

Meeting of the Working Group on Environment
14 November 2018
Skellefteå, Västerbotten, Sweden

January 2019 for adoption at WGE 28/3

Minutes

Welcome and opening of the meeting *Elin Kronqvist, WGE-chair*

The WGE chair **Elin Kronqvist**, welcomed participants to the WGE meeting in Skellefteå. **Åke Mikaelsson** noted that this was the 50th WGE meeting since 1995. The agenda of the current meeting and the minutes from the WGE meeting in Piteå in May 2018 was adopted.

Presentation of current environmental initiatives in Västerbotten *Mats-Rune Bergström, County Administrative Board of Västerbotten*

<https://www.barentsinfo.fi/beac/docs/PPomlanetMRB.pdf>

Mats-Rune Bergström presented the environmental situation in County of Västerbotten. He informed about the upcoming Barents Conference meeting on predators on March 5th, 2019 at Svanselse Wilderness Centre. In the discussion that followed, he told about how the wildfires during the summer of 2019 affected Västerbotten.

Presentation of the Joint Working Group on Youth (JWGY) *Susanna Lantz, representative of the chair of JWGY, the County Administrative Board of Västerbotten*

<https://www.barentsinfo.fi/beac/docs/YouthperspectiveintheBarentsCooperationSL1114.pdf>

Involving youth is a priority for the Swedish chairmanship of the Barents Council and the youth perspective was a priority at the 25-year celebration of Barents cooperation in April 2018. **Susanna Lantz** informed that the Joint Working Group on Youth (JWGY) held its third meeting in Kirkenes in November 2018 with 60 participants. The Barents Regional Youth Council (BRYC) has a board and representatives in each region. The JWGY is interested in joining other international youth groups. In addition, she told about the idea for a new project on youth perspective on climate change. **Julia Bobina** (IBS) has received a concept note on their project and can forward this information to interested parties. Discussion followed on how to increase youth participation in WGE activities and on how to increase cooperation between the groups.

Presentation of the Barents Forest Sector Network (BFSN) *Dr. Per Hallgren, Senior Advisor, Swedish Forestry Agency*

https://www.barentsinfo.fi/beac/docs/PerHallgren_Barents_BFSN_on_WGEC_13-14-nov_LA.pdf

Per Hallgren noted that the aim of the Barents Forest Sector Network is to promote sustainable management of forest resources, to follow and timely contribute to BEAC activities, to advocate balanced and coherent view on forests as well as on the products and services they provide. The BFSN has been part of the BEAC for 10 years. Per Hallgren informed about the upcoming BFSN- and WAMBAF-meeting on 29 January 2019 in Stockholm and invited participants. Mats-Rune Bergström, chair of the SNW, will represent the WGE.

Ingrid Lillehagen thanked BFSN for valuable input to the Action Plan on Climate Change and the Barents 2050-report. **Henrik G Forsström** informed about forest related projects under the Nordic-Russian Programme for Environment and Climate (PECC). He noted that there were 30 good proposals to the first call (PECC-1), such as projects on predicting and mitigating forest fires and projects on raising awareness on climate change in North West Russia. Of the nine projects selected for funding and under implementation, five are related to forest issues in the Barents region. A new call (PECC-2) may be launched in the first half of 2019.

Nature protection and water subgroups (SNP/SWI) *Chair Mats-Rune Bergström and members of the subgroups*

https://www.barentsinfo.fi/beac/docs/WGE_Skelleftea_2018.pdf

The Chair **Mats-Rune Bergström** provided summary of discussion under the meeting of SNP/SWI that took place on November 13 in Skellefteå. He informed that the subgroup's name has been changed to the Subgroup on Nature and Water (SNW). The Barents Intact Forest Strategy had been discussed along with the upcoming Habitat Contact Forum 2019 (June 2019 in Murmansk).

Strategy for protection of intact forests

The WGE Chair Elin Kronqvist provided a short background on the strategy for protection of intact forests. She stressed that the work on the strategy has started in 2011. In 2015, the strategy was presented to the ministers but was not adopted at that time. In August 2017, the WGE received comments from the Russian Forest Agency, and at the meeting in Kjerringøy, the WGE decided to restart work on the strategy under Swedish and Russian lead. Furthermore, the ministers acknowledged that the strategy for protection of intact forest is an important contribution and called for the finalization of the strategy during the Swedish chairmanship (13th Ministerial declaration in Vadsø). **Alexander Druchinin** informed that in recent years the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment of Russian Federation and the Forest Agency have been preparing revisions to Russian forest legislation. He proposed that the work on the strategy should be paused. The rest of the WGE regretted this but thanked Russia for a clear answer. **The WGE Chair** commented that WGE need to find a way to report on the situation to the ministers and welcomed proposals from Russia on other ways to cooperate on intact forests.

Organization of work in the WGE

The WGE Chair Elin Kronqvist highlighted two points for a discussion under the agenda item: to discuss and agree on the new mandate for WGE and is to discuss the order of rotation. At the WGE meeting in May, a decision was made to attach subgroup mandates to the WGE mandate, and the subgroups have now agreed on new mandates for their work. Minor changes were made to the WGE mandate at the meeting and it will be considered adopted unless further changes are received during a circulation under silence procedure. No comments have followed and the mandate was thus adopted on November 14, 2018.¹

The WGE discussed the new proposal for WGE rotation and agreed that Sweden will continue the chairmanship until the first quarter of 2020, then Finland will be chairing for three years, Russia will be chair for two and a half years, and from November 2025 Sweden will chair again. The Ministerial meeting under the current Swedish chairmanship will be arranged in January or February 2020.

Presentation of a comparative analysis of the implementation of BAT and Environmental Permit Granting (Marit Hjort, OECD Environment Directorate)

<https://www.barentsinfo.fi/beac/docs/OECD.BAT.Skellefteaa14November2018.pdf>

Marit Hjort provided information on objectives of the OECD BAT project which are following: assisting governments in implementing policies and practices that embody BAT or similar concepts to prevent and control industrial pollution; contributing to progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). She informed about several steps of getting involved in the BAT project for interested parties: 1) to join the Expert Group on BAT; 2) to comment on the draft Activity 3 report by December 2018; 3) to participate in the next webinar in spring 2019 and 4) to attend the 4th Meeting of the Expert Group on BAT in Seoul, 23-24 October 2019.

Subgroup on Hot Spots Exclusion (SHE) (Co-chairs Åke Mikaelsson and Alexander Druchinin)

<https://www.barentsinfo.fi/beac/docs/ReportfromSHEtoWGEinSkellefteo14Nov2018.pdf>

Åke Mikaelsson presented a summary of work done within the Subgroup on Hot Spots Exclusion (SHE) in the period of May-November 2018 (listed in the attached power point presentation). He informed that many Support Activities (SA) are under preparation as well as the SHE group's activities during the period of 2018-2019. Furthermore, Åke Mikaelsson provided an overview on the next steps during the period of November 2018 to May 2019 (listed in the attached power point presentation).

In the discussion that followed, both co-chairs Alexander Druchinin and Åke Mikaelsson highlighted the need for supporting activities and underlined importance of giving faster response to the HEGs reports. As a way for deepening the experience sharing on the development of environmental protection techniques and BAT-based regulation of metallurgical industries, the SHE-chair had also invited Dr Husamuddin Ahmadzai, Swedish EPA and Ms Marit Hjort from the OECD to present at the SHE-meeting on November 13th.

¹ At the CSO-meeting on December 17th, the CSO requested the WGE to add the sentence 'The group is open for membership from all BEAC member states' under 6. Membership. The addition was adopted by the WGE in written procedure by December 20th and the WGE mandate was approved by BEAC CSO in a silence procedure on January 18th.

Climate change (Michael Yulkin, Director General of the Environmental Investment Centre, Arkhangelsk)

https://www.barentsinfo.fi/beac/docs/Yulkin_13.11.2018_Sweden.pdf

Michael Yulkin provided information on PECC 7/17 Project “Facilitate knowledge sharing and capacity building through network activities and learning-by-doing” in Arkhangelsk region. He highlighted the main objective of the project: to enhance and strengthen the ongoing cooperation between Nordic countries and north-west Russia in order to increase the possibility for reaching the Paris Agreement’s goal. The project was implemented in the period from January 2018 to October 2018. Project partners include partners from Russian side (EIC) and Swedish side (County Administrative Board of Norrbotten).

Summary of findings: the Arkhangelsk region is well prepared to monitor and report its GHG emissions in accordance with international standards. There is a huge potential to reduce GHG and black carbon emissions through improved energy generation and use, including switching from fossil fuels to renewables and biomass. According to Mr Yulkin, there is a great potential for drastically reducing GHG emissions from fossil fuel combustion in many sectors of the economy in the Arkhangelsk region but a comprehensive road map is yet to be developed. It would require active participation from a number of regional Ministries and companies. A vision of climate change mitigation and adaptation as key parts of a long term regional development strategy in Russia, the Barents region and globally could be a first step. In this regard, Mr Yulkin proposed launching a Barents Climate Partnership (or Alliance) as a way forward.

Presentation of current work on Marine Litter, including Microplastics within the Arctic Council (Jessica Nilsson, Senior Adviser at the Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management) – over Skype

<https://www.barentsinfo.fi/beac/docs/MarineLitterincludingMicroplasticsintheArctic.pdf>

Jessica Nilsson presented the project on marine litter that is led by the Arctic Council working group PAME (Protection of the Arctic Marine Environment). She informed about a marine litter workshop that was held in 5-6 June 2018 in Akureyri, Iceland. PAME will continue their work with a desktop study on marine litter and microplastics in the Arctic.

In the discussion that followed, **Henrik G Forsström** mentioned that, at the latest meeting of the PSI Committee, there was an approval of the project on marine micro plastics with a focus on birds. He mentioned that CAFF (another working group under the Arctic cooperation) thus has funding available from the PSI for such a project and the same may be feasible also for PAME projects. **Ms Nilsson** agreed and added that they are working on the idea to merge these projects into one big project in a future perspective. **Saija Vuola** added that Finland is involved in many initiatives. She added that there is a 20-page overview on marine litter and plastic produced by the Finnish Ministry of Environment. **Ingrid Lillehagen** informed about a Norwegian-Russian cooperation about marine litter and microplastics in the Barents Sea that is under development.

Update on waste projects

AB Waste project, Helena Dahlbo

Helena Dahlbo listed three activities organized by the Finnish Ministry of the Environment and the Finnish Environment Institute (SYKE) in 2018 that are also Barents Support Activities: a waste management seminar in Petrozavodsk in June with around 50 participants; a seminar on waste management in September in Helsinki with four Barents regions represented, and the seminar on waste management in small communities in Arctic and Barents regions in Helsinki in November.

Preliminary results of the Waste inventory in Sámi areas of the Kola Peninsula, Åke Mikaelsson

Åke Mikaelsson told about the ACAP Working Group meeting in Toronto where the waste inventory project in Sami villages on the Kola Peninsula first was proposed. Following this, Norway and Sweden decided to fund an initial waste dump inventory, given that appropriate coordination with relevant local and regional authorities was done. The project was conducted in eight small villages in four municipalities on the Kola Peninsula in the summer 2018 and a number of illegal waste dumps containing both regular household and hazardous waste were identified in that area. **Igor Konyukhov** commented that on behalf of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment of Murmansk Region, he would rather name that project as an investigation or a study instead of inventory. Mr Konyukhov stressed that a holistic approach is necessary when studying a problem of waste in small villages.

Information about the Shies waste site in Arkhangelsk, Alexander Druchinin

Alexander Druchinin informed that no formal decisions have been taken on the Shies waste site in the Arkhangelsk region. He stressed that the authorities in Arkhangelsk have their own mandate to take decisions and that an environmental study is needed before such a landfill is built in Shies. **Anna Prakhova** informed about the waste problem in Karelia: waste is transported from St Petersburg to Karelia and there have not been any local protests. **Henrik G Forsström** added that the Shies landfill is located much closer to Syktyvkar (in the Komi Republic) than to Archangelsk. He stressed that an establishment of such a landfill in Shies will likely have a significant effect on the waste management projects there.

Report from the Finnish Chairmanship of the Arctic Council, Saija Vuola

https://www.barentsinfo.fi/beac/docs/ArcticEnvironmentMinistersMeeting_reporttoBarentsWGE.pdf

Saija Vuola provided information on the second Arctic Biodiversity Congress that was held in October 2018 in Rovaniemi, Finland with around 150 participants. Ms Vuola mentioned that several potential themes from the second Arctic Biodiversity Congress can be used for the 10th Habitat Contact Forum. She informed about the Arctic Environment Ministers' meeting (AEMM) in Rovaniemi, Finland, 11-12 October 2018 and highlighted the main messages on the future environmental cooperation of the Arctic Council, as reflected in the Chair's summary. She noted that there are several issues the Barents WGE could consider for further cooperation.

Next WGE –meeting

The WGE Chair thanked everyone for their active participation and concluded the meeting by announcing the date of the next WGE-meeting, which will be held on **26-28 March 2019** in Norrbotten County and on **24-26 September 2019** in Västerbotten County. The WGE members are encouraged to check their calendars and notify the WGE Chair if the proposed dates do not work.

Anna Prakhova emphasized the need to highlight the questions and rights of indigenous people and the WGE thanked her for her time as the WGIP representative in the WGE.

Meeting documents

Please follow the link to find all meeting documents that have been uploaded on the website:
[https://www.barentscooperation.org/events/Working-Group-on-Environment-\(WGE\)-meeting-in-Skelleftea-13-15-November-2018/3cn33qja/35fef186-a516-49e0-91fb-172940dbcc4e](https://www.barentscooperation.org/events/Working-Group-on-Environment-(WGE)-meeting-in-Skelleftea-13-15-November-2018/3cn33qja/35fef186-a516-49e0-91fb-172940dbcc4e)

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS 14.11.2018

1. Elin Kronqvist, Deputy Director, Ministry of Environment and Energy, WGE Chair (SE)
2. Erica Grankvist, Clerical Officer, Ministry of the Environment and Energy (SE)
3. Henrik Löfdahl, Head of section, County Administrative Board of Norrbotten (SE)
4. Åke Mikaelsson, Programme coordinator for Russia, Swedish Environmental Protection Agency (SE)
5. Rickard Nätjehall, Policy Officer, Swedish Environmental Protection Agency (SE)
6. Magnus Rolf Johansson, Project Manager, County Administrative Board of Norrbotten (SE)
7. Mats-Rune Bergström, Senior Adviser, County Administrative Board of Västerbotten (SE)
8. Ellinor Bomark, Environmental Adviser County Administrative Board of Norrbotten (SE)
9. Saija Vuola, Ministerial Adviser, Ministry of Environment (FI)
10. Helena Dahlbo, Senior Researcher, Finnish Environment Institute (SYKE) (FI)
11. Tapio Lindholm, Leading Expert, Finnish Environment Institute (SYKE) (FI)
12. Tatu Turunen, Environmental Specialist ELY Centre of Kainuu (FI)
13. Ingrid Lillehagen, Senior Adviser, Ministry of Climate and Environment (NO)
14. Anne Marie Mo Ravik, Senior Adviser, Norwegian Environment Agency (NO)
15. Christian Brun-Jenssen, Acting head of section, Nordland county governor (NO)
16. Alexander Druchinin, Deputy Head of International Organizations Division, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment of RF (RU)
17. Igor Konyukhov, Head of the Department for Nature Resources, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment of Murmansk Region (RU)
18. Anna Prakhova, Representative of the Indigenous Peoples in BEAC, WGIP
19. Susanna Lantz, International coordinator, County Administrative Board of Västerbotten, JWGY
20. Per Hallgren, Senior Advisor, Swedish Forest Agency, BFSN
21. Michael Yulkin, Director, Environment Investment Centre, Arkhangelsk,
22. Henrik G Forsström, Senior Adviser, Nordic Environment Finance Corporation, NEFCO
23. Marit Hjort, Policy analyst, OECD
24. Julia Bobina, Climate, Environment and Hot Spots Adviser, International Barents Secretariat, IBS