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Working Group on the State of the Environment and Nature
Conservation

STATE & CONSERVATION
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Background

To ensure that regional HELCOM biodiversity assessments are supported by relevant and quality assured regional data the EU co-financed HELCOM BalticBOOST project work package 1.2 “Database and data arrangements for coastal fish, birds and seals” coordinated by HELCOM Secretariat has been working on setting up a data flow and developing biodiversity related databases to suit the needs of related HELCOM core indicators.

This document presents current development status of the regional HELCOM databases for coastal fish, birds and seals to meet these requirements.

Action requested

The Meeting is invited to take note of current developments of HELCOM coastal fish-, bird- and seal-databases and related web applications.

Report of status birds, coastal fish and seal databases developed in BalticBOOST WP 1.2

Background

For the purpose of timely delivery of biodiversity related monitoring data for indicator calculations, HELCOM Secretariat initiated the development of thematic biodiversity databases for coastal fish, birds and seals under EU co-financed HELCOM project BalticBOOST WP 1.2.

The development of the regional biodiversity databases at HELCOM has taken the data requirements of the core indicators into account. The data model of the databases have been developed to cater for the mandatory parameters of the core indicators.

Once developed and operationalized, reporting to databases developed in BalticBOOST project are to be included in the regular HELCOM data collection framework, meaning annual data reporting within relevant expert group to enable the update of related indicators with latest data.

Birds

Data model and web application

Data model for coastal bird breeding and migrating observations was developed based on indicator requirements taking into account existing data formats (e.g. Wetland International).

Data model for offshore bird counts based on ESAS model developed in BALSAM project was developed further for Baltic Sea area and was agreed by JWG Bird in October 2016. Based on this format secretariat is currently in the process of establishing the database structure, but the data request have not been made due to secretariat being informed that the census data is not yet available from the national contact points.

The web application has been drafted to provide access to coastal bird data. The web application will be finalized and published by the end of 2016 providing access to data that can be made publicly available.

Data entry

Data call based on data format was send by the Secretariat to STATE & CONSERVATION and JWG Bird contacts.

It should be noted that data received from Contracting Parties in result of the data call was in variable national formats and lot of manual work was required to harmonize the data to the requested format and used for indicator calculations. As the aim of developing HELCOM databases is to include the data collection in the regular HELCOM data collection framework, Contracting Parties should consider making arrangements for submitting the data in accordance with the required format in the future.

Contracting Parties carried out the first coordinated regional winter survey of seabirds in Jan-Feb 2016, however it was clarified that the data has not been processed nationally in time for submission in response to the data call. For this reason, the data call in spring 2016 was limited to coastal census data. In the future, the aim is to also include offshore census data in the regional bird database.

The JWG Bird 2016 meeting (10-14 October) discussed the offshore census data. The experts considered it needed to agree on a regional approach to processing the data once national raw data processing has been completed. It was concluded that it is possible to include the offshore data in the core indicators, however

it was unclear to the expert meeting if the required resources will be available to process the data in time to include it in the updated HOLAS II version to be developed by mid-2018.

Coastal fish

Data model and web application

Data format for coastal fish was developed based on indicator requirements. The database data model was developed and data was received from the HELCOM FISH-PRO II project.

The web application has been drafted to provide access to coastal fish data used for related indicators. The web application will be finalized and published by the end of 2016.

Data entry

A dataset has been provided through the HELCOM FISH-PRO II project. The data has been processed to the new data format in the BalticBOOST project. The data is currently in the process of being imported to the Coastal fish database.

Seals

Data model and web application

Data format for seals was developed based on indicator requirements and following pointwise-based OSPAR format to aim synergy in data reporting between HELCOM and OSPAR.

The web application has been drafted to provide access to seal count data. The web application will be finalized and published by the end of 2016.

Data entry

In order to collate the first dataset to be entered into the database the HELCOM Secretariat and the BalticBOOST project prepared a data call for seals submitted prior to the SEAL EG 10-2016 with a reporting deadline by SEAL EG 10-2016 meeting. The data call was prepared in accordance with the data model which was developed to meet the required parameters of the core indicators on seal distribution.

SEAL EG 10-2016 opened the reporting format, in particularly related to the level of aggregation that should be used in reporting. Drafting group was established to finalize the format in order to be able to submit updated data request with revised format based on proper aggregation level which would be suitable for the distribution indicator.

Therefore the data entry is currently pending for resubmission of the data call with revised reporting format.