



Barents Euro-Arctic Council
Working Group on Environment
Subgroup on Nature and Water

Minutes of the virtual meeting 22.3.2021

1. Opening of the meeting

Chair of the Subgroup Anna Kuhmonen opened the meeting and introduced the agenda. The meeting started with a round of introductions. The list of participants can be found at the end of this document. Ilona Grekelä acts as secretary and writes the minutes.

2. Adoption of the minutes from the previous meeting

The Minutes from the previous meeting were adopted. The annex 1 to the SNW work programme 2020-2022 Project list and the list of members of the SNW have been updated. This document was delivered to the subgroup ahead of the meeting. New updates to the project list are welcome in the future as well to the email addresses: anna.kuhmonen@ymparisto.fi and ilona.grekela@ely-keskus.fi. SNW's members will get before each SNW meeting the updated project list.

3. WGE's update on Action Plan on Climate Change for the Barents Cooperation and voluntary biodiversity commitments from the Barents Region

Ms. Aino Lipsanen, Ministry of the Environment of Finland

https://www.barentsinfo.fi/beac/docs/SNW_Presentation_WGE_Update_March_2021.pdf

Finland's representative to the WGE Ms. Aino Lipsanen told news regarding updating on Action Plan on Climate Change for the Barents Cooperation. WGE is coordinating the update process together with the IBS. First round of preliminary inputs from the Working Groups is already received from some of the working groups: JWGT (Tourism), BRYC (Youth Council), WGIP (indigenous peoples) and WGBFS (Forest sector). BEATA (Transport) and WGECE (Economic cooperation) are preparing their contribution. Norwegian chairmanship of BEAC is organising a Climate Smart Barents Region Webinar on 27th April 2021. The topics of the webinar is not directly on target in all the working groups, but many working groups might find them relevant for their work. After the webinar there will be a meeting with the WG Chairs and RC to go through the results of the Climate Webinar and to discuss preliminary plans of the WGs. The meeting will help identifying possible synergies or joint projects between the WGs. By May 21, a second round of inputs is invited from the Working Groups and RC. Maria Dianova noted that some of the working groups will come later with their ideas and they can get a support from IBS if needed. She noticed that there is more interest to climate issues in many working groups now than before. The programme of the Climate Smart Barents Region Webinar is on the BEAC website. The registration link can be found from the BEAC website via calendar of events:



<https://www.barentscooperation.org/events/Climate-Smart-Barents-Region---Norwegian-Chairmanships-Event/yfszbeyn/4b6311de-bf60-4a6b-9592-7b0460a383c5>

WGE is also preparing its own input to the Action Plan. Preliminary plan is to incorporate climate relevant parts of the Subgroups' work and to launch some new activities. These include a webinar series to support regional and local level climate work, including policy discussions and activities related to black carbon. The suggested network on regional climate strategies has not attracted much interest from the regions, meaning that the idea may need to be put on hold.

Finland as a WGE Chair has launched an initiative encouraging biodiversity commitments under the UN Convention on Biological Diversity. Finland has prepared an invitation letter that will be distributed shortly. It would be appreciated if SNW members could share the invitation letter further to their networks, where relevant. UN Biodiversity Conference is scheduled to take place in October 2021 and a stock-taking document will be prepared in advance of the meeting. In the discussion, interest was expressed to have the letter translated to Swedish and Norwegian too. Yvonne Lundell suggested to include a link to a Barents region map into the Invitation letter and some editorial changes. Anna Kuhmonen noted, that the initiative has potential to highlight the nature and biodiversity values to stakeholders in the region and hoped to see many participants.

4. Webinar on Sustainable Nature Tourism in the Barents Region, 25 November 2020

Ms. Ilona Grekelä, ELY Centre for Lapland

Webinar on Sustainable Nature Tourism was held on 25 November 2021 with around 40 participants from all Barents countries. Exchange between similar projects from different countries was considered very interesting and seen to facilitate new ideas for future project development. The discussion between regions was useful and fruitful for finding new ideas on how to improve sustainable nature tourism. New contacts and networking possibilities were also thanked for.

The following issues were discussed at the webinar:

- Developing and arranging facilities and infrastructure especially in regions where basic infrastructure is very modest
- Cooperation with local communities
- Showing the economic benefit from tourism development to local population
- Social tolerance towards tourism
- COVID impact on nature tourism.

5. 11th Habitat Contact Forum in Norrbotten, Sweden

Ms. Anna Kuhmonen, Finnish Environment Institute SYKE

XIth Habitat Contact Forum (HCF) is tentatively planned for spring or summer 2022 in Norrbotten, Sweden as a physical event. In addition, it was suggested to arrange a webinar relating to the Habitat Contact



Forum topics before the physical meeting. As there are changes in the subgroup, we don't have any Russian participants in the HCF planning team at the moment, but Russian members are very much welcome to join the planning team. The next planning meeting will take place in April or May 2021. Magnus Johansson and Mats-Rune Bergström stressed importance of Russian participation in planning. Mats-Rune noted, that planning work should start about a half of year before the Forum. It would be good if Russian participants could have a possibility and enough time to learn before they should arrange a Habitat Forum in Nenets Autonomous Okrug next time. SNW Chair Anna Kuhmonen reminded that evaluation process of previous Habitat Contact Forums will be started later, as the meeting schedule also changed. The idea is to arrange a (physical) workshop to discuss outputs of the previous HCF meetings as a part of the 11th HCF meeting.

6. Nefco & SNW in 2021-2022; joint collaboration & perspective projects

Mr. Henrik G Forsström, Nefco, and Ms. Annukka Valkeapää (Dedicated expert on a Nefco mandate)

Nefco works a lot with the Hot Spots and has funds for these purposes called Barents Hot Spots Facility. These funds can be used only for Hot Spots. In the context of interaction with SNW Henrik Forsström told about PECC (the Programme for Environment and Climate Co-operation), which Nefco is running together with the Nordic Council of Ministers (NCM). NCM has contributed the most of money to this programme. The interest is to promote Nordic-Russian co-operation addressing environment and climate in Northwest Russia. The Barents part of Nefco would like to concentrate on cooperation in the Barents region. The projects of PECC 1 are already successfully implemented and now PECC 2 is in a process. Maybe PECC 3 will be possible as well, because NCM has increased its budget for additional Nefco-managed projects in NW Russia for 2021-2023. Many of these projects have connections to the Hot Spots, but even more to the work of SNW. Henrik sent a list of the projects of PECC-2 to the Chair of SNW. There are many interesting synergies. One field of cooperation is national parks in NW Russia. The project in the Kenozero National Park is a successful example. Few years ago Nefco got a support from SNW to develop cooperation with the Vodlozero NP, which is located partly in the Arkhangelsk Region and partly in the Republic of Karelia. The project focuses only to the part of the park that is located in the Arkhangelsk Region, but there is interest to extend the project to Karelian part as well. It is energy efficiency project, but actually it focuses on the management and communications of the national park, not only on energy. Henrik also mentioned Nordic-Russian Renewable Solar Energy Innovative Partnership Network (Sunny Parks) project. It is connected to Vodlozero project as well as the project that is carried out in the Kivach Strict Nature Reserve. Support of projects by SNW is important in the future as well. Nefco is in a contract process and is ready to invite Annukka Valkeapää to join the work of SNW as dedicated expert on a Nefco mandate. Annukka was earlier working in Nefco, but she is now an independent consulting running projects in the Arctic. She will bring her competence and experience to work within these projects and to SNW. Henrik proposed a follow-up meeting with the Chair of SNW for more detailed discussion. Annukka Valkeapää introduced herself. Annukka's competence is forest conservation and social issues connected to it. She has been working in Nefco and knows how to prepare ideas to projects eligible for financing by Nefco.

7. Presentation of the project Forest biodiversity protection in the Barents Region in 2020 and beyond: assessing the status and paving the way for mainstreaming biodiversity into forestry



Ms. Anna Kuhmonen, Finnish Environment Institute SYKE

https://www.barentsinfo.fi/beac/docs/SNW_Presentation_WGE_Update_March_2021.pdf

In the previous SNW meeting the need for a forest project was stressed, and after that preparation started with the lead of Finland, and now we have finally a new project starting. This project is continuation to the SNW forest related activities and the BPAN project. Nordic Council of Ministers has granted funding (500 000 DKK, which is about 67 000 €) for the project "Forest biodiversity protection in the Barents Region in 2020 and beyond: assessing the status and paving the way for mainstreaming biodiversity into forestry". This is a project for the whole Barents region covering all four countries, including all 14 administrative regions. BPAN project results including compiled and unified gis data on protected areas, land cover and other will be utilized in the project. North Karelia is still missing from the maps on protected areas and high conservation value forests in the Barents Region, as the newest regions belonging to BEAC.

The project takes stock of the progress made to achieve Aichi Target 11 (17% of the terrestrial and inland water areas conserved by 2020) in the boreal forest zone of the Barents Region. In this project the analysis on the state of protected area network will be done to see the status, on the target year of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets. The maps and analyses on protected areas network will be updated. Since the BPAN project, many new protected areas have been established, e.g. Khibiny National Park, Ladoga Skerries National Park, Dvina Pinega nature reserve and many other. The project team includes many partners and experts from the BPAN work as well new partners e.g. from North Karelia. Second important task for the project is launching a dialogue and establishing common ground to mainstream biodiversity protection with the forestry sector in the Barents Region. Project is good possibility to deepen cooperation with the Barents forest working group. In autumn 2021 there will be webinar for building dialogue with forest sector.

SYKE is a lead partner and Anna Kuhmonen acts as a project manager. Other partners are ELY Centre for North Karelia, County Governor of Troms and Finnmark, Karelian Research Center (RAS), Swedish Environment Protection Agency, Norrbotten and Västerbotten County Administrative Boards. Henrik Forsström suggested to keep this project like an example, where Nefco, Annukka Valkeapää particularly, could work together with project partners in order to plan a continuation project, which could be possibly financed by NCM. Vilma Lehtovaara suggest collaboration with ongoing Biokarelia Karelia CBC project, which contributes to the protection of biodiversity in the Finnish-Russian border region. Biokarelia project arranges a project webinar next month.

8. Pilot study of UNESCO Biosphere Reserves within the Barents Region and the possibilities for collaboration

Mr. Mats-Rune Bergström, Västerbotten County Governor

The pilot study was initiated in order to analyze the possibilities to use the Barents Cooperation as a potential platform to establish collaboration between Biosphere Reserve areas within the Barents region: https://www.barentsinfo.fi/beac/docs/Report_January_2021_Unesco_Biosphere_Reserves_within_the_Barents_Region.pdf (barentsinfo.org)

Within the Barents Region there are six formally recognized UNESCO Biosphere Reserves: Vindelälven-Juhttátahkka in Sweden (the youngest Biosphere Reserve in the Barents Region), North Karelia in Finland, and Laplandskiy, Kenozersky, Vodlozersky and Metsola in Russia. In northern Norway there is not yet any,



but there is a discussion going on about establishing a biosphere reserve in Norwegian counties that belong to the Barents region.

By serving as platforms for collaboration and dialogue UNESCO Biosphere Reserves connect stakeholders horizontally and vertically on local, regional, national and international levels in different fields. The platforms could be open for all BEAC working groups. Over the last 20 years there has been quite extensive cooperation between Finnish (North Karelia BR) and Russian Biosphere Reserves in the Barents Region. This cooperation can be further developed and involve Vindelälven-Juhttátahkka Biosphere Reserve, Sweden as well as Norwegian actors. There are differences between countries: In Finland and Sweden the reserves are managed by different organisations, but in Russia biosphere reserves have the same administration body as the national parks and have a formal mandate. This reflects in number of employees as well. In Finland and Sweden it is usually 1-5 permanent employees, but in Russian biosphere reserve there could be 25-165 employees. Also, there is a difference in land ownership. In Finland and Sweden about 50 % of a biosphere reserve's area is typically privately owned land, in Russia a biosphere reserve is mostly a state-owned land. Participants of the SNW meeting noted the importance of further collaboration between biosphere reserves, as well involving the Barents Regional Youth Council (BRYC) and young people in general into cooperation.

9. Conclusions and next meeting

SNW Chair thanked the participants for the nice discussion. Between of SNW meetings it is good to call and chat with colleagues and discuss what is going on. Participants congratulated Natalia Polikarpova on her appointment as director of the State Nature Reserve Pasvik and welcome her to participate in SNW work.

Next meeting of SNW will be arranged early autumn 2021. Before that discussion with Nefco will continue as well as planning of the Habitat Contact Forum and sharing information by email. The dates of next meetings will be agreed later by email.



List of participants

1. Anna Kuhmonen, Finnish Environment Institute SYKE, Finland
2. Aino Lipsanen, Ministry of the Environment, Finland
3. Tapio Lindholm, Finnish expert
4. Jari Pasanen, Centre for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment (ELY) for Lapland, Finland
5. Tero Väisänen, Centre for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment (ELY) for North Ostrobothnia (Oulu region), Finland
6. Vilma Lehtovaara, Centre for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment (ELY) for North Karelia, Finland
7. Katja Sukuvaara, Regional Council of Kainuu, Finland
8. Ilona Grekelä, Centre for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment (ELY) for Lapland Finland
9. Mats-Rune Bergström, County Administration Board of Västerbotten, Sweden
10. Magnus Johansson, County Administrative Board of Norrbotten, Sweden
11. Yvonne Lundell, Swedish Environmental Protection Agency, Sweden
12. Lisa Bjørnsdatter Helgason, Troms and Finnmark County Governor, Norway
13. Henrik Henrik G Forsström, Nefco
14. Annukka Valkeapää, dedicated expert on a Nefco mandate
15. Aleksey Kuskov, Murmansk Regional Duma, Russia
16. Natalia Silakova, Head of Rybrika Vepsian Settlement, Republic of Karelia, Russia;
Member of the BEAC Working Group of Indigenous peoples
17. Natalia Polikarpova, State Nature Reserve Pasvik, Russia
18. Vladimir Chizhov, Pechenga region, Russia
19. Maria Dianova, International Barents Secretariat
20. Markus Karlsen, Head of International Barents Secretariat

Interpreters: Boris Kochetkov and Evgeny Galchenko

