



## Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission

Working Group on the State of the Environment and Nature  
Conservation

STATE & CONSERVATION  
13-2020

Online, 5-9 October 2020

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<b>Document title</b>	Discussions on seals-fisheries interactions by EG MAMA
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<b>Category</b>	INF
<b>Agenda Item</b>	8J – Any other business
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<b>Submitted by</b>	Secretariat

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*This document was submitted after the deadline. The outcome of the EG MAMA 14-2020 meeting was adopted on the 29 September 2020.*

### Background

Seals fisheries interactions have continuously been discussed by the Expert Group on marine mammals. Extracts on the matter from the recent EG MAMA meetings can be obtained below.

EG MAMA 13-2019:

*Marine mammals-fisheries interaction*

The Meeting

- took note of the outcomes of the joint OSPAR-HELCOM workshop to examine possibilities for developing indicators for incidental bycatch of birds and marine mammals, which took place 3-5 September in Copenhagen, as presented by Katarzyna Kaminska, HELCOM Chair of the Workshop (presentation 3).
- noted that work on producing the roadmap on data needs produced by CG FISHDATA has progress and that the document will be submitted to State & Conservation 11-2019 for approval, and if the document is approved, the intention is to forward it to relevant authorities.
- noted that the bycatch issue is dealt also in the BSAP UP process by the ACTION project.
- noted that more parasitological and health data is needed in parallel from seals and fish in areas of special interest, as well as comprehensive information on fish health, in order to assess if Anisakid nematodes are affecting the fish intermediate/paratenic hosts. More information on prevalence of several invertebrate and vertebrate hosts and influence of abiotic factors and contaminant exposure on their distribution is also needed. For this work, both funds and manpower are needed. The Meeting noted that this should be added to the proposal for the Science agenda. The Meeting took note that in Sweden, there is a pilot study on parasites, and that research will continue.

EG MAMA 14-2020:

*Marine mammals-fisheries interaction*

The Meeting:

- discussed current knowledge gaps and challenges with regard to cod parasites and possible links to the increasing number of grey seals. The Meeting took note that State & Conservation WG had previously indicated that there should be improvements to investigate how the increasing seals numbers may be affecting fish stocks.
- acknowledged that there is still a gap in understanding the link between the seal population growth and fish health.
- considered that in order to provide a more complete assessment of the seal-fish interactions with regards to parasites, more comprehensive fish health surveys are needed as well as a better

understanding of drivers. It is also important to account for abiotic factors that may affect the lifecycles of these parasites in the Baltic Sea, as well as the several intermediate hosts of the parasites.

- took note of information regarding several initiatives to improve the knowledge on, and strengthen the scientific basis of, seal-parasite-fish interactions, both using historical records and current monitoring and sampling data.
- took note of information that Denmark is working on using DNA analysis for scat samples to determine the presence of parasites, welcomed the information that other CPs are welcome to provide samples for analysis by contacting Morten Tang Olsen (morten.olsen@snm.ku.dk) for more information.
- invited the Marine Mammal Health Team to work further on the Anisakid nematode species in marine mammals resident in the Baltic Sea and strive to expand the work to include fish health and intermediate hosts and agreed to exchange information on progress of ongoing initiatives regarding seal-fish interactions at the EG MAMA 15-2021.
- invited Contracting Parties to make available documents and information on this topic by submitting them to the EG MAMA 15-2021 as meeting document.

### Action requested

The Meeting is invited to take note of the information.