



Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission

Working Group on the State of the Environment and Nature
Conservation

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Document title	ICES Special Request Advice on EU request on emergency measures to prevent bycatch of Baltic Proper harbour porpoise (<i>Phocoena phocoena</i>)
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Category	DEC
Agenda Item	3N – Development and implementation of Recommendations
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Submitted by	Coalition Clean Baltic - CCB
Reference	revised HELCOM Recommendation 17-2

Background

The Baltic Proper harbour porpoise is listed as Critically Endangered (CR) by IUCN and HELCOM (Hammond et al., 2008; HELCOM, 2013). Furthermore, ASCOBANS considers that “the Baltic subpopulation of the harbour porpoise is of particular concern”. HELCOM is “deeply concerned about the population status of harbour porpoise in the Baltic Sea” and “convinced that the critical status of harbour porpoises in the Baltic Sea calls for immediate actions in order to safeguard their survival” (HELCOM, 2013).

In response to an EU request on emergency measures ICES published special advice on preventing bycatch of the Baltic Proper harbour porpoise in May 2020. The advice can be found in its entirety [here](#).

ICES recommended a set of five measures to immediately reduce bycatch of harbour porpoise (see the descriptive table attached).

Action requested

The Meeting is invited to agree on the way of integrating the advice into implementation of the [revised HELCOM Recommendation 17-2](#) as fast as possible in cooperation with relevant fora, including BALTFISH.

Attachment 1. A set of five bycatch mitigation measures that, if implemented as a whole, is expected to reduce bycatch risk of Baltic Proper harbour porpoise. Note that where pingers are recommended as a bycatch reduction measure, the expectation is that only pingers which have been thoroughly tested and demonstrated to unambiguously reduce bycatch rates of harbour porpoise should be used.

	Measure	Rationale
1	Closure of the Northern Midsea Bank (Figure 1) to all fisheries, with the exception of passive gears proven not to bycatch harbour porpoise (this includes pots, traps, and longlines, but excludes static nets equipped with pingers or other acoustic devices). The Northern Midsea Bank is defined here as the area delimited within the following coordinates: NW: 56.241°N, 17.042°E SW: 56.022°N, 17.202°E NE: 56.380°N, 17.675°E SE: 56.145°N, 17.710°E	Core area for the Baltic Proper harbour porpoise during breeding season and also used to a high extent during winter.
2a	Closure of the Natura 2000 site “Hoburgs bank och Midsjöbankarna” (SE0330308, Figure 1) for fishing with static nets.	High-density area for Baltic Proper harbour porpoise and designated site for their protection. The site encompasses a large proportion of the population in summer (May–October) and is used to a high extent during winter (November–April). The measure is intended to ensure that fishing effort from métiers of concern is removed.
2b	Closure of the Southern Midsea Bank for fishing with static nets. The Southern Midsea Bank (Figure 1) is defined here as the Swedish part of the Southern Midsea Bank, covering all waters between the Natura 2000 site “Hoburgs bank och Midsjöbankarna” (SE0330308) and the Swedish–Polish border. Polish waters are delimited as the area within the following coordinates (Figure 1): SW: 55.377°N, 16.589°E SE: 55.466°N, 17.538°E NE: 55.797°N, 18.037°E	Important habitat to the Baltic Proper harbour porpoise in May–October, especially during the breeding season, and is used to a high extent during winter (November–April). The measure is intended to ensure that fishing effort from métiers of concern is removed.
3	Closure of the Natura 2000 sites Adlergrund (DE1251301), Westliche Rönnebank (DE1249301), Pommersche Bucht mit Oderbank (DE1652301), Greifswalder Boddenrandschwelle und Teile der Pommerschen Bucht (DE1749302), Ostoja na Zatoce Pomorskiej (PLH990002), Wolin i Uznam (PLH320019), and the SPA site Pommersche Bucht (DE1552401) (Figure 2) for fishing with static nets during November–January.	Together, these smaller sites form a larger cluster (approximately 5,000 km ²) of designated Natura 2000 site with Baltic Proper harbour porpoises being (occasionally) present during some winter months.
4	Obligatory use of pingers on static nets in the area west of the sandbank Ryf Mew within the Zatoka Pucka i Półwysep Helski Natura 2000 site (PLH220032), with the concurrent closure of static net fisheries in the area east of the sandbank Ryf Mew within the Zatoka Pucka i Półwysep Helski Natura 2000 site (Figure 3).	The area had 18 bycatches of harbour porpoise between 1990 and 1999. The area is only used by Baltic Proper harbour porpoise that are regularly present in the area. It is important that both measures are implemented simultaneously.
5	Prohibit the use of static nets without the simultaneous use of pingers during May–October in EU waters between the southwestern management border, proposed by Carlén <i>et al.</i> (2018) (a line drawn between the island of Hanö, Sweden, and Jarosławiec near Słupsk, Poland) and a line drawn between 60.5°N at the Swedish coast and 61°N at the Finnish coast; and during November–April in EU waters between a line drawn along east of longitude 13°E between the Swedish and German coasts, and a line drawn between 60.5°N at the Swedish coast and 61°N at the Finnish coast (Figure 1), with the exception of Natura 2000 sites and other areas, where static net fisheries have been closed.	The seasonal areas reflect the current best knowledge of the seasonal distribution of the Baltic Proper harbour porpoise. Static nets are the gear type with the highest bycatch numbers in these areas and represent a large proportion of the fleet.