



Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission

Ad hoc Seal Expert Group

Tallinn, Estonia, 10-12 October 2018

SEAL 12-2018

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Background

This document contains the Terms of Reference for the 12th meeting of the HELCOM *ad hoc* Seal expert group, which were prepared and agreed by SEAL 11-2017 and amended and endorsed by STATE & CONSERVATION 7-2017.

Action requested

The Meeting is invited to take note of the information and act according to the ToR.

Terms of Reference for SEAL 12-2018

The Seal expert group will during its 12th meeting, and in the intersessional period leading up to the meeting, do the following:

1. Indicators:

- a. Mr. Tero Härkönen and Mr. Markus Ahola, Sweden, in collaboration with Mr. Anders Galatius, Denmark, will carry out the updated data calculations for the indicators 'Population trends and abundance of seals' and 'Distribution of Baltic seals' **by 1 December 2017**.
- b. Sweden, with the support of Finland, will update the core indicator on abundance to reflect the concerns of Finland regarding the methods used for ringed seal **by 13 October 2017**. Finland will provide any comments and/or amendments **by 13 November 2017**.
- c. Ms. Karin Hårding, Sweden, in collaboration with Finland and the health team, will carry out the data calculations and updated the data for the indicators on Nutritional and Reproductive status of marine mammals **by 1 December 2017**.
- d. **By 23 February 2018**, lead authors in cooperation with responsible teams to update the indicator report texts to reflect the updated assessment results.
- e. **By 1 March 2018**, the Secretariat to submit the updated core indicator reports to SEAL EG contacts for review.
- f. **By 26 March 2018**, SEAL EG national contacts to provide comments to the updated core indicator reports to the lead authors.
- g. **By 6 April 2018**, lead authors to update the core indicator reports based on comments received from SEAL EG national contacts and submit the final drafts to the Secretariat for submission to State & Conservation 8-2018 for endorsement.
- h. The health team will further develop existing, and start developing new, indicators for the health status of seals and porpoises.
- i. Mr. Sacha Viquerat, Germany, and Ms. Julia Carlström, Sweden, in cooperation with Denmark, Finland, Poland and Sweden, will continue the work on developing the indicator on 'Harbour porpoise distribution and abundance' and report to **SEAL 12-2018**.
- j. Mr. Sven Koschinski, Germany, in collaboration with Poland and Sweden and supported by the bycatch subgroup, will continue the work on the development of the indicator 'Number of drowned mammals and waterbirds in fishing gears' and report to **SEAL 12-2018**.
- k. **SEAL 12-2018** is requested to plan the future development of the core indicators.

2. Management plans:

- a. Review current national management plans and their implementation in light of the Recommendation 27-28/2 as well as the management plan guidelines developed by SEAL 8-2014.
- b. Review new and updated national management plans, to be circulated for discussion at **SEAL 12-2018**.

3. Database for abundance and distribution data on seals:

- a. Report data and review the status of the Seal database at **SEAL 12-2018**.

4. Monitoring guidelines:

- a. Sweden, with the support of Finland, will update the guidelines on abundance and distribution of seals to reflect the concerns of Finland regarding the methods used for ringed seal in the indicator on abundance and trends **by 13 October 2017**. Finland will provide any comments and/or amendments **by 1 December 2017**. Once agreement has been reached, the amended section of the guideline will be sent to the SEAL EG contacts for comment **until 7 January 2018**. The amended guideline will then be presented for endorsement **by State & Conservation 8-2018 on the 23 April 2018**.

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- b. Mr. Mart Jussi to inform **SEAL 12-2018** on the progress with updating the algorithm for submitting telemetry data so that only aggregated data is presented.
 - c. The guidelines for monitoring reproductive and nutritional status of marine mammals will be further improved in cooperation between Germany, Sweden and the health team **by SEAL 12-2018**.
5. Additional work on Baltic Sea harbour porpoise:
- a. Information to the HELCOM/ASCOBANS database is to be updated by filling in the [reporting form](#) and sending it to the Secretariat (petra.kaaria@helcom.fi) **in advance of SEAL 12-2018**.
 - b. Nomination of national contacts for updating the HELCOM/ASCOBANS harbour porpoise database to be submitted to the Secretariat (petra.kaaria@helcom.fi).
 - c. Ms. Katarzyna Kaminska, Poland, is invited to submit a proposal for revising Recommendation 17/2 so that it distinguishes between the Baltic Proper and gap area populations and make any other necessary updates, as they are considered within ASCOBANS.
 - d. Review the situation with the reporting form for Recommendation 17/2 based on developments in ASCOBANS at **SEAL 12-2018**.
 - e. Ms. Penina Blankett, Vice-chair of the ASCOBANS AC to report on activities of ASCOBANS and Ms. Ida Carlén, Chair of Jastarnia Group, to report on activities of the Jastarnia Group at **SEAL 12-2017**.
9. Registered mortality of marine mammals
- a. Denmark to report mortality data from previous years from Kattegat **in advance of SEAL 12-2018**.
 - b. All Contracting Parties to provide data on the mortality of marine mammals for year 2017 **in advance of SEAL 12-2018**.
 - c. **SEAL 12-2018** to discuss the harmonizing of the marine areas used by Contracting Parties when reporting mortality data.
 - d. Ms. Ursula Siebert, Germany, to inform **SEAL 12-2018** on the progress within OSPAR and ASCOBANS to develop databases for collecting detailed data (including geographical information) of mortality, necropsies and dead bodies, and to propose how to harmonize the HELCOM data collection with these other initiatives.
10. Marine mammals - fisheries interaction:
- a. Continue discussion on the interactions between mammals and fisheries in cooperation with the HELCOM Fish group.
11. Intersessional activities of the teams
- a. The health team is requested to inform on their intersessional activities **at SEAL 12-2018**.
 - b. The distribution team is requested to inform on their intersessional activities **at SEAL 12-2018**.
 - c. The population team is requested to inform on their intersessional activities **at SEAL 12-2018**.

