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Monday 15th October 2018

BSAC Statement regarding illegal seal hunting

Background

The Working Group on ecosystem based management met on 4th September 2018. The report, now adopted, can be read here:

<http://www.bsac.dk/Meetings/BSAC-meetings/BSAC-Ecosystem-Based-Management-Working-Group>

At the meeting, **the Chair Nils Höglund** referred to several cases of illegal killing of seals reported in 2018. He asked the BSAC to strongly denounce illegal activities. In this context, he proposed a draft statement regarding illegal seal hunting to the WG.

The draft was discussed, but not finalised at the WG. The Chair asked the BSAC Executive Committee to send comments or propose edits to the draft statement and to adopt it through a written procedure.

A final version was approved by the Executive Committee by written procedure.

BSAC Statement on illegal killing of seals

It has come to our attention that a number of illegal killing of seals, in several countries, has occurred in the past year. The BSAC wishes to make its view on this very clear. Illegal killings are unacceptable, and a united BSAC condemns such actions.

A discussion about different ways forward to manage seals and better handle the seal and fisheries interaction issues has started, and constructive talks are initiated. Illegal killing of seals is a direct threat to this delicate process. It carries a high risk of stopping any further balanced discussions due to the provocative nature of such actions. Activities like this only give further fuel to distrust and public opinion can quickly shift and put the blame on, for example, innocent fishermen.

The BSAC reiterates that the high impact of the growing seal population on fisheries, in particular on the coastal small-scale fishery, needs to be dealt with now and can in some areas include legal hunting of problem seals¹. However, illegal actions are never the answer.

Member States should report on the cases of illegal killing of seals to the European Commission, in order to assess the magnitude of the problem.

In the period 2017-2018 several incidents of suspected deliberate illegal killing of grey seals were observed in [Lithuania](#) (26), [Germany](#) (23-27, Rügen), [Poland](#) (>10, Eastern Pomerania) and Russia (3, Kaliningrad).

¹ <http://www.bsac.dk/BSAC-Resources/BSAC-Statements-and-recommendations/The-BSAC-proposes-an-amendment-to-the-Regulation->(