

Water quality and aquaculture: legislative challenges in the Åland islands

Petra Granholm, Åland Government,
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The Åland islands- background

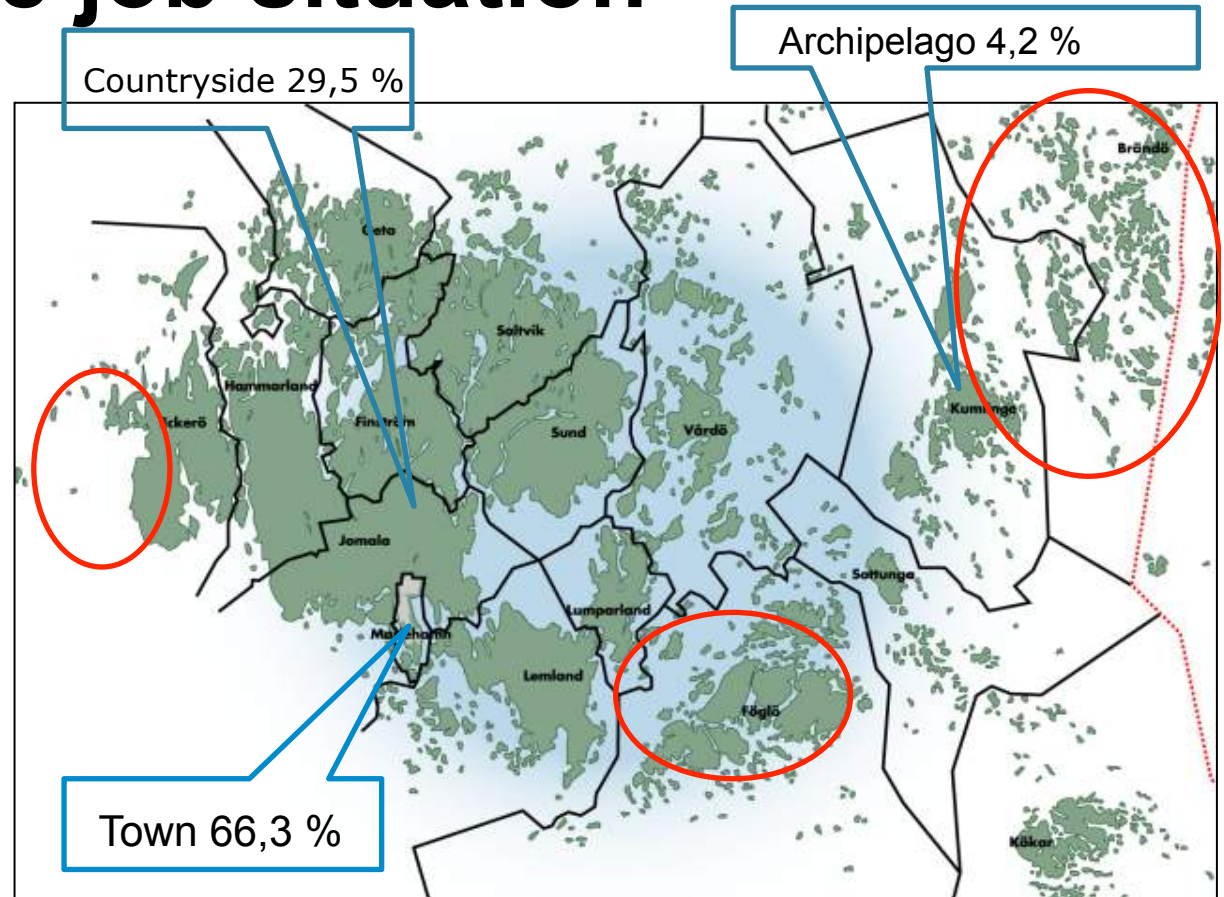
- Swedish-speaking, autonomous region in the Baltic Sea
- Part of Finland
- Legislative competence in the fields of environment and fisheries
- Part of EU → bound by WFD and MSFD
- "Small but important" aquaculture sector



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Aland and the job situation



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Aquaculture on the Åland Islands

- Open sea cages in archipelago environment since the 1970's
- Dominated by rainbow trout farming
- Pilot-scale mussel farming
- Governmental vision of aquaculture growth within ecologically sustainable limits and a full nutrient cycle by 2030



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Aquaculture and water quality

- Fish farming "blamed" for problems with eutrophication
- Bad location → local environmental degradation
- Today better technology and legislation → better spots, less negative effects
- Improvement in feeds
- But political and public opinion linger...



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STOP SECTION



- Water Act : "special quality norms for eutrophication" with direct binding effect
 - if not in place or fulfilled, no new or amended production
 - (no norms established)
 - If you cannot show that your activity will not lead to further eutrophication
 - No new environmental permits
 - Aquaculture stagnation



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Is having good water quality and fish farming impossible?



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Aquabest- best aquaculture practices for the BSR

- Towards closing the nutrient loop in practice and legislation!



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Baltic Sea Fish Feed

- Using BS raw materials in fish feed in BS fish farms
 1. herring and sprat
 2. non-commercial fish
 3. mussel meal
- Three roundtable meetings with industry, academia and authorities to find common ground
- Working definition chosen, now legislation



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Closing the nutrient loop in legislation

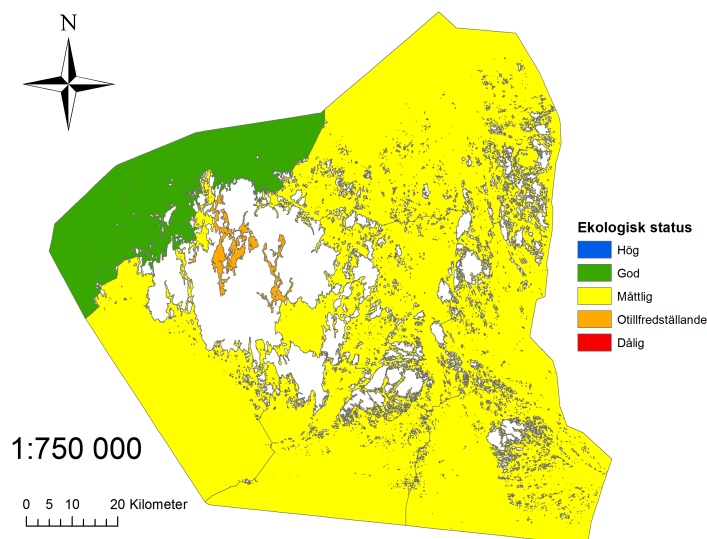
- Include BSFF in legislation
 - into environmental permits
 - larger permits, i.e. expansion as an incentive to use BSFF

Coupled with...

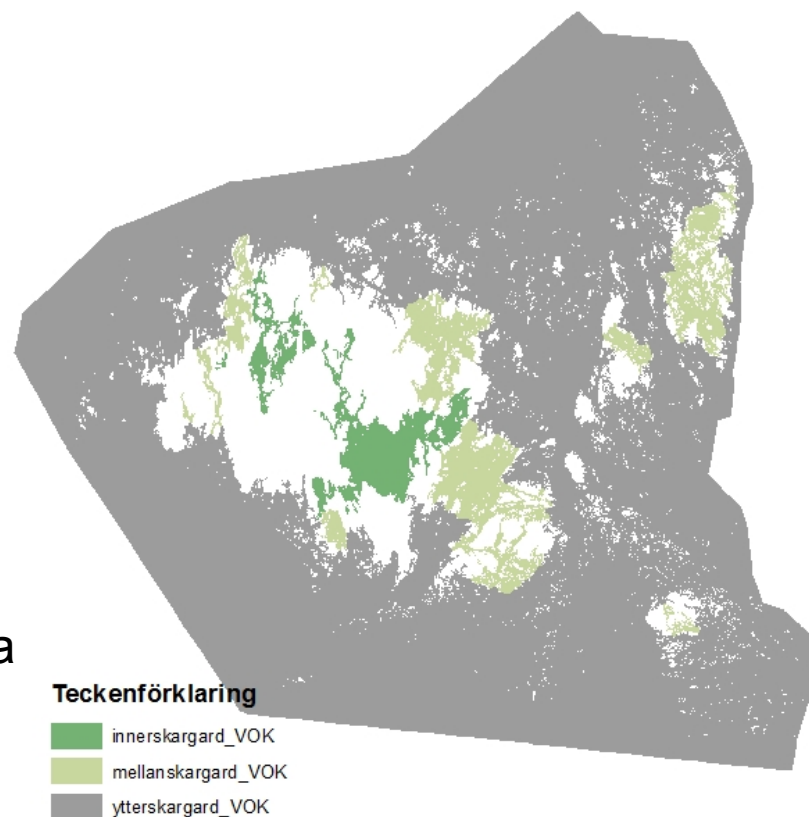
...better localisation

- Åland working on a localisation plan á la Finnish plan
- Develop the already existing Fish Farming Decree

Water quality and localisation



As fish farms move further out, they are more a nutrient load on the BS as a whole than locally (with relevance for the WFD)



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Modernise public opinion – and you will reach the politics

- Fish farming is a way to produce climate-smart, healthy and local food!
- Through better localisation and Baltic Sea-based fish feed we can combat the eutrophication issues!
- Fish farming creates important job opportunities in sparsely populated areas!



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Challenges

- Create the necessary mechanisms in legislation that gives incentives to use improvement measures such as BSFF
- Integrate this legislation and thought-through aquaculture localisation plans in environmental permitting (big gap in Åland and Finland today!)
- Link work with WFD and MSFD with environmental permitting



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And...

- Continue searching for sustainable raw materials in feed, best locations for aquaculture, new innovative nutrient abatement measures



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How can the uncertainty about the legal and regulatory framework be reduced? And do we need a common policy approach throughout the Baltic Sea Region?

- The "Aquabest-way": by modernising and harmonising environmental legislation in similar ways in all BS states → cooperation essential!

Thank you for your attention!



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