

STATEMENT

Gotland University Hosts International Conference about Sea Ducks in the Baltic Sea

- **The Conference on Sea Ducks and Their Food Will Take Place at Gotland University in Visby on June 14-16**
- **The Populations of Mussel Eating Sea Ducks in the Baltic Sea are Decreasing Rapidly**

Visby, June 8, 2011. Why have the historically large populations of sea ducks, such as eiders, long-tailed ducks and velvet scoters decreased rapidly in the Baltic Sea region in recent years? This question will occupy the researchers at the scientific conference, which will draw participation from nine Baltic Sea countries.

Several studies conducted in the last couple of years demonstrate that the mussel eating sea ducks in the Baltic Sea are indeed in decline. For some species the decrease is substantial, which has resulted in some being red-listed.

“There is reason for concern as we note that the group of bird species which depend on benthic food for their survival, i.e. on blue mussels and other mussels, are in a steep decline”, says the conference host, Professor Kjell Larsson, at Gotland University. Whether this decrease is a sign of a larger, more serious, change in the Baltic Sea ecosystem will be a topic of discussion during the conference. The conference is sponsored by Nord Stream AG and is part of a research project on sea ducks and bottom fauna in a changing Baltic environment.

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Further information about the sea duck project as well as the conference programme is available at www.hgo.se/seaducks.

Background

Surveys conducted during winters in the Baltic Sea since the early 1990s until 2011 clearly indicate a decrease in numbers of mussel eating sea ducks. The long-tailed duck, which breeds in the northern parts of

Scandinavia and Russia, has decreased by approximately 80 percent in the last 20 years. Also, the eider, which almost exclusively feeds on blue mussels, and previously was a very common species in Swedish and Finnish coastal areas, is now in steep decline. The blue mussel and other mussels, such as the Baltic macoma, are very numerous on the Baltic Sea seabed. The mussels feed on phytoplankton by filtering large amounts of water. Environmental pollution, eutrophication, higher water temperatures or other changes in the Baltic Sea ecosystem may affect the bottom fauna and, hence, also the mussel eating sea ducks.

In order to study the interaction between mussel eating sea ducks and their food in the Baltic Sea a research project was initiated in 2009 at Gotland University by Professor Kjell Larsson. The research project is sponsored by Nord Stream AG by an agreement with the Gotland University. The conference on June 14-16 in Visby is part of the research project, and aims to collect new information on the research topic, by gathering several researchers within the Baltic Sea region.

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Notes to editors

Nord Stream is a natural gas pipeline that will link Russia and the European Union through the Baltic Sea. The European Union's annual natural gas imports in the year 2008 were approximately 320 billion cubic metres (bcm) and are projected to increase to around 500 bcm by the year 2030. By then, the EU will need additional gas imports of 160 to 200 bcm per year (Source: IEA, World Energy Outlook, 2010). Nord Stream will meet up to one third of this additional gas import requirement by connecting the European gas pipeline network to some of the world's largest gas reserves. The project will be an important contribution to long-term security of supply and a milestone of the energy partnership between the European Union and Russia.

Nord Stream AG plans to have the first of two parallel pipelines operational in 2011. Each line is approximately 1,220 kilometres long, providing a transport capacity of some 27.5 bcm per year. Full capacity of about 55 bcm per year will be reached when the second line goes on stream. This is enough gas to supply more than 26 million European households.

Nord Stream AG is an international joint venture established for the planning, construction and subsequent operation of the new offshore gas pipeline through the Baltic Sea. Russian OAO Gazprom holds a 51 percent stake in the joint venture. The German companies BASF SE/Wintershall Holding GmbH and E.ON Ruhrgas AG hold 15.5 percent each, and the Dutch gas infrastructure company N.V. Nederlandse Gasunie and the French energy company GDF SUEZ S.A. each hold a 9 percent stake.

Nord Stream is included in the Trans-European Energy Network Guidelines (TEN-E) of the European Union. In 2006, the project was designated a "project of European interest" by the European Commission, the European Parliament and the Council of the

European Union. Nord Stream is, therefore, recognised as a key project for meeting Europe's energy infrastructure needs.

Construction of the Nord Stream Pipeline started in April 2010, after completion of environmental studies and planning and an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) along the entire pipeline route. Three pipelay barges have been commissioned to work on the project: Saipem's Castoro Sei is carrying out the majority of the construction in the Baltic Sea. The Castoro Dieci has completed its operations in German waters, where it constructed both pipelines in the German landfall section; Allseas' Solitaire handles construction in the Gulf of Finland as a subcontractor of Saipem. The first pipeline is scheduled to be operational in 2011, the second one in 2012.

In 2010, Nord Stream invested 13 million euros in its Environmental and Social Monitoring Programme (ESMP). More than 20 companies are conducting the surveys defined in the ESMPs, to determine just how, and if, the Baltic Sea's flora and fauna have been impacted by the construction of the Nord Stream pipelines. Data from sixteen subjects, including water quality, bird, fish and mammal populations, as well as seabed recovery, are collected from approximately 1,000 survey locations along the route in the waters of Russia, Finland, Sweden, Denmark and Germany. These data are analysed in internationally recognised laboratories, and Nord Stream reports the results to the national environmental authorities in each country. Nord Stream plans to invest approximately 40 million euros into its ESMP to monitor any impact of the construction and operation of the pipelines through 2016.