

Wadden Sea Board

**WSB 20
16 June 2017
Harlingen, Netherlands**



Agenda Item:	5.2
Subject:	Statement by the Trilateral Seal Expert Group (TSEG) concerning a change in the trilateral Seal Monitoring Programme
Document No.	WSB 20/5.2/1
Date:	2 May 2017
Submitted by:	TSEG

Proposal: **The meeting is requested to consider the document.**

Statement by the Trilateral Seal Expert Group (TSEG) concerning a change in the trilateral Seal Monitoring Programme

The Trilateral Seal Expert Group (TSEG) was notified of the decision of the Danish government to reduce the harbour seal monitoring effort in the Wadden Sea to one flight in the pupping period and two flights in the moult period.

The TSEG regrets this, as it is not in line with the current Conservation and Management Plan for the Wadden Sea Seal Population, which was adopted by Denmark, Germany and the Netherlands at the Trilateral Governmental Wadden Sea Conference 2001 in Esbjerg for the first time.

International EU regulations request correct monitoring in the framework of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive. To achieve this, it is imperative to produce data with sufficient statistical power as stated on several occasions, e.g. in Meesters *et al.* 2007 and Teilmann *et al.* 2010 and recent OSPAR and ICES evaluations.

The Danish government should also be aware of the consequences for the other Wadden Sea countries as this reduction below the requested minimum of five monitoring surveys per year lessens the quality of the total monitoring of the Wadden Sea, and decreases the value of data collected by the other Wadden Sea countries.

Furthermore, in view of future developments in the seal population as it reaches carrying capacity, adequate monitoring will prove imperative for management for example in the case of:

- interaction with fisheries where seal numbers might be an issue as potential competitors with fishery or necessary to estimate depredation on fish species
- potential reoccurrences of mass mortality (epizootics of phocine distemper virus in 1988 and 2002 and more recently Influenza virus in 2014)
- conflicts in recreation where decisions regarding spatial planning should include knowledge on the location and relative importance of breeding and moulting sites.
- long term effects of the development of human activities in and adjacent to the Wadden Sea such as shipping, mining and wind energy.

Meesters, H. W. G., P. J. H. Reijnders, S. M. J. M. Brasseur, S. Tougaard, M. Stede, U. Siebert and T. Härkönen. 2007. An effective survey design for harbour seals in the Wadden Sea: tuning Trilateral Seal Agreement and EU-Habitat Directive requirement. Pages 82 The meeting of the Trilateral Working Group TWG 07/1, Delfzijl, The Netherlands, 18 - 19 April, The Netherlands. Trilateral Working Group, Wilhelmshaven.

Teilmann, J., F. Rigét and T. Harkonen. 2010. Optimizing survey design for Scandinavian harbour seals: Population trend as an ecological quality element. ICES Journal of Marine Science 67:952-958.

https://www.ices.dk/sites/pub/Publication%20Reports/Advice/2016/Special_Requests/OSP_AR_Common_indicator_assessments_of_seals.pdf