



## GEF Baltic Sea Regional Project Office

**Recipient Countries: Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, and Russian Federation**

**Cooperating countries: Denmark, Finland, Germany, Norway, Sweden and USA**

**Chair/Coordinator: Jan Thulin, ICES**

Attachment III

**Background.** Continued degradation of the Baltic Sea ecosystem has affected the water quality, modified the biodiversity of the ecosystem, and impacted regional fisheries. The Baltic Sea is now an ecosystem under extreme stress. In response to this situation, the littoral countries initiated a Joint Comprehensive Environmental Action Program for the Baltic Sea (JCP). The JCP, as adopted in 1992, strengthened and updated in 1998, constitutes a "Strategic Action Plan" for the Baltic Sea region. It provides an environmental management framework for long-term restoration of the ecological balance of the Baltic Sea ecosystem through a series of preventive and curative actions to be undertaken in phased manner in the region. Within this framework, the Governments of the recipient countries requested Global Environment Facility (GEF) assistance through UNDP and the World Bank for a regional project to support the objectives of the JCP.

**The Project.** The objective of the GEF Baltic Sea Regional Project (BSRP) is to introduce ecosystem-based assessments to strengthen the management of Baltic Sea coastal and marine environments through regional cooperation and targeted, transboundary marine and watershed activities, with a view to reducing impacts from non-point sources of pollution and to increasing sustainable biological production. The Project supports the JCP and provides linkages with country activities. It is consistent with GEF global environmental policy to contribute significantly to "reducing stress to [the] international waters environment" by integrating sound land and water resource management strategies through a more favorable political and regulatory climate and activities that promote sustainable development. The Project's long-term goal is for the three international commissions- the Helsinki Commission (HELCOM, the International Baltic Sea Fishery Commission (IBSFC), and the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES)- to utilize project-developed management tools for sustainable ecosystem management, and to contribute to the improvements in the social and economic benefits of the ecosystem to the coastal fishing and farming communities in the recipient countries.

**Project Components.** The Project has four components and will be implemented as an integrated activity coordinated by HELCOM, as the principal executing agency:

The first Component, named Baltic Sea Large Marine Ecosystem Activities, will be managed by ICES and aims to enable, facilitate, the following activities: ecosystem-based assessments and management for the Baltic Sea; coordination and integration of the regional monitoring and assessment capacity; improved management practices to increase and sustain fishery yields and biological productivity of the BSLME; in the long term, improvement of the Baltic marine environment as well as the economic benefits and standard of living of the fishing and coastal communities.

The second Component, named Land and Coastal Management Activities, will be managed by HELCOM in conjunction with the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (SLU), and aims to: increase awareness of environmental issues related to agriculture among farmers and communities;

invest in and implement environmentally responsible farm management practices; undertake demonstration coastal zone management activities in priority areas linked with the activities for agriculture; in the long term, improve the economic welfare and standard of living within the farming and coastal communities while reducing non-point source agricultural impacts.

The third Component, named Institutional Strengthening and Capacity Building, is managed by HELCOM in cooperation with ICES and IBSFC and aims to: improve the valuation of ecosystem goods and services; strengthen local and regional decision-making and management capacity: achieve a more integrated approach to ecosystem-based management of the BSLME

The fourth Component, named Project Management, is managed by HELCOM in cooperation with ICES and IBSFC and aims to: successfully implement the BSRP to achieve the stated development objective; provide support for the project management; fulfill accounting, auditing and reporting requirements; perform project monitoring and evaluation for report to the World Bank; Strengthened regional management and technical capacity will provide a series of beneficial outcomes, not only at the regional level, but also at the national and local levels, and will contribute to sustainable management of the Baltic Sea ecosystem.

**Status of Project.** The Project preparation has been supported by a GEF Block B Grant, which commenced February 2000. The BSRP Core Group is composed of members from the commissions, ICES, IBSFC, and HELCOM, which will execute the project on behalf of the recipient countries, with assistance from the World Bank, Baltic21, NOAA, and WWF. The Core Group has developed the framework and required documentation. The budget for the BSRP for the period 2003 - 2008 is 40 million US\$ of which the GEF contribution will be 18 million US\$. During 2001 the GEF approved the project and their financial support and so did the WB during its March 2003 director's meeting. The Core Group is now securing remaining additional funds. The WB and HELCOM signed the Trust Fund Grant agreement on March 17 2003. Thereby the first phase of the project will start 1 December 2003 with a budget of 12 million US\$ and will run through 2005.

All project related document can be found on ICES website:

<http://www.ices.dk/projects/balticsea.asp>

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