



Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission

Working Group on the State of the Environment and Nature
Conservation

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Submitted by	Finland

Note that the document was submitted after the established deadline. It will be decided by the Meeting if the document can be discussed or postponed to the next meeting.

Background

In this document we are discussing the questions and comments concerning “Draft guidelines for MPA pressure evaluation”. The guidelines document was created originally for standardizing the assessment between different regions in Finland during the HELCOM MPA database update. The document has been agreed to be used as a basis in creating consistent guidelines in MPA pressure evaluation for Baltic Sea area. The paper was sent to the HELCOM State and Conservation working group for comments three times. Germany has provided comments on the draft.

Action required

The Meeting is invited to:

- discuss about the further development of the document.
- agree on how to proceed with developing the guidelines.

Comments on draft document “Guidelines for MPA pressure evaluation”

The comments and questions concerning the draft Guidelines for MPA pressure evaluation -document are relevant and need further discussion in the HELCOM State & Conservation –group. Before updating the document authors will need input from the group.

One of the most relevant comments was concerning the Annex III for EU’s MSFD. Annex III is still under revision, so the S&C group should decide whether we should use the current listing of pressures or wait for the document to be finalized. The draft guidelines document for MPA pressure evaluation has now a listing that is on few parts outdated.

It was noted, that temporary/permanent and short-term/long-term/permanent might be useful differentiations for some of the pressure categories such as “change of seabed substrate or morphology” and “disturbance or damage to seabed”. The authors of the original document felt that the frequency should be inbuilt in the pressure evaluation categories. Finland has set three categories for the pressure evaluations: High, Medium and Low. High frequency could end up in “High” –pressure class. Subdividing the categories might make the evaluation too complex.

Recovery speed was also suggested to be used in the pressure assessment. This is really relevant, but might require more information than we currently have. The studies about the impact of individual pressures to individual species/ habitats is still very limited. The knowledge about the spatial extent of species and habitat occurrences is limited. Rough estimations can be used with expert opinions.

The consistency with IUCN –criteria (red list) was underlined in the comments. It has to be discussed whether IUCN has suitable criteria for MPA –pressure evaluations. The IUCN –criteria for threatened habitats consider the whole occurrence of a habitat type, when the guideline –document addressed here is to be used when evaluating pressures on individual MPA’s.

Some comments were about human activities that were present in multiple categories. One activity can cause multiple pressures on one location and the “duplication” is intentional. See for e.g. HELCOM BSEP 125. The updates on MSDF Annex III has removed some of the duplications that might be describing the same pressure category.

Some changes to the text and references were suggested. For e.g.: “negative impacts” should be replaced by “significant negative impacts”; “Input of electromagnetic and seismic waves” should be replaced by “electromagnetic energy” (can be waves as well as fields).

It was noted that the guidelines didn’t consider some activities that are absent in Finland. For example in “extraction of sediment or subsoil” only activities that remove the sea bottoms upper sediment layer was considered, when oil drilling might not do that much harm for the bottom sediment.

The guidelines suggested for many pressures to evaluate the percentage coverage that is affecting the MPA. For some of the pressures this might be very difficult. It was commented that the percentages or evaluation basis would be good to have basis on scientific literature. A literature review has been made when preparing the guidelines –document. There is quite limited number of usable studies.

Percentage cover for the pressures (of the MPAs' areas) were used to make the evaluations as consistent as possible. For some of the pressure categories it might be better to rely on expert knowledge. For example noise and change in temperature are difficult to evaluate on coverage basis.

About the input of nutrients it was suggested to use the results from HELCOM HEAT or EU's WFD. The results of HEAT have information about larger water areas and can be used as a base for the evaluation. However small MPA's might be affected by nutrient point sources, such as aquaculture or discharges of water treatment plants and therefore detailed spatial data should be considered. WFD has resulted in ecological status assessment data, that includes nutrient measurement, but also many other indicators and cannot be used as such in the evaluation.

Comments on evaluating litter: For "death to birds or animals" we do not have indicators for the Baltic Sea. Thus a differentiation between high and medium might turn out difficult. For "Micro-size litter" there are no validated standard procedures for sampling, sample treatment and analysis yet. If only presence/absence of microlitter is meant here, a simpler approach for analysis could be used. In this case the proposed assessment would be ok.

It was also noted that the role of recreational and commercial fishing and hunting should be discussed.