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ARCTIC COUNCIL  
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WORKING GROUP ON ENVIRONMENT

**Barents Euro-Arctic Council (BEAC)  
Working Group on Environment  
Swedish Chairmanship 2010-2011**

Adopted version

## **Work Programme Subgroup for Nature Protection**



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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

The Nature Protection Subgroup of the Barents Euro-Arctic Council's (BEAC) Working Group on Environment implements and coordinates co-operation on biodiversity and habitat conservation in the Barents Region. The Nature Protection Subgroup continues the work of the International Contact Forum on Habitat Conservation in the Barents Region (HCF) established in 1999.

The Work Programme guides the Nature Protection Subgroup's efforts in maintaining biodiversity and protecting valuable habitats in the Barents Region during the Swedish chairmanship of the Working Group on Environment during 2010-2011.

## **2. BACKGROUND**

### BIODIVERSITY AND NATURE PROTECTION IN THE BARENTS REGION

The Barents Euro-Arctic Region represents some of the last intact pristine wilderness areas in Europe. The last remaining intact old-growth forests are also located in northern Europe, mainly in the Russian parts of the Barents Euro-Arctic Region.

In the northern part of the Region the ecosystems are relatively intact but vulnerable. The Barents Region is recognised as an increasingly important part of the global natural heritage requiring protection and sustainable management.

Threats to the remaining intact wilderness areas continue to grow due to increasing and often unsustainable use of natural resources such as gas, oil, minerals and forests, aquatic and other living resources. Biodiversity loss and habitat fragmentation remain the biggest threat to the biodiversity of the Barents Region.

The level of protection of both terrestrial and marine territories varies considerably between the 13 subregions of the Barents Euro-Arctic Region. There are gaps in the network of protected areas that need to be filled to safeguard biodiversity. Challenges are also recognised in the management of protected areas in all the countries.

Biodiversity is also threatened by human-induced climate change. However, sustainable nature management and biodiversity conservation can result in reducing the impacts of climate change on both people and nature in the Region.

Several protected areas have been established along national borders within the Barents Euro-Arctic Region. Also, wildlife management and protection of migratory species require co-operation between the countries. Co-operation and exchange of experience are regarded as both a challenge and an opportunity.

### HISTORY

Finland, Sweden and Norway have been co-operating bilaterally with Russia in the field of biodiversity and habitat conservation for approximately 20 years. For instance, Finland and Russia have built a transboundary network of protected areas around the concept of the Green Belt of Fennoscandia.

In 1999 the International Contact Forum on Habitat Conservation in the Barents Region (HCF) was established to further promote co-operation and coordination between Russia and the Nordic countries. The HCF presents a platform for discussing nature conservation and related cultural and socio-economical issues. The HCF network has proved valuable in dealing with nature conservation issues ranging from small-scale problems to wide-ranging international issues.

The designation of the Nature Protection Subgroup under the BEAC Working Group on Environment and the integration of the HCF into the Nature Protection Subgroup contribute to reaching national and international goals in biodiversity conservation in the Barents Region.

### **3. MANDATE AND DECLARATION**

The Subgroup on Nature Protection has a mandate from the Barents Environmental Ministers to work with projects on biodiversity conservation, ecosystem approach, protected areas, conservation of natural and cultural heritage sites, co-operation with the Working Group on Economic Co-operation on sustainable forestry management and forests protection, projects on increase of absorption and deposition of greenhouse gases by natural ecosystems and other projects on mitigation and adaptation to climate change.

The Tromsø Declaration states the following:

#### ***The Environment Ministers***

23. *emphasised* that 2010 as the UN Year of Biodiversity should lead to increased activity in the Barents Region to implement commitments of the BEAC countries under the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Ramsar Convention, and The UNESCO Convention on World Heritage Properties;

24. *acknowledged* that the global target to halt the loss of biodiversity by 2010 most likely would not be reached and *urged* the countries to contribute to the development of post 2010 biodiversity targets at the Special Session of Biodiversity of the United Nations General Assembly in September 2010 and the 10th Conference of the Parties to the Convention of Biological Diversity in October 2010;

25. *noted* that climate change is a major stressor to regional biodiversity and therefore *agreed* on the importance of following-up the study on impacts of climate change on biodiversity and ecosystems goods and services in the Barents Region and to co-operate with the Nordic Council of Minister in this regard;

26. *acknowledged* the importance of the Habitat Contact Forum held in Umeå 2008, *supported* the recommendation to preserve wetlands and forests in the Barents Region, due to their capacity of halting emissions, storing carbon and preserving natural habitats of flora and fauna, and *looked forward to* the next forum in Archangelsk in 2010, which will focus on wetland conservation, forest protection, coastal ecosystems and sacred heritage sites, inviting stakeholders from relevant sectors;

27. *urged* further steps to protect the last pristine boreal forests in the Barents Region in particular through further development of protected areas and increased focus on sustainable forestry, and *stressed* the need to improve co-operation between relevant stakeholders;

28. *underlined* the need to establish a representative and well managed network of protected areas in the Barents Region (BPAN), and in this regard *recommended* the use of models and experience from similar networks, as well as to cooperate with the Arctic Council working group on Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna (CAFF);

29. *stressed* the importance of developing the Green Belt of Fennoscandia-network of existing and planned protected areas from the Gulf of Finland to the Barents Sea, supporting ecologically, economically, socially and culturally sustainable transboundary co-operation between Russia, Norway and Finland;

30. *acknowledged* the results of the project Integrated Ecosystem Management Approach to Conserve Biodiversity and Minimise Habitat Fragmentation (ECORA) and called for the dissemination of results in the Barents region;

31. *welcomed* the proposal to establish a Saami knowledge centre on the Kola Peninsula with a focus on sustainable traditional use of natural resources, to be followed up in the BEAC Working Group of Indigenous Peoples.

### **4. GOAL AND INTERNATIONAL FRAMEWORK**

#### **GOAL**

*The overall goal is to strengthen co-operation and coordination in biodiversity and habitat conservation with the aim of halting the loss of biodiversity in the Barents Euro-Arctic Region for the future, bearing in mind the aspects of climate change.*

#### **NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL FRAMEWORK**

The Nature Protection Subgroup (NPS) aims at contributing to the fulfilling of the obligations of national strategies and international agreements on biodiversity and habitat conservation; such as the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD; 1993), Ramsar Convention on Wetlands (1971), Convention on Migratory Species (1979), Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (1979), UNESCO World Heritage Convention (1972) and the IUCN Programme on Protected Areas; as well as recommendations of the Nordic Council and Arctic Council.

All the countries of the Barents Euro-Arctic Region have committed to halting the loss of biological diversity within the CBD 2010 Biodiversity Target. Establishment of protected areas is an essential tool for conserving biodiversity.

## **5. WORK PROGRAMME AND SCHEDULE**

The work programme describes projects fulfilling the strategic directions outlined above. When determining the priority of the projects and activities, mandates of both the Nature Protection Subgroup and the HCF has been considered.

Projects and activities in the Work Programme will be addressed as time, resources and opportunity permit.

The schedule for the work of The Nature Protection Subgroup (NPS) will be to implement a smooth operation of the subgroups work. The meetings of NPS will be held in connection with other relevant events and meetings. The first meeting of NPS will be during the Habitat Contact Forum event in Archangelsk June 2010. The NPS will then work during autumn 2010 and 2011 until next ministerial meeting. During the work process of the subgroup necessary meeting will be planned in connection with other events to avoid extra travel.

### PRIORITY PROJECTS AND ACTIVITIES

The main activities and priority projects within the Nature Protection Subgroup are described in the table below. Priority projects are prioritized projects that include participation from all Barents countries.

## Nature Protection Subgroup

Priority projects and other activities (2010-2011)

### International Contact Forum on Habitat Conservation in the Barents Region (HCF)

- **HCF VI**  
Archangelsk, Russia  
June 2010 (week 22)
- **NPS project list**  
(updated in June 2008)

Priority four country multilateral projects:

- Barents Protected Areas Network (BPAN), including climate issues

Other possible project ideas to be developed:

- Treriksøysa – trilateral protected area (Finland, Sweden, Norway)
- UNESCO World Heritage Sites in the Barents Region
- Flyways and wetland issues
- Protection and sustainable use of the last remaining intact forests in NW Russia
- ECORA follow-up

## International Contact Forum on Habitat Conservation

AIM FOR 2010-2011 : The Nature Protection Subgroup (NPS) will contribute in the dissemination of the results from Habitat Contact Forum number VI arranged in Archangelsk June 2010. NPS will also initiate and contribute to the planning process of the VII Habitat Contact Forum to be arranged in the year of 2012.

BACKGROUND: The International Contact Forum on Habitat Conservation (HCF) is a platform for co-operation on habitat conservation in the Barents Region including the adjacent marine territories. The Forum focuses on management of existing protected areas and establishment of new protected areas in the most valuable and vulnerable nature areas.

The responsibility for organizing the HCF meetings rotates between the countries or subregions of the Barents Euro-Arctic Region. Biannual meetings are organised with the participation of local (and indigenous) people, NGO's, scientific institutes and federal and regional authorities of the Barents countries. The results of the meetings are delivered to federal and regional authorities responsible for habitat conservation in the Barents Region, indigenous people's organizations, relevant non-governmental and intergovernmental organisations and other relevant parties.

The NPS project list consists of completed, on-going and new Nordic and bilateral biodiversity projects in Russia, more or less closely related to the activities of the HCF. The priority projects of the Nature Conservation Subgroup were chosen on the basis of the list of new NPS project.

## Priority projects

The following projects, that include all Barents countries, have been chosen as the priority projects during the Swedish chairmanship:

### Barents Protected Areas Network (BPAN):

AIM FOR 2010-2011: The Nature Protection Subgroup (NPS) will actively contribute to launch a project on the creation of a network of protected areas in the Barents region. The project will be co-ordinated with the project on climate change and biodiversity, conducted by Umeå University.

BACKGROUND: The BPAN contributes to the 2010 Biodiversity Target by developing a representative and well-managed network of protected areas in the Barents Region. The BPAN aims at incorporating the objectives of the CBD Programme on Protected Areas, experiences of the Circumpolar Protected Areas Network (CPAN) and the results of the Finnish-Russian GAP project (Evaluation of the representativeness and gaps of the protected area network in North-West Russia). Umeå University is conducting a project the ability of the protected areas in the Barents region to conservation of biodiversity in a changing climate and the costs of alternative conservation strategies.

### Other possible project ideas to be developed include:

- ECORA  
The ECORA project stands for "An Integrated Ecosystem Management Approach to Conserve Biodiversity and Minimise Habitat Fragmentation in three selected Model Areas in the Russian Arctic". One of the three selected model areas is the Kolguev Island in the Barents region. The ECORA project officially started in May 2004 and was later extended by seven months until the end of December 2009. The core output of the ECORA project is the Integrated Ecosystem Management plan of each of the three Model Areas. The Nature Protection Subgroup (NPS) will help to communicate and disseminate the results from ECORA project and also the results from the evaluation process.
- Treriksrøysa – a trilateral protected area in Finland, Sweden and Norway:  
The Nature Protection Subgroup (NPS) will contribute to facilitate the process of a possible establishment of a trilateral cooperation in biodiversity and habitat conservation on the boarder between Finland, Sweden and Norway. The project aims at co-operation on nature protection and development of nature tourism on a regional level in the three countries, making the most of the experiences from the Pasvik-Enare project.

To be discussed:

- Conference on UNESCO World Heritage Sites (WHS) in the Barents Region
- Flyways and wetland issues
- Greenbelt of Fennoscandia
- The last remaining intact forests in NW Russia

More detailed descriptions of the priority project can be found in the fact sheets annexed.

## 6. MEMBERS and OBSERVERS

The following persons are appointed members of the Nature Protection Subgroup.

### **Mats-Rune Bergström (SWEDEN) - chair**

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Regular observers are:

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Other relevant organisations and institutions may participate as observers in the subgroup.

## APPENDICES

HCF mandate (revised in June 2008)  
NPSproject list (revised in June 2008)  
Fact sheets of priority projects

### ACHIEVED RESULTS IN 2007-2010

The following projects have been executed, finalized or initiated in 2008-2009:

The International Contact Forum on Habitat Conservation in the Barents Region (HCF), established in 1999, was formally included as an activity in the Subgroup on Nature Protection in 2008. In October 2008 the 5th HCF meeting was held in Umeå, Sweden. Main topics were conservation of forest biodiversity, management and networks of protected areas, and protection and sustainable use of wetlands, and climate change and biodiversity. The meeting was compact and successful with about 50 participants. The resolution and proceedings from the meeting have been widely distributed. The 6th Habitat Contact Forum meeting will take place in Arkhangelsk in June 2010 in co-operation with the Arkhangelsk Regional Administration. Main topics will be conservation of wetlands, forests, and coastal ecosystems, and synergy of natural and spiritual values. In 2009 the project "Development of management tools and tourism in the National Park "Yugyd Va" in the Republic of Komi was finalized. "Yugyd Va" is the largest protected area in Europe and part of the UNESCO World Heritage Site "Virgin Forests of Komi". The project yielded good results, among them the development and release of a series of information material about the park in the Russian, English and Komi languages, including a photo album, brochures about the rivers of the National Park, maps for tourists and a web-site. A conference on management of natural and mixed World Heritage sites in the Barents Region was successfully convened in Syktyvkar, The Republic of Komi, in May 2009. The resolution from the conference was forwarded to UNESCO and IUCN. Creating a partnership between the World Heritage Sites Laponia in Sweden and the Komi Virgin Forest in Russia is being considered. Proceedings from the conference are available. The issue of forest conservation has been given much attention. In December 2007 the conference "The last large intact forests in Northwest Russia – protection and use" was held in Steinkjer, Norway. The conference proceedings have been widely distributed and used. In August 2009 Nordic and Russian experts took part in the expedition to Pyoza River in East Arkhangelsk Oblast to study the nature values of this ecosystem. The experts recommend that the Pyoza River area should receive status as protected area. The resolution has been distributed by the Institute of Northern Environmental Problems in Arkhangelsk to regional stakeholders and the Ministry of Natural Resources and Ecology. Establishment of a representative network of protected areas - Barents Protected Area Network (BPAN) is a key project. Additional networks under the BPAN-umbrella are being considered, such as networks between botanical gardens, sacred sites, and geological sites. An action plan for the project is in preparation, including application for project funding to the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument. An application has been sent to the Nordic Council of Ministers. The subgroup has discussed and contributed to the Memorandum of Un-



derstanding between Russia, Norway and Finland aimed at promoting co-operation on developing of the protected areas along the “Green Belt of Fennoscandia”. The agreement has been prepared for signing in at the Meeting of the Ministers of Environment in February 2010. Applications to the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument for projects to develop the “Green Belt of Fennoscandia” are being prepared. The 4th Pan European Green Belt Meeting is planned to be held in Northern Finland, fall 2010. A project on co-operation between protected areas on the border between Finland, Norway and Sweden in the Tretriksøyysa area was initiated in 2008. In 2010 discussions will continue on how to utilise the experience from the Pasvik-Inari Trilateral Park co-operation concerning establishment and management of transboundary protected areas and development of ecotourism.