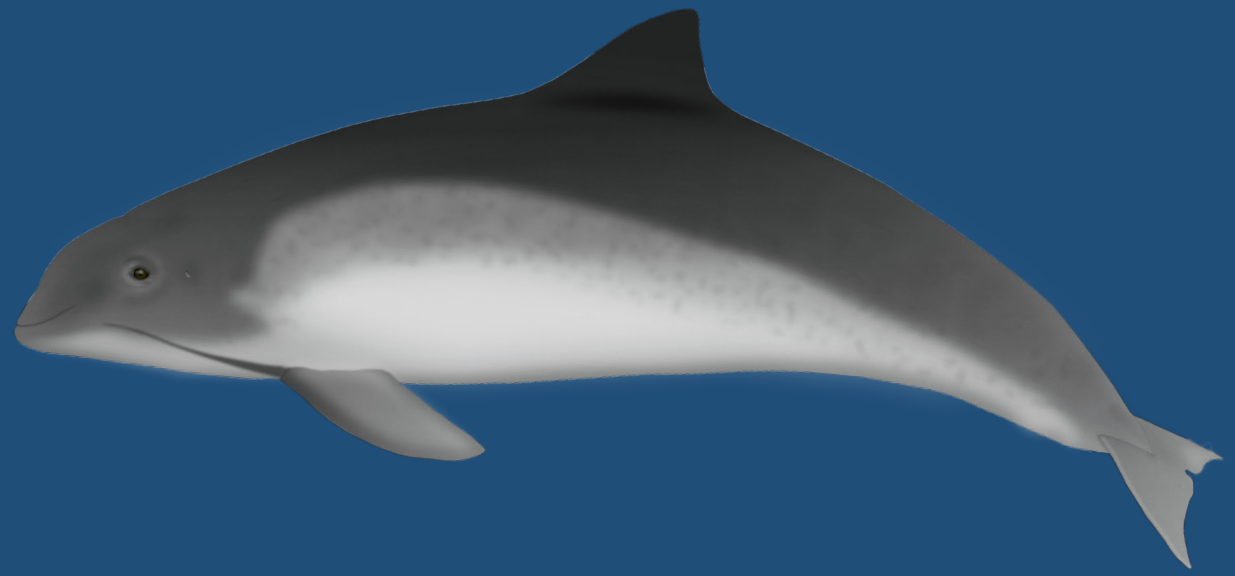
# National Progress Report for Sweden



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ASCOBANS North Sea Group meeting (NSG14)

13-14 April 2026

Contributors: Pia Eriksson[4], Morgan McCarthy[4], Johanna Stedt[1], Lova Eveborn[5]

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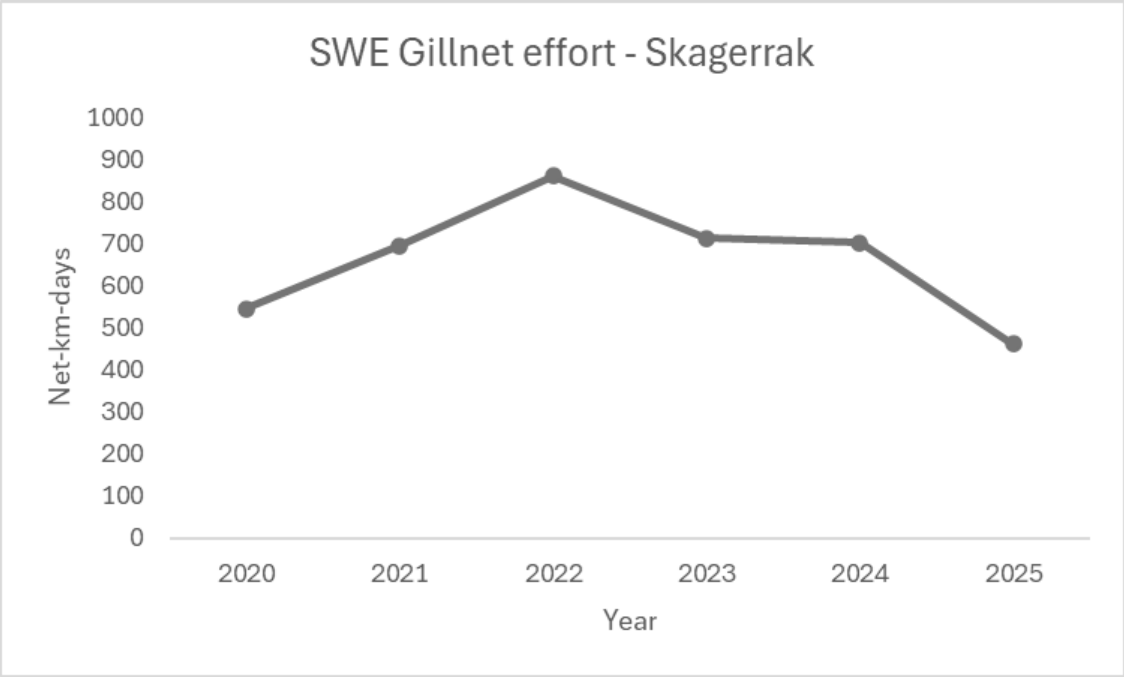
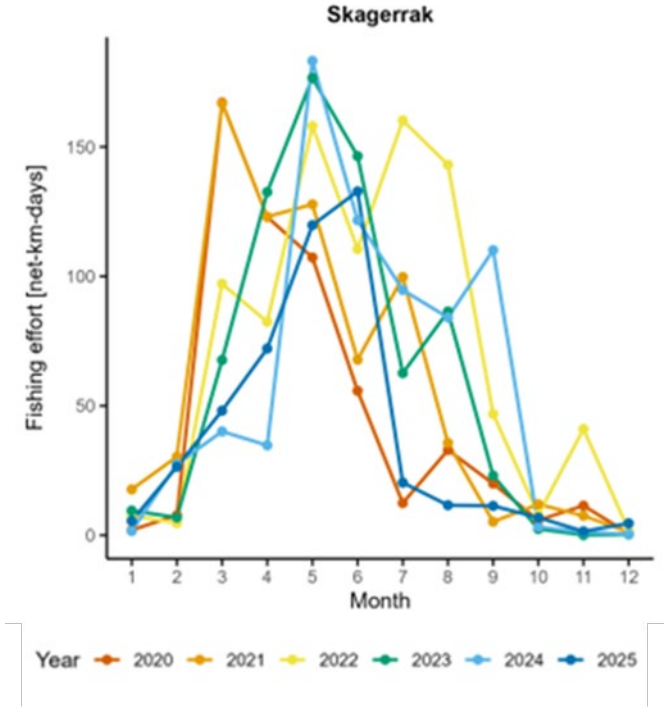
# **2.1** Identify the priority bycatch issues and relevant stakeholders (**RES-01**)

- Swe gillnet fishing effort very low in Skagerrak, data collection therefore not prioritised in DCF Bycatch monitoring programme during 2023-2024, but was picked up again in 2025-2026
  - Data collection continuously in Skagerrak with onboard observers in our 'general' DCF Discard programmes
- Several pinger trials over the years where also gear characteristics and seal bycatch were investigated (presentation during joint session of Königson *et al.* 2026, in review)
- Ongoing work in CIBBRiNA and other projects

# **2.1** Identify the priority bycatch issues and relevant stakeholders (**RES-01**)




Swe fishing effort very low (461 net-km-days in 2025) and decreasing. No Swe gillnet vessels >15 m.

Fishing for lumpfish is banned from 2025 (March 15) in Swe waters (HVMFS 2025:6).

# **2.2** Improve estimates of bycatch rates to support development of conservation strategy (**RES-02**)

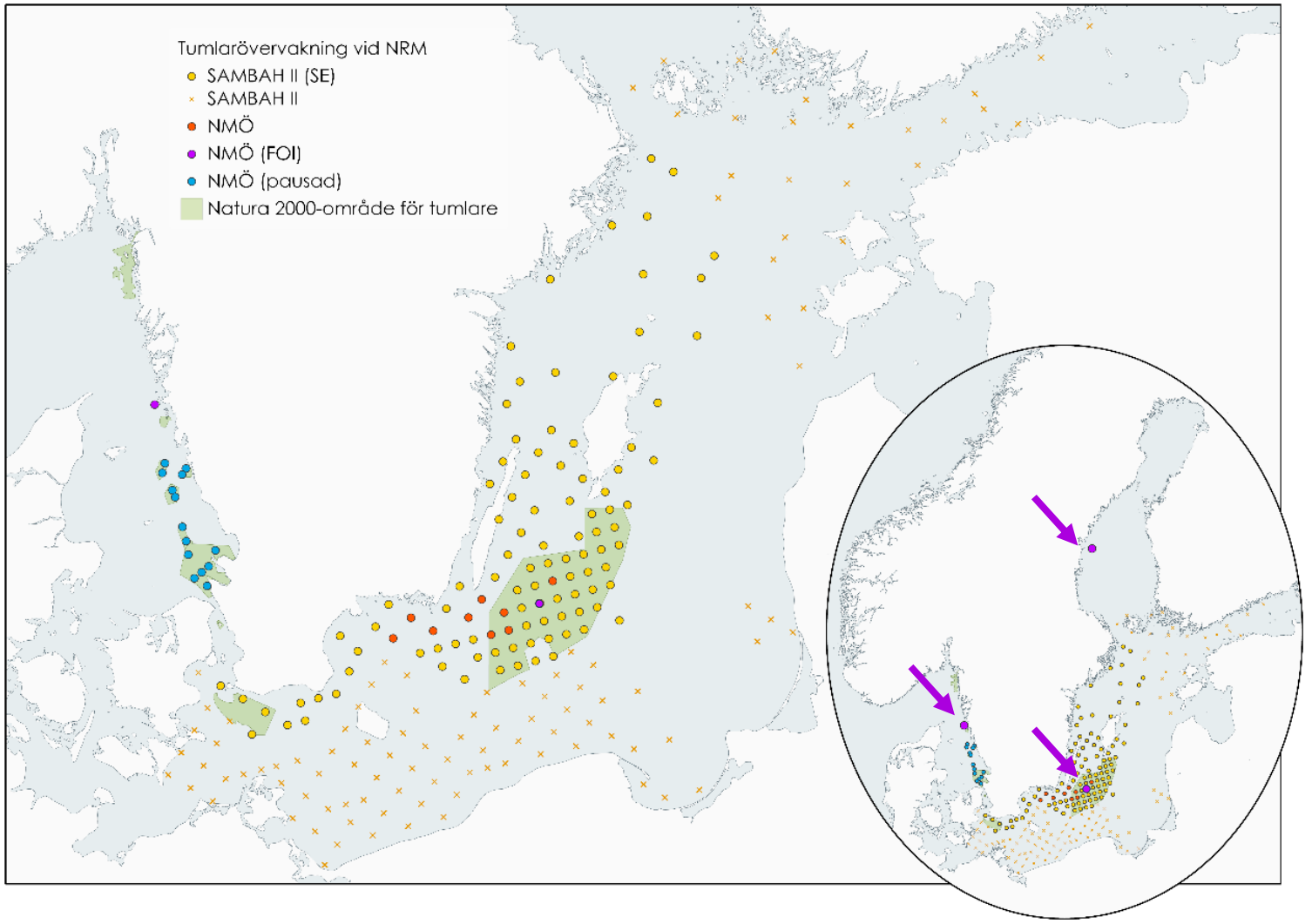
- The Swedish bycatch monitoring program (DCF) with onboard observers and voluntary electronic monitoring
  - Skagerrak (SD 20) re-introduced in the programme in 2025-2026
  - 2025-2026 target to cover tot 8% of gillnet fishing effort in the NS area
  - Bycatch data from more years needed for reliable estimates, some modelling started
  - Estimates from the bycatch programme for Belt Sea area, presented during joint session (Säterberg *et al.* 2026, in review)
- Continuous bycatch data collection in the ‘general’ DCF sampling programmes (NS area included)
- Participating in international projects and working groups (CIBBRiNA, EcoCatch, ICES etc.)

# **2.3** Implement and assess pinger and other mitigation measures to reduce bycatch (**MIT-01**)

- Evaluating harbour porpoise presence around a (145dB) pinger developed by Fishtek Marine. On/off trials with F-pods.
- Study on two pinger models developed by Future Ocean and Fishtek Marine in commersial fisheries (2024-2025)
- Functionality tests on commercial pingers
- CIBBRINA and other international projects (pearl nets, pingers and development of alternative gears, e.g. Danish 'mini' seine and pontoon fyke nets)
- Regular communication within the monitoring programme and other meetings with fishermen
- Ongoing gear development (e.g. Danish mini seine net for flatfish, push-up fyke nets for mixed fish).

# RES-03 Understanding of variation in abundance and distribution

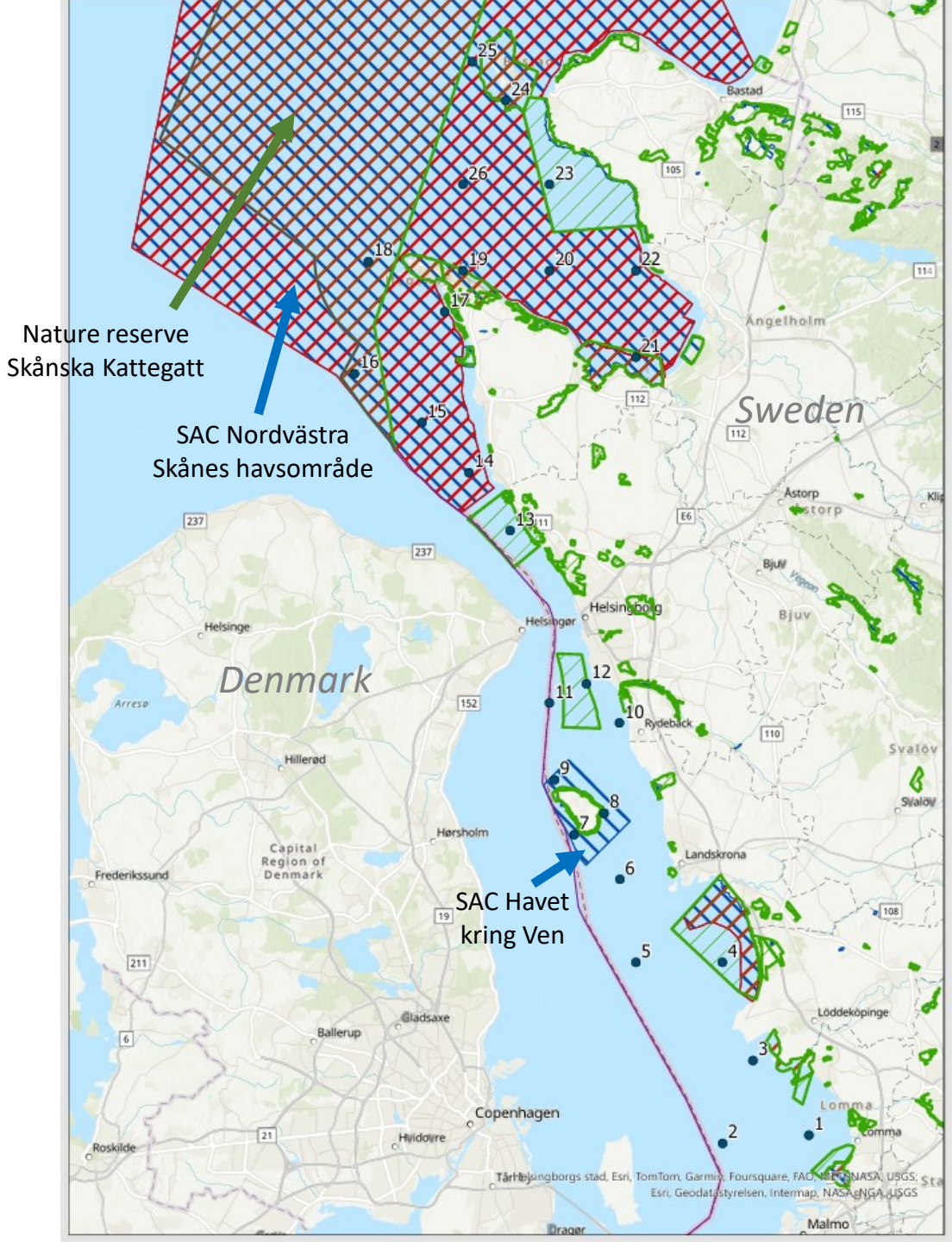
- CPOD stations managed by NRM (red stations continue after SAMBAH II, blue paused but to be picked up again)
- 3 joint CPOD and noise stations, collaboration between FOI and NRM
- All funded by SwAM



# RES-03 Understanding of variation in abundance and distribution

POSEIDON project

- Aim: Environmental drivers of distribution
- Lund University in collaboration with CAB Skåne and municipalities
- 28 F-POD monitoring stations
- 3 eDNA sampling stations
- 2+ years (since summer 2024)



# RES-04 Further our understanding of population structure

- NRM in collaboration with University of Copenhagen
- PorpAdapt: Radiation and adaptation of harbour porpoises within the North Atlantic
- Starts in January 2027
- ~300 genomes
- Range-wide fine-scale management units, document local adaptations, assess genome erosion

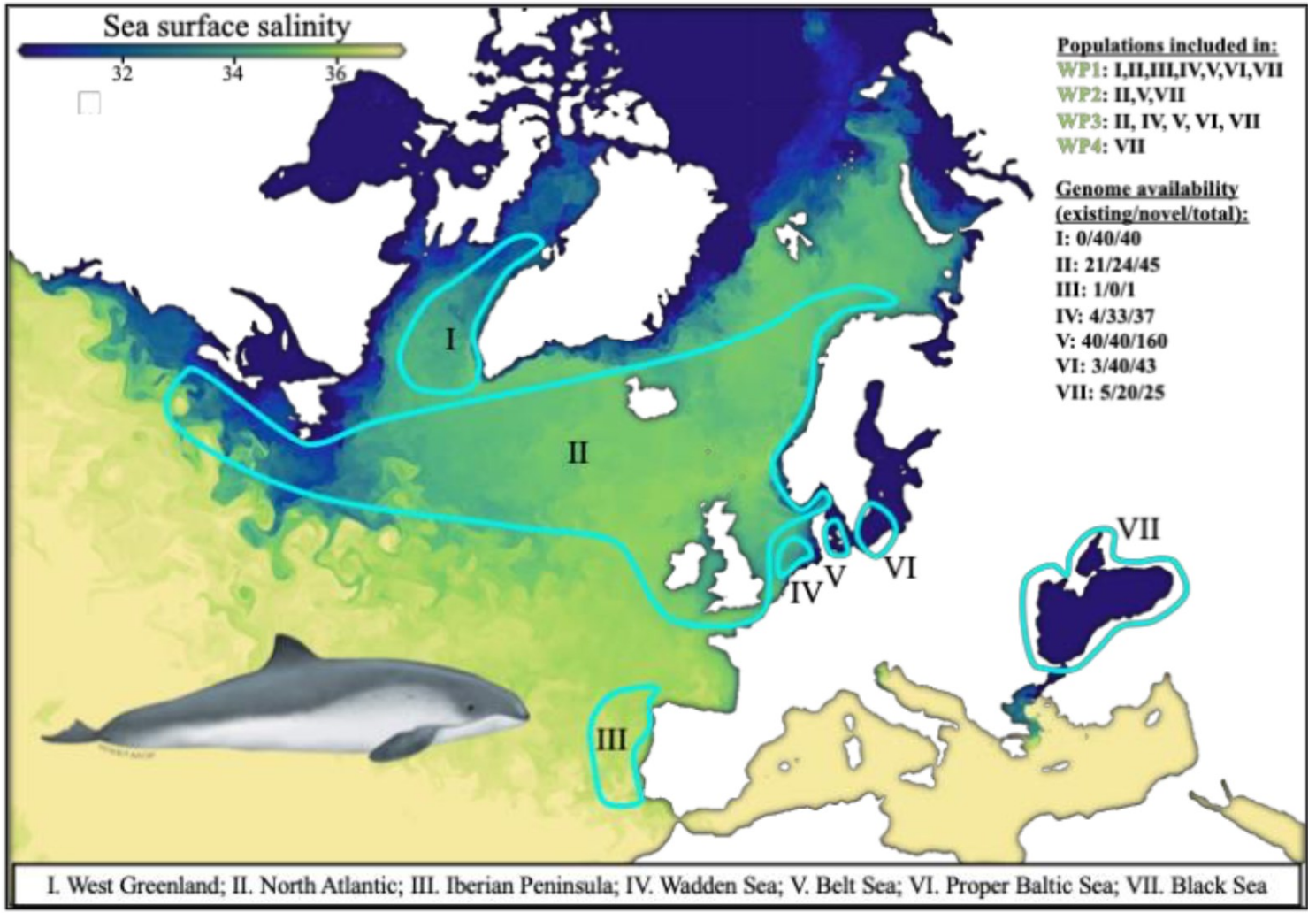
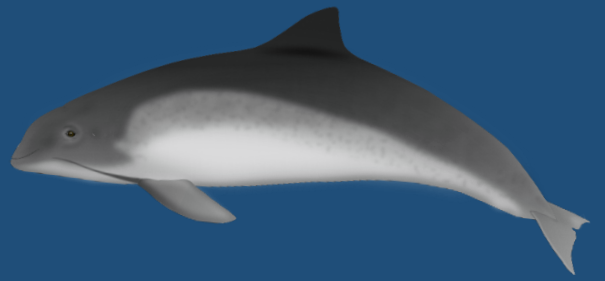


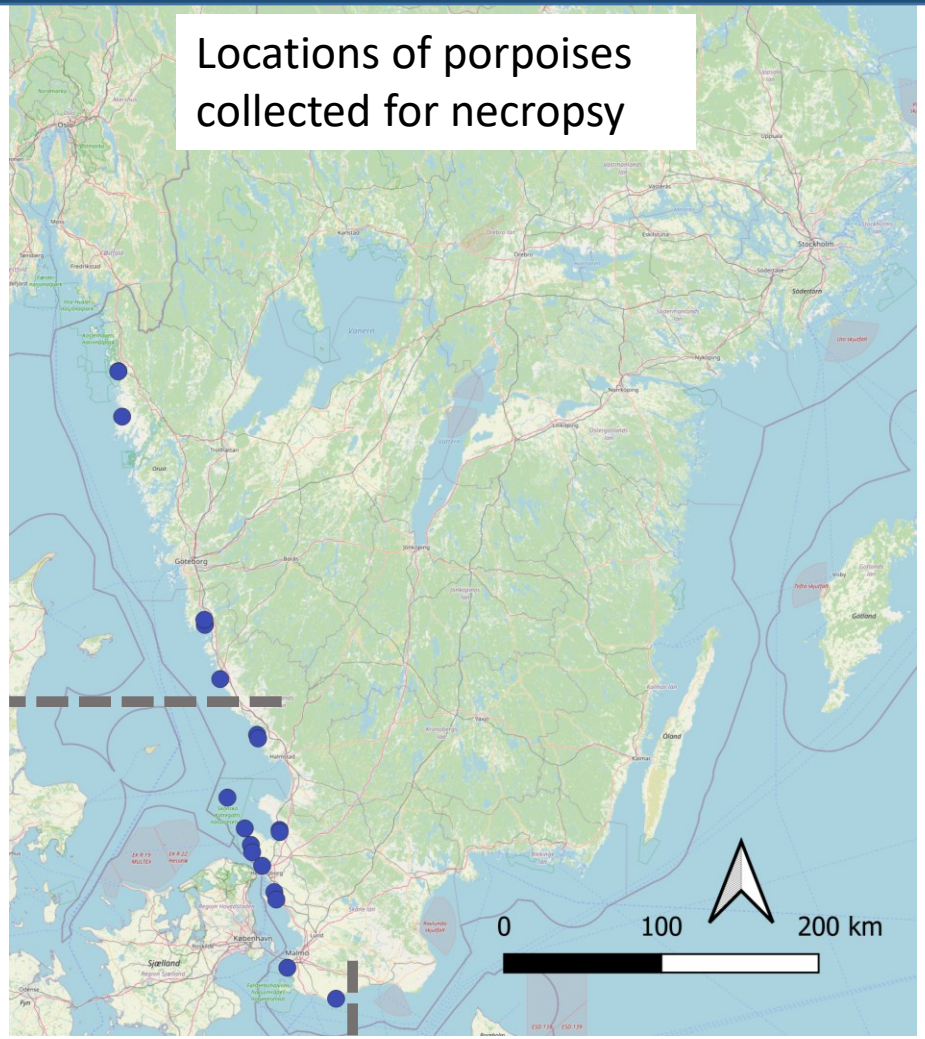

**Figure 1:** North Atlantic sea surface salinity from Jan 2020. Possible harbour porpoise management units (MUs) are outlined in teal. MUs involved in analyses for WPs are indicated (top right) followed by sample numbers with the number of existing genomes/new genomes/total number that will be available for PorpAdapt.

# MON-02 Monitor health, diet, life history, causes of mortality



Within national health and disease surveillance program:

- 93 individual porpoises were reported stranded in 2025 and 1 was submitted as bycatch by fishermen
  - Peak stranding reports in August and other summer months
  - Bycatch submissions decreased, ongoing efforts to address this
- 19 porpoises were examined by necropsy in 2025 (10 females, 9 males) following ASCOBANS/ACCOBAMS 'Best practice for cetacean post-mortem' protocol
- Health, reproductive status, cause of death determined; samples archived for diet, contaminant, genetic studies
- Data openly available at www.dataportal.se (key word 'cetacean')



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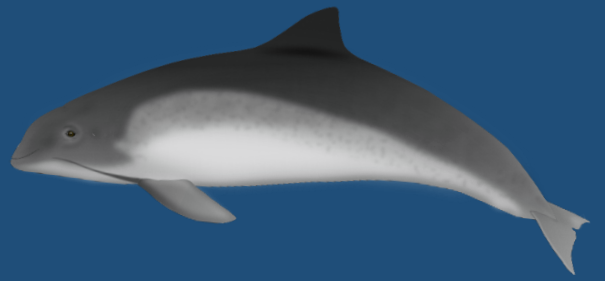

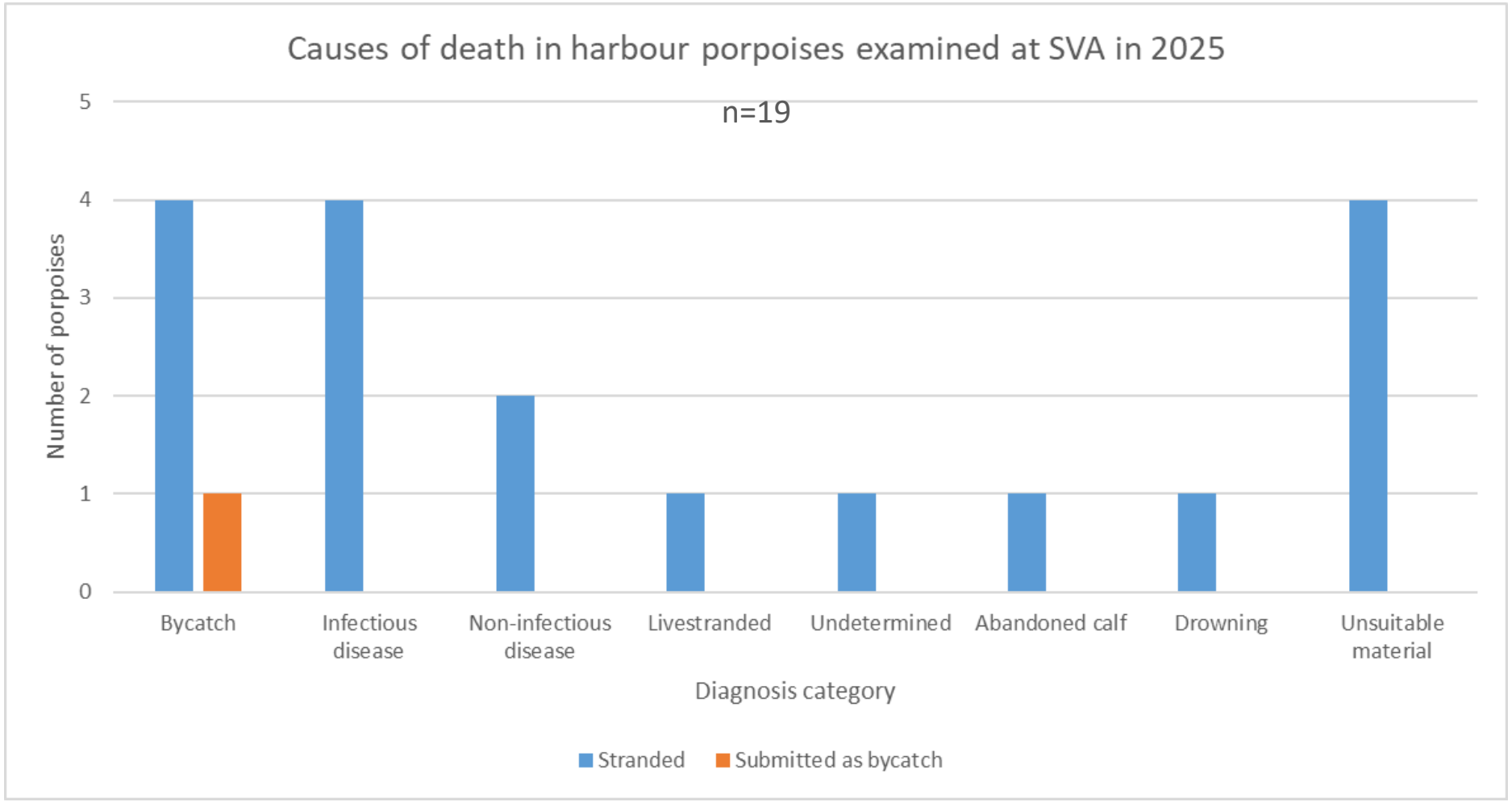

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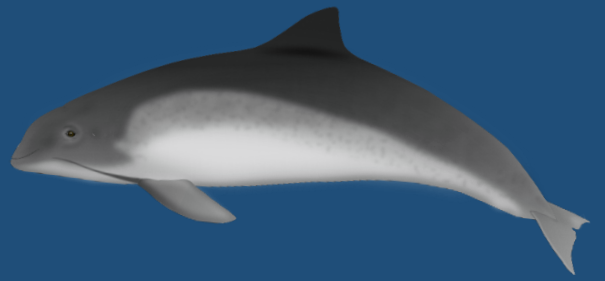
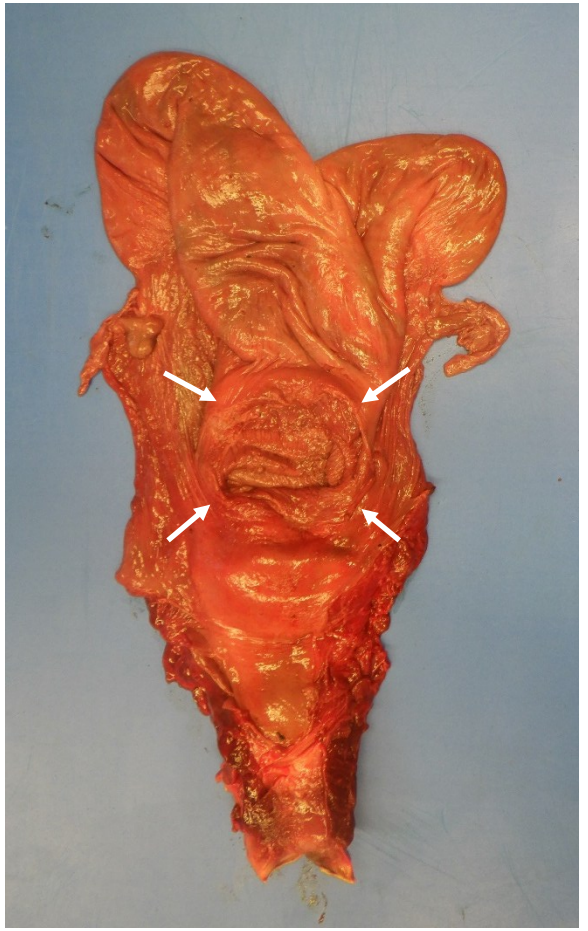


- Bycaught animals (submitted by fishermen and found stranded) continue to show significant health findings such as skin lesions, pneumonia and heavy parasitism
- Reproductive disorders/birthing complications continue to be documented:
  - a 6 year-old female and her full-term fetus died following uterine rupture
  - 1 stillborn calf stranded in June
  - 8 documented cases of reproductive disorders from 2020-2025



Uterine rupture (white arrows) during birthing Photo: SVA

# MIT-02 Noise mitigation

National guidance on pile driving by SwAM on:

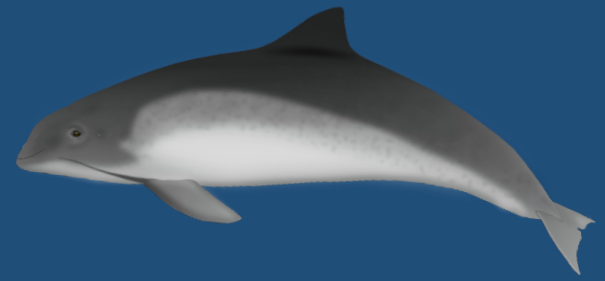
- Thresholds
- Noise modelling
- Mitigation measures
- Control programmes for marine mammals and fish

# MIT-02 Noise mitigation

Reports on methods for reducing underwater noise from **recreational vessels** and **ships** by the Swedish Transport Agency

- Review of current knowledge
- Possible mitigation measures in Swedish waters
- National seminars held, reports soon to be published
- Funded by SwAM

# MON-03 Ensure screening and assessment of the occurrence and effects of hazardous substances



- Samples from 50 porpoises from 2017-2025 with full necropsy data are being analysed for a large variety of environmental contaminants:
  - Heavy metals including mercury
  - 65 different poly- and perfluorinated chemicals (PFAS) as well as extractable organofluorine (EOF)
  - Most of these animals were also analysed for PCBs

- Results will be available later in 2026

# Relevant links/citations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- Havs- och vattenmyndigheten. 2025. Vägledning vid pålning till havs - bedömning och begränsning av akustisk påverkan på fisk och marina däggdjur. Rapport 2025:18.
- Königson, S., Naddafi, R., Amundin, M., Öhman, K., Pärn, H., Benavente Norrman, E., Björklund Aksoy, S., Fonseca Pilzecker, R. 2026. Harbour porpoise and harbour seal bycatch in gillnet fisheries: Effects of high frequency acoustic deterrents, gear characteristics, and environmental factors. In review; ICES Journal of Marine Science.
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- Swedish Transport Agency draft reports on underwater noise from recreational vessels and ships (in Swedish): Seminarier om undervattensbuller från sjöfart och fritidsbåtar den 16–17 mars – Transportstyrelsen
- Säterberg, T., Königson, S., Persson, A. S. M., Pärn, H., Ringdahl, K., Nyberg, S. 2026. Spatiotemporal patterns in harbour porpoise (*Phocoena phocoena*) bycatch in the Swedish gillnet fishery. In review; Global Ecology and Conservation.
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