The catchment approach and catchment officer work in Sweden

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INTERREG BaltCOP

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BaltCOP in a nutshell

- **Project title:**
Baltic Catchment Officer Project

- **Projekttid:** 36 månader
Juni 2024 – Maj 2027)

- **Total Budget:** €2,330 000
(extern finansiering: 80%)

- INTERREG Central Baltic

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Project partners

WWF Sweden

Pasaules Dabas Fond

Estonian Fund for Nature

**Latvia University of Life
Sciences and Technologies**

**Nyköping's Rivers
Conservation Association**

Objective

BaltCOP aims to create a ripple effect of positive change for **nutrient reduction and restoration of ecosystems**, leading to a healthier Baltic Sea.

This will be done by developing, testing and scaling the **catchment officer approach**.

Based on cooperation between partners in Estonia, Latvia and Sweden.

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Work packages

WP 1

Awareness Raising & Engagement

Increase awareness among stakeholders through workshops, field visits, and policy events.

WP 2

Knowledge Sharing & Capacity Building

Organize cross-border workshops and field visits.

Develop and share a Catchment Officer Toolkit with mapping and planning tools.

WP 3

Joint Pilot Actions

Implement pilot projects in Estonia, Latvia, and Sweden to demonstrate the catchment approach.

Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of water retention measures.

Project sites

Asupi Stream restoration. *Ongoing*

Penijõgi River restoration. *Planned 2026*

Krämbol wetland, Katrineholm. *Planned spring 2025*

Vreta wetland, Sätterста. *Completed summer 2024*

Tuudi River and Oidrema ditch. *Planned 2026*

Mežaciruļi wetland improvement. *Planned 2026*

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How catchment-scale restoration could be the key to a healthier Baltic Sea

Creating a ripple effect of positive change through the **BaltCOP** project →

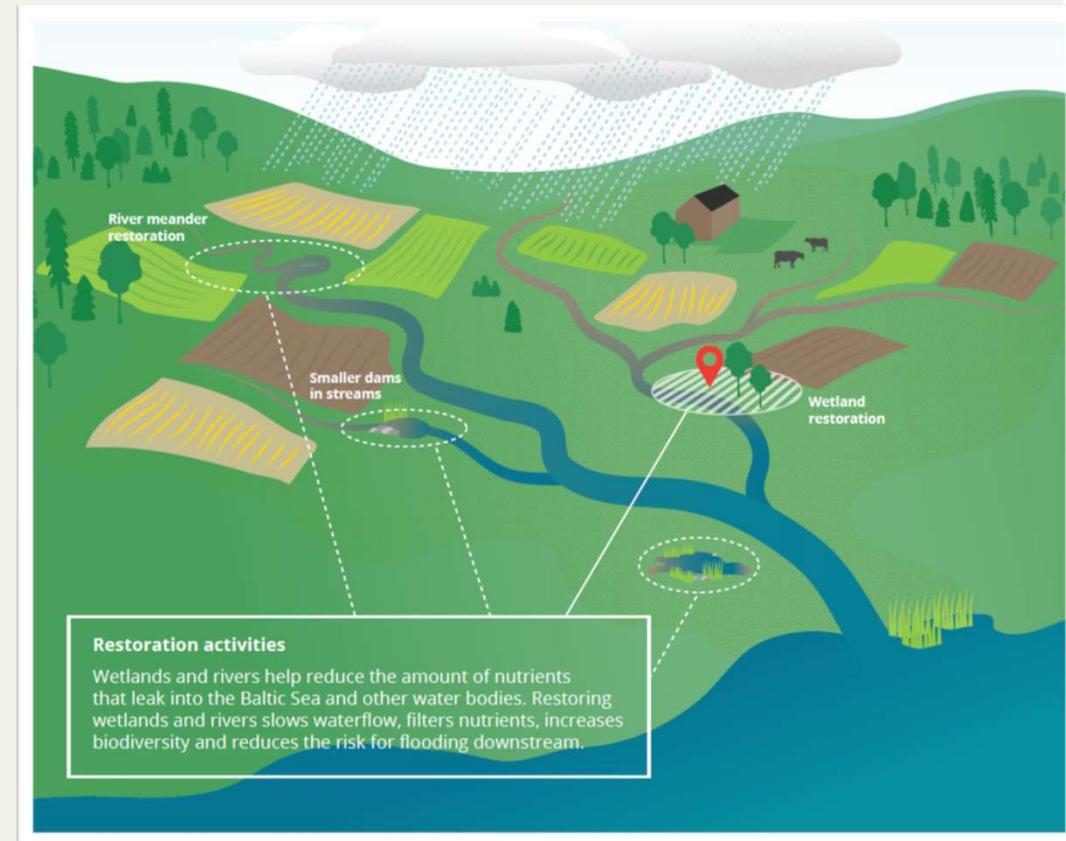## This is where the innovative catchment approach comes into play.

- Coordinating efforts across a catchment – also called a watershed or drainage basin – addresses problems **across the entire river system** instead of just isolated parts.

- **Catchment officers** - people who coordinate restoration efforts across a catchment - can help **bridge stakeholders, identify suitable locations** and ensure **plans translate into effective solutions**.

The catchment approach

Starting point for the WFD, the RBMPs and restoration measures

- Base for monitoring, targets and reporting

- Collaborative and inclusive approach

- Uses local knowledge to improve restoration results

- Increases overall cost effectiveness

-> *In Sweden the catchment officer approach (CO) has been developed and tested to scale measures for better water quality*

River meander restoration

Smaller dams in streams

Wetland restoration

Restoration activities
Wetlands and rivers help reduce the amount of nutrients that leak into the Baltic Sea and other water bodies. Restoring wetlands and rivers slows waterflow, filters nutrients, increases biodiversity and reduces the risk for flooding downstream.

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What is a catchment officer?

Catchment officers assist in coordinating restoration efforts across a catchment area, acting as a bridge between stakeholders.

They do this by:

- Identifying where measures can and should be implemented.

- Giving advice to farmers and landowners, helping them from idea to realization.

- Guiding and helping with external funding.

- Not acting as or representing the authorities.

Local catchment officer
- Step by step approach

Step by step approach
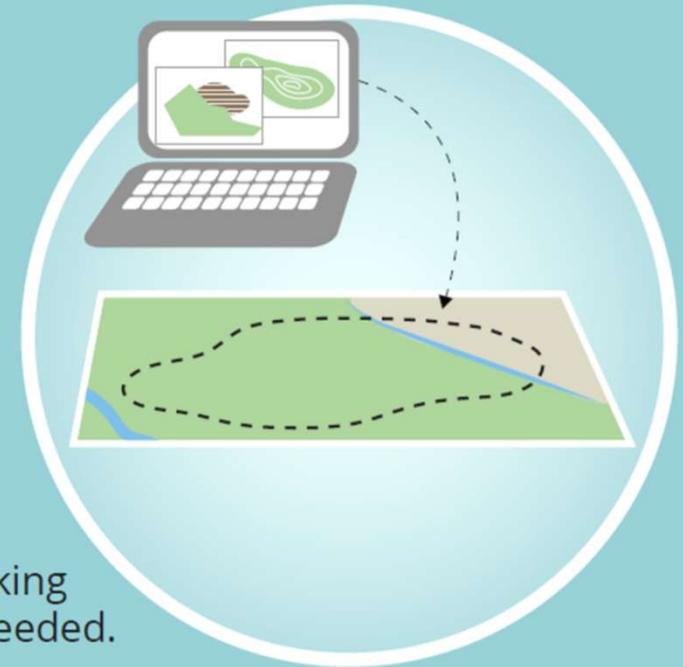

3 **Analysing the area**

Mapping the area digitally and analysing the data.

4 **Mapping the restoration measure**

Designing the wetland and making adjustments if needed.

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Step by step approach

5

Obtaining permits

Applying for necessary permits from local or regional authorities.

6

Preparing for restoration

Preparing for digging by clearing trees and bushes, and putting markers in the ground.

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Step by step approach

7

Executing the planned restoration

Digging the wetland with the help of an excavator.

8

Restored wetland

The wetland is finished, but needs to be regularly maintained.

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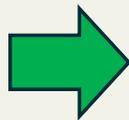
Catchment officer work in Sweden - 1

- Inspired by earlier national programs in UK and Denmark...
- National pilot project 2019 -2021, 20 catchment officers, coordinated by national agency
- Today appr 50 catchment officers, diverse organizational base and funding
- The work is mainly funded by national measures funded by wetland funding schemes, CAP and other sources

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Catchment officer work in Sweden - 2

- Swedish government praises catchment officer approach in national policy documents
  - Still, no specific funding decided...

- WWF, Swedish Farmers Association and other actors advocate for long term funding
  - 10 years commitment - for national Catchment Officer-programmes including long term funding for measures

**Catchment officers
+ Long term funding** ➡ **ACTION!**

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Catchment officer work in Sweden - 3

Three ways of organizing "CO-work" in Sweden

- Local Catchment Officer
  - advisor, designer and even implementer of measures in a specific catchment area

- Catchment "project leader"
  - Project manager working with several COs and actors in one or more sub-catchments

- Coordinator for a river basin or national region
  - Coordinator for a river basin or several catchments - strategy, planning and finanancing borth Cos and measures

Report: State of the art
- Catchment officers in Sweden

- Objective to describe experiences, challenges and needs, and to identify improvement proposals for future organization, financing and support structures

- Digital questionnaire (48 answers) and 6 interviews

- Report (in Swedish) from Swedish Agricultural University, funded by WWF SE

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  Link to report, in Swedish:
  https://pub.epsilon.slu.se/37418/1/eriksson-n-et-al-20250616.pdf

Lokal åtgärdssamordning av vattenvårdsåtgärder
Nuläge, utmaningar och behov

Nairomi Eriksson och Pia Geranmayeh

Sveriges lantbruksuniversitet, SLU
Institutionen för vatten och miljö
2025:6
2025

Catchment officers in Sweden – some results

- Diverse background and education
- 60% works full time as COs
- 40% are on temporary/project based employments
- 4/5 are financed by national/regional project support
- 1/3 doesn't have any plan for future funding
- Monitoring and evaluation is managed differently
- No existing national node or coordination

The CO-concept is widely spread but not yet adopted and scaled

Where do the Catchment officers work?
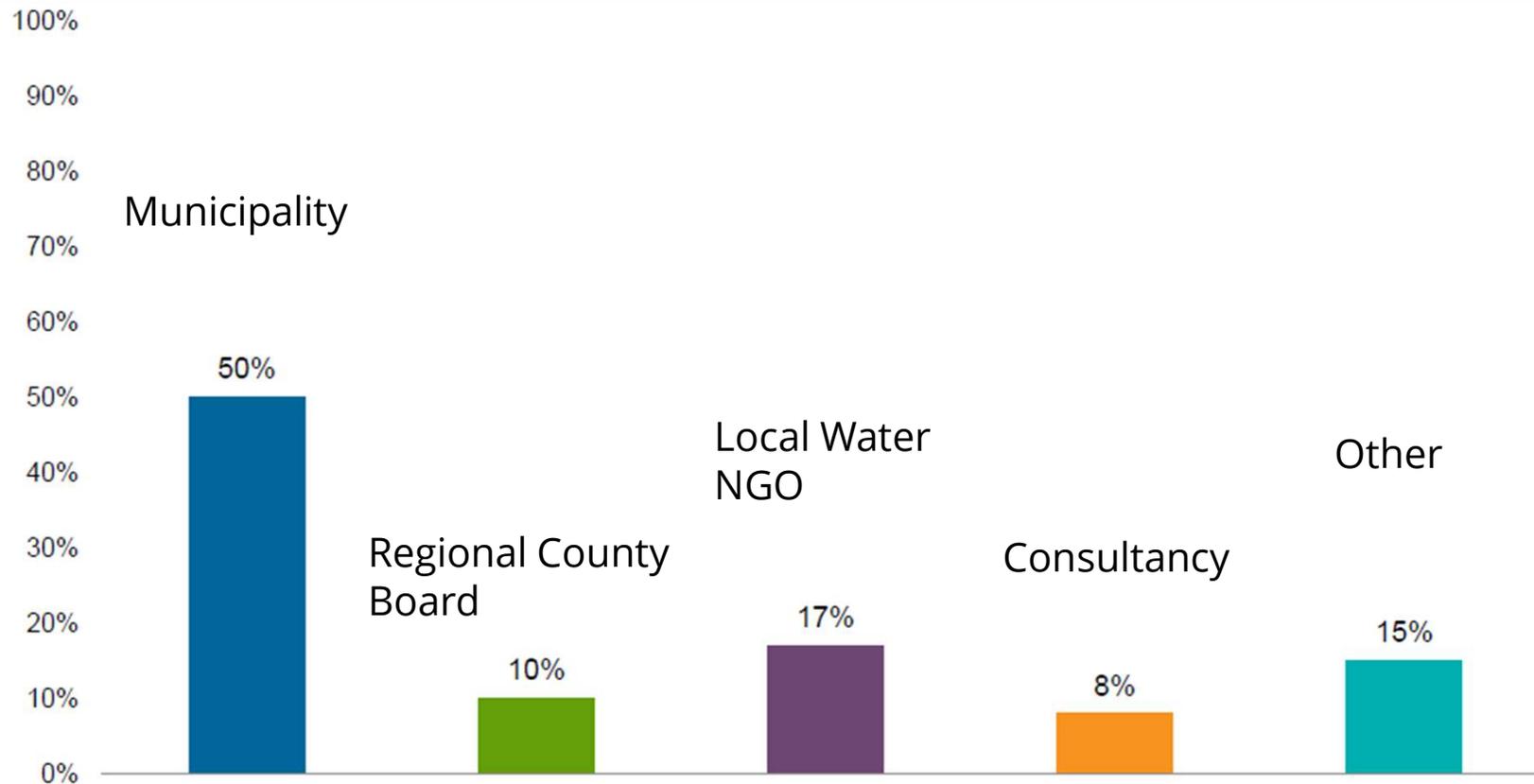
Steps forward and lessons learned
- Swedish context -1

- Secure financing over time – important to have more than project based funding and employment

- Don't focus on only one problem such as eutrophication
  -> Instead use a multifunctional approach on water restoration

- Simplify processes for permits and harmonize between authorities

Steps forward and lessons learned
- Swedish context - 2

- Develop and share checklists and guidance documents for new COs

- Develop the social and communicative skills among COs

- Give support to COs so funding from CAP easily can be used

- Increase dialogue and cooperation between local COs and the regional authorities

Output from BaltCOP in 2027

Roadmap
- "Policy"

- **Target group:**

  Baltic regional actors, National ministries, authorities, sector organisations and other actors

Toolkit
- "BaltCOP Guidebook"

- **Target group:**

  Local and national regional actors, NGOs, existing CO-projects/pilots etc.

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Project sites

Asupi Stream restoration. *Ongoing*

Penijõgi River restoration. *Started 2025, implemented 2026*

Krämbol wetland, Katrineholm. *Planned autumn 2025*

Vreta wetland, Sättersta. *Completed summer 2024*

Tuudi River and **Oidrema ditch**. *Planned 2025/2026*

Mežacīruļi wetland improvement. *Planned 2026*

Turku

Helsinki

Gulf of Finland

Tallinn

Stockholm

Lake Vänern

ESTONIA

Lake Peipus

Gulf of Riga

Rīga

LATVIA

Pskov

enburg

BaltCOP
- a first step for future cooperation

- **Inspire and develop** pilots/field projects in other countries/national regions

- **Policy and advocacy** on Baltic Regional level

- **Develop future Pan-Baltic project**

  - based on BaltCOP and knowledge in countries around the Baltic?

- **"Horizontal" spreading** of the CO-concept?

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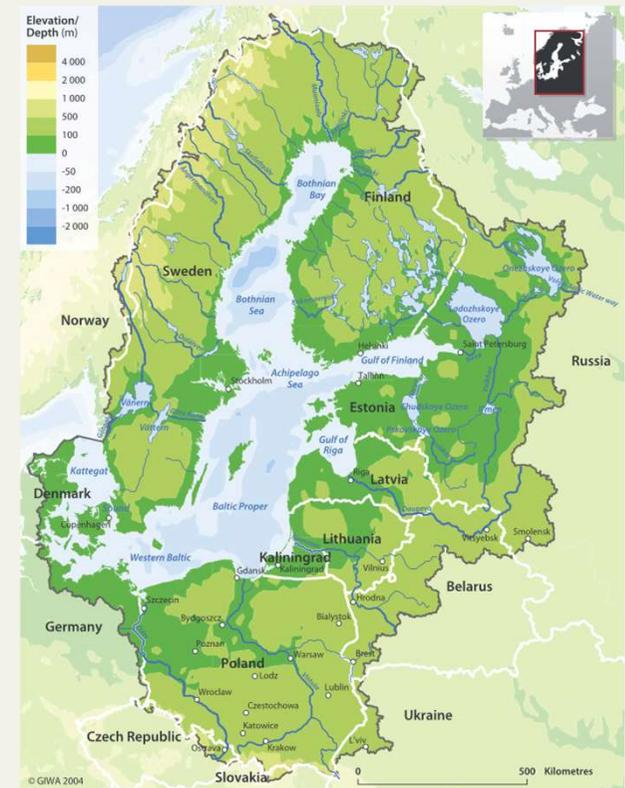
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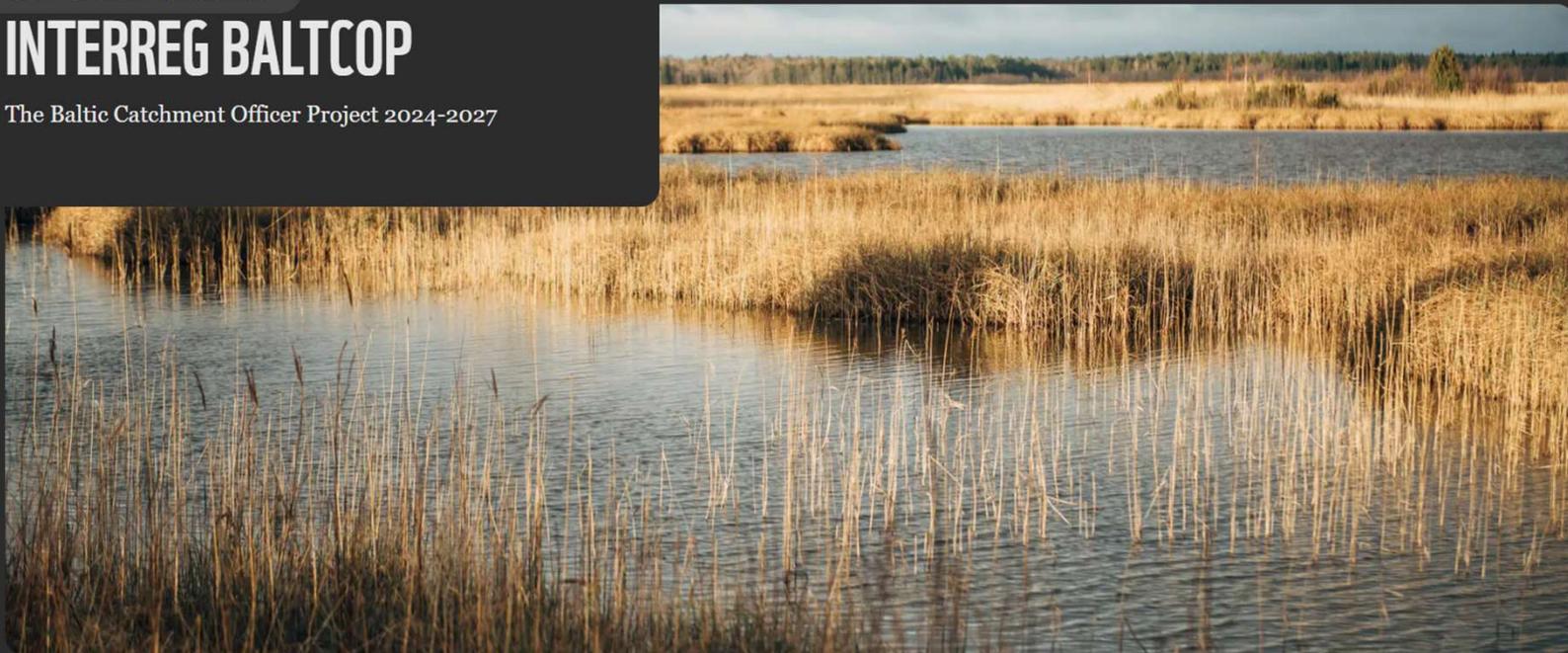
Thank you for listening! - Questions?

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