



Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission

Working Group on the State of the Environment and Nature
Conservation

STATE & CONSERVATION
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Submitted by	Indicator Co-Leads
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Background

STATE & CONSERVATION 12-2020 expressed general support for the work on the “Cumulative impact on benthic biotopes” pre-core indicator, highlighting the importance of the indicator for the upcoming HOLAS III assessment. The meeting encouraged the indicator co-leads to consider the issues raised during the presentation of the indicator and the subsequent discussion, in particular focusing on the development of threshold values and to continue to involve the EN BENTHIC in the work, possibly through an additional meeting of the EN before STATE & CONSERVATION 13-2020.

STATE & CONSERVATION 12-2020 invited the indicator co-leads, with support from the Secretariat, to prepare a time plan for further work to finalize the core indicator, to be submitted as information to the State and Conservation WG.

STATE & CONSERVATION 12-2020 further invited the indicator co-leads to present an updated indicator report for STATE & CONSERVATION 13-2020 for further discussion on threshold values and shifting the status of the indicator from pre-core to core indicator, at latest by HOD meeting in June 2021. The meeting further invited the indicator co-leads, together with the Secretariat and the Co-chairs of State and Conservation to prepare a realistic time plan for further work, including a possible additional meeting of EN BENTHIC, taking into account the time needed by contracting parties to get acceptance nationally to the indicator results (especially the threshold values).

A time plan has been established by the indicator co-leads together with the Co-Chairs of State and Conservation in July 2020 including a scheduled additional Workshop of EN BENTHIC dedicated to the development of threshold values, held on 7th of September 2020. In preparation of the workshop, a proposal on possible thresholds was sent out on 13th of July 2020.

Action requested

The Meeting is invited to consider and agree on the time plan for further work on the cumulative impact on benthic biotopes indicator.

Actions done after STATE & CONSERVATION 12-2020

At STATE & CONSERVATION 12-2020 the draft indicator report for the "CumI" was presented by Germany. S&C welcomed the work carried out and stressed the importance of including the indicator in the HOLAS III assessment.

The Meeting took note that most contracting parties can only embark on the process of shifting the status of the indicator from pre-core to core once the threshold values are in place in due time. The meeting agreed that a minimum of two months for national consultation and approval processes related to indicator threshold values is appropriate.

Having this in mind, we see our remaining task from S&C to suggest threshold values and to discuss them with EN BENTHIC. Therefore, we developed the following road map.

In the first half of July, the indicator co-leads sent out a first proposal on possible threshold values for the CumI, based on what other HELCOM indicators have done so far in this respect and starting with one threshold per HELCOM subbasin (17 thresholds altogether). The threshold values were an initial proposal with estimates in order to get the discussion started. The plan was that various neighbouring subbasins will finally get the same threshold value. Thus, we would end up with much less than 17 values for the whole Baltic Sea, probably not more than 5-7 in the end respecting the different ecological characteristics based on the 4 different threshold values proposed so far. The Contracting Parties responsible for their area were asked to come up with an adjusted proposal and a reasoning for the adjustment. **This discussion should be done via email correspondence with Torsten Berg and Antonia Sandman as representatives of the LCs (berg@marilim.de and antonia.sandman@aquabiota.se) and be driven further until the beginning of September.** No comments at all were received on the proposed threshold values.

On 7th of September the additional EN BENTHIC WS2-2020 was conducted online, specifically with the most important goal to discuss the draft threshold values aiming to find a common recommendation from EN BENTHIC.

Time plan for further work on Cumulative impact on benthic biotopes indicator

1. After EN BENTHIC WS2-2020 the initial plan needs to be revised based on the outcome of the meeting discussions. The EN BENTHIC workshop agreed that the aspect of threshold values in terms of an 'allowable extent' of impacts (as a spatial component of the threshold values proposal) should be deferred to a later discussion. In particular, the discussion on thresholds for the spatial extent of impacts cannot continue without previous steps, most importantly the definition of the boundary of 'adverse effects'. EN BENTHIC found it necessary to revisit the underlying definitions for the CumI at the next regular EN BENTHIC Meeting in November 2020. Before this next meeting, the basic settings of the assessment (categories and values for the magnitude of pressure) will be compiled in a concise and clear manner by the indicator co-leads in order to encourage the urgently needed feedback from CPs and to support the discussion on it for the November 2020 meeting of EN BENTHIC. Comments on the categories and values for the magnitude of pressures, should be send in at least two weeks before the EN Benthic meeting in November. This assures that the co-leads can prepare discussions at the EN Benthic meeting.

2. Under these circumstances, no preliminary agreement on the proposed thresholds was possible. A revision of the indicator report is only meaningful if a common understanding and agreement from the EN BENTHIC group can be included.

For this reason, an updated indicator report including preliminary agreed thresholds will not be submitted to S&C 13-2020 as initially planned. In order to achieve an agreement before S&C in spring 2021 and have results ready for submission to S&C 14-2021, another additional meeting of EN BENTHIC including

discussions on the “spatial component of the threshold values proposal” is required at the beginning of 2021.

3. Probably at State & Conservation in spring 2021 or in autumn 2021 at the very latest, the CumI needs to be shifted to a core indicator to be used in HOLAS III.

4. How HOD has to be involved in the process can be decided at a later stage by the Secretariat and the Co-Chairs of S&C.

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