Status report from the Regional Working group on Environment (RWGE), regarding year 2011

The RWGE held during last year two meetings back to back with the WGE. The RWGE meetings was joint sessions with the SWI group both in Komi (June, 2011) and in Piteå (September, 2011) and was informal meetings. The main reason for holding informal meetings was the lack of participants from the member regions in the group. No more meetings were scheduled last year in the RWGE group. The RWGE reported its activities at the Ministerial meeting in Umeå in November, 2012 and it is noted that several different activities have been carried out or are ongoing in the group. However the majority of the projects that have been reported are within a bilateral context, see appendix for more detailed information if available.

Furthermore, the RWGE group has – as above mentioned – lacked participation of members from the regions. This is most likely a financial issue and a recommendation to the BEAC/BRC is to address how to increase participation in the regional structure in the Barents cooperation rather quickly. Furthermore, the financial situation is hampering the possibility to organize separate RWGE-meetings. As the situation is today; the RWGE has to have its meeting back to back with the WGE, which do not give the RWGE as much time for more in depth discussions on regional issues as we would like to have. The advantage with this arrangement is however that we can cut expenses. The ambition is to have one back to back meeting with the WGE per semester and at least one separate meeting in the RWGE format per semester if the financial situation is solved for the regional level.

Finally, work with the Action program for the group is not completed. Further time is needed to complete the task.

Sincerely,

Mattias Lindgren
Chair of the Regional Working Group on Environment

Appendix

Information Change on Water Management (WFD) issues;
The aims of increasing the quality assurance level of the water quality monitoring laboratories and information change on water management activities. Quality control and analytical method development, international comparability and a significant improvement of the reliability of the results of environmental analyses. The activity strengthens also the capabilities of local environmental authorities. (FI-RF)

The aim is to increase information change on water management activities between Finland and Russia according to water framework directive. (FI-RF)

Project has been financed by Ministry for Foreign Affairs in Finland and will be started in Autumn 2011. Main focus will be in Water Framework Directive and comparison of the water management activities in FI-RU border area. The Water Framework Directive of the European Parliament and Council also obligates member states to co-operate with nations that do not belong to the EU and ETA in water management issues, if the waterway in question reaches out to these areas.

The obligation of the Directive for co-operation with Russia remains at a minimal level, and it is necessary to make such more effective for the coming planning round (years 2010 – 2015). In the waterway regions of River Paz and River Tuloma, the greatest environmental impacts are caused by hydropower construction on the waterways and loading caused by industry, which mainly originate from Russia.

Objective of this project is that the environmental monitoring authorities of the Murmansk region have a knowledge in the typifying and ecological condition classification of surface waters according to WFD. Also water management activities according to WFD are presented.

Flood forecasting and modelling to meet with the challenges of climate change;
Develop cooperation on flood risk management. Exchange of information and harmonisation of hydrological monitoring, develop models and management plans, flood forecasting and under-take flood protection measures. (FI-RF)

Project has been ended and information change on flood issues has been delivered in seminars between Finland and Russia. Also automatic measuring station has been built up in Russia (river Lutto) for better flood forecasting in Finnish-Russia border area. During the project flood forecasting model used n Finland has been developed for Russians and used in practise in river Lutto area.

Information change and education on flood model systems has been carried out with Russians. The Pasvik water surface profile measurements were carried out in 2010, and the hydrological data collection for the flood risk assessment was started. Water cooperation seminar was arranged in Arkangel. Negotiations were held to discuss closer cooperation in flood risk management in Paatsjoki catchment area with Russian authorities.

Project has been ended last year.

Climate change and airbore pollutants in the Pasvik River Basin:

Three year joint project on studying mitigation of the harmful effects of climate change, water level, flow regula-tion and contamination in the Finnish, Norwegian and Russian border regions. Knowledge and information on environmental impacts and strategies on adaptation to climate change and other anthropogenic effects on regional level. (NO-FI-RF)

Project application is prepared for second round of Kolarctic ENPI CBC program. Overall objective of the project is mitigation of the harmful effects of climate change, water level and flow regulation and contamination in the Finnish, Norwegian and Russian border region. Knowledge and information on environmental impacts is also produced for decisions making and strategies on adaptation of climate change and other anthropogenic effects on regional level. Assessment tools of the effects of climate change, water regulation and harmful substances in the Finnish, Norwegian and Russian border region will be developed within the project for using during and after the project.

Main activities of the project are:

• To model the emissions, dispersion and deposition of airborne pollutants in the border region as a background information
• To compare national and international classifications of ecological state and natural habitat types for more reliable evaluation work
• To evaluate the effects of climate change and water level regulation on the ecological condition of Lake Inari and the River Pasvik
• To evaluate the effects of climate change and water level regulation on the fish populations in the River Pasvik
• To evaluate and develop the existing lake monitoring network of the River Pasvik basin from climate change point of view

Ground water supply in Sortavala district (ENPI Karelia 250 000 €);

The design documentation produced within this project further will be used for the constriction of underground water intakes, treatment facilities and pipelines (FI-RF).

The specific objective of the project is to develop design estimates for the construction of ground water intakes, treatment and pipelines for two pilot areas of Kaalamo and Ruskeala of Sortavala district with the use of Finnish experience of ground water supply.

In 6.5 km to the west from Kaalamo village and in 3.2 km to the south from Ruskeala village some fields with the deposits of pure ground water were found; water quality was monitored and its stock was assessed.To develop design estimates for the construction of ground water intakes, treatment and pipelines for two pilot areas of Kaalamo and Ruskeala of Sortavala district with the use of the Finnish experience of ground water supply. Development of design estimates will be based on the hydrological and geological survey made in cooperation with Lapland Regional Environment Centre (now ELY Centre for Lapland) in 2009.

TRIWA III project "Forestry impact and water management in Torne International River Basin" (Interreg IV A Nord financed 2011-2013, 719 000 €). Impact of forestry on surface waters in river Tornio river basin area and restoration activities needed in the area will be studied in the project. (FI-SWE)

Activities:

- The need of restoration activities of the rivers and the necessary ecological inventory
- Evaluation of the effectiveness and implementation level of water protection activities
- Detailed water protection and restoration plans for the pilot areas

The Pasvikprogramme report on activities in 2010-2011 (Finnmark):
Follow up and implementation of the joint environmental monitoring programme in the border areas of Norway, Russia and Finland; annual water sampling and analysis are conducted. Finnmark and Norway has contributed with water monitoring data to a joint water report for the years 2000-2009, concerning monitoring results in the River Pasvik and 26 small lakes in the Border area (Finnish ELY – centre has been the coordinator and lead partner for this report).

Pasvik-Inari Trilateral Park (monitoring of inter alia the brown bear.
Also a part of the Green Belt of Fennoscandia. See above members
that participate)

Trilateral cooperation on our common resource the Atlantic salmon in the Barents region
Develop and enhance the management of the shared Atlantic salmon resource in the Barents region; enabling a future adaptive sustainable and knowledge-based harvesting regi-me, conservation of the rich fishing traditions and coastal culture and indigenous traditions. By merging traditional, local knowledge with new ecological, and genetic salmon research in Nor-way, Russia and Finland. (NO-FI-RF)

The Kolarctic ENPI CBC project “Trilateral cooperation on our common resource; the Atlantic salmon in the Barents region (KO197)” – Kolarctic salmon 2011-2013, aims to merge modern science with traditional salmon fishing knowledge to create a future sustainable, long-term and knowledge-based salmon management regime for the common Atlantic salmon stocks of the Barents region.

The border areas between Norway, Russia and Finland have unique natural qualities and natural resources. The Atlantic salmon is a symbol of healthy and vital ecosystems and is of significant economic and cultural importance, both through commercial and recreational fishing. Fishing for Atlantic salmon has a long tradition in the area, as evidenced by a unique vocabulary about the species in the Sami language, and the existence of a large number of traditional fishing methods.
The project is a joint venture between management, research, salmon fishing organizations and salmon fishermen in the participating countries.

Aims of the project
• To develop an integrated, long-term management of Atlantic salmon in the northernmost distribution area of the species.
• To provide data to implement customized, sustainable, knowledge-based harvesting regimes, and to preserve the rich traditions of fishing and coastal culture.
• To unite empirical knowledge (local and traditional) with scientific knowledge.
• To provide synthesized and new knowledge about Atlantic salmon, its adaptation to climate change and its migration along the coast.

We will also leave a legacy of active cooperation and dialogue among management, various research disciplines, sea salmon fishing organizations and local fishermen.

The project is funded partly through EUs Kolarctic ENPI CBC programme and national funds in all the three participating counties. The project was launched 1.1.2011 and will continue to 31.12.2013. You can follow the implementation and results on the project web site www.fylkesmannen.no/kolarcticsalmon

Educational activities on bilateral level between Troms and Murmansk or Arkhangelsk
Troms county council has a bilateral agreement with Murmansk and the Norwegian-Russian secondary school and also cooperation with Agricultural training school in Arkhangelsk. In addition a cooperation project for young scientists participate in Arctic Frontiers.

The Green Package
The Green Package project was successfully implemented and over by June 2011 (Cooperation between No, Fi, Swe and Komi).

North-Ostobothnia- region

- We are applying funding for small educational project from the Finnish ministry of Environment in septemper 2010. Main idea is to compare monitoring methods – especially biological monitoring methods of rivers and lakes. It is proposed that Russian experts will visit Finland and join suitable field measurements. Discussions with Russian partners will start at second week in June e.g. during climate conference.

- Finland have done a preliminary study in small harbours of Oulu region in 2009 – but not received any funding for further studies. We also wanted to concentrate only on environmental issues in Finland.

Environmentally sustainable small enterprises in the Barents region
Promote implementation of environmentally safe and cost effective operations in small and medium sizes enterprises. Identify rules and regulations, environmental conditions and analyse risk and vul-nerability. Promote implementation of sustainable cost effective technologies to control discharge of contaminants. (NO-FI-RF)

Degradation on Permafrost in the Barents Region (Finland-Komi)
Status:Project is completed.

Eco-efficient communities (Västerbotten-Karelia)
Status: Information N/A

Water Management Initiative in Arkhangelsk (Norrbotten, Finnmark, Troms, Lapland, North Ostrobothnia and Archangelsk)
Status: unclear.

Feasbility study on Treriksröset (Norrbotten, Metsähallitus (FI), Troms (No)),
Status: completed last year.