

## **Planning for oiled wildlife response in the Baltic Sea**

Results from an international workshop  
Tallinn, October 5, 2009



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Organised by Sea Alarm and WWF-Finland



In close cooperation with the  
Estonian Ministry of Environment and the HELCOM Secretariat





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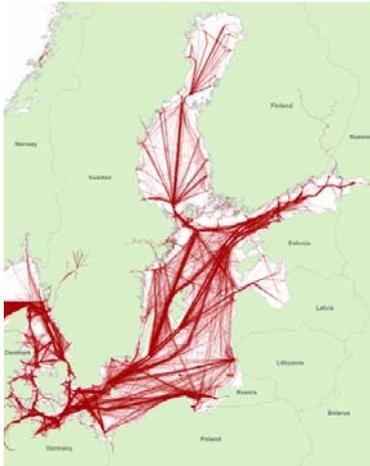
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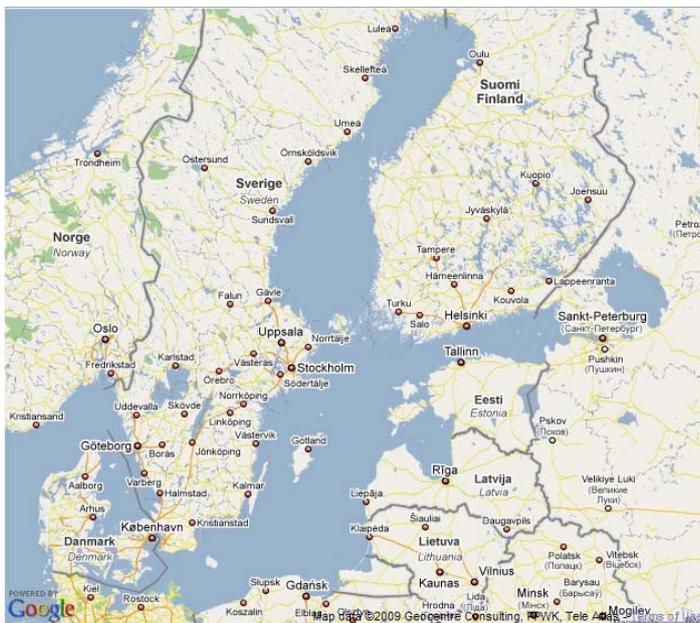
## Introduction

A marine oil spill incident can seriously threaten marine wildlife in the Baltic, especially vulnerable seabirds and marine mammals. Having in place an integrated wildlife response plan is essential to effectively deal with the hundreds, if not thousands of animals that may become oiled.



*Intensive maritime traffic in the Baltic: record of one week. (Source: BRISK)*

The countries bordering the Baltic Sea have realised this and included an objective in the Baltic Sea Action Plan, to integrate wildlife response into existing oil spill response plan. In 2007 HELCOM RESPONSE adopted wildlife response preparedness into its working programme and issued work. In 2008, a survey was conducted to provide an overview of the experiences, current activities and needs of Contracting Parties. The results were discussed at the HELCOM RESPONSE 2008 meeting in Warnemünde, and it was decided to integrate oiled wildlife response into the HELCOM Manual on Co-operation in Response to Marine Pollution (in the following the HELCOM Manual). A proposal for this was prepared and agreed in principle at the most recent HELCOM RESPONSE 2009 meeting in Stockholm.



*The Baltic region*

These developments have increased interest in oiled wildlife response planning at national levels in the Baltic region. Although most Baltic countries do not yet have an integrated oiled wildlife response plan in place, several authorities are now either exploring the issue or have started a planning process.

In order to support the Baltic countries in their processes of planning a one day planning workshop was organised by Sea Alarm Foundation and WWF-Finland in close cooperation with the Estonian Ministry of Environment and the HELCOM RESPONSE Secretariat. The workshop took place on 5 October 2009 at the Ministry of Environment, Tallinn, Estonia.

The workshop recognized that most Baltic countries are presently facing similar challenges in their efforts to integrate wildlife response and therefore provide key actors from these countries with key information and an opportunity to exchange knowledge and experiences.

This report reflects on the results of the workshop.

## Workshop Aims

The workshop aimed to:

- Present the international standards for oiled wildlife response planning
- Provide an overview of the planning processes of other Baltic and European countries, and the USA
- Familiarize the participants with the advantages of having a response plan in place
- Discuss Government - NGO relationships
- Identify issues specific to the Baltic region, and
- Facilitate regional networking

## Workshop programme

The Workshop programme consisted of a series of presentations in the morning, a table top exercise in the early afternoon and a plenary discussion in the late afternoon (see Annex 1).

## Participants

The workshop was advertised at Helcom Response 2008 and 2009, and invitations were sent to the Focal Points of the HELCOM Contracting Parties by the HELCOM Secretariat. The aim was to have up to 3 representatives per country, ideally representing:

- The authority responsible for oil spill response
- The authority responsible for the coordination of (oiled) wildlife emergency response
- A relevant national NGO that is recognised for assisting in an oiled wildlife emergency

The workshop was attended by 20 participants including 16 participants from 6 Baltic Sea Countries, the Helcom Secretariat, Oiled Wildlife Care Network (California, US) and Sea Alarm Foundation (see Annex 2).



## Results

### Welcome

Mr. Harry Liiv, the Deputy Secretary General on Environmental Use of the Estonian Ministry of Environment, welcomed the participants to the Ministry Premises and the city of Tallinn. He emphasized the importance of being prepared for oiled wildlife emergencies and memorized the 2006 oil spill incident that confronted Estonia with both a pollution of the coast and oiled wildlife. Thanks to the assistance received from foreign expert groups Estonia could deal with the problems but it demonstrated that an oiled wildlife response plan should be in place. Estonia since then is developing a national plan and has been playing an active role in HELCOM discussions where it has taken the role of lead country for activities facilitating planning and response in the Baltic Sea area.



*Michael Ziccardi, Agnes Villmann, Harry Liiv*

### Lectures

Mrs. Monika Stankiewicz of the HELCOM Secretariat provided an update on the processes that have been taken place in Helcom Response Group since the Baltic Sea Action Plan was agreed in 2007. Helcom Response has adopted the task to elaborate this objective and has taken progressive steps ever since. The most recent 2009 meeting has taken a firm decision by which oiled wildlife response will become an integrated part of the HELCOM Manual. This would mean that Contracting Parties will be able to request and provide international assistance following established formal international procedures. The Contracting

parties are currently considering amending the Helsinki Convention to fully integrate wildlife into its response objectives.



*Timo Asanti, Monika Stankiewicz*

Mr. Hugo Nijkamp (Sea Alarm Foundation) provided an overview of the main issues in an oiled wildlife incident. He demonstrated that there are many issues that would need a coordinated response both at sea and on the sea shore. An integrated national wildlife response plan is the best guarantee that these issues can be dealt with appropriately and effectively. He went through different aspects of response planning, referring to different published guidance documents that are available.

Dr. Michael Ziccardi (Oiled Wildlife Care Network, California, United States) provided an overview of the oiled wildlife preparedness and response in California. He explained how the Exxon Valdez incident in 1989 had changed the whole concept of oil spill response preparedness in the United States. The 1990 Oil Pollution Act defines a far-stretching regime of national preparedness in which ship owners are discouraged to spill oil in the US (high fines) and in which federal and state authorities can cooperate effectively under a unified command system. The state of California has adopted its own legislation on top of OPA'90. An oil spill preparedness fund has been created which is financed with levies on barrels of imported oil. This fund and legislation are now the basis for a relatively high state of preparedness for oiled wildlife response which is rather unique in the world. Oiled Wildlife Care Network coordinates a large country wide network of rehabilitation centres and scientific bodies which regularly train and exercise together. Permanent rehabilitation centres have been created both for seabirds and mammals. The University of Davis hosts the OWCN.



*Michael Ziccardi presenting Californian preparedness*

Mr. Timo Asanti (SYKE) provided details of the state of preparedness for oiled wildlife incidents in Finland. Also Finland has created an oil spill fund by putting levies on imported oil. The fund has recently been used to develop an oiled wildlife response unit consisting of three specialized containers (veterinary care, holding, washing) that can be transported by trucks or ship to wherever they are needed. The unit also includes tents

and specialized equipment that allows the quick set up of a field rehabilitation centre. Trained volunteers that are coordinated by WWF can work with the unit.



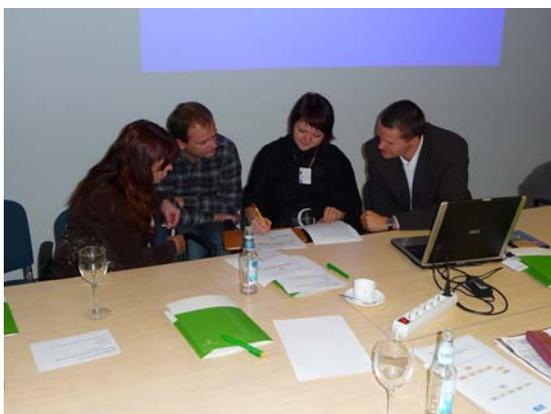
*The Ministry of Environment provided the facilities*

Mrs. Tanja Pirinen (WWF Finland) explained the details of the system created by WWF Finland in which volunteers are trained to provide shoreline cleanup. More recently also a programme has started to train oiled wildlife responders that can work with the Finnish mobile unit. The volunteer training programme that was started in Finland is now copied by WWF Norway and ELF in Estonia. WWF Russia has recently started with a similar initiative.

### Table top exercise

A table top exercise was developed and moderated by Sea Alarm Foundation. The exercise simulated a national planning process. Participants worked per country and were given a series of 6 sequential tasks, as follows:

1. List the authorities and NGO's that do or may have a responsibility in an oiled wildlife response
2. Indicate how these organisations would fit into a national response management structure
3. Indicate on a geographical map the marine areas that are most sensitive to oil pollution and the locations from where available resources could be mobilised
4. Specify a tiered response model for different regions that were distinguished under the previous task
5. Read a radio message that defined a spill in the Baltic Area
6. Each group explained how they would deal with this spill if it happened in their country, based on the response plan they had drafted, and this was discussed in plenary.



*The Estonian delegation*

Step 6 provided the opportunity for all the participants how an oil spill incident would be dealt with in each of the countries. The moderator let the oil incident of Step 5 “travel” through the Baltic area and challenged each country delegation to explain how the wildlife issues would be dealt with at the particular location (see Annex 3 for an overview of results). The exercise revealed that the different countries in the Baltic areas have different levels of preparedness. Some countries have to deal with relatively remote areas where an oiled wildlife response would be difficult to organize. The exercise revealed that no country has an agreed response plan in place as yet, although some countries have basic resources such as expertise, a network of rehabilitation centres, or a mobile unit. Some countries are lacking these resources and would for a large part be dependent on foreign assistance.



*The Swedish delegation*

The table top exercise was perceived by the participants as very useful. Especially hearing from other country delegations how they would deal with an incident provided a unique insight in the strategies and preparedness systems that would be used. Participants commented that the exercise gave an interesting overview of the various practical issues that need to be resolved. Some participants said the exercise had given them important guidance as to the process that needs to be set up nationally and announced they would get things started.

### Plenary discussion

Following the table top exercise a more general plenary discussion was held (see Annex 4 for a bullet pointed overview). Here participants discussed the need for more development towards national and international preparedness for oiled wildlife response in the Baltic. The development of national plans was mentioned as a crucial element and the need for authorities and NGOs to work together, such as is established already in Finland and Estonia. As part of national planning processes, international cooperation between countries should be explored. The progress made by HELCOM was welcomed.

### Closure

Hugo Nijkamp thanked the Estonian Ministry of Environment for their hospitality and Mike Ziccardi for his valuable contribution. He also thanked the participants for attending and their contributions and closed the workshop close to 1700.



*The Finnish delegation*

## Conclusions

As a summary of Annex 4, the main conclusions from the workshop can be formulated as follows:

- There are various examples of preparedness available from the Baltic itself, from wider Europe and from the United States, which can be considered by Baltic Countries that initiate a planning process
- As part of processes in HELCOM RESPONSE increasingly wildlife response becomes integrated in international cooperation between Baltic countries.
- Planning is needed at national levels in the Baltic in order to be better prepared for future oiled wildlife incidents
- No Baltic country has an agreed oiled wildlife response plan in place
- Some countries have in-country resources in place, others do not and would be more dependent on international assistance to respond to an incident
- Baltic States have a lot of potential to cooperate and develop forms of mutual assistance in case of larger scale incidents. This potential needs to be taken into account in the planning processes that the different countries will have to go through.
- The table top exercise demonstrated the different stages and elements of a planning process in a nutshell and was perceived as a useful training exercise for those delegates that will get involved in a national planning process in their country.

## Recommendations

- There is an urgent need for integrated wildlife response plans in the different Baltic countries. The cooperation between NGOs and authorities needs to be formalized as part of national planning processes
- Wildlife response planning in the Baltic should consider the potential of international cooperation between Baltic countries, especially with regards to sharing resources such as expertise, man power and equipment. The development and availability of several sets of mobile equipment and response units in the region should receive special attention, as well as sharing and developing technical standards for wildlife response, e.g. through regular regional training events and exercises.
- The availability of international response teams is needed to provide assistance especially in large complicated situations that are beyond a country's national capacity.
- Relative remote areas need special attention in the planning process. They may need area-specific response plans that recognize the lack of immediate resources such as expertise, equipment and facilities.

## Annex 1: Programme

08:00-09:00	Registration with coffee
09:00-09:10	Opening and welcome by Harry Liiv (Ministry of Environment, Estonia)
09:10-09:40	Introduction of the participants by participants themselves
09:40-10:00	Oiled wildlife response and HELCOM by Monika Stankiewicz (HELCOM Secretariat)
10:00-10:30	Key issues of oiled wildlife response planning by Hugo Nijkamp (Sea Alarm Foundation)
10:30-11:00	Coffee break
11:00-12:30	Planning and response in California by Michael Ziccardi (Oiled Wildlife Care Network, California, USA) Planning and response in Finland by Timo Asanti (SYKE) Example of an NGO – Authority relationship for oil spill emergencies by Tanja Pirinen (WWF)
12:30-13:30	Lunch
13:30-15:00	Table-top exercise moderated by Hugo Nijkamp (Sea Alarm Foundation)
15:00-15:15	Coffee break
15:15-16:30	Discussion moderated by Hugo Nijkamp (Sea Alarm Foundation)
16:30-16:45	Conclusions of the day by Hugo Nijkamp (Sea Alarm Foundation)
16:45	Close

## Annex 2: List of Participants

### Estonia

Mrs. Agnes Villmann	Ministry of Environment	agnes.villmann@envir.ee
Mrs. Agni Kaldma	Estonian Fund for Nature	agni@elfond.ee
Mr. Ivar Ojaste	Environmental Board	ivar.ojaste@keskkonnaamet.ee
Mr. Harry Liiv	Ministry of the Environment	harry.liiv@envir.ee

### Finland

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Mrs. Tanja Pirinen	World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF-Finland)	tanja.pirinen@wwf.fi
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### Latvia

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### Lithuania

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### Sweden

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### Annex 3: Scenarios from different countries

The scenario from Box 1 was presented to the participants as part of step 5 in the table top incident. The moderator then asked the different country delegations to explain how such an incident would be dealt with in their country based on the analysis they had made in the steps 1-4. The moderator moved the oil spill to different countries and to different locations as indicated in Figure 1. The comments from the different delegations are listed below.

A Panamese oil tanker, carrying 100,000 tons of crude oil lost its steering power during the heavy storm in this area of the Baltic Sea and collided with a Maltese freight ship. Because of the collision, at least 3000 tons of oil has been spilled in the marine environment and the tanker is still leaking. The Coast Guard has taken the lead of the response and oil combat ships from other Baltic Countries have been mobilised to the incident area.

Nature conservation organisations are deeply concerned as large oil slicks are drifting towards the coastal areas which are known to host hundreds of thousand seabirds at this time of the year. Local people have already reported oiled birds arriving at the shoreline. More news on the incident will be brought in our later broadcasts”.

BOX 1: Scenario of an oil spill incident that threatens wintering birds in the Baltic Sea



Figure 1: Different locations that were confronted with the oil incident.

#### SWEDEN

##### 1) Gotland:

- No resources, no people on the island who are interested in rehabilitation
- Mainly long-tailed ducks, hard to rehabilitate successfully
- Birds would probably be shot, by the municipality, local hunters
- Rehabilitation if media/people put pressure on them?



## 2) Near Norrköping:

- Easy to find people to help
- More facilities available (around 20?)
- Possible to send birds to other close-lying communities?
- 60-100 birds max/centre
- Could rehabilitate up to 700 birds if all help is available
- Rescue services are in charge, and they have to invite people (like NGO's) to help

## 3) North of Sweden:

- Resources are very scarce
- Almost no cooperation between NGO's and rescue services
- Authorities don't know what to do with birds

## ESTONIA

## 4) Saaremaa:

- Lots of birds, no facilities
- Long-tailed ducks
- Shoreline is inaccessible
- Locally/nationally capacity to deal with around 1000 birds
- Any more birds= euthanasia
- Birds would be handled on the island
- Local director would organize monitoring
- Near Tallinn same system and same figures, Keila could be taken over again
- Shooting birds not an option, would be scandal!

## 5) LATVIA

- Small country, experts etc are easily available
- No trained volunteers
- Capacity around 500 birds
- Big pressure from public and media to rehabilitate
- Around 100 birds would be possible to try to help
- If hundreds of birds, probably would be shot
- Latvia would ask for international assistance
- No experience of this kind of work

## 6) LITHUANIA

- Very small country with 90 km shoreline
- Sea Museum with good facilities for oiled wildlife care?
- Organizations involved would include coastguard, EPA, local municipality, volunteers from Kaunas and Klaipeda universities?
- Not ready for a large scale oil spill, not even cleaning beaches
- Shooting birds not an option
- Not possible for rehabilitation effort without international help

## 7) GERMANY

- Each federal state completely independent (5 coastal states)

- All depends on who gets to the birds first (which ministries, which NGO's)
- Capacity is low regarding centers/facilities, not enough space or people
- If several hundred birds, international help would be called
- Would need a mobile centre

#### 8) FINLAND

- 100 or less birds could be taken care of locally
- If more than 100, mobile bird cleaning unit would be moved
- WWF volunteers mobilized

## Annex 4: Overview of discussions and conclusions in bullet points

- Very different approaches to oiled wildlife response in the different Baltic countries:
  - Ex: Shooting oiled birds is likely in Sweden, not possible due to public pressure in for ex. Latvia
  - Capacity for oiled bird care:
    - Sweden: 700 birds max nationally?
    - Finland: locally 100 birds or less, if more, BCU would be taken into use
    - Latvia: 500 birds max nationally?
    - Lithuania: capacity =?
    - Germany: if more than 200-300 birds, international help would be called
    - Estonia: around 1000 max nationally?
  
- Difficulties (and examples of countries facing them):
  - Not enough cooperation between NGO's and rescue services (Ex: North of Sweden)
  - Lack of suitable facilities (Ex: Latvia and Lithuania very low oiled wildlife response capacity, would need international help also for shoreline clean-up).  
Lack of resources would probably lead to animals being shot (Latvia)
  - Lack of coherent plans nationally lead to very different responses (Ex: Germany with different federal states with different approaches). Locally lack of resources or volunteers (Gotland in Sweden for ex.)
  - In some countries organization but no funding: Sweden (no national oil fund like Finland, but organization for rescue possible in certain areas)
  - Not enough trained people and facilities (Ex: some parts of Germany NGO's willing to take animals, but don't have enough knowledge/resources)
  
- Baltic conclusions and challenges:
  - Cooperation between neighbors vital, help will be needed in case of large spill
  - Advice from international organizations is always useful – most countries have very little or no experience of dealing with a large oil spill, and need advice
  - Possibilities to secure EC funding for joint equipment? (would work for example between Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania where relatively short distances)
  - Sharing oil spill equipment is a good idea, but we have to remember that different countries face different situations and what works in one country may not work in another
  - Need for more mobile units (similar to Finnish model)?
  - Solutions for remote areas need to be developed? Many areas are difficult to access
  - We have to work on strengthening cooperation internationally between countries (sharing knowledge) and nationally between NGO's EPA, coastguard, rescue services etc.
  - We have to develop our strengths. For example in Latvia experts are easily available because of small size of country, but there are no trained volunteers