



NEWSLETTER

MAY

2016

WWF Baltic Ecoregion Programme

BALTIC ECOREGION NEWS

Catch up on the latest events, successes and challenges from the past 6 months in this edition of our newsletter.

WWF Cartoon Guidebook back by popular demand

Ecosystem-based management (EBM) is just a new way of describing the basic principles for managing human activities in a complex environment. The term EBM is widely found in legislation but it's fair to say that it is still not widely understood as a concept. When it comes to implementation, it can be difficult to answer simple questions such as, "What does EBM really mean for me and my industry?" and "In practice, what must I do to comply with EBM and its aims?"

In light of this – and in response to the huge success of a first cartoon developed on Marine Spatial Planning several years ago – WWF Germany has produced a second cartoon booklet for decision-makers, designed to help answer these questions and convey the basics of what EBM is and is not. The Baltic Sea's geographic boundaries and catchment area were used to illustrate in simple terms what EBM means in practice, although the booklet can be applied widely to other marine areas as well.

A Finnish version is scheduled for May. Stay tuned for planned versions in other Baltic languages to come.

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WWF CARTOON GUIDEBOOK

VICTORY FOR THE BALTIC SEA! BAN ON SEWAGE DISCHARGE SECURED!

A clear victory for people and nature was achieved when the long awaited ban of the discharge of sewage from passenger ships in the Baltic Sea was finally agreed by the International Maritime Organization (IMO) on 22 April.

The Baltic Sea will now be the first region in the world where all IMO registered passenger vessels will be required to discharge their sewage at port reception facilities, or treat it using an on-board treatment plant certified to meet the Special Area requirements.

The regulations will enter into force in 2019 for new passenger ships and in 2021 for existing vessels.

While this is an achievement with global significance, it is first and foremost a regional achievement, over 10 years in the making.

For us it represents an affirmation of the Baltic Programme's long fought efforts to ensure sustainable management and use for the Baltic Sea. WWF

has played a critical role as an advocate and key stakeholder on this issue. We have worked along a broad range of stakeholders both in public and behind the scenes – operating visibly in the media and invisibly in closed-door discussions thanks to the sustained engagement and tremendous commitment of the Baltic team working effectively together. Also invaluable has been the wider WWF network and in particular the critical support of Simon Walmsley, a tireless advocate and representative for WWF at the IMO.

After 10 years, it also represents both an important case and a compelling story of change. Like most good stories, it has a number of plot twists, suspense and international intrigue. The heroes and villains are not always clear-cut and there are many ways to interpret the actions of the well-defined characters. The trajectory of the narrative, however, is decidedly progressive. It inspires and reminds of the importance of tenacity, commitment and the transformational power of a clear vision. It speaks to our values, and what can happen when those values are shared by an engaged public who are ready to mobilize and influence positive change.

We need positive stories, in the Baltic Sea as in all coastal and marine areas. Stories that demonstrate progress and our collective potential to secure a bright future for that which we treasure. Stories of what we can achieve together in partnership. **It is a familiar story that resonates precisely because it is playing out again and again across the world's ocean and seas.**

And, of course, this story, continues. The sequel is already in progress and it is anyone's guess where the story will end.

For our part, we remain committed to continue to build upon this positive story of change. Neither its evolution nor our development will be linear. We will continue to adapt our strategic responses as needed and to build

alliances along the way. We need strict and progressive regulations and that these must be effectively implemented. But, **we also need leadership which goes beyond compliance.** We need the **joint commitment of the public and private sector to work together to support holistic, integrated and forward-looking solutions** in order to achieve a sustainable Blue Economy in the Baltic Sea. We will continue our commitment to work in partnership with all stakeholders to secure this. And, in doing so we can demonstrate, once again, that **the Baltic Sea can provide a global role model where people and businesses prosper amidst healthy, well-managed ecosystems.**



Happy reading,
Pauli and Ottilia

FOCUS ON OUR LIVING BLUE PLANET AND THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL FOR THE OCEAN



Photo: Brent Stron / Getty Images

The ocean generates economic benefits worth at least US\$2.5 trillion each year, and the overall value of the ocean as an asset is 10 times that. Yet a dive into the health of the oceans in [WWF's Living Blue Planet Report](#) shows a blue planet in crisis where humanity is collectively mismanaging the ocean to the brink of collapse. This is a situation we know only too well in the Baltic region.

Fortunately, in 2015 world leaders included global commitments to conservation and restoration of the oceans as a key component of the new United Nations development agenda. These are underpinned by 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Number 14 is a standalone "Ocean Goal".

The recognition of the need for SDG 14 focused on the world's oceans and seas underscores both their unique and critical role in global ecosystems and economies and their increasingly threatened ecological state.

What does this mean for the ocean?

The Ocean Goal commits world leaders to end overfishing, eliminate



WWF's Living Blue Planet Report

illegal fishing, establish more marine protected areas, reduce plastic litter and other sources of marine pollution, and increase ocean resilience to acidification. This means the world now has an agreed road map for ocean recovery.

But how do you translate a set of admirable and ambitious commitments into effective collaborative action at the local, national, and international levels — with the challenge of a weak and fragmented state of global ocean governance? Unlike the other SDGs, there is no single international body charged with driving forward the Ocean Goal. This makes it unclear who will be responsible for monitoring progress and ensuring accountability.

Taking leadership over oceans

Two nations - Fiji and Sweden - have stepped forward to take leadership and rally support. An initial step was to create a new high-level series of global conferences on the oceans, the first of which is scheduled in June 2017 in Fiji, with Swedish support. This leadership and proposal for a conference has been co-sponsored by 95 countries and adopted unanimously in a UN General Assembly resolution.

The governments of Fiji and Sweden have a large task at hand; we believe this to be a promising step for change. We hope — as Isabella Lövin, Swedish Minister for International Development Co-operation, stated — that "2016 turns out to be the year when the world enters a new era of ocean regeneration." We can and must correct course now as the ocean has clearly told us there's no time to waste.

We are well suited in the Baltic region to demonstrate the kind of regional approaches needed to aid the delivery of SDG14, and we will continue to explore the opportunities to do so.

INTEGRATED OCEAN MANAGEMENT AND MARITIME ACTIVITIES



Photo: Jüri-Ott Salm

Restoring wetlands in Estonia

The Estonian Fund for Nature has joined with partners in a new five-year EU LIFE project entitled “LIFE Mires of Estonia.” The project aims to secure favourable conservation status for wetlands (especially mires), to halt the degradation of habitats caused by drainage and to regenerate favourable natural hydrology conditions in six areas of Estonia. The project will raise public awareness on the importance of internationally valuable wetlands and share international experiences and knowledge of wetland restoration.

Methodology and guidelines are being developed for the degraded mire habitats sites. Fifty planned nature conservation holiday work camps will give hundreds of volunteers the chance to contribute in the restoration and monitoring of crucial areas. Both experts and drones will monitor the success of the project. Click [here](#) to read more.

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Tantalizingly close to a Ballast Water Convention

Belgium and Fiji ratified the International Maritime Organization (IMO) Ballast Water Management (BWM) Convention in March. For the Convention to enter in force, at least 30 countries representing 35% of the world merchant shipping tonnage need to ratify. These two nations brought the figure to 34.82%, representing 49 countries and leaving just 0.18% remaining to meet the threshold. With states such as Panama and the United Arab Emirates expected to ratify in the near future, the shipping industry is facing a vast change with many outstanding questions about the regulation.

The process of ratification was also approved by parliament in Finland at the end of April. The national legislation is expected to pass the parliamentary vote later this year, adding an extra 0.15% that will bring the Convention tantalizingly close to coming into force. WWF Finland has been actively driving the issue forward,

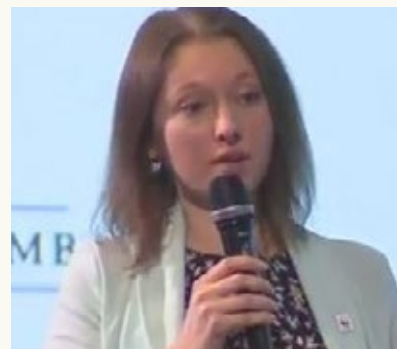
participating in parliamentary committee hearings, sending the parliamentary Transport and Communications Committee a letter signed by WWF's CEO, and publishing an opinion piece in Finland's largest newspaper, Helsingin Sanomat.

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XVII International Environmental Forum «Baltic Sea Day»

On March 22-23, Vanessa Ryan from WWF Finland made a presentation at a roundtable on “Maritime Spatial Planning” during the XVII International “Baltic Sea Day” Environmental Forum hosted in St Petersburg. The presentation focused on “EU legislation in MSP and its application in the Baltic Sea region – environmental implications”. Emphasis included the experiences and progress of MSP in the Baltic Sea region, highlighting the need for an ecosystem-based approach to planning, and using marine spatial planning as a tool to reach Good Environmental Status (GES).

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INTEGRATED OCEAN MANAGEMENT AND MARITIME ACTIVITIES



Mapping service

In February, Finland completed its underwater inventory program, started in 2004. The Inventory Program for Underwater Marine Biodiversity (VELMU) has collected data on the distribution of algae, plants, invertebrates and fish, as well as the geological characteristics of the seabed.

The results are presented in an online map service. This is publicly available and contains data about fish spawning areas, underwater biotopes and some human pressures, as well as more than one thousand photos and videos of species and marine landscapes.

The new map service is unique in the wealth of observations and coverage of the whole Finnish sea area. This extensive information is needed for marine spatial planning, oil and chemical accident prevention and clean-up activities, and granting licenses for various activities. Knowledge and identification of high-value areas is also important to determine needed protection areas.

At present the [map service](#) is only available in Finnish, but non-Finnish speakers should also have a look at the site. A book presenting the results will be published in 2017, with plans for translation into English. The VELMU methodology and results can and should be used as an example to other countries that are initiating similar national underwater inventory programs.

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Regional Workshop to share lessons on Integrated Ocean Management

In the 2030 Development Agenda, the world's oceans and seas have been recognized with a sustainable development goal of their own - SDG14 (see page 3 for more information). All involved are challenged with how best to translate this admirable and ambitious commitment into effective collaborative action at the local, national, and international levels.

From 26-28 April, WWF Sweden and WWF International's Global Marine Unit co-hosted a workshop which engaged over 30 colleagues on regional implementation of Integrated Ocean Management and the Sustainable Blue Economy principles which WWF sees as central to delivering on the Ocean SDG. The workshop built on the diverse experiences of experts around the globe to help advance strategic development of regional initiatives in the Northern Mozambique Channel, the Mediterranean Marine Initiative and the Baltic Sea Ecoregion.

In addition to a series of energetic sessions around experience

sharing and building platforms for learning and collaboration, a mingle event was held on the M/S Prins Carl Philip boat, featuring SDG14 Ambassador for Sweden, Jan Olsson, and Kesaia Tabunakawai from WWF Fiji on the Sweden-Fiji partnership toward driving implementation of the Ocean SDG, as well as photographer Mattias Klum, and John Tanzer, Director of WWF's Global Marine Programme.

A panel event the following morning featured guests from KfW Development Bank and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, (Sida), as well as John Tanzer, to share their insights around:

- How to effectively mobilize the human and financial resources to deliver a truly integrated oceans management and realize SDG14;
- What kinds of initiatives are needed to scale up the conservation of marine resources;
- How to redirect investments to influence a sustainable 'blue growth' with social and economic benefits from a healthy ocean for current and future generations.

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BIODIVERSITY AND FISHERIES

EU deal allows continued overfishing

The European Parliament and the Council reached an agreement on a multi-annual plan for cod, herring and sprat in the Baltic Sea at a trilogue meeting on 15 March, following a European Commission proposal in 2014. This is an important legislation as it is the first in a series of regional plans for managing EU fish stocks. It is thus much more disappointing that it offers such poor guidance and low ambition for future management plans.

The agreed multi-annual plan allows for continued overfishing, making the commitments under the European revised Common Fisheries Policy to restore fish stocks to healthy levels by 2020 pretty unlikely. This also means that



Photo: WWF Poland

Member States are faltering in their commitments to reach “healthy fish stocks” in HELCOM’s Baltic Sea Action Plan. Moreover, reaching overall Good Environmental Status under the Marine Strategy Framework Directive is almost out of reach.

The question is who loses most from this final outcome – the fish stocks, consumers or the fishers themselves? And if all of these lose, who wins?

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MSC removes certification from all eastern Baltic cod fisheries

Last December the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) announced the suspension of the Baltic Sea cod fisheries certification, signaling the withdrawal of certification from 5 nations: Denmark, Germany, Latvia, Poland and Sweden.

MSC sets high standards on the criteria for certification - only sustainable and well-managed fisheries, based on scientific stock data can become certified. The 2015 data for estimates of Eastern Baltic cod stock vitality from the International Council of the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) show insufficient information to



make a scientific assessment. Moreover, changes in the growth patterns of the stock raise concern that the stock is not doing well. This left the MSC no choice but to remove the certification until the stock can be guaranteed in good condition.

In the meantime, consumers should follow their national seafood guide and continue to buy seafood which is certified

under MSC or the Aquaculture Stewardship Council (ASC) and listed as green in the consumer seafood guide. If cod is on the menu, consumers can choose from MSC certified fisheries in the Barents Sea, around Iceland and Greenland. Keep your eyes open for this year’s edition of the seafood guide. New editions have been launched in Finland, Norway and Sweden this month, and other countries in the Baltic will follow suit.

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BIODIVERSITY AND FISHERIES

Fisheries and biodiversity

On 19 November, WWF Poland organized an international conference “Fisheries and the protection of biodiversity – best practices to mitigate the impact of fisheries activities on the marine environment”. The conference was held in the National Marine Fisheries Research Institute in Gdynia, with the honorary patronage of the Ministry of the Environment.

Nearly 70 participants -fishermen, scientists, civil society and government - from all over Europe took part. They learned the principles of responsible fishing and received information about innovative practices to reduce the negative impact of fisheries on biodiversity. Transferring this knowledge into practice will help both to reduce the negative impact of human activities on the environment and to protect marine biodiversity.

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BALTIC RINGED SEALS – NOT CITY DWELLERS!

The Estonian Fund for Nature has completed its research in the Gulf of Finland on the declining population of Baltic Ringed Seals. The research team - which included experts from Estonia, Finland and Russia - installed telemetric devices that tracked the animals’ movements, how deep the animals dived and salinity on the seals’ backs.

The research results show that not only has the focal seal population decreased dramatically, but no contact was made with other ringed seal populations in the Baltic Sea area, as they do not migrate to other areas outside their home territory. The vulnerability of the Baltic ringed seal to pollution and need for specific habitat areas for feeding and reproduction make it clear that the health of the seal has to improve if the population is to be viable.

On the basis of the ecological findings, a proposal will be made to HELCOM to widen the HELCOM Kurgalsky Peninsula Baltic Special Protected Area to include the Lavassaare, Penisaare and the surrounding sea area.

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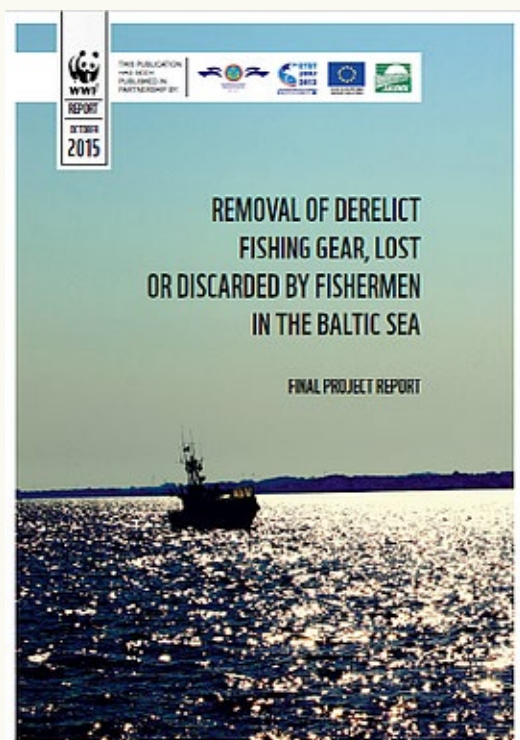


New Finnish law protects endangered fish species

A new decree that protects endangered fish species was recently passed in Finland. Sea trout, sea-spawning grayling, landlocked salmon and Arctic char are among the species that are now better protected by legislation. WWF Finland has worked relentlessly to achieve this and has been successful in influencing the contents of the law.

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BIODIVERSITY AND FISHERIES



Lost or discarded in the Baltic Sea

WWF Poland organized the final conference of the project focused on “Removal of derelict fishing gear, lost or discarded by fishermen in the Baltic Sea”, in partnership with the Maritime University of Szczecin last October.

Key [project results](#) were presented around the collaboration of WWF with scientists, fishers and divers to develop new methods for removing lost fishing nets from the seafloor and shipwrecks.

In the summer of 2015, in cooperation with over 100 Polish fishing vessels, WWF retrieved 268 tonnes of derelict fishing gear from the Polish Exclusive Economic Zone of the Baltic Sea. An electronic net tagging system, which will help to identify the owner of lost or abandoned gear, was also developed under the project.

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More ‘green’ fish than ever before

A recent survey conducted by WWF Finland across retailers and many other key players - representing over 90% of the seafood market in Finland, shows that over 60% of the seafood products on sale in Finland are ‘green’ (thus are sustainable consumption choices) according to seafood guide recommendations. About one third are classified as ‘yellow’ (meaning fine for occasional consumption), and only 2% are ‘red’ (not recommended for consumption due to sustainability concerns). A final ‘grey’ category covers the products or species that cannot be evaluated by using the seafood guide and represents only 1%, indicating that the vast majority of market actors know the

OVER 60%
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origin and sustainability of their seafood.

Another highlight is that since the launch of the campaign in 2012 there have been more than 150,000 visits to the WWF Finland campaign and seafood guide site - corresponding to about 100 visits a day. Not bad in a country of 5.5 million inhabitants! The seafood guide is also cited in official high school text books.

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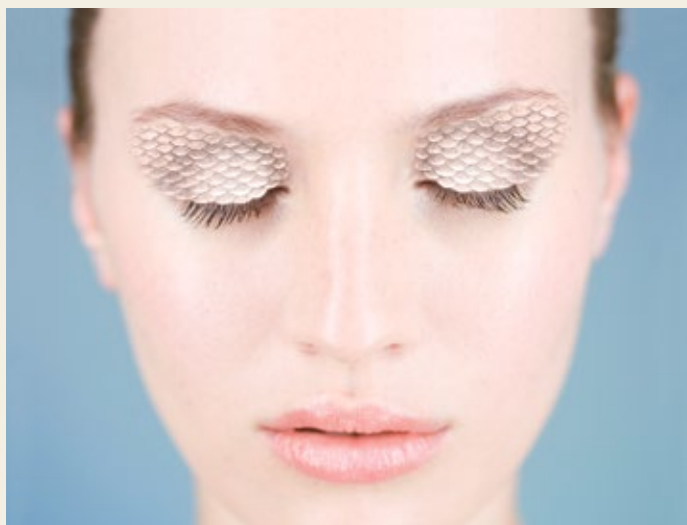


Photo: Getty Images

BIODIVERSITY AND FISHERIES

Changes required to make hydropower sustainable

Major rivers in the Baltic region, especially in Sweden and Finland, are heavily developed with hydropower installations. It is often argued that the negative impacts of dams on fauna and flora are just local, and that the climate neutral production of electricity outweighs any arguments in favour of stricter legislation. But the status of the wild Baltic salmon and eel tells another story.

Both species need to migrate upstream in their life cycles but dams are blocking their attempts. The individuals that are successful in reaching their spawning grounds – whether by fish ladder or manually transported – are often cut up downstream in the turbines.

In both Sweden and Finland, WWF and NGO partners are involved in several activities – including field projects, court cases



and lobbying - to restore rivers by building fishways, establishing or restoring natural adapted flows and the removal of dams.

Experts in northern Sweden have shown on two major hydropower rivers that applying these types of measures can be done

without losing production capacity. Only by applying such measures could hydropower dams be considered a truly “sustainable” energy source.

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Clearing out the junk

MARELITT BALTIC is a new pan-Baltic project aiming to reduce the impact of marine litter - such as derelict fishing gear - on the

environment. Partners and associates include KEST (Estonia), the Municipality of Simrishamn (Sweden), WWF Poland and WWF Germany.

WWF Poland will lead action

around ghost net retrieval from the sea floor and ship wrecks, coordinate workshops and training for fishers, and coordinate the formulation of guidelines and final results. WWF Germany will work with associated partners to provide a feasibility study concerning the mapping of host areas for derelict fishing gear in sensitive areas including sites contaminated by ammunition and underwater heritage sites. By creating a treatment scheme, it will facilitate finding recycling possibilities and required actions for harbours, recycling companies and politicians.

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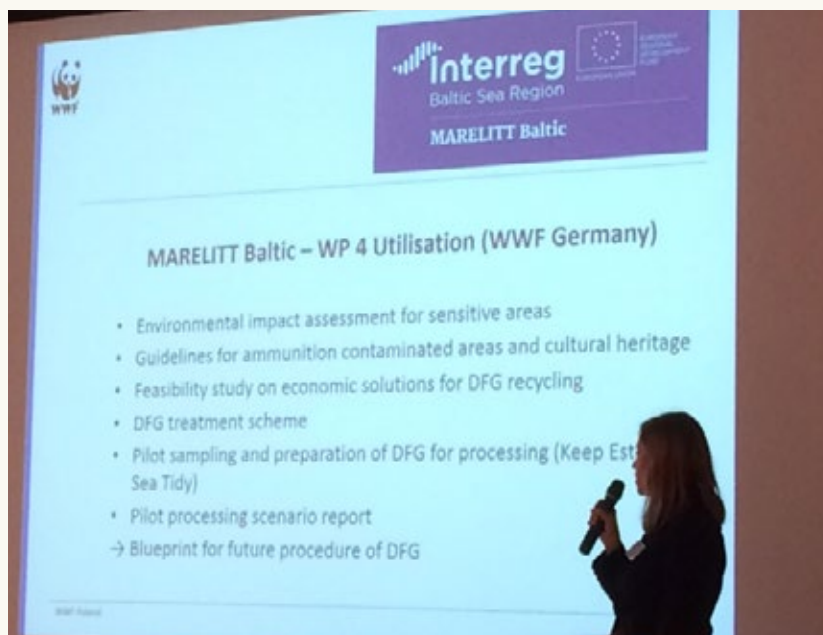


BIODIVERSITY AND FISHERIES

Donate your Christmas tree to the fish

Every year in mid-January, mountains of old Christmas trees fill the streets of Sweden. These days there is a range of new options for disposing of these no-longer wanted decorations – such as building new underwater habitat. This past January, old Christmas trees were put to use in fisheries management around the country.

In the 'Riddarfjärden' (Stockholm Bay Area), conifers were dumped in select areas of the bay to become new residential and play areas for fish and other aquatic species whose natural habitats have disappeared due to, for example, pier construction and dredging. In a collaborative initiative bringing together Swedish Anglers, the City of Stockholm, Strömma Sightseeing Tours, Stockholm Zoo and WWF, conifer trees ('risvasar') are being repurposed to serve as artificial reefs.



Catherine Luhr, Environment Commissioner from the Mayor's Office, applauded this initiative as one of several ways that the country needs to "smarten up" its urban planning.

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HELCOM Marine Litter Stakeholder Conference

On 9 March, Marta Kalinsowska gave a presentation at the [HELCOM Marine Litter Stakeholder Conference](#) in Helsinki, focusing on some of the success stories and best practices of promising initiatives such as the MARELITT project. One highlight was the story of WWF Poland's derelict fish net removal project in association with a recycling partner to give the nets new life. WWF's work on this issue was widely noted with appreciation. Vanessa Ryan joined from WWF Finland, as did Edmundas Greimas, from Lithuanian Fund for Nature, to speak about their activities to raise awareness around the critical issue of microplastics in cosmetics in Lithuania (read more on microplastics on page 14).

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EUTROPHICATION AND AGRICULTURE



Photo: WWF/Carsten Bartel

Greener Agriculture for a Bluer Baltic Sea

In November WWF co-hosted with the German Federal Environment Agency (UBA) the annual Greener Agriculture for a Bluer Baltic Sea Conference (GABBS) entitled “Agriculture – production and consumption contributing to the Eutrophication of the Baltic Sea”, in Stralsund, Germany. Some 100 participants with diverse backgrounds (science, farming, policy, civil society, business) came together from 12 countries to share ideas, solutions and collaborative approaches to reducing the impacts of agriculture to the Baltic Sea.

During the conference the **2015 WWF Baltic Sea Farmer of the Year Award winners were presented**. Finnish couple Markus Eerola and Minna Sakki-Eerola were awarded the regional award for the innovative techniques at their organic farm **Knehtilä**. They have done a remarkable job on their 340 hectares of arable land since the 1990s, pursuing Baltic-friendly approaches long before shifting to organic farming in 2010.

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THE BALTIC SEA FARMER OF THE YEAR AWARD was created in 2009 by WWF to recognize the importance of farmers who are taking active steps to reduce nutrient runoff to the Baltic Sea. Click [here](#) for a **film** on past winners which showcases how farmers are leading the way to improve the situation for agriculture and the Baltic Sea, or [here for more information on the Award](#). There is no competition this year but stay tuned for future announcement of the award.

Eating for the Baltic - WWF meat guides

One of today's biggest environmental challenges is growing meat consumption. The production of meat has implications for biodiversity, global warming and - particularly in the context of the Baltic Sea – eutrophication. In an effort to change consumption patterns and ways of producing meat, WWF has developed a ‘meat guide’, similar to the seafood guides that provide practical information on consumer choices. In late 2015, the first meat guides were launched for **German** and **Swedish** consumers. Look out for a Finnish version planned for autumn 2016!

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EUTROPHICATION AND AGRICULTURE



Photo: Anna Sosnowska

Eutrophication education campaign sweeps across Lithuania

The Lithuanian Fund for Nature (LFN) has created a network of motivated volunteers to help build public awareness about the threat of eutrophication to the Baltic Sea. An educational campaign – “Look at Blooming Water” – has run every summer for the past 3 years in the Curonian Spit. Participants have the opportunity to look at water samples from the Baltic Sea and Curonian Lagoon and learn about the causes and consequences of eutrophication.

High interest in this campaign underlines the need for education for wider audiences. The LFN is now developing activities at a bigger scale with a range of workshops for volunteers and campaigns around music festivals in which people learn about the treatment of sewage water, sustainable agriculture and fisheries.

Volunteers are also creating an animated film on eutrophication - a short cartoon which will be used in national and social media to attract public attention. Lessons on eutrophication have also been organized in various schools.

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New funding to combat eutrophication

Congratulations to WWF Poland for success in its application to the EUSBSR Seed Money Facility for financing the SIGWET project to increase the significance of midfield wetlands to combat Baltic Sea eutrophication. The project aims to reduce nutrient runoff from farms in 6 countries. Key will be the construction or revitalization of 100 midfield wetlands on various farms. Wetlands act as natural nutrient retention zones, so reducing runoff to ground and surface waters will contribute to the overall nutrient reduction.

The farms will also serve as

demonstration sites, thus contributing to raising awareness among farmers around the Baltic Sea in applying this method. By implementing solutions for wetland restoration and construction, the project will propose ways to cover the existing gaps in legislation regarding necessary measures needed to tackle nutrient leakage. Project partners include WWF Poland, Institute of Technology and Life Sciences Poland, Estonian Fund for Nature and Lithuanian Fund for Nature.

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Book launch: water-protection measures for farmers

The Estonian Fund for Nature has launched a new handbook for farmers to help keep our fresh-water systems and the Baltic Sea clean. The book offers guidelines on various water protection tools, regulations and laws. It also

shares replicable examples of good practice that have worked for farmers and the environment. For the first time, all water-protection measures for farmers in Estonia are included in one handbook.

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PEARLS FROM THE BALTIC SEA REGION



Build civil society capacity in Russia

A new four year program aims to develop and strengthen the influence of civil society in sustainable natural resource management in Russia.

It will focus on three main areas: integrated river basin management, marine spatial planning, and improved environmental performance of extractive industries.

Supported by the Swedish International Development Agency, activities will focus in the Russian part of the Baltic Sea region and the Barents region where competition over natural resources is increasing and the resource base is at risk. It has been realized through a consultative process among Coalition Clean Baltic, WWF Russia and WWF Sweden, in cooperation with WWF's BEP.

Tanja Ehrenberg has joined WWF Sweden as Program Coordinator. Since 1999, Tanja has worked in international development cooperation with a particular geographic focus on Russia, Ukraine and Belarus.

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Estonian Fund for Nature - 25 years of nature conservation

The Estonian Fund for Nature (ELF) celebrated its 25th birthday on 2 February. Over time, the Fund has taken part in most of the important environmental processes in Estonia. CEO Silvia Lotman concluded that while the first 25 years have been "tempestuous", there is no sign of the ELF calming down. She added "Our focus is still on the Baltic Sea, wetlands and forests as the very heart of our ecosystems. We thank all our

volunteers and supporters and promise to keep up the good work!"

WWF played a huge role in the formation of the organization and the partnership remains strong and fruitful. Thanks to the WWF Baltic Ecoregion network, the ELF has contributed to addressing major environmental challenges in the region over the years.

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Green Economy Community of Experts Meeting

BEP was invited to the WWF Green Economy meeting (9-11 February), where some 25 participants from across the network came together to share lessons learned and practices within economic models and financial flows. BEP presented the work on Blue Economy along with the Principles for a Sustainable Blue Economy and how this linked to the context of overall sustainable economy whether on land or at sea. External speakers from OECD, UNEP and Swedish Ministry of Financial Markets attended and gave their outlook on the dynamics driving green economy and how to balance and influence the financial market for the benefit of people and nature.

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PEARLS FROM THE BALTIC SEA REGION



Photo: J. Wilkiewicz

Blue Patrol of the Polish coastline

This year, as in 2015, WWF Poland's Blue Patrol was invited to be a part of the State Environmental Monitoring to collect data on the state of the Polish environment. The Blue Patrol is a group of volunteers recruited from local communities involved in rescue work. The initiative started in 2009 with 42 volunteers and now

has expanded to 200 volunteers. During their patrols along the beaches, volunteers carry out the monitoring of waste along the shore. The monitoring is planned for the whole of 2016.

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Plastic free Baltic

In partnership with Coalition Clean Baltic and other NGOs in the region, the Lithuanian Fund for Nature (LFN) is implementing an initiative known as the "Plastic Free Baltic".

The water in the Baltic Sea contains small plastic particles known as microplastics which are harmful to marine life affecting reproduction and feeding among fish, shellfish and plankton. With help of volunteers, LFN compiled a list of personal care products containing microplastics. Up to 40 tons of microplastics make their way through the sewage systems to the Baltic Sea from personal care products and clothing every year. An awareness raising campaign helped encourage consumers to make conscious purchase choices, thus reducing the threat to the marine environment.

The outcomes were presented at the HELCOM Stakeholder Conference on Marine Litter (March 9) – see page 10.

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Introducing Blue Economy to Latvia's President

As a member of the Advisory Council of Environmental NGOs, Pasaules Dabas Fonds had a meeting with the Latvian President, Raimonds Vējonis, to discuss reduction of emissions from the agricultural sector by improving the conditions for the grant allocation during next EU Agricultural Policy programming period. Pasaules Dabas Fonds took the opportunity to introduce President Vējonis to the concept and principles of a sustainable Blue Economy. The President welcomed all of the materials produced by WWF and requested that they be passed on to the Ministry of Economy.

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Photo: Chancery of the President

PEARLS FROM THE BALTIC SEA REGION



In Memorium

WWF wish to express our sincere condolences for the passing of the irreplaceable Professor Krzysztof E. Skóra on 13 February 2016.

As an academic at the University of Gdansk, over the last 25 years Professor Skóra was tireless in his efforts and enthusiasm to build and manage the university's Marine Research Station in Hel on Poland's Baltic coast. The Hel Station became a key resource for the Baltic Sea environment, conducting extensive activities such as research and monitoring of the introduction of alien species, environmental education and awareness programs for younger generations.

Professor Skóra was active in international cooperation in marine - and especially Baltic Sea - issues. His contributions were recognized with the Swedish Baltic Sea Water Award in 2008. He worked closely with WWF Poland and is particularly known for his work in helping to initiate the volunteer group Blue Patrol. The group is now composed of 200 volunteers supporting rescue actions and making an important contribution to help marine mammals and birds along Poland's Baltic coastline.

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Photo: Lubasz Glowacki/KFP

Next steps on EU International Ocean Governance

WWF welcomes Dr. Samantha Burgess, who has been appointed as the Head, European Marine Policy, to its Brussels office from the end of April. Sam is a senior marine governance expert with a well-established international profile and strong track record in marine governance policy and sustainability issues.

In early February, the European Commission for Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries published the [results of the public consultation on international ocean governance \(IOG\)](#). WWF was one of 154 contributors to the consultation, which included received contributions from public authorities, business representatives, environmental NGOs, academia and EU citizens. Most contributors agreed the current framework for ocean governance remains inadequate and will not support the sustainable use of the oceans, however many feel the solution is not to create a completely new system and agree the problem is

inefficient implementation and insufficient coordination.

The EU has a stated interest and desire to demonstrate leadership on IOG, building on the work to date and addressing the gaps that currently exist in IOG. WWF is well-placed to engage in the development of international ocean governance, in particular with WWF's work on a sustainable blue economy. The importance of IOG to support the delivery of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is key, as is the importance of engaging all relevant stakeholders in IOG.

With respect to the way forward, WWF is looking forward to the Commission's announcement - due in summer 2016 - of a likely EC Communication on ocean governance. It is anticipated that this will set out concrete ideas on how the international governance of oceans could be strengthened in order to ensure a sustainable use of ocean resources.

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ON THE HORIZON

WWF BALTIC ECOREGION PROGRAMME

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

• 18-19 May

European Maritime Day
Turku, Finland

• 25-26 May

WWF MPA Working group
Meeting
Hamburg, Germany

• 31 May - 1 June

Conference on Blue Bio-economy
and the development of a Nordic
road map
Helsinki, Finland

• 13-15 June

BEP team meeting and advocacy
training
Brussels, Belgium

• 15-16 June

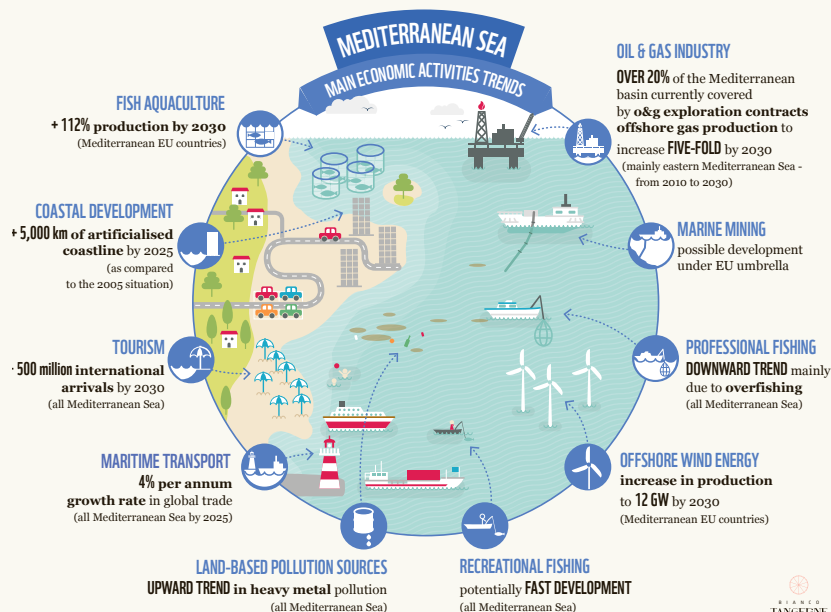
HELCOM Head of Delegation
Tartu, Estonia

• 16-17 June

Workshop "Towards Ecosystem
Based Fisheries Management in
the Baltic Sea"
Stockholm, Sweden

• 30 June - 1 July

Workshop on Port Reception
Facilities
Kiel, Germany



Current exploitation of Mediterranean maritime space and resources simply not sustainable

A WWF study — [MedTrends](#), run by the WWF Mediterranean Marine Initiative and funded by Programme Med — provides detailed information on the future trends of Mediterranean maritime sectors, and how these trends might affect marine ecosystems. The study provides the most up-to-date outlook on the present development of key economic sectors in the region and has developed scenarios for the next 15 years.

By overlapping existing and proposed areas of conservation with the current and predicted development of economic sectors, MedTrends has identified critical planning hotspots and demonstrated that the achievement of Good

Environmental Status by 2020 is highly unlikely on the current development path. Recommendations are made concerning the adoption of ecosystem-based management principles in the implementation of the Maritime Spatial Planning Directive.

The large-scale areas of intense interaction between Blue Growth and sites of conservation interest in EU Mediterranean countries indicate that there is an urgent need for integrated ocean management measures which address cumulative impacts, similar to the trends and scenarios that are being foreseen and flagged by the Baltic Ecoregion Programme in the Baltic Sea.



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

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Pauli and Otilia