



OUTCOME OF THE FIRST MEETING OF THE EXPERT WORKING GROUP ON OILED WILDLIFE RESPONSE (EWG OWR 1-2014)

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OUTCOME OF THE FIRST MEETING OF THE EXPERT WORKING GROUP ON OILED WILDLIFE RESPONSE (EWG OWR 1-2014)

1. Opening, introduction participants

Hugo Nijkamp welcomed the participants to this first meeting of this HELCOM RESPONSE Oiled Wildlife Response Expert Group, and sketched the history of the topic of oiled wildlife response under HELCOM. One of the main achievements was Recommendation 31/6E on Oiled Wildlife Response Planning, which was adopted in 2010, providing a very useful framework for the development of wildlife response plans at national levels. In 2013 the Copenhagen Ministerial Meeting approved three other decisions:

1. All countries should have an OWR plan in place by December 2016
2. An OWR Expert Group, with representation of governmental wildlife agencies, should be set up under HELCOM RESPONSE
3. Government-NGO relationships should be encouraged at national levels

The meeting of today starts the work of the OWR Expert Group, which has to report to HELCOM RESPONSE, and the next meeting will take place 25-27 November in Estonia.

The participants introduced themselves (see **Annex 1**). The contact details of the current composition of the Expert Group are provided in **Annex 2**.

In a discussion on the Group composition all agreed that all Contracting Parties should be represented in this group and that an effort should be undertaken to achieve this.

2. Tasks and working mode

The Group discussed Attachment 1 of *HELCOM 35-2014*, which defines the Terms of Reference of the Expert Group.

The four tasks of Attachment 1 of this paper were discussed as follows:

Task as described in HELCOM 35-2014	Comments by the Group
1. Facilitate timely development of national plans	The best the Expert Group can do is assisting countries where possible; flagging up gaps and try working on gaps
2. Arrange regular meetings Expert Group, allowing for training and info sessions with value to national processes	
3. Facilitate the implementation of the work programme 2014-2017	This was discussed (see section 3 of the Outcome)
4. Produce by 2016 a report on finalised integrated OWR Plans	This would be the final report of the group, and therefore this is considered as the group's last task

Regarding working mode, the following points were made

- The frequency of meetings should relate to the needs of the working programme.
- The SKYPE meeting worked reasonably well and SKYPE could be adopted as a cost-efficient option on the short term. The value of face to face meetings is recognized, and if appropriate could be planned in conjunction to HELCOM RESPONSE meetings, or to the expert working group on shoreline response.
- Sea Alarm has the possibility to create a project on “Basecamp” for the expert group. It was noted that HELCOM has an Extranet facility. Hugo to liaise with Hermanni to see if this can be used.
- Hugo is prepared to take the role of intermediate Chair until the Group is better established and in a position to elect a Chair from its midst. In his function of Chair Hugo will report back to HELCOM RESPONSE

Regarding the group’s membership, the following points were made:

- The group feels incomplete and would like to encourage the other CPs to nominate representative members.
- It was discussed to which extent NGOs could or should be part of the Expert Group. The following thoughts were shared:
 - The important role of NGOs was emphasised, but it was considered important that NGOs at national level can operate as coordinated networks and speak with one voice. This is needed for emergency response and is a condition for building government-NGO relationships for this purpose.
 - Although single NGOs in some countries (FI, EE) are part of the national response system, in other countries (DE, DK) this is not the case. It was decided not to open up membership of the Expert Group to NGOs, although NGOs could be invited as part of the national delegations to attend the Expert Group meetings.
 - Once established, the Expert Group could decide if NGOs could be invited to join the group, or have alternating meetings with and without NGOs, such as is established in DE.
 - There are some relevant NGOs such as Birdlife International which have representation in most or all Baltic countries. It is unclear as yet if Birdlife has an international policy on oiled wildlife response, and has something to offer in this respect.

3. Moving forward: Programme of action

The Work Programme in Attachment 2 of *HELCOM 35-2014* was discussed and the following points were made

- The Group accepted the task to encourage CPs to carry out the Work Programme and monitor and facilitate progress
- The Work Programme includes the years 2016-2017
- With regards to Category “Regular exchange at HELCOM RESPONSE meetings”:
 - The order of actions should be modified to the effect that Progress and lessons learnt on authority-NGO cooperation comes third (not first). It would emphasise the importance of national plans, and related activities (training, exercises, etc).
 - There should be a second deadline in 2014 for remaining CPs to nominate members for the Expert Group.
- With regards to the category Training and exercises”:
 - Tomorrow a joint exercise will take place between DE and D, which has an element of oiled wildlife response. Uda will inform the rest of the Group, and report on the results
 - This year FI and EE will have their annual bilateral Clean Seas exercise. Teet will provide info
 - Balex Delta this year (Latvia) did not have a notable OWR component. Teet (who attended) will check and pass on info.

- In 2015 (Poland) and in 2016 (Lithuania) the Balex Delta exercise will probably see a considerable integrated OWR component (according to Poland, as was communicated to Hugo)
- With regards to the category “Workshops, meetings and events”:
 - WWF Poland has offered to host the “First meeting of Baltic OWR network” event as listed in work programme. It is not completely verified and not sure if the action was approved by HELCOM RESPONSE and can be held as such. Hugo will check with Secretariat and WWF Poland and provide info as it becomes available
 - Hugo mentions that SAF has carried out a feasibility study to the idea of a Baltic OWR Network. Although there is a clear interest within approached NGOs, it remains unclear from the study what the way forward for this network would be.
 - "First meeting OWR expert group" can be ticked off as of today.
- The category “Cooperation with other Regional Conventions and EU” was not discussed.

4. Other points discussed

The group discussed a few points as follows:

- Which Baltic countries have currently plan in place?
 - Hugo refers to a recent HELCOM RESPONSE overview paper by Sea Alarm and WWF. According to this paper, only DK, EE and DE have plans in place. SE still is discussing amongst authorities who should take a lead on OWR, hence no plan in place and not nominated representative in Expert Group. FI has infrastructure and cooperation but no plan as yet. Russia has a bit of infrastructure (NGOs) but unclear how it works at national and regional (Helcom) level. Other countries, LV, LT, PL do not have plans or agreed infrastructure in place.
- Where is govt-NGO cooperation established?
 - EE, IF have formalised structures. In DE one coastal state is also building up formalised structures with one NGO. For all five coastal states in DE organised forms of cooperation are being discussed. It is considered important that NGOs can operate as coordinated networks and speak with one voice. DK works with many different NGOs, scientists, museums but no formal structure.

5. Conclusions and action

- Group agrees to the Terms of Reference
- Group is happy with work programme, will also see if activities can be added in the course of time.
- Group should be completed. Other CP's to be encouraged to nominate a representative to join the Group
- Group should assess the current level of preparedness (Hugo to distribute recent SAF/WWF paper).
- Share existing plans in original language and English where possible
- Group needs a site where information can be shared. On the short term a Basecamp site will be set up (Hugo/SAF). Hugo will see if HELCOM can set up an Extranet site.
- Develop and keep updated a calendar with important national and international events on the topic. Exchange dates of exercises and training; allow for international observers/participants as appropriate
- Frequency of group: twice a year, or more as appropriate

6. Next meeting

The Group feels that a next meeting should be held prior to HELCOM RESPONSE. HN to facilitate doodle poll for the month of October, and include first weeks November. The aim is to try getting more countries represented an involved in this second meeting.

Annex 1

Meeting participants

EE:	Silver Vahtra, Agnes Villmann, Teet Koitjarv, Triin Vokk
DE:	Uda Tuente
DK:	Helene Ntyegaard Hvid
WWF-FI:	Sanna Kuningas
Sea Alarm:	Hugo Nijkamp (Chair)

Apologies

FI:	Pekka Rusanen
HELCOM Secretariat:	Hermann Backer

Personal profiles

Silver Vahtra	Formerly in the Estional Police/Border Guard. Since 2007 in Ministry of Environment. Provides general coordination of EE delgation in Helcom and working group delegation. In 2006 EE experienced a spill with oiled wildlife. This started cooperation between SAF, WWF and EE under HELCOM. Quite substantial work has been carried out leading even to a change of the Convention to accommodate the topic of OWR.
Agnes Villmann	Later joined the call. Not separately introduced, but colleague of Silver in Ministry of Environment
Teet Koitjarv	Works at the Environment Board under the Ministry of Environment. He is directly involved in aspects of oil spill response and wildlife response, and was responsible for the recently developed integrated oiled wildlife response plan.
Triin Vokk	Works at the Ministry of Environment, but just started the job and is new to the topic.Tries to learn about OWR
Pekka Rusanen	Not on the meeting. Hugo has spoken with him a few weeks ago. Pekka works as a scientist at SYKE, and SYKE oversees both oil spill response and wildlife response in Finland. Finland has an oil fund, which is used e.g. for capital investments into preparedness. A number of years ago a mobile unit has been developed for oiled bird response (Bird Cleaning Unit). SYKE works with Civil Protection Services and WWF to provide preparedness for oiled bird response. An OWR plan has been developed.
Uda Tuente	Works at CCME in Cuxhaven, which leads the response to large marine pollution incident in Germany and coordinates between the five coastal autonomous regions to this aim. Uda is responsible for environmental topics and coordinates between relevant experts. She oversees cooperation on the OWR topic in 5 regions. A national working group has started to look into plans. In 2005 no plan, but now two plans are in place, for Lower Saxony and Schleswig- Holstein. The latter aims at euthanasia of oiled birds but NGOs are allowed to undertake rehabilitation if professional. In LS euthanasia is applied if rehab not possible. SAF assisted to get all NGOs together. Cooperation with NL and Belgium in past. Uda participated in HELCOM, OTSOPA. One main tasks: oiled wildlife response. A lot to do.

Helene Ntyegaard Hvid	Works at the Nature Agency under Ministry of Environment. She works 50% of her time on invasive species (EU); the other 50% on wildlife killed by traffic. Since 1997 OWR plans have been in place for marine mammals and seabirds. The mammal plan was revised in 2012; the plan for seabirds is currently under revision via hearings of national experts. Euthanasia of oiled seabirds will be carried out; expert advice was underlaying this approach. Rehabilitation by experts is allowed and welcomed.
Sanna Kuningas	Works as Marine Conservation Officer and on the topic of OWR temporarily replaces Vanessa Ryan who is on maternity leave. Her activities are more broadly to Baltic Sea environmental issues. WWF's oil spill response work includes the organisation of regular courses on oiled shoreline cleaning for volunteers, which also includes OWR. Training on OWR at least once a year. In April an OWR course was provided to 20 responders from Poland. Beginning of June: a small spill happened in Finland, but needed one week shoreline cleaning. Some oiled birds were observed but could not be captured for cleaning
Hugo Nijkamp	Works as General Manager for Sea Alarm, an NGO that acts as an international facilitator and coordinator of oiled wildlife response and preparedness. Sea Alarm aims at defining international standards for response and tries to ensure that these standards are available and used in oiled wildlife responses. Sea Alarm is observer in HELCOM and has assisted in the development of oiled wildlife preparedness under the convention and has worked with various governments to assist the development of national preparedness.

Annex 2

Helcom Response Wildlife expert team: Nominated delegates

As of 17 June 2014

Country	Name delegate	Email address	Telephone nr	SKYPE
Estonia				
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