

BALANCE Newsletter

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Information from the BALANCE Secretariat to partners, sub-contractors and friends of BALANCE

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News from the Secretariat

Almost a year has passed since the start of the BALANCE project. After a slow start due to the Summer Holiday 2005, the level of activity has risen considerably. BALANCE has now reached a point, where it makes sense to take stock of progress. Some of the most important results achieved by BALANCE so far include:

- Agreeing on and setting-up a Data Provider Agreement as well as standards, protocols and guidance on harmonization of the methods and data to be used within BALANCE.
- Preparing a number of environmental data sets for development of marine landscapes.
- Setting-up of the BALANCE Data Portal (<http://maps.sgu.se/Portal/>) which is intended to work as a central access point for spatial data relevant to the project. Data publishing are in progress.
- Publishing the web based BALANCE photo gallery of marine habitats and marine life in the Baltic Sea. Contributions are encouraged.
- A number of reports incl. a report focusing on development of a methodology for selection and assessment of a representative MPA network in the Baltic Sea and a literature review of the "blue corridors" concept and its applicability to the Baltic Sea. The reports will be available on the web page in July 2006.
- A poster available on the web page in July 2006.

The 1st meeting of the BALANCE Steering Group took place at the premises of the Danish Forest and Nature Agency on the 28-29th of June 2009. The SG Meeting was attended by three senior officials (David Connor, JNCC, UK; Jacek Zaucha, VASAB 2010; Juha-Markku Leppainen HELCOM), the leaders of the BALANCE work packages (WPs 1-5) as well as the BALANCE Project Manager. The objectives of the SG meeting are: (1) to take stock of the developments within BALANCE, (2) to discuss the results achieved so far, and (3) to discuss and, if needed,

set up guidance on how to shape BALANCE products with an aim of giving these products long-term durability.

Johnny & Jesper

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HELCOM HABITAT 2006

The Eight Regular Meeting of the HELCOM Nature Protection and Biodiversity Group (HELCOM HABITAT) took place on the 15-19th of May on the German Isle of Vilm to discuss ways to halt the decline in biodiversity and habitat destruction and to protect the endangered species in the Baltic marine area.

One of the central topics at the meeting was the amendment of the network of the Baltic Sea protected areas with an aim to enhance and strengthen it. Currently the network comprises of app. 90 sites protecting species, habitats, important ecological processes and geological formations. New sites will be nominated and gaps in the ecological coherence will be analysed for further completion of the network.

The Meeting also considered a priority list of threatened and declining species and habitats in the Baltic Sea which need special attention. Conservation of seals living in the Baltic Sea was also an important issue at the Meeting.

BALANCE was presented to HELCOM HABITAT and discussed. At the Meeting, it was agreed to collaborate as close as possible, because BALANCE has a limited duration and because HELCOM is one of the important end-users of the results and products of BALANCE.



A postcard from Australia ...

The First International Marine Protected Areas Congress (IMPAC 1), which took place in Geelong, Australia 23-28 October 2005 proved a highly successful event with over 800 participants.

The objectives of IMPAC 1 were to:

- embrace the entire global range of marine protected areas, including but not limited to in-shore (integrated coastal zone management), reef, deep water, high seas and remote locations;
- develop a blueprint for partnerships between MPA managers, fisheries managers, management agencies, Indigenous peoples, local communities and industries reliant on marine resources to ensure that marine ecosystems are sustained into the future;
- provide examples or models of best practice approaches for biodiversity and ecological processes through the management of MPAs;
- address important or emerging issues affecting or likely to affect the future existence, values qualities and effectiveness of MPAs and to explore innovative approaches and possible solutions to enable effective management of these issues.

One of the most encouraging outcomes of IMPAC 1 was the unanimous view from both the fisheries representatives and marine protected area specialists of the mutual necessity to work collaboratively. The value of the 'historic' knowledge held by local com-

munities was recognized along with the importance of early community inclusion and co-management options. There was general acceptance of the need to go with the best scientific information you have (whilst still seeking to improve knowledge = "moving whilst improving") rather than wait for 'perfection' and that it was essential to build-in flexibility to cater for unforeseen changes.

The several social events provided welcome relief from the intensity of the formal technical program and great networking opportunities. Unfortunately adverse weather conditions (high winds) caused many of the water based field trips to be cancelled with obvious disappointment, although the alternative options were still enjoyed by most.

The IMPAC 1 Proceedings will incorporate transcriptions of all plenary presentations, the 1500 word extended abstracts from oral concurrent sessions, the 250 word abstracts of posters, an indexed list of presentations, list of delegates with e-mail contact, sponsors recognition, and appropriate acknowledgements together with an array of photographs.

There was much support for the concept of IMPAC becoming a regular (perhaps) 4 yearly series and in response the IMPAC1 Organizing Committee have decided to run an expression of interest process in regard to hosting/organizing IMPAC2. Perhaps the BALANCE partnership should consider hosting a future event?



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BALANCE Data Portal

The BALANCE Data Portal, which was launched in January 2006 at <http://maps.sgu.se/Portal/>, is intended to work as a central access point for spatial data relevant to the project. Project partners and others will register and administrate their own metadata and map services. The main functions of the portal are to search, obtain and use spatial data and map services provided by the portal.

The BALANCE Data Portal has been designed and configured to meet the needs of the BALANCE project. The main purpose of the portal is to serve BALANCE project partners with relevant environmental metadata. "Real" data will be stored by the responsible project partner to ensure that data meets the standards set up for the BALANCE project and that necessary updates are made.

If you are not a BALANCE, but have geographic data (e.g. maps, data and geographic activities or events), that you are interested in sharing with others, we invite you to join us as part of the GIS Portal Toolkit Initiative. By joining, you can:

- Help promote greater public access to, and understanding of, geographic information.
- Gain worldwide exposure for your geographic content.
- Enhance the value of your maps and data by integrating them with other GIS Portal Toolkit sources.

Join the GIS Portal Toolkit Initiative Today! To publish geographic content, follow the next four steps:

- Obtain a username/password to be registered as a publisher from the GIS Portal Toolkit Administrator.
- Create a metadata document for the geographic content you want to publish.
- Open ArcCatalog and connect to the GIS Portal Toolkit metadata service.
- Drag and drop the metadata document onto your folder on the GIS Portal Toolkit metadata service.
- The GIS Portal Toolkit Administrator will review the metadata document you submitted for the geographic content and approve it, if the metadata meets the requirements.
- Congratulations! Your geographic content can now be found by users of the GIS Portal Toolkit!

NorGIS 2005-2006, the mother of BALANCE

The purpose of the NorGIS project is to evaluate and harmonise the use of geographic information systems (GIS) and geo-related data in mapping and modelling of Nordic marine habitats to facilitate spatial planning and management of the marine environment and protected areas at regional, national and international level.

The NorGIS project is funded by the Nordic Council of Ministers and co-financed by the partners from Iceland (Environment and Food Agency of Iceland), Finland (Finnish Environment Institute), Denmark (Danish Forest and Nature Agency), Norway (Norwegian Institute for Water Research), and Sweden (Swedish Environmental Protection Agency).

The aims of the NorGIS project are to:

- Identify GIS methods, data, and models to describe marine and coastal habitats and their distribution.
- Conduct a GAP analysis of existing data and their applicability in GIS based modelling and mapping of habitats and planning and management of the marine environment.
- Identify the features important for marine habitats in the Nordics seas and compare among classification systems.
- Evaluate the state of knowledge and implementation of GIS based methods in the Nordic countries.
- Apply for funding to initiate mapping and modelling of marine landscapes and habitats in the Nordic seas.

The current status of the NorGIS project is:

- An application for a large scale project on landscape and habitat mapping in the Baltic region, named BALANCE, has been submitted and accepted for funding by the European Union within the BSR INTERREG III B Neighbourhood Programme.
- The identification of GIS methods and the GAP analysis are currently undertaken by all partners and will be finished ultimo 2005. The remaining tasks will be carried out during 2006.

For more information, please contact Grete Dinesen, the Danish Forest and Nature Agency (grd@sns.dk).



BALANCE family picture taken on the 1st of September at the kick-off meeting at GEUS, Copenhagen, Denmark.

About BALANCE Interim Reports

BALANCE products will be published electronically as so-called BALANCE Interim Reports. The first three reports are:

- Lindeberg et al. (2006): Delineation of BALANCE pilot areas. *BALANCE Interim Report No. 1.*
- Andersson & Liman (Eds.) (2006): Developments of a methodology for selection and assessment of a representative MPA network in the Baltic Sea. *BALANCE Interim Report No.2.*
- Vahtmäe, Kutser, Martin & Kotta (2006): Feasibility of hyperspectral remote sensing for mapping benthic macroalgal cover in turbid coastal waters of the Baltic Sea. *BALANCE Interim Report No. 3.*

At present, 5 to 6 more reports are being edited. When final and approved, these reports will be made available at <http://www.balance-eu.org>.

BALANCE website

The BALANCE website <http://www.balance-eu.org> was launched on the 15th of October 2005. Here, you can find more information on the project, partners, activities and planned results etc. The latest updates include:

- Information about and a link to the BALANCE Web Portal, which is a product of WP1 and managed by the Swedish Geological Survey (SGU).
- The BALANCE Photo Gallery, where you can find photos of landscapes, habitats and species in the Baltic Sea. Please note that the gallery will be updated during the lapse of BALANCE.

Please remember to register your BALANCE presentations via the Presentation Registration System. At present, the number of presentations is 33, including oral presentations, posters, articles in newspapers and magazines.