



Document title	Status of national management plans for seals
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Agenda Item	3 – Progress with National Management Plans
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Background

In the Baltic Sea Action Plan, HELCOM Contracting Parties have committed themselves to, by 2012, finalise national management plans as part of the measures taken to safeguard the long-term viability of the Baltic seal populations according to HELCOM Recommendation 27-28/2.

With reference to the Outcome of Seal 6-2012 (paragraph 3.4), the Secretariat compiled this document based on the reports by Contracting Parties on the status of their seal management plans. The document was used as background documentation for the HELCOM 2013 Copenhagen Ministerial Meeting and has since been annually updated by the Seal Expert Group.

Action required

The Meeting is invited to update the information on seal management plans by amending this document by **25 November** and submitting it to the Secretariat (petra.kaaria@helcom.fi).

Table 1. Countries with national seal management plans.

Country	Status of the Management Plans and Species included	Adopted in for the years	Planned Updates	Summary: Most important issues of the MPs	Websites	Additional information
Denmark	MPs for grey seal and harbour seal exist	2005 for 2005-2010 and is still valid	Review process due in 2015		GREY SEAL and HARBOUR SEAL (summary in English)	Surveys of seals and mammals are being carried out, including SCANS surveys (Outcome of HELCOM SEAL 6/2012).
Estonia	Being revised for grey and ringed seal	Grey seal 2001-2005 Ringed seal 2006 for 2006-2010	In 2017			The government is revising the management plans on grey and ringed seals for the next five years. The quantity of individuals lost from the population through by-catch is currently not known which has made it challenging to create LRLs. Estonia will wait for HELCOM decision on the LRL. Any numbers of seals are currently rough estimates and the ministry wishes to improve and modernise the monitoring. The aim is to make the society and other sectors more aware of the seals and their environment. Adopted by the Estonian law by the end of this year 2013-2017 (Outcome of HELCOM SEAL 6/2012). The revision of MPs is in the final phase, MPs are expected to be approved by the end of 2014. The grey seal was added in the list of wild game in the Estonian Hunting Act, but it is not decided if and how the hunting permissions for grey seals will be issued.
Finland	MPs for grey and ringed seal exist	2007 for 2007-2012 and is still valid	Date for the update has not been decided (by the Finnish Wildlife Agency)		GREY SEAL AND RINGED SEAL: ENGLISH FINNISH	The 2007 MPs available at the Webpage of the Ministry of the Agriculture and Forestry (Outcome of HELCOM SEAL 5/2011).The plans are going to be updated in 2012 but timetable yet to be settled. Due to the updating process of management plans of large land carnivores (wolf, lynx and brown bear) the management plan for Baltic Sea seals for Finland is probably not going to be updated in the near Future. It is, however, the responsibility of the Finnish Wildlife Agency to follow the progress made in the implementation of national management plans every year and report it to the Ministry of Forestry and Agriculture. Conflict with fisheries is still an issue. The by-catch has been discussed a lot and ECOSEAL gives information (Outcome of HELCOM SEAL 6/2012).
Sweden	MPs for grey seal and harbour seal in Skagerrak and Kattegat (except for the "Kalmarsund population") are in place. MP for ringed seal is in preparation and is to be finished in 2013.	2012 for 2012-		Development of seal safe fishing gear continues. Information and cooperation as a tool to make better understanding between fishery and conservation is a challenging goal.	GREY SEAL HARBOR SEAL	Management plans for grey seals and harbour seals were adopted in 2012. Conflict with fisheries is an issue.

Table 2. Countries with national seal management plans under development or without national seal management plans.

Country	Status of the Management Plans and Species included	Websites	Additional information
Poland	Under development for grey seal and harbour porpoise	GREY SEAL (draft) HARBOUR PORPOISE (draft)	<p>Preparation of management plans (in Poland - conservation programmes) for endangered species is one of the main tasks of the General Directorate for Environmental Protection. In Poland draft national management plans for grey seal and harbour porpoise have been developed within the project "Supporting the restitution and protection of Baltic mammals in Poland" co-financed from the EU funds, conducted by WWF Poland in cooperation with Hel Marine Station of the University of Gdansk and the Foundation for the Development of the University of Gdansk. WWF Poland has hired a professional mediatory company to ensure all stakeholder participation and consultation in the development of draft management plans, including fishermen, national and local authorities, scientists, environmentalists, legal advisers etc. In 2012 there were 2 plenary meetings organized as well as 6 working groups meetings (on the topics of: interactions with fisheries /2 meetings/, disturbance, noise and pollution /2 meetings/, research and monitoring /1 meeting/, information, education and social communication /1 meeting/). There were 98 participants from 42 institutions and organisations involved in this process.</p> <p>Draft plans were reviewed by foreign scientists and final versions were prepared by the end of the year 2012. At the beginning of 2013 draft management plans were sent to the General Directorate for Environmental Protection which is responsible for further internal and social consultations, preparation of final versions of documents and their adoption as a part of national legislation. During the meeting with the Ministry of Environment and the General Directorate for Environmental Protection WWF Poland received the information that the process of interdepartmental consultations of both documents will begin not earlier then in the first quarter of 2014.</p> <p>Consultations for the grey seal management plan are planned for 2015.</p>
Russia	No Management Plans		<p>There is no official management plan for the marine mammals but other activities are being carried out. Ringed seals' situation in the GOF is under scrutiny and it is in a perilous state with only about 100 individuals and dependent on input from other areas of the Baltic Sea. The seals on the haul outs are in the focus, and there are good haul outs in the southern GOF, in Gurgalsky Kurgalsky peninsula, problems are due to by-catch in fishing nets in Gurgalsky Kurgalsky where half of the population is located. Grey seal survey has also been carried out and grey seal numbers are increasing and this year winter and ice conditions were good, which was not the case during the recent years. In the GOF there is an increasing quantity of anthropogenic influence such as shipping. Plan to investigate seal distribution using GSM tagging to pick up data about foraging region and moving of seals in time when they are not on haul outs. Investigation of seals in the gulf should be done in international collaboration with Finland and Estonia. The red data book of Russia is under a revision and will be published next year. For the ringed seal the case is clear but for the grey seal it is more of a question whether to include the species (Outcome of HELCOM SEAL 6/2012).</p>

Table 3. Countries with no expected management plans.

Country	Status of the Management Plans and Species included	Additional information
Germany	No MPs foreseen to be produced	In the German Baltic Sea there are presently no haul out sites, neither for breeding nor for moulting, whereas resting seals can be observed along the coast, particularly for grey seals in the Greifswald Lagoon and for harbour seals in Wismar Bay (Outcome of HELCOM SEAL 4/2010). All hunting of seals is forbidden in Germany. Some management measures are conducted: All stranding are reported and the cause of death is determined. Reported sightings are also recorded (Outcome of HELCOM SEAL 5/2011). Plans for habitat restoration measures to re-install one important haul-out site that was destroyed by gravel extraction in the early 20th century are not implemented so far due to several reasons. Numbers of seals in this site are monitored twice a month by federal and state authorities and the numbers are gradually increasing (Outcome of HELCOM SEAL 4/2010).
Latvia	No MPs foreseen to be produced	According to the Latvian Ministry of Environment, no seal management plans are foreseen to be produced because of the lack of breeding stock and haul outs which would have need to be protected. Expert's view: both national management plan and monitoring program for seals is needed in Latvia, too. It is motivated by the fact that seals, particularly grey seals, are performing feeding migrations to territorial waters of Latvia and are coming in interactions with fishery. Therefore both national management plan and monitoring of seals should be focused on seal bycatch. Besides, monitoring of seals should include such items as health of seals and stranded animals (Outcome of HELCOM SEAL 1/2006).
Lithuania	-	-