

BALTIC HARBOUR PORPOISE BYCATCH RESOLUTION

At its 22nd Annual General Meeting held on 12th March 2008 in Egmond aan Zee, The Netherlands, the European Cetacean Society adopted the following resolution, largely endorsing a statement agreed earlier by members of the conference “Year of the Dolphin in Europe – Conservation of Small Cetaceans and Marine Protected Areas”, 29 Oct – 1 Nov 2007, held at the German Oceanographic Museum, Stralsund, Germany:

In reviewing Council Regulation 812/2004 for the Baltic Sea, the European Commission should:

1. Mandatory use of pingers should be introduced as an interim measure in all gillnet or entangling net fisheries of high risk to cetaceans (i.e. harbour porpoise), regardless of vessel size.
2. The testing and introduction of alternative fishing gear should be speeded up, in order to make it possible to phase out gillnets as soon as possible.
3. An effective marine mammal by-catch monitoring programme should be encouraged and made mandatory, reinforcing already existing provisions. Recreational and other part-time fisheries should be addressed in a similar fashion.
4. Vessels below 15m should be included in the mandatory observer programme; in those cases where the provision of human observers is not feasible, appropriate electronic surveillance should be conducted. In addition to independent monitoring, comprehensive reporting of by-catch by fishermen should be encouraged.
5. The clear goals for by-catch mitigation laid down in the ASCOBANS Jastarnia Plan should be taken into account, ensuring that a medium term time-line (not exceeding three years) is adopted for the achievement of these goals.

[The Society will later consider developing a similar statement for a wider area, but with appropriate modifications.]