



Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission

Fifth Meeting of the Working Group on Reduction of Pressures from the Baltic Sea Catchment Area

PRESSURE 5-2016

Warsaw, Poland, 25-27 October 2016

Document title	Revised proposal for Terms of Reference for Expert Group for Dredged Material
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Agenda Item	5 - Dredging/depositing operations and mining on the sea floor
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Submitted by	Secretariat
Reference	

Background

Dredging and depositing operations at sea are recognized as one of the pressures that is to be considered within the holistic assessment of the ecosystem health of the Baltic Sea. Dredging/depositing operations is one of the human activities which impacts on the ecosystem components.

HELCOM Recommendation 36/2, adopted by HELCOM 36-2015 on 4 March 2015, recommends that the Contracting Parties follow the HELCOM Guidelines for Management of Dredged Material at Sea and that the Contracting Parties report on the national data on management of dredged material according to the Reporting Format of the HELCOM Guidelines.

The reporting procedures require evolution and update of the reporting format as well as development of the procedures for data verification, insertion into the database, approving, and visualizing for further use. Also an assessment of the environmental pressure caused by dredging/depositing operations at sea requires methodological support and regular follow up.

PRESSURE 4-2016 decided to organize an expert skype meeting to discuss the issues mentioned above and invited countries to nominate experts. The expert group had two online meetings (23 May and 13 September 2016) and prepared a set of documents to improve the procedures of data reporting and assessment. The group also came to the conclusion that the matters related to exploitation of mineral resources at the sea floor are beyond the competence of the group and should be considered by experts from competent authorities separately.

The expert group also concluded that there is a need to continue the work of the group to ensure the quality of the reported data and assessment results and suggested a list of tasks for the expert group in future.

This document contains a draft for Terms of Reference for the Expert Group on dredging/depositing operations at sea.

Action requested

The Meeting is invited to exchange views on a need for establishing a time-limited expert group on dredging/depositing operations at sea and decide on possible tasks and targets for the group as well as working procedures and timeline.

DRAFT
 Terms of Reference for the
 Expert Group on dredging/depositing operations at sea

Depositing of dredged material is one of the pressures that is to be considered within the holistic assessment of the ecosystem health of the Baltic Sea. The HELCOM Baltic Sea Impact Index (BSII), which is used for the assessments, reflects the spatial distribution of human induced pressures and impacts on different ecosystem components, including benthic species and biotopes. Dredging/depositing operations is one of the human activities which impacts on the ecosystem components.

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The Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) of the European Union included seafloor integrity into the list of descriptors for determining good environmental status. The MSFD also identified the physical loss and physical damage to the marine environment and human activities which cause them e.g. dredging/disposal of dredged material; impact on the seabed of commercial fishing, boating, anchoring; exploration and exploitation of living and non-living resources on seabed and subsoil.

Objective

The Expert Group on dredging and subsequent depositing operations at sea (hereinafter - EG DREDS):

- supports reporting and validation of data on dredging/depositing operations at sea;
- facilitates the work of the Pressure Group in terms of assessment of environmental pressure caused by dredging/depositing operations at sea.

Timeline

The expert group is established for two years (2017-2018).

Tasks

The EG DREDS will

- a. prepare a list of EG DREDS Contact Points, incl. contact persons/details;
- b. follow up implementation of the HELCOM Recommendation 36/2 including reporting formats and providing suggestions on updates of the documents when it is relevant;
- c. review and verify the annually reported data on dredging/depositing activities at sea according to HELCOM Recommendations 36/2 and an established verification procedure;
- d. provide methodological support for the development of the HELCOM information resources on dredging/depositing operations at sea (development pending availability of resources);
- e. guide the assessment of dredging/depositing operations at sea with the use of the agreed methodology and based on reported data, with the immediate need to provide input to HOLAS II (e.g. data to the Baltic Sea Pressure Index).
- f. suggest further developments of the methodology;
- g. implement any other specific tasks related to the expertise of the group by requests of the HELCOM Pressure Group;

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 elaborate a methodology for assessment of the environmental impact by dredging/depositing operations at sea;¶

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- h. coordinate their activities with corresponding reporting and assessments activities of OSPAR, with the Contracting Parties members to the two RSC serving as a liaison and utilizing information exchange between the secretariats, as well as with ICES and EMODNET;

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Deliverables of the group shall be (among others)

- a. List of National EG DREDS Contact points and contact persons;
- b. The further developed methodology for the assessment of dredging/depositing operations at sea;
- c. The HELCOM database on dredging/depositing operations at sea (pending availability of resources);
- d. Validated annual datasets on dredging/depositing operations at sea;
- e. Updates of the data reporting formats on dredging/ depositing operations at sea as may be needed;
- f. Regular reporting to HELCOM Pressure Group.

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Working procedures and timeline

The EG DREDS will report to Pressure Group and will assist other subsidiary bodies and projects of HELCOM with requested information.

The EG DREDS will meet as often as necessary and will utilise video-/teleconferencing as the major working method, though physical meetings are possible, if appropriate as agreed by Pressure group.

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The Secretariat will provide administrative support during the meetings. The EG DREDS will record the outcomes of the meetings in the form of short memos.

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The EG DREDS will identify tasks that may require additional resources or are long-term and may come up with proposals for projects.

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The mandate of the EG DREDS will last until end of 2018.

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Resources needed

The Contracting Parties/Member Countries are to nominate their representatives to the group, and the work will rely on expert participation and contribution of the Contracting Parties/Member Countries. Additional resources will be sought for through various projects. HELCOM Secretariat will provide GIS expertise.