



## Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission

Working Group on the State of the Environment and Nature  
Conservation

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<b>Document title</b>	Call for action regarding the alarming situation around Kurgalskiy Nature Reserve, Russia
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<b>Submitted by</b>	Coalition Clean Baltic

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### Background

The Coalition Clean Baltic would like to raise the attention of HELCOM State and Conservation Working Group experts and call for urgent HELCOM's action regarding the alarming situation being reported around Kurgalskiy State (Regional) Nature Reserve, located in Leningrad Oblast of the Russian Federation.

The Kurgalskiy Nature Reserve, being established in 2000, is included in the network of HELCOM Baltic Sea Marine Protected Areas and RAMSAR Convention list of protected wetlands of international importance. It is situated at the south-west coast of the Gulf of Finland, close to Estonian border and has a status of reserve ('zakaznik') of regional importance in Russia. Its total area is 60 000 ha including 38 400 ha of marine area. Kurgalskiy Reserve is an area of high conservation value for the Eastern Baltic Sea region.

Marine and coastal biotope complexes of the reserve are very diverse and undisturbed. Biotopes represented by sandy and moraine coasts, dunes, reed beds, reefs, coastal meadows, islets, surface boulder ridges, mudflats, underwater and surface sandbanks, with or without vegetation. Shallow areas of marine part of Kurgalskiy Reserve serve as a spawning ground for many commercial fish species, as well as a habitat for several fish and lamprey species, endangered in the Baltic Sea region. The Kurgalskiy Reserve is important breeding area for many species of marine birds and stopover for migrating birds, including those listed in the HELCOM's Red List of Baltic Breeding Birds. The Reserve is the key area for the Baltic ringed seal haul-outs in the Gulf of Finland. It is also breeding and foraging area for ringed seal and important area for the Baltic grey seal haul-outs.

The development of Ust-Luga port near to Kurgalskiy Reserve has also spurred urban development in the area that presumes 8-fold upscaling of small nearby settlement to a city of 34.5 thousand inhabitants with expansion of the residential area and exploitation the Kurgalskiy Peninsula area as a recreational zone for local residents. The recreation development plans so far do not show any respect to HELCOM provisions, e.g. set in Recommendation 21/3 on sustainable and environmentally friendly tourism in the coastal zones of the Baltic Sea area. In particular, carrying capacity of the environment, cultural and social capacity has never been assessed; tourism is not oriented on PA's management plan and nature conservation goals; no environmental education is planned; no management of the recreation is assumed, limits for motorized activity are not developed; tourism in the reserve is not oriented on local community's interests.

The CCB network is concerned that implementation of the above plans will lead to negative impact from recreational activity and population growth on ecosystems of Kurgalskiy Reserve through reaching critical levels of animal disturbance, poaching, habitat destruction and increased pollution. Ultimately, the proposed development will not contribute to reaching GES in terms of securing sustainable use of Baltic Sea Area resources by reducing user conflicts and adverse impacts of human activities, but on contrary, there is high probability of conservation value loss of the Kurgalskiy Reserve/Peninsula.

CCB hopes for the opportunity to consider and resolve potential threats to Kurgalskiy Nature Reserve at both Russian federal and the international levels (HELCOM), taking into account the need to respect relevant obligations, including e.g. Environment Impact Assessment procedures with regards to nature protected areas of international importance. This can be *i.a.* achieved through an open stakeholder dialogue (involving local and regional authorities, port administration, public, etc.) with a view to develop an integrated approach

towards management and planning of marine, coastal and land areas of the Kurgalskiy Nature Reserve, based on ecosystem approach.

Further detailed information is presented in the attached letter to Russian Federal and Regional authorities, as well as to HELCOM.

### Action required

The Meeting is invited to consider the presented information and to suggest a way forward in resolving this conflict.

Contracting Parties are invited to share experiences of successful management of urban development and PAs.