

**A platform meeting for aligning initiatives and networking
to share and advance knowledge**

FOCUS ON CLEAN WATER ALLIANCES

**Integrating water smart agriculture and pollutant control
through catchment-based collaboration**

EUSBSR in collaboration with LIFE SIP WetEST, LIFE IP CleanEST and

Interreg BaltCOP projects

Estonia, 6 – 7 May 2026

Background

The seminar strengthens catchment-based collaboration for cleaner water across the Baltic Sea Region. The event is supported by EU LIFE funding and regional cooperation frameworks.

Why this seminar

Catchment-based water management is gaining traction as an effective approach to addressing rural water challenges. It requires strong local coordination and cooperation. Countries like Finland have developed systems with dedicated catchment officers and educational programs. BaltCOP supports Sweden, Estonia, and Latvia in spreading these practices, but broader regional exchange is still limited. The two integrated LIFE water projects in Estonia have established an initiative to create a catchment coordinator system in the project areas, with the aim of developing it into a permanent nationwide system.

Effective water management starts at river basin level. Coordinated action across the catchment helps address shared pressures and improve water status. This seminar brings together international experience and best practices in river basin-based approaches, fostering shared learning and cooperation across communities and organisations.

Objectives	
Exchange of experience	Exchange of experience among policymakers, catchment officers/coordinators, and participating countries
Sharing Lessons Learned	Discuss challenges and practical lessons from implementing catchment-based approaches
Exploring Synergies	Examine the links between catchment coordination and farm-level advisory services
Future Collaboration Development	Identify opportunities for joint project ideas, networking, and continued cooperation

Expected participants

Policy makers, catchment officers/coordinators, project partners, advisors, and stakeholders from agriculture and environmental sectors.

Post-event outcomes
Strengthened regional cooperation
Initiation of new pilot projects
Strengthening ongoing cooperation among catchment officers

Event organisers

The EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region is an agreement between the European Commission and the EU member states bordering the Baltic Sea: Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Sweden. It fosters cooperation and finds common solutions to joint challenges on a macro-regional level. The objectives of the EUSBRS are to Save the Sea, Connect the Region, and Increase Prosperity.

Currently, Estonia holds the Presidency of EUSBRS 2026.

For further information please check the [EUSBRS website](#).

LIFE23-IPE-EE-LIFE SIP WET-EST

The main objective of LIFE SIP WetEST project is to support the full implementation of the Western Estonia River Basin Management Plan (RBMP) for 2022–2027 and to bring innovative approaches to a new level for the upcoming fourth management cycle. The project addresses the main barriers that currently limit RBMP implementation and provides practical solutions to remove them. One of the focuses of the project is to re-invent water governance in Estonia and to involve stakeholders at the early stages of decision-making. To support this, the project is piloting a water ranger (catchment coordinator system) in the Western Estonia river basin.

The project consortium consists of 17 partners, runs from 1 January 2025 to 31 December 2033, and has a total budget of 29,8 million euros. The project is funded by the European Commission LIFE programme and co-financed by the Government of Estonia.

For further information please check the [LIFE SIP WetEST project website](#).

LIFE IP CleanEST project “Development of an integrated water management and its modern tools in Estonia - strategic choices for future”

LIFE17 IPE/EE/000007

LIFE IP CleanEST is a 10-year integrated water management project in Estonia funded by the EU LIFE programme and the Estonian state. It focuses on improving the water quality and ecological condition of rivers, groundwater and coastal waters in Ida-Viru and Lääne-Viru counties. The project implements actions from the regional River Basin Management Plan and develops new solutions like remote monitoring and ecosystem services mapping. Examples include removing obsolete dams to restore fish migration routes and cleaning up contaminated river sections, as well as creating guidance for better wastewater treatment and reducing agricultural pollution. Project pilots catchment coordinator system in project area.

The project consortium consists of 23 partners, runs from 1 January 2019 to 31 December 2028, and has a total budget of 16,7 million euros. The project is funded by the European Commission LIFE programme and co-financed by the Government of Estonia.

For further information please check the [LIFE IP CleanEST project website](#).

Interreg BaltCOP “Batic Sea Catchment Officer Project”

CB0300177

The catchment approach is central to the BaltCOP project. 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 help with this, coordinating restoration efforts across a catchment area and acting as a bridge between stakeholders, from landowners, to municipalities, to environmental agencies. They can help to identify where measures can and should be implemented to best reach the goals for the catchment, and ultimately the Baltic Sea.

Catchment officers are vital for implementing concrete restoration actions, overcoming gaps between policy and practice, and ensuring that plans for reducing nutrient runoff translate into effective on-the-ground solutions.

The partner countries are Sweden, Estonia and Latvia. WWF Sweden plays a leading role across five partner consortia. Project duration is 01.06.2024 - 31.05.2027 and budget is 2 336 088 €.

For further information please check the [BaltCOP project website](#).

Day 1, Wednesday 6 May 2026: FIELD DAY
Catchment-based perspective, capacity building with study visit
Study visit is hosted by Interreg BaltCOP project
Please wear comfortable, weather-appropriate clothing and shoes suitable for outdoor activities

Matsalu National Park is a wetland of international importance that is impacted by nutrient run-off from the catchment. Penijõgi is one of the streams that carries the nutrients from the surrounding area and is heavily modified by former dredging. BaltCOP project has implemented pilot measures to rehabilitate biodiversity and provide nature-based solutions to reduce run-off. We will visit Penijõgi and the pilot sites during a small trip in the morning. The afternoon excursion will take us to the Asupi stream, located on the border of the Kasari floodplain meadow. Restoration efforts along the Asupi aim to improve water retention at the meadow's margins and create a more favorable habitat for local bird populations. Additionally, we visit the Kloostri birdwatching tower, that offers a comprehensive view over the entire Kasari floodplain. During the tour, BaltCOP team will provide an engaging overview of the region's past, present and future.

08:45 – 09:00	Gathering to the bus, <i>bus stop tbc</i>
09.00 – 10.30	Travel Matsalu Visitor Centre , Penijõe, West-Estonia
10.30 – 11.00	Break and gathering for field visit
11.00 – 11.15	DAY 1 GROUP PHOTO
11.15 – 12.30	Field visit part I
12.30 – 13.30	Lunch at <u>Trahter Birgit</u> .
13.45 – 16.00	Field visit part II

16.00 – 18.00	Networking dinner at <u>Karukoobas</u> , located in Kullamaa Lunch and dinner is hosted by LIFE SIP WetEST project
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18.00 – 19.30	Travel back to Tallinn
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Day 2, Thursday 7 May 2026: SEMINAR	
EU policy and integrated solutions for safeguarding water health	
VENUE	Ministry of Climate, Suur-Ameerika 1, Tallinn, Estonia
09:15 – 10.00	Registration, morning coffee with networking

Plenary session		Catchment-based Cooperation for CleanWater
Moderator	tbc	
Room	SAAR ground floor (floor 1)	
Time	10.00 – 12.30	
10:00 – 10.30	Introduction to the seminar	Moderator
	Welcome by Ministry of Climate of Estonia	Marten Kokk, Secretary General or Kristjan Truu, Deputy Secretary General for Water and Maritime Affairs tbc
	Welcome by Ministry of Agriculture and Regional Affairs	tbc
	Welcome by EUSBRS	tbc
10.30 – 11.00	Key note speech Multilevel Water Governance as the Key to Effective Decisions, Informed Implementation, and Healthy Waters	Reeda Iismaa, Ministry of Climate, Water Department, Head of Water Management
11.00 – 12.00 15 min each presentation	Example of Finland catchment-based approach	Essi Hillgren, head of Archipelago Sea catchment program, Economic Development Centre of Southwestern Finland
	United Kingdom Rivers Trust System	Rob Collins, The Rivers Trust
	<i>Open call for presentation</i>	tbc
	Estonian model of catchment-based approach	Elina Leiner, Environmental Board, head of RBMP Bureau
12.00 – 12.30	Conclusions from sessions	Moderator
	Introduction to the second half of the day	

12.30 - 12.45		DAY2 GROUP PHOTO	
12.45 – 14.00		Lunchbreak and networking	
Parallel Session 1			
Controlling Hazardous Substances and Pollution: Preparing for Future Environmental Challenges			
Moderator Louise Floman (coordinator of EUSBSR PA Hazards)			
Room KASK/KÕIV ground floor (floor 1)			
14.00 – 15.30			
Aim of the session is to discuss current and emerging challenges related to hazardous substances in catchment-based management and explore cross-sectoral solutions			
14.00 – 14.10	Introduction to the seminar	Moderator	
14.10 – 14.30	Chemical Pollution of Fresh and Coastal Waters – a multi-faceted societal challenge	Rob Collins, The Rivers Trust, UK	
14.30 – 14.50	Nature-Based Solutions within an Ecohydrological Framework to Improve Water Quality: Lessons from the UNESCO Ecohydrology Demonstration Site in the Pilica Catchment	Paweł Jarosiewicz, European Regional Centre for Ecohydrology of the Polish Academy of Sciences	
14.50 – 15.10	Strengthening catchment-based pollution control through environmental permitting – LIFE SIP WetEST project initial results and future plans	Kalle Kiik, Estonian Environmental Board, water-ranger	
15.10 – 15.30	Discussion and Q&A with the audience: Mentimeter questions, open discussion, and session takeaways (Moderator)		

Parallel Session 2

Water-Smart Rural Collaboration: Aligning Business, Agriculture and Environmental Goals

Moderator Elsi Kauppinen, PA Nutri/EUSBSR

Room LÖHMUS/PÄRN ground floor (floor 1)

Aim of the session is to explore practical cooperation models that connect rural entrepreneurship, agriculture, and water protection

Pre-reading: Reading package for participants to be sent before the event. Will cover experiences in each country and different projects (f.ex. Excel) and what kind of questions we will discuss during the event. Prepared by BaltCOP.

14.00 – 14.10	Introduction to the seminar	Moderator
14.10 – 14.25	Presentation 1: From National Strategy to Local Action: Finnish Experiences with the Catchment Approach Presenter tbc	Finnish experiences (one presenter gathering experiences from several levels): 1) Finnish national strategic level, national catchment approach programme and how that work has been funded, 2) experiences from previous practical efforts (Kyyvesi-catchment coordinator project), 3) what practical level is planned now (ACWA-Life – catchment approach & catchment officers), business-approach
14.25 - 14.40	Presentation 2: Swedish experiences from 10 years of catchment officer projects Presenter: Anneli Carlén	Presenter Anneli is one of the most experienced catchment officers in Sweden, leading catchment officer work and participates in BaltCOP in the Nyköpingsåarna catchment
14.40 – 14.55	Presentation 3: New ideas in development: Baltic catchment officers network, policy lab, experience paper Presenter: Mats Johansson/WWF	
14.55 – 15.30	Discussion with the audience: mentimeter questions to audience or discussion in smaller groups Summary of discussions, next steps	

15.30 – 16.00 Networking break	
Summing Up: Insights for Future Action	
Moderator <i>tbc</i>	
Room SAAR, ground floor (floor 1)	
16.00 – 16.45	
The objective of the closing session is to reflect on the outcomes of the parallel sessions, summarise the key takeaways of the day, and outline the agreements reached for future cooperation	
Conclusions from Parallel Session 1	Louise Floman
Conclusions from Parallel Session 2	Elsi Kauppinen
Wrap-up and uptakes for future	<i>Moderator</i>