



Document title	Updated assessment units for use in HOLAS 3
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Agenda Item	5 - Preparatory work for HOLAS III assessment
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Submitted by	Executive Secretary
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This document has been revised to include the highlighted paragraph which was accidentally not included in the first version of the document and additional information received with regards to the splitting of SEA-013, Gulf of Finland.



Background

In preparation for HOLAS 3 Contracting Parties have reviewed their national assessment unit boundaries (e.g. Water Framework Directive coastal waterbodies – equivalent to HELCOM Scale 4 coastal assessment units) and any changes are being collated following State & Conservation 15-2021. Information on changes in German and Estonian coastal assessment units (document [document 3J-94 Rev.2](#) to State and Conservation 15-2021), the updated boundary between Swedish coastal and off shore marine areas ([document 3J-100](#) to State & Conservation 15-2021) and the update of the general coastal boundary has already been shared, and subsequent changes will be introduced in the Assessment Unit structure prior to HOLAS3. It was further noted at STATE & CONSERVATION 15-2021 that Denmark will confirm whether Danish national coastal water assessment changes under the WFD have been applied in the HELCOM Assessment unit Level 4 and that the process of updating their coastal waterbodies is ongoing in Sweden with the aim to be finalised in 2021 ([Outcomes paragraphs 3J.60 and 3J.66](#)).

Proposed changes to assessment units for use in the eutrophication assessment.

In addition, the HELCOM Assessment Units for the assessment of eutrophication are proposed to be altered in the Gulf of Finland and Bornholm Basin/Pomeranian Bay. These are summarized under [document 3J-94 Rev.2](#) to State and Conservation 15-2021.

The proposed changes to the level 4 open sea assessment units applied for the eutrophication assessment (splitting of SEA-013, Gulf of Finland) were prepared by IN Eutrophication ([IN-Eutrophication 19-2020, Outcome paragraphs 4.1-11](#)) and endorsed at State and Conservation 14-2021 ([Outcome](#)). STATE&CONSERVATION 14-2021 noted that while discussion had taken place under IN Eutrophication with experts from Russia, the endorsement of the proposal to re-classify the eastern area of the assessment unit as coastal and transitional waters was pending final approval of Russia ([document 4J-90](#) and [Outcomes paragraph 4J.232](#)). **Trilateral workshop were held between Russia, Estonia and Finland within HELCOM IN-Eutrophication expert group and proposal was prepared and agreed to be sent forward to State & Conservation. The assessment unit border between Gulf of Finland (SEA-013B) and the Russian transitional waters is in line with the division applied by Russia and the one applied in the Gulf of Finland assessment done trilaterally. STATE&CONSERVATION 15-2021 ([Outcome paragraph 3J.64](#)) provisionally agreed on the proposed changes and their implementation in the HELCOM Assessment unit datasets available from HELCOM Map and Data Service as well as documented in the HELCOM Monitoring and Assessment Strategy for use in HOLAS III and beyond and agreed to submit the proposal for HOD 61-2021 for approval.**

Proposed changes to level 4 open sea assessment units applied for eutrophication assessment (splitting of SEA-007 Bornholm Basin) were endorsed at State and Conservation 14-2021 ([Outcomes paragraph 4J.228](#)).

Changes in the boundaries of Bornholm Basin and Arkona Basin, in order to align those with the boundaries of the WFD ([document 3J-35](#) to State & Conservation 15-2021), were provisionally endorsed pending a commenting period, to be followed by submission to HOD 61-2021 ([Outcomes paragraphs 3J.63 – 3J.64](#)).

In addition, based on the approach to have a harmonised assessment unit structure and to support the potential development of threshold values in the Bornholm Basin/Pomeranian Bay region (in particular for the State of the soft-bottom macrofauna community indicator ([Outcomes paragraphs 3J.113](#))) State and Conservation 15-2021 invited the Secretariat to outline the possible implications of implementing eutrophication specific assessment units for the practical application across HELCOM assessments ([Outcomes paragraphs 3J.65](#)). The initial review was prepared and presented to GEAR 25-2021 ([document 5-12](#)) and shared with State and Conservation WG intersessionally. While GEAR 25-2021 supported the use of the new division for the eutrophication assessment, and welcomed the initiation of this process and supported the concept of applying harmonised assessment units where possible, GEAR noted that for HOLAS 3 the divisions proposed under eutrophication assessments should not be applied to all indicator evaluations and assessments since further designated review should occur via relevant Expert Groups towards HOLAS 4. However, GEAR supported that, if ecologically relevant, the certain indicators with close/direct links to eutrophication (e.g. zooplankton, phytoplankton or soft bottom macrofauna community) should also explore the application of these assessment units for testing in HOLAS 3 ([Outcomes paragraphs 5.25 – 5.29](#)) and invited relevant Expert Groups and indicator leads to evaluate the ecological relevance of the proposed division of assessment units for their topic and recommend what division to use to STATE&CONSERVATION 16-2022.

Action requested

The Meeting is invited to

- approve updating the HELCOM Monitoring and Assessment Strategy to reflect changes in all relevant HELCOM assessment units;
- approve the use of the newly developed assessment units in the Gulf of Finland and Bornholm Basin/Pomeranian Bay for the assessment of eutrophication (and the relevant update of the HELCOM Monitoring and Assessment Strategy);
- mandate STATE&CONSERVATION 16-2022 to approve which assessment units to use in HOLAS 3 for closely linked indicators (e.g. phytoplankton, zooplankton and benthic habitats), based on the outcome of the review of ecological relevance;
- support the further review process (i.e. application of the same units across all indicator evaluations and assessment in the longer-term) to ensure a clearly defined and harmonized set of HELCOM assessment units.