



## PRESS RELEASE

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### **People are willing to pay for a healthier Baltic Sea**

**People in countries around the Baltic Sea attach a great value to the Sea and are willing to pay about 4 000 million Euros per year to improve the marine environment. This is shown in a new study undertaken by the international research network BalticSTERN.**

For the first time people in all nine countries around the Baltic Sea were simultaneously asked what they would be willing to pay for reducing eutrophication in the Sea. The results show that the majority is willing to pay for an improvement.

- Swedes are willing to pay on average 110 Euros per person each year for a healthier marine ecosystem including improved water transparency, less algal blooms and less oxygen deficiency in deep-sea bottoms. The average willingness to pay varies considerably across countries, ranging from about 4 to 110 Euros per person and year, although if income differences are considered the range generally decreases.
- Aggregated to the whole adult Swedish population, the total value of a healthier Baltic Sea is about 840 million Euros per year.
- In general, every second person in the Baltic Sea region has experienced the effects of eutrophication, mostly in terms of water turbidity and algal blooms. Many are also worried about the environmental state of the Sea. Across all countries people value a healthier Baltic Sea as a whole and not only their local sea areas.
- The Baltic Sea generates many ecosystem services such as recreational opportunities. In Sweden, 98 percent of the population has at least once been to the Sea for leisure activities such as walking along the seashore, swimming or boating. Most Swedes view problems in the marine environment as one of the most important environmental problems in the country and are in general worried about the Baltic Sea.

In total, 10 500 people in the nine countries answered questions about the importance of the Baltic Sea and their willingness to pay, either through an internet questionnaire or in face-to-face interviews.

The survey described the state of the Baltic Sea in 2050 if no new measures to reduce eutrophication are undertaken compared to a state where the reduction targets of the Baltic Sea Action Plan are implemented. The respondents were asked to compare these two states and provide their willingness to pay for the improvement.

The Action Plan is an agreement within HELCOM (the Helsinki Commission) among all nine Baltic Sea countries. Each country has agreed to reduce their emissions of nutrients with a certain amount in order to achieve a good status of the Sea.

- Our results show that people in the Baltic Sea countries attach great value to achieving the policy targets on nutrient reductions specified by the Action Plan. This is a strong message to decision makers that there is public support for further and urgent actions to improve the state of the Sea. Doing too little will be costly, says Linus Hasselström, analyst at Enveco and scientific coordinator of the study in Sweden.

BalticSTERN is a research network with partners in all countries around the Baltic Sea. Ecological and economic models are developed and integrated to estimate benefits and to identify cost-effective measures. The results from the willingness to pay study will be included in a cost-benefit analysis to be published during autumn 2012.

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The scientific paper on the study “Benefits of meeting the Baltic Sea Nutrient reduction targets – Combining ecological modeling and Contingent Valuation in the nine littoral states” is available at [www.mtt.fi/dp/DP2012\\_1.pdf](http://www.mtt.fi/dp/DP2012_1.pdf)

Read more at [www.stockholmresilience.org/balticstern](http://www.stockholmresilience.org/balticstern)

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