



WWF
NEWSLETTER

MAY
2019

WWF Baltic Ecoregion Programme

EMERGENCY! 'ZOMBIE-LIKE' EASTERN BALTIC COD

In April, WWF and NGO partners sent an [open letter](#) to Baltic Fisheries Ministers asking them to introduce emergency measures to protect the Eastern Baltic cod, as they are empowered to do under the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) rules. In immediate response to the release of an alarming new report by international fisheries scientists that Eastern Baltic cod is at a critically low level, the NGOs suggest a full closure of the fishery before the start of the spawning season in May.

The [report](#) published by the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) - an intergovernmental marine science organization- found that the Eastern Baltic cod population has declined so dramatically that it is unable to reproduce itself sufficiently to maintain a healthy stock in future. For years scientists and researchers have warned about the risk of the stock population, specifically on the low numbers, small size at reproduction and risks of starvation. Some fish are said to be so unhealthy that they 'look like zombies'. Yet fisheries ministers have repeatedly ignored urgent scientific advice to reduce the fishing quota for this vulnerable population.

In response to the NGO letter, ministers in both Denmark and



Photo: Peter Ljungberg

Sweden announced they will take the necessary action to 'save' the Baltic cod. The Swedish Minister for Environment and Climate, Isabella Lövin and Jennie Nilsson, Minister of Rural Affairs, wrote a joint op-ed saying that the government is ready to act resolutely to this end. Meanwhile, the Danish minister for Food, Agriculture and Fisheries, Eva Kjer Hansen, committed to cooperating with Baltic counterparts to close the Eastern Baltic cod fisheries. However, elsewhere she calls for a reduction of the current national quota by 70% – so not a total closure.

Preparations for next year's quota negotiations will soon commence, for a decision at the annual EU Council of Fisheries Ministers in October.

WWF and partners will continue to sound the alarm that 'business as usual' must stop, and that the Baltic fisheries ministers must take the warnings seriously and adopt emergency measures before cod fisheries become just a memory. Our governments owe it to current and future generations to secure the cod as an important species for the function of the Baltic Sea, to secure coastal communities, and for a viable industry providing healthy food.

WWF recommends avoiding all consumption of Baltic cod, according to our seafood consumer guide, and suggests sourcing fish that is certified and sustainably caught.

Contact: [Ottilia Thoreson](#)

EDITORIAL: RISING APPETITE, MORE GREENS FOR ALL

The Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services' (IPBES) launched a landmark Global Assessment Report on 6th May, presenting the irrefutable evidence that the state of nature is in steep decline. The scientific study is the first comprehensive snapshot of the state of the world's biodiversity since 2005, with evidence provided by 400 world's leading experts from across 50 countries. Echoing many of the findings of [WWF's Living Planet Report](#) published in 2018, it paints an alarming picture of species extinctions, wildlife population declines, habitat loss and depletion of the ecosystem services crucial for our sustenance and economic development.

Last month, Netflix released the [Our Planet](#) series to celebrate and remind us of the amazing diversity of life on Earth and the importance of nature to people. More and more often these days, we are reminded of the scale and urgency of the downward trend in the wellbeing of our planet. Around 1 million animal and plant species are now threatened with extinction, many within decades, and more than ever before in human history.

On 10th May we passed the 2019 Earth [Overshoot day](#) in Europe. At that point we had used more from nature than our planet can renew in the whole year. Several countries across the Baltic region reached that point even earlier – Denmark and Estonia in March; Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, Russia and Sweden in April. The remaining Baltic Sea countries - Germany and Poland - are not far behind in May. What does this tell us?

The choices we make – food, clothing, transport, and much more – are the largest cause of climate change and biodiversity loss. As consumers we are constantly faced with decisions on what to buy and the impact that these choices may



Photo: Hugh Pearson

have. Our diets can have a positive role in shaping the future, reducing the loss of natural habitats, and influencing climate change. To achieve this we need a global transformation of the food system, as many environmental systems and processes have been pushed beyond safe boundaries by food production. The [EAT-Lancet Commission](#) on healthy diets from sustainable food systems recommends that we halve global meat consumption and more than double the volume of whole grains, pulses, fruit and vegetables consumed.

An exciting wave of entrepreneurs is seeking solutions to mobilize change in our dietary habits. For example, the [One Planet Plate](#) movement which is led by the Sustainable Restaurant Association puts sustainability on the menu. Chefs worldwide demonstrate how food can help us live better within our planetary boundaries with a selection of menus. Many across the Baltic are following this wave. In Sweden WWF has developed a [One Planet Plate menu guide](#) to help people adapt their meals to meet the Paris Climate Agreement goal of max 1.5 degrees.

WWF is working to grow both the supply of and demand for more sustainably sourced food, as well as to reducing food waste. In the Baltic, the consumer seafood guide is a helpful tool to guide consumers,

producers and retailers on sourcing sustainable seafood. [We have developed similar guides](#) to conscious choices around consuming meat products and seeking alternative protein sources. Just as with the certifications for wild caught (MSC) and farmed (ASC) seafood, certifications are emerging for meat products (although none yet as globally recognized as in the seafood industry).

This edition focuses on this and much more. We invite you to browse and discover the latest trends, activities and developments that we are proud to be a part of, in and around our precious Baltic Sea.

Best wishes,
*Ottilia Thoreson and Anu Suono
and Valerie de Liedekerke*



Ottilia, Anu and Valerie.

Photo: Stefan Andersson / WWF Sweden

NEW DEAL FOR NATURE AND PEOPLE

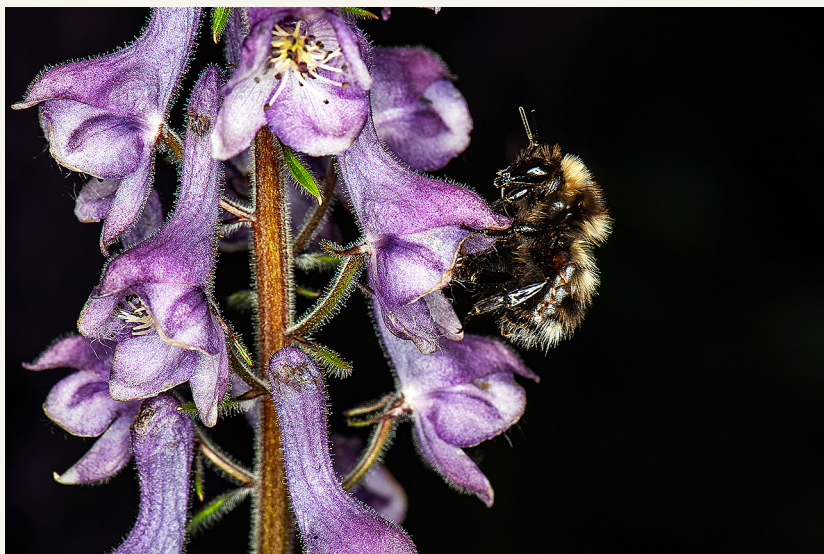


Photo: Oia Jørgensen / WWF

The 7.6 billion people on this planet represent just 0.01% of all living things. Yet since the dawn of human civilization, we have been responsible for the loss of 83% of all wild mammals and half of all plants.

Humanity plays such a dominant role that 96% of all mammals in existence today are humans and our livestock.

Next year the strategic plan for the Convention of Biological Diversity (CBD) will be revised for the coming decade: 2020-2030. With climate change at last officially recognized as a real and present threat, a paradigm shift is urgently needed, focused on solutions that secure the wellbeing provided by nature and healthy planetary systems.

WWF is busy building a movement for nature ahead of the key UN forums next year, to mobilize wider interest across the globe toward setting a vastly more ambitious biodiversity agenda. This mobilization will lay the groundwork for the meeting of world leaders to set the course for slowing and reversing our destructive relationship with nature, in Beijing at the 15th Conference of Parties of the CBD in 2020.

According to Marco Lambertini, Director General of WWF International, "Climate, nature and sustainable development are intrinsically linked. To accelerate progress on achieving global goals set by world leaders, restoring nature must be a priority. We need the world to come together for an ambitious, science-based New Deal for Nature and People by 2020 to pull our planet back from the brink of decline and reverse the catastrophic loss of nature. The science could not be clearer, human activity is pushing the planet and the Earth systems that we depend on to the edge. Urgent action is required if we are to secure a prosperous future for humanity."

"Since the dawn of human civilization, we have been responsible for the loss of 83% of all wild mammals and half of all plants."

The UN Environmental Assembly is the world's highest level decision-making body on environmental issues. Its fourth meeting, in March, provided an opportunity to strengthen international policies to address the threat of catastrophic biodiversity loss. There, in the

context of the New Deal for Nature and People, WWF called on governments to strengthen their commitments, in the following areas:

- **Plastics:** Agree on a mandate and a process for reaching a global, legally binding agreement on marine plastics pollution to address the failure of our global system that produces, uses and disposes of plastic, resulting in millions of tons of plastic pollution on land and in rivers, lakes and oceans each year.
- **Food:** Ensure sustainable consumption, production and food security for all through integrated policies on agriculture and food systems.
- **Forests:** Enhance collaboration and strong policy measures to eliminate deforestation and ecosystem conversion and degradation from agricultural commodity supply chains.
- **Biodiversity:** Propose an ambitious Heads of State declaration on Nature; strong post-2020 global biodiversity framework agreed under the CBD with an enhanced implementation mechanism.
- **Sustainable Development Goals:** With only one year to go until the environmental targets of the SDGs mature, Ministers need to propose a clear way forward to maintain the integrity and ambition of the environmental targets of the SDGs, and ensure commitment to align these, with the new post-2020 global biodiversity framework.

Success will depend on a critical mass of support and activities, in conjunction with key partners. Do you want to help save the planet and take action? Check out the changes you can make in your daily life on WWF Our Planet. [WWF Our Planet site.](#)

Contact: [Ottilia Thoreson](#)

INTEGRATED OCEAN MANAGEMENT AND MARITIME ACTIVITIES



Photo: Kaupo Kuik

A long tale with a happy ending for the long-tailed duck

Good news: on 15 February, Estonia finally designated the long awaited Apollo marine protected area (MPA). Fourteen kilometers northeast of the island of Hiiumaa, the new MPA is 5,217 hectares with an average depth of 10-20 meters.

Apollo is one of the most essential open sea banks in Estonia's

territorial waters - an important marine habitat for numerous species. Thanks to its submarine bank, reefs and sandy bottom, it is a gathering and hibernation area for long-tailed ducks and other birds, and is rich in fish on the IUCN Red List.

The process of establishing the MPA was a long one. In 2011, after

extensive research in the area, the Baltic Environmental Forum, the Estonian Fund for Nature (ELF) and a small group of partners presented a proposal for the designation of the Apollo MPA. Because the waters are quite shallow, there was a competing interest to develop an open sea wind farm in the same area (which did not go through). It ended up taking five years to receive the official decision for the designation of the Apollo MPA and another two years to finalize.

The Apollo MPA is an important marker of success for the protection of Estonia's marine biodiversity and for ELF's marine programme. We advance now toward our next MPA challenge. Another proposal for an important MPA in Kõpu was presented in 2012. The process is still ongoing but we are hopeful that it will have a similar happy ending.

Contact: [Kertu Hool](#)



Photo: Pixabay

Denmark's Øresund: sand extraction out, environmental protection in

In November 2018, the Danish Minister of the Environment announced the end of all new permits to extract sand in the Danish part of the Øresund north of the Øresund bridge. The government also shared their

plans to establish formal environmental protection of that sea area under the EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive.

For reasons of maritime safety, trawling has been prohibited in Øresund since 1932. An

unintended side effect of this ban is that both fish populations and biodiversity are thriving there, in comparison with the neighbouring Kattegat and Western Baltic Seas.

Contact: [Thomas Kirk Sørensen](#)

INTEGRATED OCEAN MANAGEMENT AND MARITIME ACTIVITIES



Photos: WWF Poland

Closing the net on MARELITT Baltic

20-21 March, Stockholm:

Running from March 2016 to April 2019, the MARELITT project was the first pan-Baltic initiative addressing the complex challenge of derelict fishing gear at four key levels: prevention; retrieval; reception at ports; and treatment and recycling. Through the course of the project, partners from Estonia, Germany, Poland and Sweden developed and tested various practical solutions and made recommendations. These were summarized and presented at the closing conference in March.

The project developed a comprehensive understanding and step-by-step roadmaps on how to approach derelict fishing gear. These have been condensed into a handbook - 'Baltic Sea Blueprint' - focusing on recommendations around the most important requirements. The

concept of the handbook was well received by conference participants. The Blueprint will soon be published on the project's website.

The conference also focused on ghost net problems from a global perspective. Participants from different regions of the world shared their experiences, lessons learnt and ideas on addressing derelict fishing gear. The presentations were followed by round table discussions on how to handle the issue in the future, both nationally and internationally, how to finance derelict fishing gear retrieval operations, and how to integrate this issue into existing regulations (such as waste management systems).

The Baltic Ecoregion Programme was featured in six presentations. Sylwia Migdal from WWF Poland presented best

practices in ghost net mapping and retrieval. Andrea Stolte from WWF Germany presented their experiences in technologies for processing and recycling used and retrieved nets in a 'circular economy' approach. The environmental impact assessment for net retrieval and a study on ammunition risks was presented by Jochen Lamp, and a method to search for nets with sonar technology and divers was illustrated by Gabrielle Dederer, both also from WWF Germany. The first steps in the Russian ghost net work was presented by Tatiana Ivanova from the Baltic Fund for Nature. Additionally, Metta Wiese of WWF Sweden reported on the first ghost net activities undertaken in Greenland.

Contact: [Sylwia Migdal](#) (WWF Poland) and [Jochen Lamp](#) (WWF Germany)

FISHERIES AND BIODIVERSITY

Engaging experts for nature

March 21, St. Petersburg: A round table on “Nature Conservation in the Baltic Sea region” was held in memory of Rustam Sagitov as part the International Environmental Forum “Baltic Sea Days”. The first session was organized as a panel discussion on current issues in nature conservation, featuring experts from the Directorate of Protected Areas, the Committee of Urban Planning and Architecture, local authorities and scientific institutions.

Evgeny Genelt-Yanovsky and Yulia Danilova from the Baltic Fund for Nature moderated, addressing topics such as HELCOM’s consolidated biodiversity database; taking an ecosystem-based approach to developing networks of coastal and marine protected areas; HELCOM recommendations and the Baltic



Photo: M. Butris

Sea Action Plan; and climate change impacts on the Baltic Sea ecosystem. Discussion flowed around varied perspectives on the use, management, study and protection of Baltic Sea ecosystems, and related challenges. The round table continued with expert presentations on rare and protected species and regional protected areas, with some reports from businesses on their environmental studies and initiatives.

In his role as Director of the Baltic Fund for Nature, Mr. Sagitov made a significant contribution to conservation in north-western Russia. He always believed that success in nature conservation can be achieved with open discussion and the involvement of a wide range of stakeholders at the local, regional and international levels. This meeting honoured that vision. Contact: [Evgeny Genelt-Yanovsky](#)

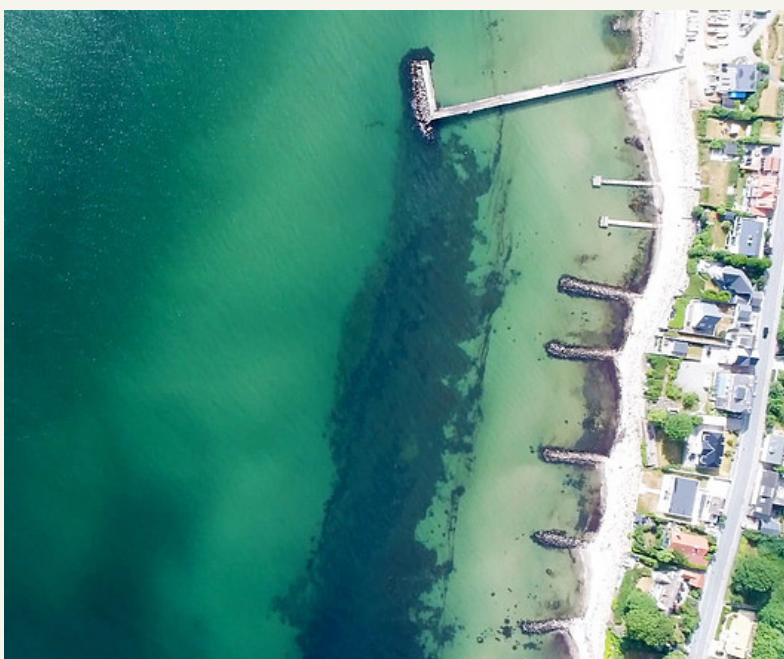


Photo: WWF

New documentary series highlights the need for low-impact fisheries

In March, WWF Denmark launched a mini-documentary series on the plight of marine biodiversity in Danish waters, with a focus on the impact of decades of intensive bottom trawling. The film shows how low-impact fisheries offer a way forward to restore the balance in fish populations (and fisheries) while simultaneously safeguarding the sea floor’s habitats and species.

The four films are narrated by Danish actor Lars Mikkelsen and were produced with support from the VELUX Foundation. They are [available in Danish with English subtitles](#).

Contact: [Thomas Kirk Sørensen](#)

FISHERIES AND BIODIVERSITY



Photo: I. Pawlisch

Training volunteers to rescue wildlife from oil spills

Over two weekends in March (16-17 and 23-24), Blue Patrol volunteers from WWF Poland took part in an advanced training on oiled wildlife response. Twenty two volunteers participated in two courses.

The training involved some theory and lots of practice. It began with a discussion of the potential health threats of helping oily animals, and how to minimize problems related to the care and maintenance of wild animals. Participants learned how to catch and care for injured animals, as well as how to arrange a diet for injured water birds which have become soiled with toxic petroleum substances.

The training took place under the supervision of specialists from the Pomorskiego Ośrodka Rehabilitacji Dzikich Zwierząt OSTOJA - Pomorania Center for Rehabilitation of Wild Animals OSTOJA.

Such trainings are a part of the implementation of the national plan to help animals injured as a result of oil spills at sea. The 200 WWF Blue Patrol volunteers play an important role in supporting wildlife rescue operations in Poland.

Contact: [Maria Jujka-Radziejewicz](#)

Changing daily habits in the Eastern Baltic

In January, Pasaules Dabas Fonds started a 3-year project in Latvia to raise awareness around sustainable and responsible seafood consumption, in collaboration with the Swedish Postcode Foundation. The project aims to build understanding around the problems of unsustainable over-consumption of fish and the state of fish stocks in the Baltic Sea.

Building on current momentum around protecting the Baltic cod and European eel, Pasaules Dabas Fonds will work with stakeholders to increase both the public's and the market's sensitivity to the connection

between sustainable fisheries and a healthy Baltic Sea. They will also focus on the need for a transition in daily habits, offering advice on how to better consider the environment in our everyday activities.

The project further aims to reduce the availability of IUCN Red List species in food retailers and restaurants by 25% over the coming three years. Pasaules Dabas Fonds is cooperating with the Environmental Solutions Institute to develop a complement to WWF's Seafood Guide, encompassing assessments of freshwater species for the national market.

Similar projects were launched in Lithuania and Estonia.

"We are proud to support the Estonian Fund for Nature, Pasaules Dabas Fonds and Lithuanian Fund for Nature in their work to promote more sustainable fishing through educating and engaging consumers, retail business as well as policy makers in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania," says Marie Dahllöf, Secretary General of the Swedish Postcode Foundation."

Contact: [Elza Ozoliņa](#)



Photo: Erling Svensen / WWF

New fisheries conservation capacity

One exciting consequence of the new partnership with the Swedish Postcode Foundation in the eastern Baltic on seafood market activities is the hiring of an additional resource in each of the Baltic Ecoregion Programme partner offices in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. These new staff members will work on seafood and fisheries strategies for the next three years, greatly strengthening delivery toward regional sustainable fisheries goals in 2019 -2021.

FISHERIES AND BIODIVERSITY



Smelt on ice

Photo: N. Krilov

Fishing for smelt and science

During the 2019 ice fishing season for smelt in the Gulf of Finland, the Baltic Fund for Nature and the Pitserskiy Anglers Club decided to calculate recreational catches of smelt (*Osmerus eperlanus*), effectively launching a joint action – ‘Fishing for Science’. This action was supported by the Barents-Baltic Nature and People Programme.

Every year, thousands of anglers go to ice to catch this small but tasty traditional fish. As a result of overfishing (both recreational and commercial), long-term climatic oscillations and habitat destruction,

the smelt populations in the Gulf of Finland have significantly declined since the 1990s.

Scientists from Russian fisheries institutes are often challenged by the volume of data to analyze on recreational fishing – a perfect



Photo: N. Krilov

opportunity for citizen science to step in and help with nature conservation. The Baltic Fund for Nature and the Pitserskiy Anglers Club (the largest anglers club in north-west Russia) organized data collection on smelt fishing from anglers via Internet questionnaires, an assessment of fishers publications on the anglers’ website, and surveys on the ice during the 2019 smelt fishing festival.

The results showed that the mean weight of smelt caught by anglers in 2019 was a puny 17.6g. Each angler on average caught only 78 fish, with a total weight of 1.4kg per expedition. The action counted a total of 30,000 anglers who caught smelt on the ice of the Gulf of Finland during the January–April 2019 season, suggesting a total weight of smelt caught recreationally of at least 250 tons (and probably more)! On top of this, the approved 2019 quota for commercial smelt catch in the area is 800 tons.

The action showed what a significant impact recreational fishing can have, and how important it is to respect interests of anglers. Through the action, the anglers demonstrated that they are ready to collaborate in improving the state of the smelt population in the Gulf of Finland.

Contact: [Tatiana Ivanova](#)

Industry says ‘End illegal fish discards’

Since 1 January it has been illegal to throw fish back into EU waters, but the practice remains widespread. In response, representatives from large [Swedish food companies joined WWF to request](#) that the Swedish government take urgent action to end illegal discards and introduce surveillance cameras on board fishing vessels.

The Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences reported

that an average of 5,700–9,200 tonnes of fish and shellfish were discarded annually between 2008 and 2015. Data from the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) confirms that the practice has continued since 2015, notably with regard to Baltic cod.

This worries the industry and retailers as they rely on all actors in the supply chain being legally compliant. German retailers – including Lidl and Aldi – made a

[similar statement](#) in partnership with WWF last year. The retailers point out that these problems can be avoided with effective implementation of existing regulations.

Fully documented fisheries can help provide better fisheries management, healthier fish stocks, and a stable supply of the high quality fish that they want to sell to their customers.

Contact: [Karin Glaumann](#)

FISHERIES AND BIODIVERSITY



Photo: Rostislav Stelaneck / Shutterstock

Joint efforts to save the eel

The eel continues to be a priority for fisheries advocacy within the Baltic Ecoregion Programme, who joined forces with other regional NGOs to urge Member States and the Commission at the Fisheries Council Meeting in December 2018 to list the eel as a prohibited species in the total allowable catch (TAC) and quota regulation decision, as well as to prohibit all recreational fishing in all waters.

In a halfhearted win for sustainable fisheries management, Council agreed to include prohibition of fishing of eel at all life stages – including glass eels – and recreational fisheries, and extended the prohibition to brackish waters. The prohibition is set for three consecutive months to be chosen nationally between 1 August 2019 and 29 February 2020. The Council further agreed to limit eel fishing between September 2018 and January 2019, when only eel smaller than 12 cm can be caught. The ruling applies to European waters in the North Atlantic, including the Baltic Sea, Skagerrak and Kattegat, and the North Sea.

WWF regards this as a necessary first step. **However, in the absence of a complete closure, this temporary management effort will have little effect on the**

recovery of the critically endangered eel.

The International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) clearly advises a reduction of all pressures to close to zero in both fishing and anthropogenic impacts. Last year, NGOs pushed hard for a total ban on eel fishing across Europe. So while this new decision was an improvement on the previous Council decision, the problem remains that in choosing the months of prohibition, countries can deliberately choose to allow fishing in the months with the least (short term) impact on fishermen, and minimal conservation benefits. This was the case in Sweden in 2018.

Member States have also agreed to also take further steps toward protecting the stock in national inland waters, through strengthening national management plans during all stages of the eel life cycles. Today's measure for eel regulation must be the beginning of genuine conservation efforts, including the management of the fishery for young glass eels, stopping illegal trafficking and ensuring that rivers are cleaner and not blocked by turbines and hydroelectric power plants.

Contact: [Karin Glaumann](#)

Stop ignoring the science

March, Brussels: WWF provided input to the European eel consultation. Referring to a recent study commissioned by the EU Parliament PECH Committee, '[Environmental, social and economic sustainability of European eel management](#)', WWF noted that the 40% escapement target used in national management plans is not an appropriate baseline, suggesting instead the application of a scientific mortality-based target. Moreover, stocking programmes were disputed as a suitable method for a stock recovery within the scientific community as some countries have used them as an excuse to keep fishing, or performed stocking in waterways above hydro-power dams.

Classified as critically endangered by CITES since 2009, the numbers of eel have dramatically declined in recent years. The eel is a unique fish, a survivor from prehistoric times that spawns only once in its lifetime, and only in the Sargasso Sea in the western Atlantic. Yet both Europe and the Baltic region have struggled to put in place adequate safeguards, and even illegal fishing for eel is a widely known ongoing problem.

Contact: [Karin Glaumann](#)

FISHERIES AND BIODIVERSITY



RiverGo brings Russians and Finns together

Russia's Baltic Fund for Nature has joined with the Nature Resources Institute of Finland and the Center for Economic Development, Transport and Environment of Southeast Finland to launch the project 'River flows - Life goes' (or RiverGo for short). Implemented in the River Vuoksi water catchment, the project is funded by the European Union, the Russian Federation and the Republic of Finland in the cross-border cooperation programme South-East Finland - Russia 2014-2020.

The project is focused on the study and conservation of the natural systems of the Vuoksi River and its surroundings on both sides of the border. It will promote the development of joint solutions and recommendations for sustainable management of nature areas and raising public awareness about the region's natural values.



Photo: P. Vahanaiki

The Vuoksi River unites Europe's two biggest lakes - Saimaa and Ladoga. The project will unite people and organizations to promote a clean and sustainable environment in the trans-boundary region, both for local people and visitors.

A key focus will be improved management of salmonid fish populations. Through complex regional ecological studies and joint discussions around impacts and mitigation measures, teams will

undertake restoration of salmonid spawning sites in end of May, in Imatra, Finland.

The process of river restoration and dam removal for free fish migration are at an early stage in Russia, and restricted by costly, time-consuming negotiations and permissions. RiverGo will facilitate the efforts of NGOs, experts and authorities to develop a road map and educational video on river restoration for the recovery of fish populations, for future use in Russia.

2019 is the International Year of the Salmon - a fitting time for the joint efforts of Finnish and Russian organizations under RiverGo to contribute to improvements in both the state of salmon populations and public awareness around the importance of salmon and challenges faced. The Baltic Ecoregion Programme provides support to the project implementation. The outcome should help improve the management of river systems and fish populations in target areas of the Baltic Sea region.

Contact: [Tatiana Ivanova](#)



Photo: P. Vahanaiki

EUTROPHICATION AND AGRICULTURE



Photo: Kosteikkomaailma Juhana Siekkinen

Building a wetland to combat eutrophication

WWF Finland is moving ahead with building a new ‘constructed’ wetland in Inkoo. When completed, the wetland is expected to capture nutrients from agriculture and reduce the load entering the Ingarskila River which flows into the Baltic Sea.

Functioning wetlands are incredibly important. They increase the water retention in the catchment area, creating a buffer for heavy rains and acting as water reserves in times of drought. They act as filters for run-off: when water flows through a wetland, nutrients and soil matter fall to the bottom. They also offer biodiversity benefits, for example by creating habitat for birds, mammals and amphibians.

The project is delivering concrete measures aimed at reducing nutrient load and eutrophication in Finland’s inland waterways. Most of the nutrients in the Baltic Sea comes down the rivers, so improving the status of inland waterways directly benefits the sea too. Part funded by the Ministry of

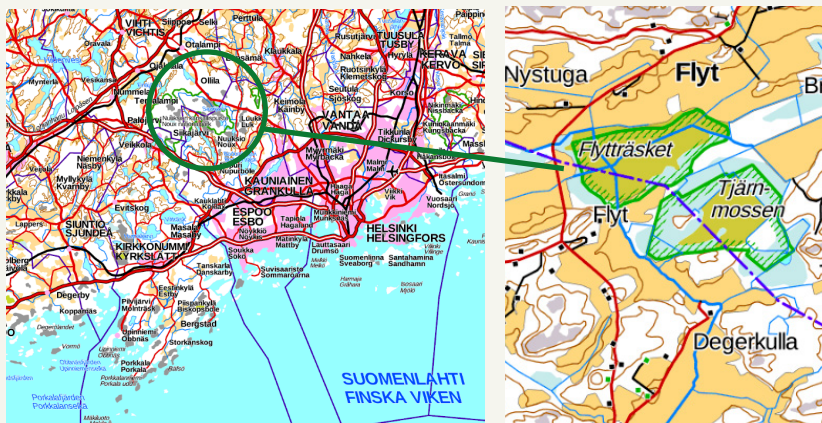
Environment of Finland, the project will run until December 2020 as a cooperation between landowners, agricultural advisors, local environmental associations, municipalities and other local actors.

Over the summer several construction and restoration projects will take place in the catchment. The mapping of poten-

Functioning wetlands are incredibly important. See detailed map here

tial sites in the area is underway. Thus far, landowners have been enthusiastic. “I wanted to be involved in this project to increase biodiversity in my home landscape and to do my part to reduce nutrient loading. I hope that in the near future we will have the opportunity to see some water birds in the wetland – and I don’t think it will decrease the value of the property either”, says Touko Vohlonen, the owner of the first wetland site.

Contact: [Jenny Jyrkänkallio-Mikkola](#)



EUTROPHICATION AND AGRICULTURE

Environment and Climate Action Award to Krzysztof Kowalski

11 April, Brussels: The 2018 winner of the Baltic Sea Farmer of the Year Award, Krzysztof Kowalski, recently received further affirmation of his important work. He is now the latest recipient of the Rural Inspiration Award in the thematic category of 'Environment and Climate Action', presented by the European Network for Rural Development. Mr Kowalski's farm was recognized for using EU Rural Development Programme (RDP) support to implement a sustainable model of agriculture that combines production of high-quality products with environmental protection. The winners were announced during a ceremony hosted by Phil Hogan, European Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development.

Last year, Mr. Kowalski was awarded the WWF Baltic Sea Farmer of the Year Award for his holistic approach to sustainable crop and pig production. In addition to implementing a range of measures to reduce nutrient leakage – such as planting over 1000 trees, using catch crops and buffer zones and reduced use of fertilizers – they also installed solar panels and heat pumps to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Furthermore, they minimize pesticide use and actively test for residues and heavy metals in the oil they produce. The farm's 30 beehives also give a good indication of the health of the environment in and around the farm.

Read more about the Kowalski farm in the description of [ENRP winners](#) and the [2018 WWF Baltic Sea Farmer of the Year brochure](#).

Contact: [Anu Suono](#)



Phil Hogan, European Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development and Mr. Kowalski, Winner of Baltic Sea Farmer of the Year Award 2018.

Photo: ENRD CP 2019

Innovative farmers award covers vast majority of the Baltic catchment

13 December, Minsk: WWF was delighted to invite Belarus and the Ukraine to join the Baltic Sea Farmer of the Year competition, which meant that we had representation from farmers covering the vast majority of the Baltic Sea catchment.

The winners from the two countries were showcased at the Greener Agriculture for a Sustainable Sea (GRASS) Conference in Minsk in mid-December, a two day conference focusing in particular on organic agriculture.

Anu Suono, Anna Sosnowska and Elza Ozolina from the Baltic Ecoregion Programme attended the conference to showcase some of 2018's fantastic winners and underscore the relevance of farmers to the wider catchment area.

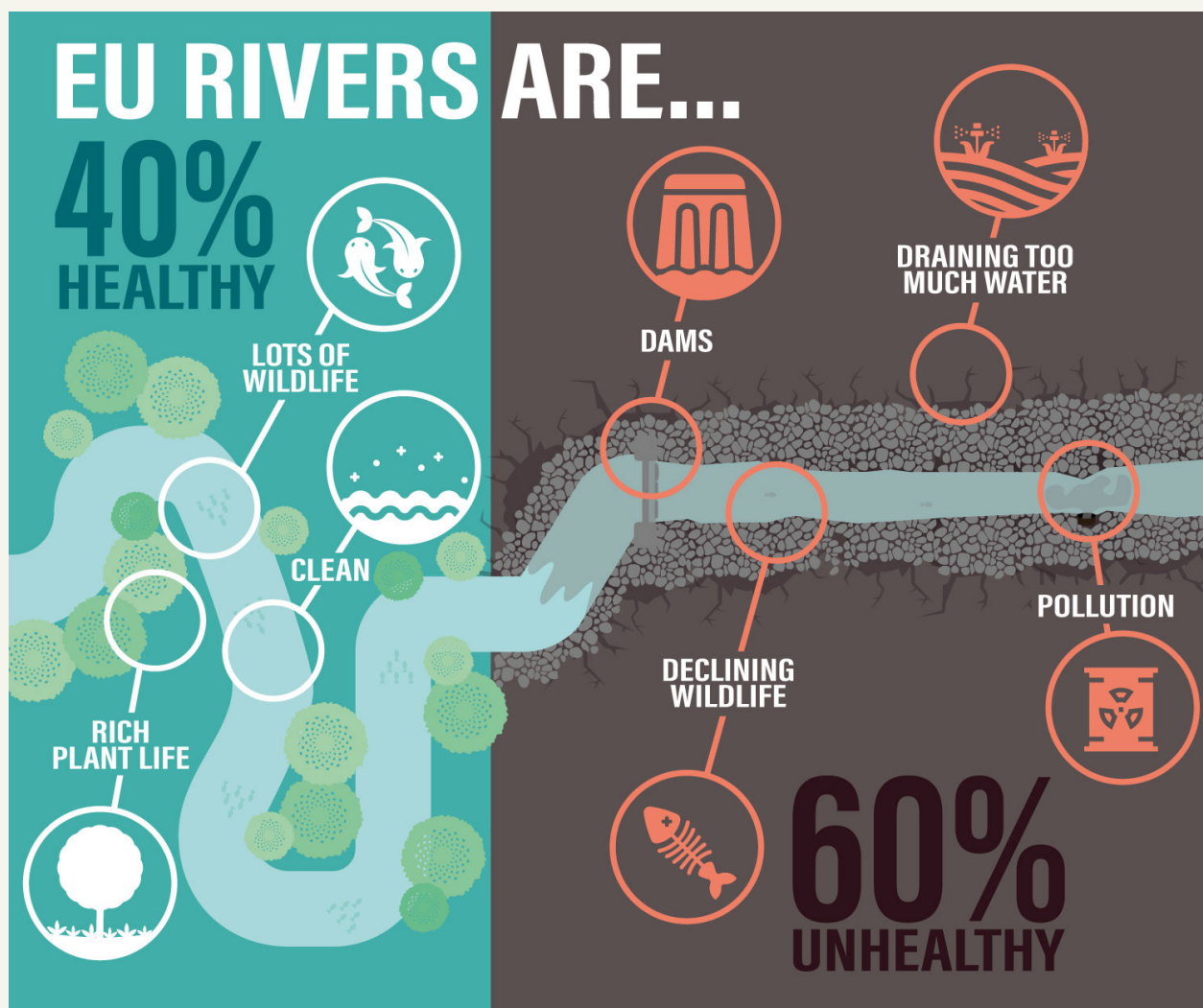
The search for innovative and Baltic-friendly farmers around the region is back. Countries are now in the process of selecting their national winners for 2019. Along with the regional winner, these national champions will be celebrated at the GRASS 2019 conference, to be co-organized by WWF in Warsaw this autumn.

Our aim is to spread the experiences and knowledge of the winners so that their practices become the norm, instead of unique individual examples. [Stay tuned for more information.](#)

Contact: [Anu Suono](#)



EUTROPHICATION AND AGRICULTURE



#Protectwater

From October 2018 to March 2019, WWF provided input to the Health Check of the Water Framework Directive through the EU Public Consultation process, led by its European Policy Office in collaboration with several environmental organizations. A total of 375,386 signatures were collected, making this the third largest public consultation in the history of the EU.

But what is going to happen with the Water Framework Directive after 2027? By then all measures in the river basin management plans should be implemented but there is

excessive use of exemptions across the region. Several countries – such as Germany – have exemptions for over 90% of their water bodies. Others – like Sweden and Poland – apply exemptions for more than 50% of their waters.

The Water Framework Directive is one of the most ambitious and innovative pieces of EU legislation ever to pass. It is critical to the protection and restoration of Europe's freshwater ecosystems. A weaker Directive would have disastrous consequences for the health of our waters and biodiversity, and the crucial services these

ecosystems provide across Europe. WWF is therefore working to stop countries from weakening the Directive before the health check is completed.

We are calling for effective implementation and better enforcement of the Water Framework Directive to reduce diffuse pollution and excess groundwater extraction for agriculture and damage to natural water ecosystems due to unsustainable hydropower, navigation and flood management infrastructure.

Contact: [Anders Alm](#)

PEARLS FROM THE BALTIC SEA REGION

Highlighting marine litter on the Baltic Sea Day

March 21-22, St. Petersburg:

Representatives from across the Baltic gathered in St. Petersburg, Russia, for the 20th time on the 2019 International Environmental Forum Baltic Sea Day. Discussion focused on exchange of experience, results achieved, and future plans, as well as how to reach our ambitious goals for conserving and protecting the Baltic Sea environment.

The round table on Marine Litter centred on the current status, how to implement the actions on microplastics from the Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter, and on the challenge of abandoned, lost or discarded fishing gear.

Cleaning activities on the Russian coast of the Baltic Sea (St. Petersburg and the Leningrad and Kaliningrad regions) were presented. Specialists from the Russian State Hydrometeorological University presented monitoring methods and the results of their study of marine litter in the Russian part of the Gulf of Finland. The focus for the research in 2018-2019 are a study of marine litter accumulation in the Neva estuary; testing methods for litter collection on the beach and near-shore waters; identification of litter pollution 'hotspots'; and defining a mathematical model of litter distribution in the Neva estuary.

Fifteen spots were chosen for the research around Neva Bay. The results are predictable, with the northern and southern coasts differing dramatically in terms of litter composition. The cleanest city beach is the Park of the 300 Year Anniversary of St. Petersburg, which is cleaned every day. Plastic is the main type of litter across the



board on the northern coast (50-60%), although much less at public beaches that are regularly cleaned - like Lakhta or Zelenogorsk - than at wilder beaches. Beaches on the southern coast were mostly covered by broken bottle glass, corroded metal from boats and plaster (gypsum cement, a light and crumbly construction material). Plastics comprise only 10-12% of the litter on the southern coast.

Several international projects on litter monitoring in the Kaliningrad region have been run by the Shirshov Institute of Oceanology (the Russian Academy of Sciences). Methods included laboratory experiments, sea expeditions, and litter collection. All beaches in the Kaliningrad region were found to be covered in plastic, with the microplastics content averaging 1.3-36 pieces per kilogram. In the study area much of this is polystyrene and polystyrene foam. There is no difference between pollution on coastlines with high or low levels of anthropogenic load. But today another problem takes place in Kaliningrad region – pollution by geosynthetic litter. This is synthetic products used to stabilize terrain, such as big-bag containers, geomats, and geogrids.

Russian NGO “Friends of the Baltic” is involving local communities in the plastic pollution management. This NGO organized four seminars for 110 people (students, teachers, volunteers, representatives of NGOs etc.). The organisation have also developed an educational plan for schools on marine litter, a guide for the public on ecological control called River-Watch and recommendations on the use of plastic for government, business and society in general.

During the second session of the round table “Marine litter” projects on ghost nets retrieval were presented. Participants of the round table got acquainted with results of “MARELITT Baltic” project implemented in the Baltic Sea for the last three years. There is no ongoing project on ghost nets retrieval in the Russian part of the Baltic Sea, but Baltic Fund for Nature has started a pilot project on the investigation of necessary measures and negotiations that should be taken in Russian part of the Gulf of Finland before operational activities of derelict fishing gear retrieval, disposal and utilization.

Contact: [Polina Bakunovich](#)

PEARLS FROM THE BALTIC SEA REGION



What has been your inspiration for working for the Baltic Sea and the environment?

“The Baltic Sea has been part of my life since childhood. The negative impacts of coastal development prompted me to take action to foster a more sustainable approach.

Working for WWF allows me to promote better marine conservation and address decision makers, backed by the weight of one of the biggest global conservation NGOs. I also get inspiration from exchange with, and mutual support of, colleagues both within and outside WWF, as well as a respectful and mostly constructive dialogue with other sectors and policy makers. Fundamentally, achieving practical results on the ground – like turning intensive agricultural areas back into living coastal habitats – is really rewarding and inspiring.”

Meet the Team – Jochen Lamp

We are thrilled to congratulate Jochen Lamp from WWF Germany for receiving the [2019 Baltic Sea Award](#).

What road have you travelled to get where you are now?

“I grew up on a farm at the Baltic coast. One day investors showed up with plans to develop in the middle of the landscape where I used to roam freely. They built a resort for 3,000 tourists and we just had to watch it happen. That probably triggered my career in conservation.

After high school I started voluntary service in the Wadden Sea Nature reserve, then moved to Berlin to study landscape planning. After that I joined WWF Bremen to work on protecting the Wadden Sea through the national parks programme. In 1991 I moved to eastern Germany and have been part of the WWF Baltic Ecoregional Programme (BEP) ever since.

The early BEP years focused on protected areas and advocacy around, for example, the International Maritime Organisation’s (IMO) classification of the Baltic Sea as a Particularly Sensitive Sea Area (PSSA). This was a major basis for binding environmental regulations for all international ship traffic in the Baltic. We also

elevated eutrophication as a priority for public attention.

Since 2010 I have focused on promoting maritime spatial planning as a tool to harmonize conservation with sustainable economic development. The Baltic is an example of good practice for other regional seas. I have also supported capacity building trainings for young planning practitioners in different parts of the world. A key challenge has been advocacy against the Nordstream I pipeline development between Russia and Germany.

I am also now busy with one project on retrieving and recycling ghost nets from the Baltic Sea, and another to restore coastal wetlands to saltmarshes naturally flooded by sea water. After long negotiations we expect to start construction in two areas this year, in close cooperation with the German Baltic Sea Foundation and other NGOs.”

What has been the highlight or biggest success of your career?

“A highlight was when the IMO declared the Baltic as a PSSA and later phased out the release of waste water by passenger ships outside Baltic ports. Seeing the national park visitors centre opened after 10 years of work was great. The closure of a shipyard after a public campaign and 10 years later of a coal fired power plant were also highlights. The shipyard closure was crowned with the European Conservation award in 1992.”

WWF Germany

- Country: Germany
- Active in Baltic since: 1991
- BEP focused staff members: 5 staff, including Communications, are working on the Baltic as part of wider thematic conservation work.
- Main thematic focus: maritime spatial planning, wetland restoration, ghost net work.

PEARLS FROM THE BALTIC SEA REGION



NEWS FROM BRUSSELS

Europe fails on sustainable fisheries

The European Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) defines the sustainable management of marine ecosystems and fish stocks with the aim to make fisheries environmentally, economically and socially sustainable. In preparation for the next policy reform, WWF reviewed implementation by Member States and the European Commission on key legal articles of the CFP.

WWF's [report](#) revealed that insufficient progress has been made across all major themes of the policy, with national marine strategies failing to include clear,

concrete objectives in line with the CFP.

Of the 46 actions examined only one was achieved by all Member States: the fleet registry. Twenty four actions were partially accomplished, while the remaining 21 have yet to be tackled at all. In the Baltic region, Member States scored poorly on rebuilding the stocks to be harvested at sustainable levels. This was particularly true of the large fishing countries - Denmark, Germany, Finland, Poland and Sweden.

The Baltic Sea was the first region to be considered for a new

fisheries management framework and adopted the very first multi-annual plan in 2016. Three years on, the plan is to be revised. Thus far, the plan has not met the CFP sustainable yield objectives, since it allows for higher fishing levels than that permitted by the CFP. This results in continued higher quotas, despite the risks demonstrated by scientific evidence.

Accurate reporting, monitoring discard catches, along with control and enforcement actions are still weak across all Member States. Securing the EU's commitment to environmental protection and implementing effective measures to address the wider management of the sea must be a priority for the Member States. This should naturally include achieving the CFP objectives of exploiting fish stocks at sustainable levels and achieving Good Environmental Status in all European seas.

Contact: [Ottilia Thoreson](#)



Photo: Agata Dorobek / Shutterstock

ON THE HORIZON

WWF BALTIC ECOREGION PROGRAMME

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

22 May 2019

International Day for
Biological Diversity

23-26 May 2019

European Elections

8 June 2019

World Oceans Day

12-13 June 2019

EUSBSR FORUM
Gdansk, Poland

13-16 June 2019

Denmark's political week
Folkemødet - Bornholm

18-19 June 2019

56th Meeting of the
HELCOM Heads
of Delegation,
Helsinki, Finland

30 June-7 July 2019

Sweden's political week,
Gotland, Sweden

14-15 October 2019

EU AGRIFISH Council meeting,
Luxembourg

Bringing Sustainable Blue Economy Principles to the Arctic

May 7, Rovaniemi, Finland:

Scientists have warned that rising greenhouse gas emissions are causing the Arctic to heat up much faster than the world average. Yet out of its latest meeting, the Arctic Council issued a short joint statement that avoided spelling out its priorities and excluded any mention of climate change or necessary actions.

This is the opposite of what is called for in [Getting it right in a new ocean](#), a report published late last year by WWF's Arctic Programme. Inspired by the Sustainable Blue Economy Principles developed by the Baltic Ecoregion Programme - this study is the first of its kind to outline how the Arctic's ocean resources and economies can be developed in the long-term while balancing the economic and ecosystem health for the region.

Released to coincide with the first global Sustainable Blue Economy conference (Nairobi, November 2018), the report describes how a 'new ocean' is emerging as Arctic sea ice melts due to climate change and the profound impacts that will have on the region's biodiversity and communities. Major economic development to exploit this trend - up to US\$1 trillion dollars over the next 15 years - could intensify many of the negative impacts unless clear decisions are taken early to set a sustainable direction. The report offers guidance to governments and business on how sustainability can be achieved at this pivotal moment for the Arctic.

WWF Arctic Programme

WWF's Arctic Programme coordinates WWF's work in the Arctic through offices in seven Arctic countries with experts in circumpolar issues like sustainability, governance, climate change, shipping, oil and gas and wildlife. Visit our [website](#), check out our [scorecard](#), or follow us on Twitter: [@WWF_arctic](#)

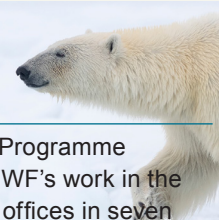


Photo: Richard Barrett / WWF-UK

The Arctic Ocean and its coastlines are home to 34 species of marine mammal, 633 species of fish and four million people, including Indigenous Peoples and communities. The vulnerable ecosystem's largest economic sectors include mining and oil and gas, services, fishing and resource processing. But as the Arctic Ocean ice shrinks, shipping and tourism are poised to become key sectors.

Any future development must promote a healthy, biodiverse Arctic that benefits all life in the region. The vulnerable coasts and marine species will increasingly come into conflict with industrial activities like shipping and seismic exploration. Effective policies and actions are needed, including the creation of a pan-Arctic network of marine protected areas, to allow species to respond, adapt and be resilient as they confront rapid climate change.

Contact: [Tom Arnbom](#)



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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Ottília, Anu and Valerie