



COMMUNITY-LED CONSERVATION

Ville Wahlberg, Baltic Sea Action Group

BALTIC SEA ACTION GROUP

- BSAG is an independent foundation aiming to restore the ecological balance of the Baltic Sea in changing climate conditions.
- Number one in enabling conservation of privately owned sea areas in Finland.
- Forerunner in finding innovative solutions for climate and Baltic Sea -friendly agriculture.
- A strong advocate for regulation to make sea traffic more sustainable.

Ville Wahberg

Managing Director

MA & MBA

#BalticSea

#PublicAffairs

#Management

#DesignThinking

#SystemicChange

An underwater photograph of the Baltic Sea showing a dense forest of dead, skeletal seaweed stalks. Sunlight rays penetrate the water from the top left, creating a dramatic, somber atmosphere. The water is a deep, murky green, and the stalks are dark and brittle, indicating a dead or dying ecosystem.

**The Baltic Sea is struggling
due to heavy nutrient flow
from agriculture, forestry and
shipping.**

We have lost 1/4 already

CO-OPERATION IS THE KEY TO SUCCESS



CO-OPERATION WITH GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES

One of the main questions in marine conservation planning is: where to expand the MPA network?

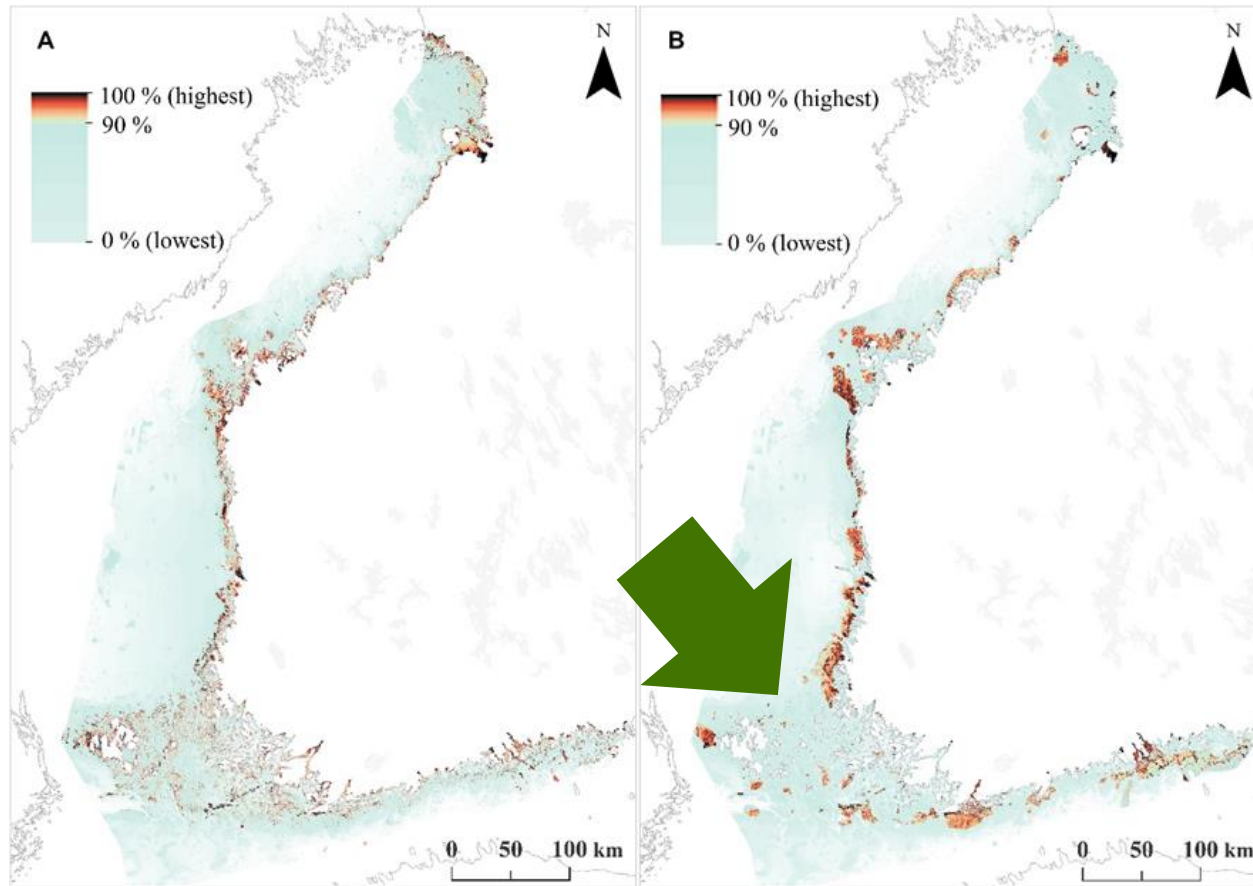
- Due to 20 years of outstanding work made in Velmu project, Finland has very good view on marine biodiversity of the national waters.
- Based on the Velmu data officials can use systematic conservation planning tools to make scientifically-justified and coherent recommendations on where protected areas would benefit most marine biodiversity.
- BSAG works in close co-operation with Velmu and other relevant governmental agencies.

Velmu – Finnish inventory programme for underwater marine diversity

A massive database of habitats and species including algae, vascular plants, benthos, fish larvae etc.

These observations have been used to produce species distribution models of underwater marine biodiversity.

WE KNOW WHERE THE MOST VALUABLE SPOTS ARE



- Ecologically the most valuable sea areas of the Finnish waters are located in shallow water near the shores.
- Those areas are usually privately owned

Moilanen, A., Lehtinen, P., Kohonen, I., Jalkanen, J., Virtanen, E. A., & Kujala, H. (2022). Novel methods for spatial prioritization with applications in conservation, land use planning and ecological impact avoidance. *Methods in Ecology and Evolution*, 13(5), 1062-1072.

Virtanen, E. A., Viitasalo, M., Lappalainen, J., & Moilanen, A. (2018). Evaluation, gap analysis, and potential expansion of the Finnish marine protected area network. *Frontiers in Marine Science*, 5, 402



What it takes to enable community-led conservation



1. Community led conservation is always voluntary
2. The conservation planning is carried out in close cooperation with the community
3. Profit is measured in hectares conserved, no money is involved

CONSERVATION JOURNEY FOR COMMUNITY-LED PROJECTS

Awareness

- Reaching out to landowners
- Convincing the first decision maker or internal influencer
- Preparation of the project

Closer look

- Checking the ecological value of the location.
- Planning for the first meeting with rest of the owners

Consideration

- Drafting the conservation proposal for the landowners meeting.
- Discussions with governmental offices.
- Discussions with landowners

Preparation

- Finalizing the conservation decision.
- Preparation of the final meeting

Decision

- Meeting and finalization of the application
- Sending the application to officials



The 1st Victory
**An area of 4,800 hectares
was protected in
Gullkrona by landowners**

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Conservation doesn't aim to make life in the archipelago more difficult. Its purpose is to maintain the vitality of the archipelago's nature and culture. Landowners know their area best and are familiar with the archipelago's practicalities. It's therefore essential to consult them from the outset.

Ilkka Herlin, Gullkrona landowner