



**WWF Baltic Ecoregion  
Action Programme**

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29 August 2006

Dr. Lena Sommestad  
Minister for the Environment  
Tegelbacken 2  
103 33 Stockholm

Dear Minister Sommestad,

I am writing you in my capacity as director of the WWF Baltic Ecoregion programme, a programme which is comprised of WWF and partner organizations around the Baltic – working to conserve, restore and sustainably use the riches of our shared unique sea. Together with my colleagues around the Baltic, I would like to express our deep concern regarding the alarming situation related to the recent discovery of more than 3 500 barrels of catalytic waste legally dumped around 50 years ago off the coast of Sundsvall. We have learned that, in total, these barrels may contain around 9 tons of mercury. The research results from a mapping cruise of the Swedish Geological Survey (SGU) found that some of these barrels are corroded, which is likely diluting the cement, leaving the toxic contents exposed to the sensitive sea environment.

Further, we understand that investigations of this situation have now ceased due to lack of funding. Given the potential danger posed by this material, the uncertainty about their location and state of the remaining approximately 17 500 additional barrels likely also dumped in the area, we believe that this situation must be addressed immediately. Over time, the mercury could easily be released, and thus could devastate the Baltic Sea's sensitive marine environment. The findings of the mapping cruise are alarming enough to warrant immediate action. Any delay in taking decisive steps to minimise the risk of an environmental disaster are not only irresponsible but potentially very dangerous.

We therefore urge you and your colleagues to ensure that every effort is made to:

- Immediately launch a full-scale, fully-funded, investigation to accurately assess the scope and status of this area – i.e. exactly locate and map the position of the barrels, their condition and identify the potential threat they pose
- Immediately identify solutions and a plan for how to effectively eliminate the threat these barrels pose - i.e. how can these barrels, and their toxic contents, be properly treated and/or removed from the marine environment.

We would appreciate your written response on the above, since we are now fielding inquiries from our members around the Baltic wanting to know more about the potential risks these materials pose to people and nature and demanding to know how this is being addressed by the Swedish Government.

We will raise this issue and the threat posed by other dumped toxic waste at the next HELCOM Head of Delegation Meeting. We would like to urge all HELCOM governments to assess the amount of known hazardous substances that have been dumped in their national waters and identify a plan for proper removal and treatment.



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We also urge the Swedish government to prepare a masterplan for revealing the complete situation in Swedish waters in order to prepare a solution for the situation of dumped hazardous substances in the whole Baltic Sea. We hope that Sweden will show leadership, through appropriate actions in this case, and demonstrate a swift and effective response to eliminate the threats posed by newly found hazardous substances.

We look forward to your reply.

Best regards,

Lasse Gustavsson  
Programme Director  
Baltic Ecoregion Programme

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