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Background

Please find here, for your information, a joint NGO letter sent to the Nature and Marine Directors of the Baltic Member States, in relation to the development of fisheries conservation measures under EU environmental obligations, particularly Natura 2000.

Our concern is primarily about nature conservation authorities and NGO participation in Regional fisheries groups, such as Scheveningen and Baltfish, where such measures are being decided.

Action required

The Meeting is invited to

- take note of the information
- provide information on fisheries management and development of those measures inside marine protected areas in your country



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28/08/2014

To: Nature Directors of coastal Member States in the Baltic Sea region

Subject: Request for your active involvement in the development of fisheries measures necessary for the compliance with obligations under Union environmental and nature legislation

Dear Sir/Madam,

Member States are obliged to implement measures to achieve a Favourable Conservation Status of species and habitats listed by the Habitats (92/43/ECC) and Birds Directives (2009/147/EC) and a Good Environmental Status of marine waters in line with the objectives of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (2008/56/EC). In this context, Member States must also ensure that impacts of fishing activities on the marine environment do not compromise the conservation status of species and habitats.

The new Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) Regulation (EU 1380/2013) reinforces these objectives and provides the legal basis, notably in Art. 11 and 18, for the adoption of fisheries measures that are necessary to comply with obligations under EU environmental legislation with each regional sea basin. We understand that the administrations active in the Scheveningen Group of North Sea coastal states and the Baltic Sea states under BALTFISH have recently proposed, terms of reference for agreeing fisheries-related measures inside marine protected areas. It is foreseen that the fisheries directors in each group will work together to agree on measures to regulate fishing in order to minimise adverse impacts. However, no reference is being made to the involvement of relevant nature conservation departments.

We are concerned that the Scheveningen Group and BALTFISH lack the necessary conservation expertise to determine what type of measures are needed to secure the protection of marine species and habitats, as they are not generally responsible for implementing EU nature conservation legislation. It is our view that it would be appropriate to deal with these measures in a more integrated manner, including Nature Directors as well as Fisheries Directors in each group. Where appropriate, we would also like to see involvement of stakeholder expertise in developing relevant fisheries management measures, for instance through the engagement of the European Habitats Forum (EHF) who already provides advice on Natura 2000 implementation and EU nature policies. Consequently, we propose a joint working group for each sea basin to identify and develop relevant management measures.

Aside from securing a consistent and appropriate set of measures, a collaborative approach between the fisheries and nature departments could greatly improve and secure the successful application and enforcement of measures, as the ultimate responsibility for ensuring necessary protection and therefore the implementation of protective measures rests with national conservation authorities.

We urge you to ensure that the role of the nature conservation authorities is strengthened in this process. Where necessary, the Commission can help to facilitate the process of cooperation, as foreseen by Article 11 (6) of the new CFP Regulation.

We would like to meet and discuss our proposals and possible ways for stakeholders to contribute with their expertise with you. We look forward to your response to the above request. In the meantime, if you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact us.



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