

Foundational activity on Prevention and Reduction of Nutrient Pollution in the context of COBSEA's Strategic Directions 2018-2022

The Coordinating Body on the Seas of East Asia (COBSEA) provides a regional intergovernmental mechanism for science-based policy setting and implementation. Deterioration of coastal water quality and the coastal environment as a result of land-based pollution is a central concern for COBSEA participating countries, and COBSEA's Strategic Directions 2018-2022, adopted by the Intergovernmental Meeting in 2018, encompass focus on nutrients, including measures to identify sources as well as prevention, reduction and control.

The Ministry of Environment of Sweden, through its support for UNEP's work with the Regional Seas, has provided initial seed funding towards development of COBSEA's work on nutrients, in collaboration with the Global Partnership on Nutrient Management (GPNM). This will support initial fact finding and planning, based on which further efforts through COBSEA can be tentatively defined for consideration by the Intergovernmental Meeting.

This document outlines planned activities in late 2020/early 2021, in line with the Strategic Directions 2018-2022.

1. Introductory webinar (mid-January 2021)

A brief, introductory webinar for COBSEA countries will be held towards the middle of January 2021 to introduce the planned activity on nutrients. This will include presentation of and seeking input on the proposed methodology for the desk review as well as the draft outline of the review report to be prepared.

2. Desk review (December 2020 – February 2021)

A desk review on nutrient pollution as a regional/transboundary challenge in the East Asian Seas region will be undertaken in order to: i) identify the main sources and impacts of nutrient pollution in the coastal and marine environment; ii) compile information on prevention and reduction commitments, targets and measures, and related monitoring and assessment in COBSEA countries; iii) analyze gaps and identify potential priorities, including in relation to research, management, capacity and policy, providing recommendations for further efforts through COBSEA based on its mandate and comparative advantage. The desk review will be prepared by consultants hired by the COBSEA Secretariat, primarily based on literature review and through country consultation, including a virtual regional workshop. Findings and recommendations arising from the review will be presented to the 25th Intergovernmental Meeting of COBSEA in 2021.

3. Virtual regional workshop (February 2021)

A virtual regional workshop will be organized to vet findings of the desk review as well as provide input to support its finalization. The workshop will further be an opportunity to identify steps leading up to the 25th Intergovernmental Meeting of COBSEA. The workshop will be organized by the COBSEA Secretariat in collaboration with GPNM. The agenda will include presentations on the GPNM, efforts through other Regional Seas including e.g. the South Asia Nitrogen Hub and ongoing work in the Caribbean, and a detailed presentation of review findings.