



## Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission

*Ad hoc* Seal Expert Group

Hel, Poland, 5-7 October, 2016

SEAL 10-2016

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<b>Document title</b>	Proposal on the LRL for harbour seals
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<b>Category</b>	CMNT
<b>Agenda Item</b>	4 – Limit reference level for harbour seals
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### Background

This document contains a proposal on the LRL for harbour seals, prepared by a drafting group including participants from Denmark, Germany and Sweden, during SEAL 10-2016.

The Meeting agreed on the proposal and on its submission to STATE & CONSERVATION 5-2016.

## Considerations about the Agenda Item Minimum Reference Levels for the Harbour seal population.

\*Suggestion – define the limit reference level at 10 000 harbour seals for the combined management unit "Kattegatt (including the Danish Straits)" and "Southwestern Baltic" with respect to the following points.

1. Note that the harbour seals are highly stationary at a smaller geographic scale within the large distribution area. The ~~many small~~ sub-populations are weakly linked by migration and form a so called "metapopulation". This implies that sub-populations must be monitored and managed separately ~~in the two management units~~ (this should be regulated in national management plans).

2. If for example the metapopulation is above the limit reference level, ~~for example the~~ Southwestern Baltic harbour seal subpopulation might still be vulnerable and therefore require a different management and protection strategy:

~~Each~~ Each ~~management units~~ subpopulation should have positive population growth rates until the metapopulation reaches the target reference level (as agreed upon in the HELCOM seal recommendation).

HELCOM MPAs should encompass the main harbour seal haul out sites.

If the growth rate of harbour seals is negatively influenced by e.g. grey seal dominance, different management options should be taken.