwide.



Photo: Liivimaa Lihaveis

Many meat producers are exploring ways to communicate with the public about the quality of their products. One successful example is NGO Liivimaa Lihaveis (Liivimaa Beef) whose state certified, grass-

fed beef offers a special quality assurance and premium brand. Lamb breeders are taking similar steps towards their own scheme. Some beef breeders are keen to pursue sector-wide environmentally friendly improvements, by changing the feed for example.

ELF has received several invitations to upcoming seminars – a clear indication of the growing importance of the topic. We will continue to engage, and hope to work increasingly with producers who use more intensive production methods.

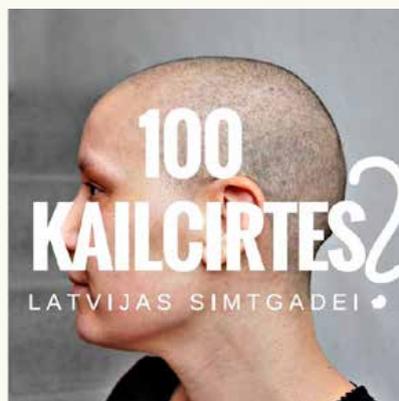
Contact: [Silja Kana](#)

PEARLS FROM THE BALTIC SEA REGION

Which is your favourite clear-cut?

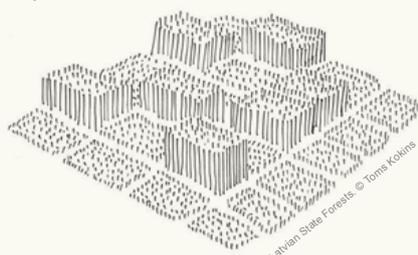
In recent years nature in Latvia has been under increasing pressure. One of the most obvious 'symptoms' has been intense forest logging and clear-cuts. According to Yale University's Environment Performance Index, Latvia has one of the world's highest forest cover decrease rates. In 2017, the Ministry of Agriculture proposed a new regulation which could potentially be even more damaging: they are proposing to lift the longstanding ban on clear-cuts in coastal forests.

Initially, officials presented this as a support to 'nature protection', asserting that without clear-cuts pine forests would slowly disappear if no sunlight reached the ground to promote the growth of small new trees. However, their position shifted multiple times during the ensuing discussions. In the end this revealed that the underlying reason for the proposed changes was short-term economic interests, with no attention to the environmental and social dimensions.



**JA NEVĒLIES ŠĀDU GRIEZUMU
PARAKSTI PETĪCIJU!**
www.100kailcirteslatvijai.lv

"100 clear-cuts for Latvia's centenary?
If you don't want such cut, sign the
petition!"



According to Yale University's Environment Performance Index, Latvia has one of the world's highest forest cover decrease rates.

Pasaules Dabas Fonds, in cooperation with national NGO partners including Latvian Fund for Nature, Friends of Earth Latvia, Latvian Ornithological Society, launched a campaign against allowing clear-cuts in coastal forests. The campaign – '100 clear-cuts for Latvia's centenary' – focused on mobilizing the public through discussions (e.g. what society demands from a coastal forest ecosystem) and a cynical photo contest in which people were invited to send photos of their "favourite" clear-cuts (the prize was a flight above contestant's "favorite" clear-cut).

The campaign prompted people to raise their voices, and it was obvious that they wanted something much more than the tax income from wood products. In coastal areas they are looking for recreation opportunities and the possibility to access non-timber forest products. Berries and mushrooms are, for example, characteristic to natural and semi-natural forests, and are important both to the local culture and as a contribution to family income in rural areas, especially at the end of summer. The discussions clearly demonstrated people's interest in sustainable, ecosystem based coastal management, which includes sustainable forest management.

After long discussions the government decided to cancel the proposal - a huge success for the environmental community. However, there are indications that this proposal might be back on the agenda again after the Parliamentary elections in October 2018. So Latvian NGOs will keep a watchful eye on this issue this fall!

Contact: [Elīna Kolāte](mailto:Elina.Kolate@pasaulesdabafonds.lv)

PEARLS FROM THE BALTIC SEA REGION



Keeping afloat with the problem of marine plastics

With the European Union drafting a proposal to ban single-use plastics, marine pollution is rising in the European and international policy agenda. WWF is actively contributing to this debate and inspiring public authorities to make the crucial changes needed to protect and conserve our valuable coastal and marine environment. Over 10 offices contributed to [WWF response to the Commission consultation on marine litter and single use plastics](#), and several events are being organized to engage European decision-makers.

An issue of concern is plastic waste from fisheries and aquaculture, in particular from lost or discarded fishing gear. WWF has gathered experiences in ghost net search and retrieval projects since 2011. Within the MARE-LITT Baltic project, Simrishamn municipality in Sweden, WWF and Keep the Estonian Sea Tidy have, since 2016, led surveys among fishermen asking about the amounts of and reasons for gear loss.

Samantha Burgess, Head of the WWF European Marine Policy Unit, was recently a panelist in a public debate on “Plastic pollution in our ocean”. Organized by the Ocean Plastics

Lab, the event attracted policy makers, NGOs, scientists, and concerned citizens. Panelists explained that eight million tonnes of plastic enter the marine environment every year, and that there is at least one plastic particle present in every living ocean organism – an overwhelming abundance even as the general public is only now awakening to the problem. Turtles, marine mammals and seabirds get tangled and may even choke in the

This global threat can only be solved by coordinated, international global action, on the part of government, business and private citizens.

larger plastic particles. In time, larger plastic particles break down into microplastics, which are easily ingested by animals.

This global threat can only be solved by coordinated, international global action, on the part of government, business and private citizens. The plastic problem is unique in that consumers are at the heart of the solution. Attitudes must change away from the abundance of single use plastics in our everyday lives; consumers need to demand this from producers. In addition, policy makers need to be more ambitious, implementing stricter rules for the use of plastic in our society. Plastic bans and fees have shown promise in several European countries, including for example Sweden’s ban on microbeads in rinse-off cosmetics.

It is time for both legislators and businesses to understand that policy and industry-led solutions can contribute to solving the problem of marine plastics in an economically sustainable manner.

Contact: [Sam Burgess](#)



Eight million tonnes of plastic enter the marine environment every year.

Photo: Shutterstock / Rich Carey / WWF

ON THE HORIZON

WWF BALTIC ECOREGION PROGRAMME

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

4-5 June

9th Annual Forum
of the EU Strategy
for the Baltic Sea Region
Tallinn, Estonia

8 June

World Ocean Day

9-14 June

Folkemodet – The People's
Political Festival
Bornholm, Denmark

14-15 June

HELCOM HoDs
Helsinki, Finland

1-8 July

Almedalen – Political Week
Gotland Sweden

16-20 July

SuomiAarena
– Public Debate Forum
Pori, Finland

15 September

World Cleanup Day

15-16 October

Fisheries Council decision
on Baltic Sea fish stocks
quotas

29-30 October

Our Ocean Conference
Bali, Indonesia

“Riding the wave” or “Pirate ship”? – Future scenarios in the Western Indian Ocean

Scenarios are a useful tool to guide future decisions. “Counter Currents”, the scenarios for the Baltic Sea developed in 2012 are still resonating in decision making in our region

today, and helped to prompt a similar process in Africa. Last year around the UN Oceans Conference the idea emerged to develop scenarios for the Northern Mozambique Channel (NMC) toward achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (see December 2017 newsletter, p.16).

The third and last of a series of workshops with Reos Partners to implement a “Transformative Scenarios Process” was held in Zanzibar in March. Four narratives describing imaginary trajectories from 2018 to 2035 for countries of the NMC have emerged. Participants identified the type of governance (good or poor) and the level of investment (high or low) as the primary uncertainties that will determine the countries’ futures. Against these, the interplay of multiple other factors could influence their futures, such as climate change impacts, political processes, health and education policies, etc.

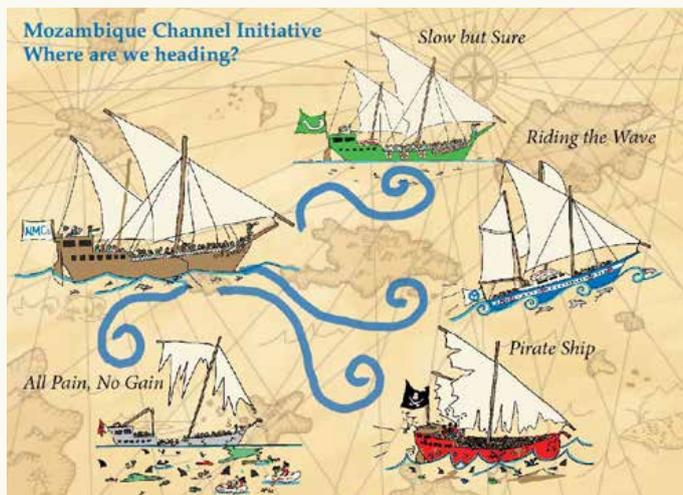


Illustration: Harriet Malsbaert

Elements already affecting the region (such as the presence or not of natural gas reserves) and foreign investment (such as through China’s One Belt One Road initiative) are built into the stories. Mirroring the ocean focus of SDG14, the stories follow a maritime narrative, with titles evocative of both the sea and the challenges faced by societies. The narratives are intended to illustrate how different forces may act in synergy or opposition with one another, and how decisions by leaders can make one outcome more likely than another.

The scenario outputs will be launched at the Nairobi Convention Conference of Parties in August 2018. From here they will be used to support real decision-making processes – such as in marine spatial planning in the region and in ongoing SDG14 processes. Contact: [Harfidy Ralison](#)



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

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[Otilia](#) and [Anu](#)