OSPAR Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic, and

Helsinki Convention on the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Baltic Sea Area

Meeting of the Joint HELCOM/OSPAR Task Group on Ballast Water Management Convention (BWMC) and Biofouling (TG BALLAST 11-2020)

Online: 26-27 November 2020

An update of the regionally harmonized early warning system (EWS) for timely communication of findings of harmful aquatic organisms and pathogens (HAOP)

Presented by Lithuania

Issue: This document presents an update of the regionally harmonized early warning system (EWS) for timely communication of findings of harmful aquatic organisms and pathogens (HAOP)

Action requested

1. JTG-Ballast is invited to:

    a. take note and provide comments to the update of the regionally harmonized early warning system (EWS) for timely communication of findings of harmful aquatic organisms and pathogens;

    b. revise and complement information related to identified institutions and administrations responsible of different stages of the process e.g. detection and handling of warning signals;

    c. discuss and agree on the institution to receive the information and decide on issuing the warning signal (see step 4 and 5 of the proposed EWS);

    d. discuss and agree on the institution to receive the warning signal;

    e. discuss and agree on holding an online workshop on the EWS concept and technical implementation to be organised by the AquaNIS development team.

Background

2. An INTERREG Baltic Sea Region Programme project COMPLETE (Completing management options in the Baltic Sea Region to reduce risk of invasive species introduction by shipping, 2017-2020) addresses the issues with relevance to the activities of the HELCOM/OSPAR TG Ballast. This document provides the draft project output O3.3. Regionally harmonized early warning system (EWS). Due to extremal situation related to the COVID-19 pandemic, the final output is postponed until the end of the COMPLETE project which has been extended to March 2021. The EWS serves for timely communication of findings of harmful aquatic organisms and pathogens (HAOP) to all relevant authorities in the HELCOM countries and international shipping in the Baltic Sea. MARITIME 19-2019 identified the need of creating an early warning system, possibly as part of the HELCOM OSPAR Ballast Water Exemption Decision Support Tool, using the outcome

of the COMPLETE project as one of the not yet accomplished actions of the HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan (BSAP) under the scope of the Maritime Working Group. The meeting also considered that the task should be complete within 2020 and if this is not accomplished, new concrete actions should address this matter (Outcome of MARITIME 19-2019, Annex 2, Table 1). The current document represents the progress made in the further development of the EWS, taking into account the outcome of the HELCOM/OSPAR TG BALLAST 10-2019.

An update of the regionally harmonized early warning system (EWS) for timely communication of findings of harmful aquatic organisms and pathogens (HAOP)

The aim of the EWS: is to minimize the uptake of ballast water which could be harmful for the recipient port or area and reduce the risk of spreading of HAOP and alien species. The EWS is created in order to issue a warning signal to (1) vessels to prevent loading of ballast water when critical biological conditions occur in ports and surrounding areas, i.e. mass development or blooms of HAOP, and to (2) environmental and health authorities when non-indigenous species (NIS) or pathogens are present in ports or surrounding areas to enable an early response and an implementation of remediation measures. The EWS is related to the BWMC only.

Technical implementation of the EWS. The EWS is embedded in the Information system on aquatic non-indigenous and cryptogenic species (AquaNIS, www.corpi.ku.lt/databases/index.php/aquanis/target/ews). It is currently based on the HELCOM Target Species (TS) list for the Baltic Sea (www.corpi.ku.lt/databases/index.php/aquanis/target/species) in accordance with the goals and objectives of the COMPLETE project.

The AquaNIS development team has created a fast-track entry option which includes a 5 steps approach:

1. Select a port in the Baltic Sea region from the drop-down menu with countries / ports for which to report a HAOP detection;
2. Select a species using the TS list from the drop-down menu. If a HAOP is not included in the TS list, the free text option can be used to indicate which pathogen (parasite or other pest) is detected and justify why it should be reported;
3. Select the option to report the status of the HAOP:
    a. new arrival of a TS into the port;
    b. an outbreak (increased abundance and spread) of a previously known TS;
    c. other (use “free text” option to explain).
4. Click to send the above information to the relevant receiver (AquaNIS Editorial Board, national administration, or HELCOM – to be determined).
5. On receiving the message, the relevant institution (AquaNIS Editorial Board, national administration, or HELCOM – to be determined) takes the decision to issue the warning signal.

Who receives a warning signal? A warning signal will be sent to the relevant institutions (to be determined), which undersigned an agreement with the AquaNIS Editorial Board to receive warnings, and who will further decide where to send the signal.

Criteria that should trigger a warning. The criteria to issue a warning signal are based on the concept of TS (see document 3-4 to HELCOM/OSPAR TG BALLAST 9-2018). The data on TS comes to AquaNIS from the HELCOM database on TS (http://jointbwmexemptions.org/ballast_water_RA/apex/f?p=104), which is harmonized with AquaNIS.

Response. The issuing of the warning signal should activate response measures and actions, e.g. the notification of a no ballast water uptake area to ships, increased monitoring efforts, or the promotion of more complex measures such as eradication, control or containment of HAOP. For species belonging to the strongest impact category, contingency plans should previously be developed and be ready for implementation. Response strategies and methods should be anticipated and consensus reached on as many details as possible beforehand.

Online workshop. The AquaNIS development team offers the possibility to arrange an online workshop “The Early Warning System on findings of harmful aquatic organisms and pathogens in the Baltic Sea and its implementation in the AquaNIS information system” for national focal points, i.e. institutions, responsible

for the detection of HAOP and non-indigenous species, port authorities and other interested stakeholders. At this workshop the concept of the EWS, its technical implementation and practical experience of its use will be presented.