

Resolution of the section
“Ecosystem Approach in the Complex River Basin Management. Public Role and Engagement”
within the frame of the **XIX International Environmental Forum “Baltic Sea Day”**

March 22, 2018

Moderators: *Edward Podgaisky, Coalition Clean Baltic, expert; Marina Kazmina, Deputy Director, Neva-Ladoga Water Basin Directorate, Federal Agency of Water Resources; Olga Senova, Chair, “Friends of the Baltic”*

Thirty six representatives from Russia, Belarus, Latvia, Finland, Sweden, and Estonia took part in the session discussion.

The goal of the session was exchanging experiences and elaboration of joint approaches to the development of the ecosystem basin management in river catchment basins at the account of strengthening participation of general public and local communities, support from local and regional authorities and government environmental and water-protecting bodies.

Session participants pointed out that reduction of anthropogenic pollution of water ecosystems, including measures for decreasing nutrient loading, and keeping track of forecasted climate changes remain to be the essential tasks for the region regarding the state of the Baltic Sea region. Issues of the development of the sewage treatment systems, restrictions on agricultural biogenic effluents including livestock wastes, determination of the flooding and saturation zones, and revising strategies and practices of climate adaptation should be resolved with consideration of the best technical solutions, best practices and involvement of all interested parties, i.e., local activists, municipalities, public organizations, action groups and other civil groups.

Session participants suggested:

1. *To use resources of cooperation programs and transboundary working groups for the development of full-scale cross-border RBMPs for the basins of the Baltic Sea rivers and center around the WFD requirements along with national documents. **Apply to the RF Ministry of Nature and Latvian Ministry of the Environment with a request to initiate establishment of a Russian-Belorussian-Latvian Commission or Working Group on transboundary waters to integrate practices and instruments of the Belorussian-Russian and Belorussian-Latvian transboundary commissions.***
2. *The Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission (HELCOM) should consider the **possibility to single out not only country-wide but also basin-wide goals on the reduction of nutrient loading for all major rivers and, afterward, move on to setting voluntary (selective) goals for reduction of nutrient loading for all major rivers and, further on, to singling out voluntary (selective) goals for the reduction of loading** for particular categories of water-users (e.g., municipalities, industrial enterprises, farms). [The Russian Federation employs the basin-based principle of water resource management, which allows, among other things, to establish through water resources assessment (SKIOVO) target indexes on the reduction of loading and make recommendations for the events to be taken into account by subjects of federation and municipal units in their work on the plans and programs related to the improvement of water resource statuses]. Elaboration of **methods for the assessment of volumes and degrees of negative impact of dispersed (diffused) effluents from industrially developed areas.***
3. For **coordinated choice and implementation of economically efficient measures on the improvement of the transboundary water medium**, accurate assessment of the state and impact is necessary. For an accurate assessment of the impact of biogenic and chemical substances on river ecosystems, it is necessary to use **coordinated and united analytical methods**; at that, it is vital to provide for consistent measurement sensitivity. *It is necessary to develop **methods for assessment of volumes and degrees of negative impact of dispersed (diffused) effluents from industrially developed areas.*** It is necessary to develop methods for biological and hydromorphological assessment.

4. Authority bodies should strengthen **implementation** of the integrated water basin management and **ecosystem approach** (including both transboundary rivers and rivers with basins belonging to different subjects or municipalities in Russia) **at the account of broad involvement of public organizations**. Authorities and environmental organizations should maintain **cooperation with Public Councils and Public Consultative Groups** in the area of river basins for watching and improving the environmental situation.
5. **Support the initiative** of the Ecological Council for the Environmental Protection under the Government of St. Petersburg and the Public Environmental Council under the Governor of the Leningrad Region **on the agreement between the Governments of St. Petersburg and the Leningrad Region on information exchange regarding pollution of water bodies and establishment of an inter-departmental working group for the development of an Action Plan** and efforts on inventorying polluted wastes as the first step on the way to basin-based management principle.
6. For the reduction of nitrogen and phosphorous input to the Baltic basin with waste waters, the most **economically, socially, and environmentally efficient waste water treatment technologies**, corresponding to particular needs in each situation and each area, should be selected in every case.
7. For the reduction of nitrogen and phosphorous input to the Baltic basin due to utilization of mineral and organic fertilizers, the possibility of **adaptation of the actual norms of introduction of nitrogen-phosphorous fertilizers with consideration of HELCOM requirements** should be considered. It is important to **provide agricultural entrepreneurs with necessary consultations and methodical support on environmentally justified methods of agricultural management and utilization of organic wastes**, including that within the frame of manuals on the **Best Accessible Technologies** presently being developed. In the future, it would be expedient to consider the possibility of rationing the nitrogen-phosphorous soil balance as a cumulative index.

The session participants find it important to:

- Disseminate the practices and outcomes of various water-protecting projects implemented in the basins of the Daugava (Western Dvina) and Neman Rivers, Chudskoye Lake and Narva River; support the Barents Baltic Nature and People Program on the development of an ecosystem approach and public engagement in river basin management carried out in cooperation with Coalition Clean Baltic in Leningrad and Kaliningrad Regions in 2016-2019
- Support activities of SEVIRA Project on the development of methods for assessment of nutrient loading on the Gulf of Finland and rivers in its basin and practical nutrient researches in transboundary and inner water bodies in Finland and Russia within the frame of the EU Program on Transboundary Cooperation between SW Finland and Russia.