



WWF

NEWSLETTER

OCTOBER

2015

## WWF Baltic Ecoregion Programme

# BALTIC ECOREGION NEWS

Catch up on the year-to-date events, successes and challenges in this latest edition of our newsletter.

### Predictability and sustainability key for Baltic fisheries

In April a multiannual plan for managing Baltic cod, herring and sprat stocks was approved by the European Parliament. This is the first plan of its kind under the new Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) which took effect in 2014. Long-term management (as opposed to year-on-year planning) should have the dual benefit of both making life more predictable for fishermen and making fishing in the Baltic Sea more sustainable.

Multiannual plans aim to limit the fishing effort to protect the long-term viability of fished populations and keep the stock size in safe biological limits. Yet, the current trilogue between Council and Parliament, that started in May, has had a tough start with heated debates on setting the limit of fishing effort for the three stocks in the plan. So much so, that in June the EP delegation walked out of the negotiations with Council and Commission. Parliament felt the Council had failed to meet the objectives of the reformed CFP, in particular on preventing overfishing.

The trilogue has been on hold over the summer months and there is much interest to know when the talks will start again. In the meantime, on 22 October, the annual quotas for fishing the Baltic Stocks were negotiated by the Council of Fisheries ministers, with many quotas again exceeding scientific advice. So, business-as-usual continues, lacking any decided multi-annual plan!

For more information, contact [Ottilia Thoreson](#),  
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### ALL HANDS ON DECK

How sustainable is our quest for a "Blue Economy"? Are we on the right course? The new WWF report, [All Hands on Deck](#), makes it clear that we need a sustainable Blue Economy in the Baltic Sea – but that we need to raise the bar on the goals, targets and actions that will get us there. *Story on p. 4!*

# “IMAGINE A TRULY SUSTAINABLE BLUE ECONOMY IN THE BALTIC SEA”

The increasing global attention on the oceans is heartening. But the barrage of recent reports on their dramatic decline – including from WWF’s own [Living Blue Planet Report](#) – demonstrates just how urgent the actions proposed to save them are.

The Baltic Sea is no exception, sounding its visible alarm system again this summer with algae blooms which were even characterized as ‘*beautiful*’ by some. We, however, find the imagery from healthy habitats and biodiversity a more striking inspiration as we seek to balance Blue Growth ambitions with an alternate vision.

Imagine a truly sustainable Blue Economy in the Baltic Sea – one that actually helps bring the Baltic Sea back to health by fitting within the boundaries of the sea’s ecosystems, accelerating the adoption of clean technologies and renewable energy, and creating circular material flows. Imagine that this process creates new jobs and economic opportunities. Imagine that all stakeholders get involved, including governments, businesses, academia, civil society groups and individual citizens, young and old.

We believe that this vision is achievable. We urge public, private and civil society actors to use the [Principles for a Sustainable Blue Economy](#). These principles should be used as a lens through which to define what a sustainable Blue Economy in the Baltic Sea region is; assess whether our actions are taking us in the right direction; and set sail for a more prosperous future, for people and nature alike. This is what WWF has done in our new report – [All Hands on Deck](#). We hope you enjoy the read, and will join us on the journey.


Best wishes,  
*Pauli and Otilia*



## BLUE, GREEN, AND CIRCULAR ECONOMY - WHAT’S THE CONNECTION?

The phrase Green Economy came first, emerging out of the 2012 United Nations summit on sustainable development in Rio de Janeiro (Rio+20). Maritime nations - and especially the small island states - felt that the Green Economy agenda was too focused on land-based processes. They introduced the parallel concept of Blue Economy to embrace the development of the oceans as an economic resource. The term has since spread to nearly every country with a significant maritime economy.

The idea of a “circular economy” is more general, and refers to industrial processes that ensure that every waste product becomes an input to another industrial process, creating no net loss of resources and no pollution. To be truly sustainable, any economic system — whether it is “Green” or “Blue” - needs to be circular.



2.5  
TRILLION  
DOLLARS

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IS THE ESTIMATED ANNUAL  
ECONOMIC OUTPUT  
FROM THE SEA

# FOCUS ON NUTRIENT LOADING



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## SOLUTIONS FROM BOTH LAND AND SEA

Thanks to human activities in and around it, the Baltic Sea has undergone a process of eutrophication for decades. Two main nutrients are to blame: nitrogen (N) and phosphorus (P). Today, the Baltic Sea contains 5 times as much nitrogen and 8 times as much phosphorus as it did 100 years ago. Most of these inputs come from land-based activities, including sewage, industrial and municipal waste and agricultural run-off.

The good news is that many of the worst point sources of pollution have been addressed and significant gains have been made, including by improving wastewater treatment facilities and addressing industry runoff. The share of the total nutrient load contributed by these sectors has decreased substantially.

### Agricultural runoff contributes to the nutrient load

Despite these improvements however, two sources continue to exacerbate the situation. Firstly, agricultural runoff from around the Baltic watershed continues its substantial contribution to the

nutrient load, primarily through five main rivers. The expected development of agriculture around the region will worsen conditions if reductions in nutrient input to the Baltic Sea (such as those agreed by HELCOM) are not taken.

Secondly, much of the phosphorus already released to the Baltic Sea is now stored as an environmental liability in the sediments of the deeper parts of the basin. Anoxic (oxygen-free) zones enhance the release of phosphorus from the sediment – so called “internal loading” – and make it available for enhanced algal blooms. The problem of the internal load in the Baltic Sea has been known for many years. But recently it has become the subject of public debate. New ideas have been posited regarding how best to address it, including artificial oxygenation of the seabed and chemical sedimentation. So far the suggested “high tech” solutions have only been undertaken through research projects. Thus the potential techniques, and social, economic and environmental costs and consequences are not yet fully understood.

A broad consensus of scientists supports the continued discussion around sea-based measures. But they have made it clear that this should neither detract from the continuing need to improve land-based solutions nor be used as an excuse to stop proactive measures at farm level. This is why WWF and partners continue to focus on working together with public and private sector actors as well as farmers to decrease agriculture’s share of nutrient runoff in an effective way, highlighting the ever growing range of good examples and best practices around the Baltic.



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# INTEGRATED SEA USE MANAGEMENT AND MARITIME ACTIVITIES



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## ALL HANDS ON DECK

Creating a sustainable Blue Economy is one of the defining challenges of the Baltic Sea Region. We need to raise the bar on our collective ambitions in government, civil society and the private sector. Hence in its new report [All Hands on Deck](#), WWF is calling for the adoption of a new set of [Principles for a Sustainable Blue Economy](#) as the region's chart to a prosperous future. Among other things, the report provides a SWOT analysis on marine-based economic development in our region, using the new WWF Principles for a Sustainable Blue Economy as the basis. The result of a global consultation process, the Principles are being applied for the first time globally, here in the Baltic Sea.

We would like your feedback on the report as well as your suggestions. Please take our [5-minute survey](#) about the report and the Blue Economy in the Baltic Sea. Your input is needed to help move our region more effectively in a sustainable direction. (You can even answer the survey if you only have time to read the Executive Summary).

A plethora of regional meetings and events have been held around Blue Economy approaches. Since the spring, WWF has taken the podium to speak at the European Commission DG MARE Maritime Stakeholders' Platform (26-27 March), participated in the OECD 'Future of Coastal and Marine Economy: Exploring the prospects for emerging ocean industries to 2030' workshop on Marine Tourism (24-25 May), participated as presenter and panelist at the European Maritime Day (27-30 May), co-moderated the BONUS 10th Annual Baltic Sea Science Congress with a focus on the role of science and innovation for the development of a Sustainable Blue Economy (15-19 June) and participated as presenter and panelist at the Drivers for Blue Growth in the Baltic Sea Region conference (6 Oct).

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## Reviving the Ocean Economy

Central to WWF's 2015 Global Oceans Campaign have been efforts to demonstrate the social and economic value of marine ecosystems. "[Reviving the Ocean Economy](#)" and "[Living Blue Planet Report](#)".

The reports show that if the ocean was measured in terms of GDP, it would be the world's 7th largest economy, but that our actions are diminishing its wealth drastically every year. Among the various launch activities carried out around the world, the Swedish government took a particular interest.

The Minister of Infrastructure, Anna Johansson, took part in a WWF seminar on Blue Economy during the Almedalen Week in June-July (a significant political forum that takes place annually in Gotland).

In September, Sweden took a joint lead with Fiji to operationalize the [Ocean Sustainable Development Goal](#).

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# INTEGRATED SEA USE MANAGEMENT AND MARITIME ACTIVITIES



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## Cleaning up

WWF Poland is a member of HELCOM task force on Marine Litter, working on the Regional Action Plan and recommendations to the governments of the Baltic Sea region on how to reduce the negative impacts of marine litter. WWF and the government have created a national expert group to develop proposals for preventing marine litter. WWF Blue Patrol volunteers will participate in the State Environmental Monitoring of marine litter, thus contributing to the implementation of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive in Poland.

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## Camping for Nature in Finland

Each year WWF works to preserve traditional Finnish environments and other threatened natural ecosystems by organizing voluntary camps around the country. Many of this year's camps were set in the Baltic archipelago. Over one hundred volunteers participate in efforts to learn about and safeguard our precious environment.

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## Wet Lands, Hot Spots

As part a national project on biodiversity hot spots in Germany, WWF is helping to restore 200 hectares of polders – now cut off from the sea – to their original wetland state. One year into the project, a joint vision for regenerating the salt marsh wetlands along the Baltic coast between Rostock and the island of Rügen has been

formulated, and a portfolio of suitable wetlands for potential action has been identified. Initially one or two areas will be selected and physically restored. The goal is to have Baltic seawater once again flowing freely into the area and natural saltmarsh biodiversity reinstated.

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## Legal action for protection

In January, WWF and six other NGOs brought an action against the Federal Government of Germany over the lack of implementation of the 10 marine protected areas in the German exclusive economic zone (EEZ) in the Baltic and North Seas, designated in 2007.

The NGOs are calling for immediate suspension of environmentally harmful fishing practices such as set gillnets (threatening harbour porpoise and seabirds) and mobile bottom gear (damaging to reefs and sandbanks). The European Commission has since also lodged an infringement procedure against Germany over lack of designation and/or implementation of Natura 2000 sites, including those under both Federal and state responsibility.

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# INTEGRATED SEA USE MANAGEMENT AND MARITIME ACTIVITIES

## Public interest in passenger ship practices in the Baltic Sea growing

In 2010 the International Maritime Organization (IMO) took a welcome decision to establish the Baltic Sea as a so called 'special area' for sewage from passenger ships. Special area standards would require that all sewage from such ships is either brought ashore for treatment, or effectively treated on board, using the best available technology, to ensure that nutrients are effectively reduced (resulting in at least 70% reduction in nitrogen and 80% reduction in phosphorus).

Each summer, the Baltic Sea is trafficked by around 80 different cruise ships, operated by around 40 different cruise companies, making more than 2,000 calls in Baltic Sea ports. A large number of these ships are still legally discharging their sewage into the Baltic Sea – which means that these discharges continue to contribute to the problem of eutrophication. While some ships do provide treatment prior to discharge (and some have ceased the practice of discharge voluntarily), the treatment processes used in most cases do not effectively reduce nutrient discharges in accordance with the special area standards. This spring, all of the Baltic Sea countries, with the exception of Russia, notified the IMO regarding the adequacy of their port facilities and have proposed dates for the ban to come into effect. There has been resistance, however, and WWF remains committed to working with governments and industry to find a way forward.

In May WWF contacted over 50 passenger ship operators in the region with a simple question: "Do



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you confirm that the passenger ships you operate do not discharge untreated sewage in the Baltic Sea and that sewage is either properly treated on board or fully disposed at port reception facilities?" Responding through their trade organization, Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA), most companies chose not to make such a commitment. On the other hand, among the 21 international ferry lines contacted, eleven operators have confirmed that they already dispose

of all their sewage at port reception facilities. Media interest around the region in this issue has been high.

In Finland, WWF conducted a survey of 200 cruise passengers visiting Helsinki on 10 May of whom 93% responded that they would rather choose a cruise ship company that does not discharge untreated waste water into the Baltic Sea.

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## PASSENGER SHIP WASTE FOUND ON DANISH BEACHES

A large amount of sewage waste was found on Copenhagen beaches in August leading to the imposition of a ban on bathing at popular coastal leisure spots which lasted several days. Authorities concluded from the amount of contamination that it could have come only from a large passenger ship which must have emptied its toilet tanks within the 12-mile zone. Clear laws prohibit this type of activity, and WWF proposed that the authorities take legal action and file an investigation. WWF continues its efforts to support the designation and implementation of the Baltic Sea as a special area to further avoid these types of situations in the future.

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# INTEGRATED SEA USE MANAGEMENT AND MARITIME ACTIVITIES



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## MARINE SPATIAL PLANNING – COUNTDOWN BEGINS

With the European Maritime Spatial Planning Directive adopted in July 2014, Member States around the Baltic Sea coast are obliged to develop marine spatial plans (MSPs) by 2016 for their national waters. They are further advised to cooperate in transboundary planning of international waters.

WWF joined the HELCOM/VASAB MSP working group meeting which took place in Riga on 1–2 October where the [Guideline](#) for the implementation of ecosystem-based approach to MSP in the Baltic Sea area was adopted. This will help applying such an approach in practice, given that it is in accordance with spatial planning legislation in force in the Baltic Sea countries.

WWF also joined the Baltic SCOPE kick-off meeting, a project which unites MSP authorities and pan-Baltic organizations to find planning solutions to transboundary issues and improve MSP processes.

WWF has actively worked on promoting ecosystem-based MSP around the region including:

- In **Germany**, where the MSP process is far advanced in comparison to much of the region, WWF supported the revision of MSPs in the Baltic catchment of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern toward reducing wind farm coverage by 60% in bird dependent areas.

- **Sweden** has an MSP law in place and has started work on actual planning. WWF is an active stakeholder, especially when it comes to operationalizing the ecosystem approach and making the connection between MSP and Good Environmental Status.

- A round-table hosted in Warsaw by WWF **Poland** for 100 participants – including the Deputy Ministers of Infrastructure and Environment – focused on the MSP

process and set the tone for future collaboration in national planning.

- **The Estonian Fund for Nature** has conducted awareness raising activities regarding MSP. It made recommendations on how best to secure a balance between economic interests and marine environmental protection in the counties of Hiiu and Pärnu.

- **Latvia's** Ministry for Environmental Protection and Regional Development is moving its MSP process forward with support from Pasaules Dabas Fonds (also an active member of the Marine Planning Working Group). A key success is tight integration of ecosystem based management principles in the ongoing process of MSP.

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# BIODIVERSITY AND FISHERIES



## Fins in tins

A 'mini campaign' in Finland on sustainable tuna has reached over 900,000 people. The above picture was posted on Facebook, and got 3,500 'likes' and close to 550 'shares'. Altogether, WWF Finland's social media outreach on sustainable fisheries and seafood consumption (with special emphasis on sustainable sourcing of canned tuna) in September alone reached close to a million Facebook users and garnered over 14,000 'likes'.

WWF's fish guide has been a huge hit among Finnish consumers since it was first released almost ten years ago. This year WWF Finland took the guide into the new millennium by developing a version better suited for mobile use. The

updated fish guide was launched in early September to much acclaim from both media and consumers.

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## Exorcising the Baltic "ghosts"

Between June and September **WWF collaborated with over 100 Polish fishing vessels** to retrieve 130 tonnes of derelict fishing gear from the Baltic Sea. "Ghost nets" were also cleared from two shipwrecks by groups of professional divers. An exhibition in the Polish Marine Aquarium shows the environmental impact of ghost nets. The number of fisher-

men participating in WWF project makes it the world's biggest ghost gear retrieval project!

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Plastic processing and recycling company, Tönsmeier, has agreed to sponsor a WWF **ghost net re-retrieval campaign** in Germany over the next 3 years. The project launches early in 2016. WWF will also work with Tönsmeier on seeking solutions to re-process the nets back to the original plastic material for re-use.

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In Latvia a different type of ghost net campaign was created with a focus both on reducing the amount of abandoned and lost fishing gear in Latvian lakes, as well as on raising public awareness about the negative impact of this gear on fish populations and the ecosystem as a whole. Five Latvian lakes were inspected and cleaned during the summer, with great media coverage. Volunteers and a range of stakeholders – including representatives of the local municipality, state police and the state environmental service – were involved. Here is a short [video](#).

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# BIODIVERSITY AND FISHERIES



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## Green light to cook

Through June and July, WWF Poland ran a television campaign promoting WWF's fish guide and informed consumer choices. The campaign reached over 11.3 million people multiple times. Activities included a culinary workshop, the launch of a new fish guide, and the publishing of a "green light" cook book. Did it work? A public opinion research conducted shortly thereafter showed that the number of people who had heard of the fish guide tripled since February, from 11% to over 34%. The number of people who declare that they will take the threat of extinction into account next time they purchase fish has also tripled – from 2% in February to 6% in August.

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## Russia takes steps toward a driftnet ban

A draft law which would ban driftnet fishing in Russia's exclusive economic zone (EEZ) has passed the first reading in the State Duma (the Lower Chamber of the Russian Parliament) and received strong approval by the Government.

The paper remains in the Duma for further discussion.

For more info contact: [Yurii Kislyak](#) and [Kon Zgurowsky](#)



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## Bass passes, Pike fails in Estonia

Estonian scientists have assessed the situation of bass and pike populations in Estonian waters according to WWF standards. The results - Estonian bass is in good condition and got an 'pass' from the experts. Pike, however, is not doing so well. Guidelines were presented to the local industry actors on how to make the pike populations more sustainable.

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# EUTROPHICATION AND AGRICULTURE

## Baltic Sea Farmer of the Year Award

The WWF Baltic Sea Farmer of the Year Award is a competition to inspire farmers to combat eutrophication and move toward a Baltic-friendly farming, providing examples that others can learn from. This [film clip](#) gives a flavour of some of the past winners of the Award and the measures that they are applying on their farm to help improve the health of the Baltic Sea.



WWF Baltic Ecoregion Programme



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## CALCULATE YOUR BALTIC FOOTPRINT

An innovative new Baltic Sea Eutrophication calculator has been launched by WWF and partner organizations in Latvia, Estonia, Lithuania and Finland. Available in all of the local languages as well as English, this interactive tool connects individual lifestyle choices with the Baltic Sea's ecological challenges and provides recommendations for alternative choices that might help reduce 'footprint' impacts on the sea. It is designed to educate and help people develop closer, more personal associations with complex issues such as eutrophication of the Baltic Sea. Measure your own [footprint!](#)

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© Estonian Fund for Nature

## Artificial wetlands taking off in Estonia

The Estonian Fund for Nature has long researched and advocated the use of artificial wetlands as a tool in combatting eutrophication in the Baltic Sea and other water bodies. This summer saw the construction of the [first free water-surface flow wetland](#) in Southern Estonia. Volunteers also helped plant water-plants and arrange the rock formations. The second wetland is currently under construction.

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# PEARLS FROM THE BALTIC SEA REGION

## “Discover the Ocean” around Denmark

In July WWF Denmark launched the citizen science project Discover the Ocean (“Opdag Havet”). A main feature of the project is an app for iOS and Android smartphones. The app includes 75 different marine species (of seagrass, algae, invertebrates, fish and mammals) which people can register while they are, for example, at the beach or diving. The project also hosts a number of events (with e.g. snorkeling) along the Danish coastline. WWF collaborate with scientists at the University of Copenhagen to secure and analyse data, and so far there have been over 1,300 registrations.

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## OIL SPILL RESPONSE IN FINLAND

WWF Finland is participating in a European Commission funded project that aims to develop Europe-wide standards and practices for oiled wildlife response. In the so called EUROWA Module professional training courses are developed and provided, allowing a pool of European experts to advance knowledge and skills, and be able to form part of an international response team. Mobilisation preparedness of response equipment is also tested as part of the Module. The project runs between Jan 2015 – Jan 2017.

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## Ringing the guillemots

In connection to the big national politician's week “Almedalen”, the first week of July, in Gotland, WWF Sweden brought a selection of politicians from several parties to Stora Karlsö to discuss Integrated Ocean Management and Sustainable Blue Economy. During this trip the politicians also got to ring guillemots. The mix of discussions and exotic field work gave a quite unique possibility for knowledge-sharing.

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## Wildlife Rescue Training for Oil-spill Volunteers

In September Estonian Fund for Nature oil-spill volunteers renewed their skills on a seaside wildlife rescue training.

Over two days, volunteers learned how to catch oily birds and rehabilitate them in a mobile bird hospital, through both theoretical lessons and practical experience. The training took place under the watchful eye of oil-spill and wildlife rehabilitation expert Agni Kaldma and a leading expert Claude Velter from the Ostend Wildlife Rehabilitation Centre in Belgium.

After the training the volunteers shared that they hoped not to have to use their skills but are ready in case an accident occurs on the Baltic Sea.

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# PEARLS FROM THE BALTIC SEA REGION



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## Poles for porpoises

WWF launched a campaign for Baltic harbour porpoise protection connected with Earth Hour. The main aims of the campaign were to raise public awareness and engage national authorities in harbor porpoise protection, as well as to implement a national conservation program for the harbour porpoise. WWF's appeal was signed by more than 70,000 people.

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## Baltic Harbour porpoise data collection in the Baltic Sea

The Baltic Sea harbour porpoise population was estimated to approximately 450 animals based on a four-year long acoustic data collection and analyzing by the international SAMBAH project.

Porpoise echo location signals were recorded at 304 locations in all EU member states in the Baltic Sea.

Maps showing distribution of porpoises in time and space were produced based on the material. The project was partly funded by WWF Finland.

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**NEWS  
FROM  
BRUSSELS**

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## “Is the current international ocean governance framework adequate to ensure that the oceans are used sustainably?”

The European Commission is running a public consultation on ocean governance and collecting views on how the EU could contribute to achieving better international governance of oceans and seas for the benefit of sustainable blue growth.

The critical question is “Is the current international ocean governance framework adequate to ensure that the oceans are used sustainably?” and “If not, what needs to be done to make it more effective?”

WWF has submitted a coordinated response based on input from across our network. WWF agrees that the current ocean governance framework is not effective in ensuring sustainable management of oceans and their resources, and while recognising that there are gaps in governance that need to be addressed, highlights the patchy ratification and / or implementation of rules and agreements which severely hampers effective management of oceans and marine resources.

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# ON THE HORIZON

## WWF BALTIC ECOREGION PROGRAMME

### CALENDAR OF EVENTS

#### • 21-22 October

WWF European Marine Meeting  
Brussels, Belgium

#### • 5-6 November

A Greener Agriculture for  
a Bluer Baltic Sea Conference  
Stralsund Germany



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#### • 23 November

Baltic Development Forum  
Annual Summit, Copenhagen  
Denmark

#### • 1-2 December

BONUS Stakeholder Meeting.  
Brussels, Belgium

#### • 7 December

Commission – MSP and the  
Marine Environment Meeting  
Brussels, Belgium

#### • 10-11 December

HELCOM Head of Delegation  
Helsinki, Finland

### Connecting to the Western Indian Ocean



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Enclosed by Madagascar on one side and part of the East coast of Africa on the other, the Northern Mozambique Channel sees 30% of global tanker traffic plying its waters while trillions of gas reserves wait to be tapped below the sea. It is also a trove of coral diversity and tuna.

In this part of the world, WWF and partners are working closely with local institutions and governments to help carve a new development path – one that involves large-scale conservation while contributing to sustainable economic development and the prosperity of the region. In this respect there are a number of similarities between WWF's work there and in the Baltic Region. As such, the Baltic Team and WWF colleagues in the Northern Mozambique Channel, in particular in Madagascar and Mozambique, have initiated an

exchange of experiences. This exchange has provided inspiration, best practices and traction for joint efforts across a range of key issues such as integrated ocean management, sustainable fisheries and the Blue Economy.

This will continue and a workshop planned for 2016 is now under development.

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### LET US KNOW WHAT YOU THINK!

We are currently reviewing the schedule and format of this newsletter.

What do you think about it? Is it needed and how can it be improved?

Please, send your views and comments to **Ottilia Thoreson**.



#### 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)

### SHARE YOUR NEWS!

Send us your contributions to the next issue of the Baltic Ecoregion News!

Pauli and Ottilia