



Document title	Recent and upcoming activities of the RETROUT project (Development, promotion and sustainable management of the Baltic Sea Region as a coastal fishing tourism destination)
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Agenda Item	6 – Salmon and sea trout including HELCOM Recommendation 32-33/1
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Submitted by	Project manager of RETROUT

Background

[HELCOM SALAR](#) (2010) classified a number of salmon and sea trout populations in rivers flowing to the Baltic Sea and prepared recommendations for measures for restoration activities and fisheries management. Partly as continuation to the activities of SALAR, the RETROUT project will focus on trout rivers, sustainable trout fishing tourism and trout river restoration. HELCOM is a partner in the project and leading Work Package 4 which is focused on the status and management of sea trout rivers and stocks.

The project full title ‘Development, promotion and sustainable management of the Baltic Sea Region as a coastal fishing tourism destination’ indicates the key objectives of the project. It is funded by the Interreg Baltic Sea Region programme under priority area bioeconomy/blue growth. This 3 –year project started in October 2017 and will finish in September 2020. The budget is about 3.2 M euro.

The RETROUT Partnership consists of County Administrative Board in Stockholm (Lead Partner, SE), Campusroslagen (SE), Haninge municipality (SE), Baltic Environmental Forum Estonia (EE), University of Tartu (EE), NGO Estonian Fishing Tourism (EE), Kurzeme Planning Region (LV), Institute of Food Safety, Animal Health and Environment - “BIOR” (LV) , Klaipeda University (LT), Fishery service under the ministry of Agriculture of the republic of Lithuania (LT), Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission, HELCOM (Intergovernmental), and Ventspils Regional Municipality (LV). The National Marine Fisheries Research Institute (PL) has withdrawn from the project. The project coordinator is currently also negotiating with the University of Gdansk about the partnership.

The project and its partners provide guidance in the form of toolboxes for river restoration and fishing tourism. These toolboxes shall be used by authorities to help foster sustainable growth and jobs through appropriate policy and regulatory adjustments.

Endorsement by the Fish Group will be sought for the final report of WP4 as well as for the guidelines for river restorations to be published in the Baltic Sea Environment Proceedings at a later stage.

As part of the project activities, a joint monitoring and assessment method workshop is planned to be organized in Klaipeda, Lithuania, on 26-28 June 2018, possibly as a sixth meeting of HELCOM migratory fish species task force (Fish-M).

Action requested

The Meeting is invited to

- take note of the recent and planned activities of RETROUT,
- agree that the RETROUT methods workshop (26-28 June) can be combined with the next meeting of the HELCOM Task Force on migratory fish species (FISH-M 6-2018).

Activities in WP4 “Assessment of status and management of sea trout rivers and stocks”

The aim of WP 4 is to assess the pressure of recreational fishing on sea trout stocks, to compile information on the status of sea trout rivers and stocks in the Baltic Sea region, to gain understanding about issues contributing to a success or failure by applying alternative river restoration methods and technological solutions, and to recommend best practices and management options. The gained experience will be synthesized in a dedicated Baltic Toolbox with a set of river restoration measures. The toolbox is to be published as a HELCOM report (in the Baltic Sea Environment Proceedings) with pan-Baltic recommendations, including a section with case studies. The main results will be translated into local languages for national dissemination.

In summary, the WP4 will:

- Develop a common, standardized methodology of habitat monitoring and electrofishing (4.1)
- Perform a scenario study including (4.2):
 - assessment of recreational fishing pressure
 - assessment of status of sea trout rivers and stocks
 - comparison of different management options
- Evaluate completed restoration projects to identify success factors (4.2)
- Demonstrate efficient river restoration measures and implementation methods (through demonstration projects) (4.3)
- Develop a Baltic Toolbox for River Restoration to be used at the pan-Baltic level and by local, regional and national authorities. (4.4)

The following meetings are planned under WP 4:

- Monitoring and assessment method workshop at Klaipeda University in Lithuania (in June 2018)
- Pan-Baltic meeting on river restoration and trout management (in period 6 but might need to be arranged earlier)
- Study visits to demonstration sites in Estonia, Latvia/Lithuania, Sweden and Poland (exact number to be determined).

By the end of April 2018, HELCOM has exercised most of the effort in developing a knowledge base about the available guidelines for river restoration projects and about applicability of the existing handbooks and guidelines to the Baltic Sea environment. They will potentially serve as experience to build on when developing the toolbox about the best practices for sea trout river restoration. Useful references include Woolsey et al. (2005) Handbook for evaluating rehabilitation projects in rivers and streams, a website about river restorations (<http://www.fiskepleje.dk/vandloeb/restaurering> (in Danish)), and Eloranta (2010) River restorations (in Finnish).

HELCOM has also developed and submitted a template to the project partners to create a catalogue about the already completed river restoration projects as linked with activity 4.2. The aim is to carry out 4-6 interviews in each project country. It will be necessary to have a catalogue of the completed restoration projects to make a deliberate choice about which ones to include in the sample. This sample can be based on either random sampling from the whole set of completed projects or on a sample drawn by a decision rule.

Also, HELCOM is coordinating arrangements for the methods workshop in Lithuania, to be held in June 2018. There is an issue of inconsistent availability and quality of assessment data around the Baltic Sea states to

support knowledge building of the status and dynamics of sea trout populations. Analytic assessment, in the sense it has been carried out for the Baltic salmon stocks, have not been developed for sea trout stocks, probably stemming from the trout's lower priority in the landing portfolio of commercial fisheries compared to salmon and the lack of quota-based international management system. Therefore, assessment of the status of the river habitats and sea trout requires alternative approaches. The methods workshop will focus on harmonization of methods applied for the 1) river biotope classification, for 2) evaluation of the quality of the trout reproduction areas (trout habitat score), and for 3) carrying out electrofishing surveys and the concomitant assessment of catchability and parr density.