

Why Caspian seals need the biodiversity protocol



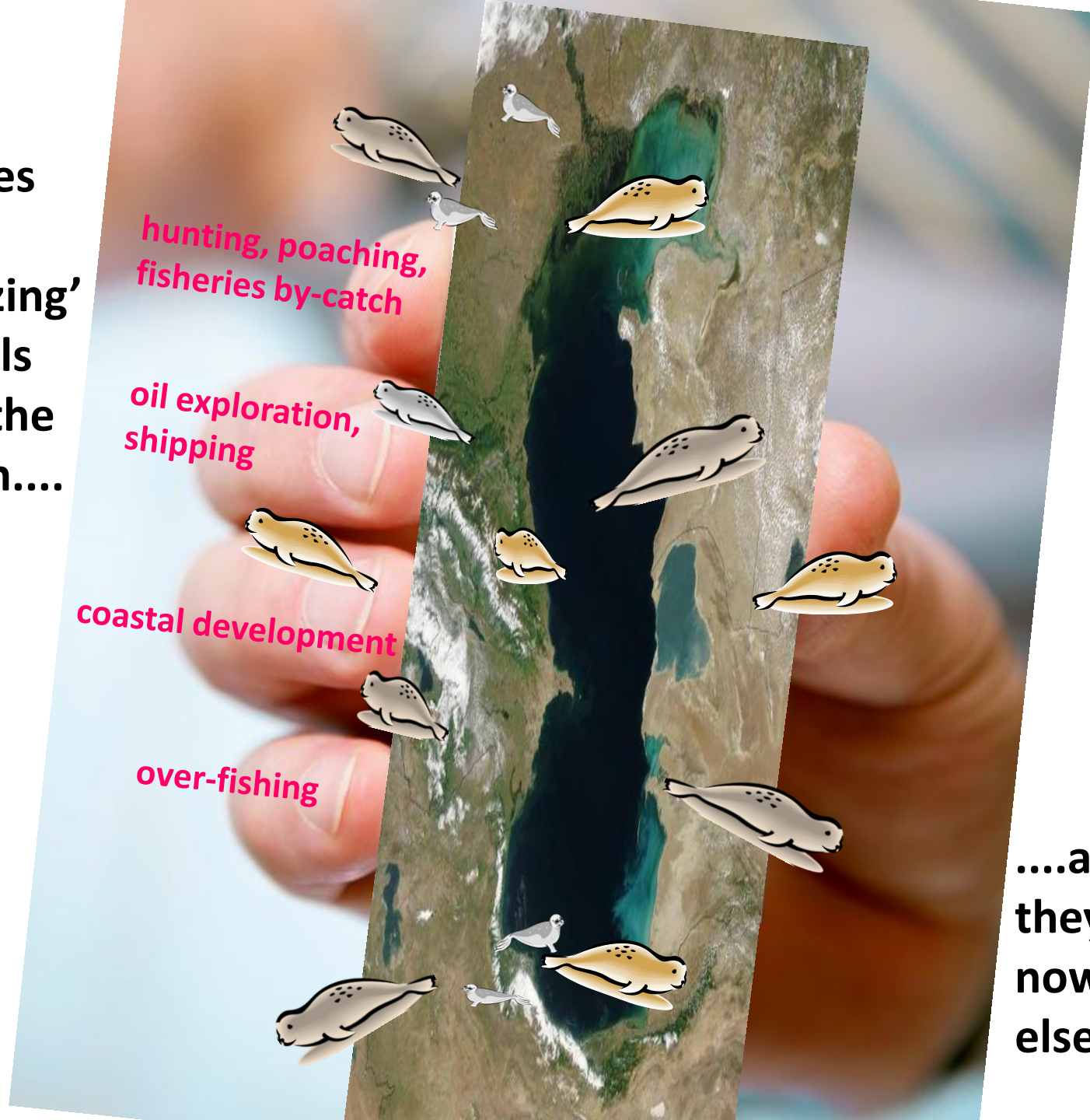


Biodiversity conservation in the Caspian means protection of the seals' sea, ice and coastal habitats and conservation of the complexity of the ecosystem at all trophic levels.

The Caspian seal is the top predator in the Caspian – for millennia the seal population has been sculpting the Caspian ecosystem by its selective predation at the top trophic level, historically resulting in maintaining a stable equilibrium amongst fish species at lower trophic levels. The converse is also true: the present depleted seal population needs a healthy and diverse ecosystem to recover. The seals also need their essential sea, ice and coastal habitats protected from human occupation, degradation and disturbance.

The Caspian seal is a flagship species for the Caspian

Human activities are 'squeezing' the seals out of the Caspian....

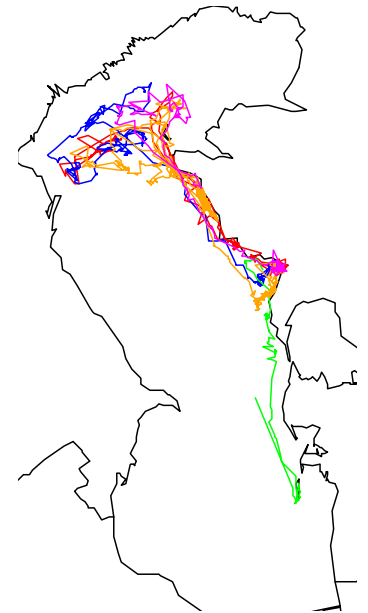


....and they have nowhere else to go

Biodiversity Protocol.....in relation to seals

Article 2

- To safeguard and ensure the long-term viability of the seal and the ecosystem of which it is the top predator
- to apply the precautionary principle to prevent decline of the species and degradation of habitat and over-exploitation of fish prey species
- to protect areas representing the seals' essential habitats – ice-breeding habitat, coastal and island moulting and resting sites, migration corridors and foraging areas

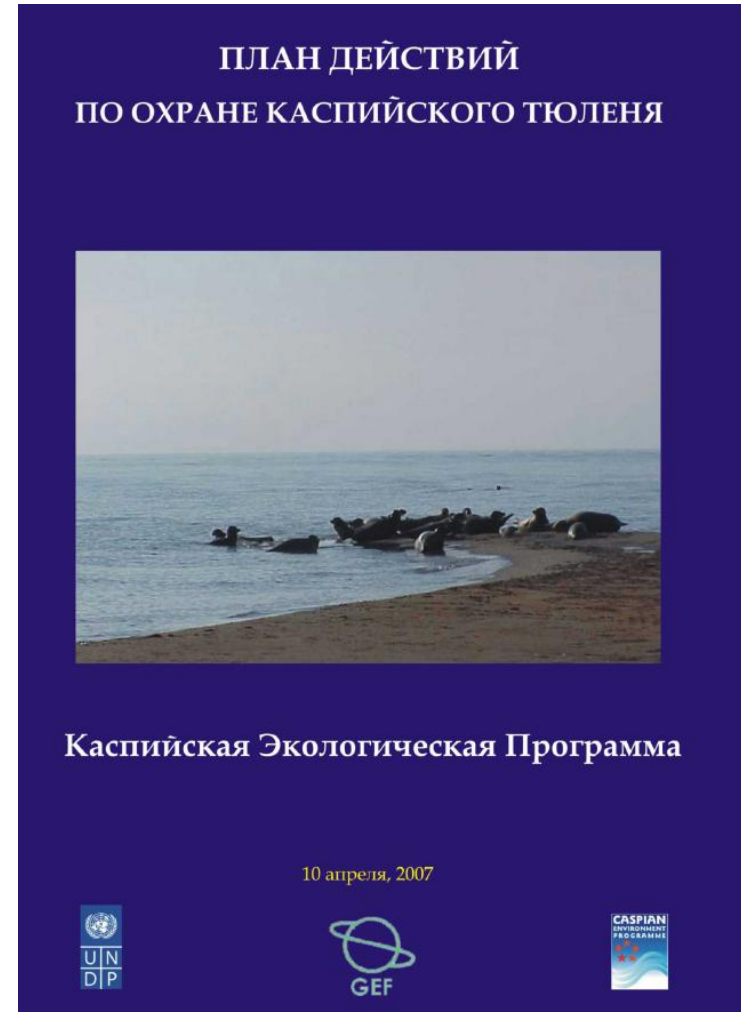
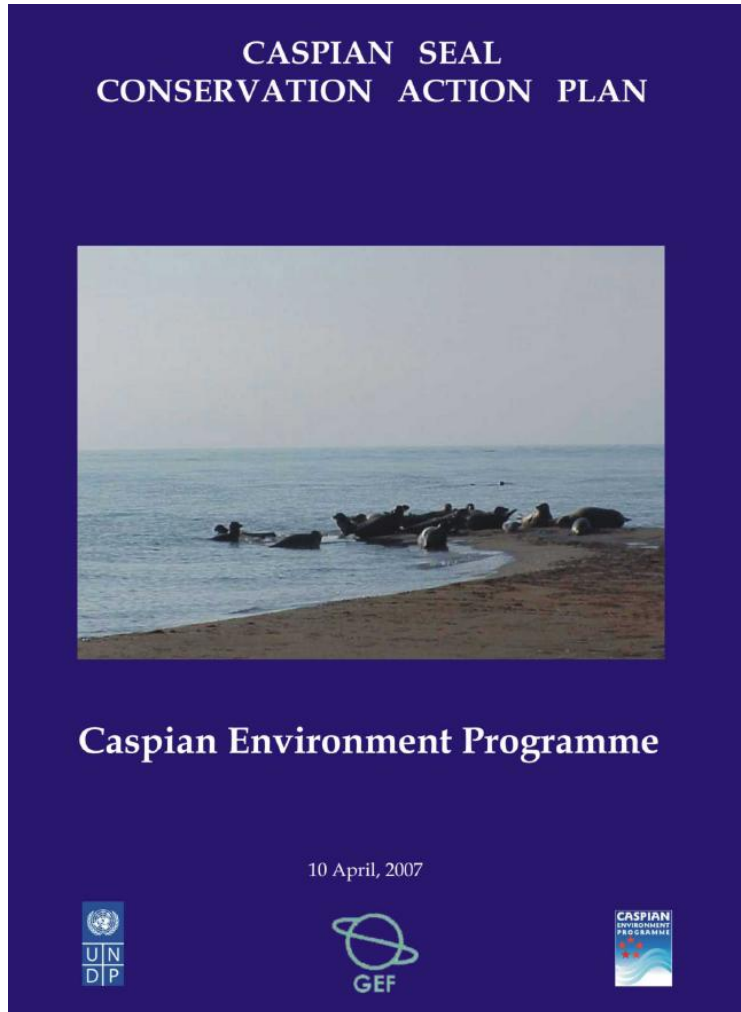


Biodiversity Protocol

Article 6 Measures for species conservation and protection

- (a) Include seal in Caspian red book of threatened species
- (b) draw up list of activities in each State which have adverse effects on Caspian seal and regulate these activities
- (c) Monitor all deliberate and accidental taking of seals and make annual report to the Convention Secretariat
- (d) Draw up inventory in each state of activities that disturb Caspian seals, especially during breeding and moulting
- (e) Regulate all forms of killing and disturbance to seals, including fishing and encroachment of human developments on to their breeding, resting and moulting sites
- (f) Ensure cooperative transboundary conservation network – CSCN, with regional and national seal centres.
- (g) Continue long-term monitoring of Caspian seal breeding in winter ice-field – trends in annual pup production on ice is an indicator of seal conservation status

Article 6(f) - regional action plan is already in place, but has not yet been implemented



Biodiversity Protocol

Article 9 Designation of protected areas



breeding



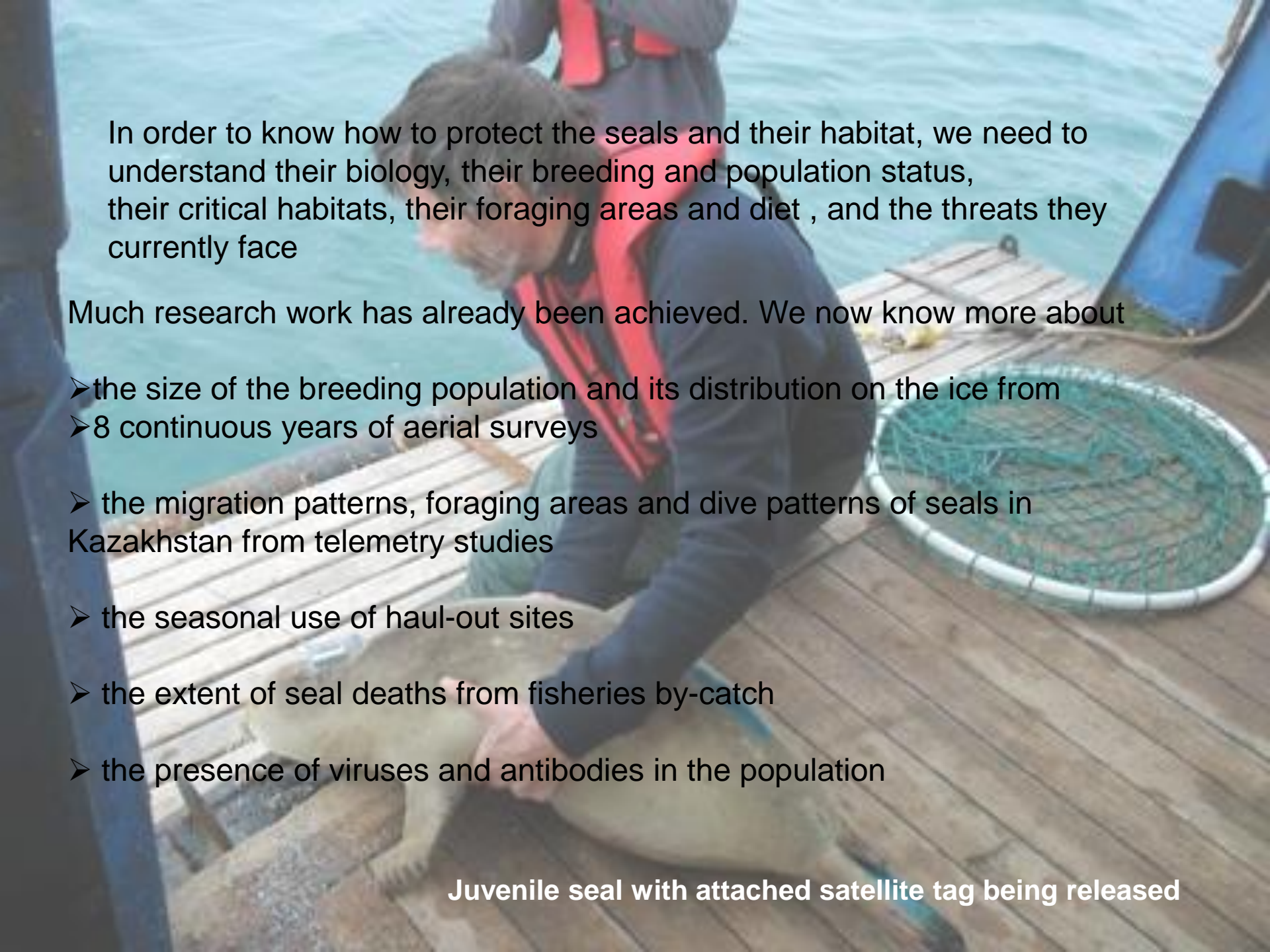
moulting



Foraging at sea



Resting on shore



In order to know how to protect the seals and their habitat, we need to understand their biology, their breeding and population status, their critical habitats, their foraging areas and diet , and the threats they currently face

Much research work has already been achieved. We now know more about

- the size of the breeding population and its distribution on the ice from
- 8 continuous years of aerial surveys
- the migration patterns, foraging areas and dive patterns of seals in Kazakhstan from telemetry studies
- the seasonal use of haul-out sites
- the extent of seal deaths from fisheries by-catch
- the presence of viruses and antibodies in the population

Juvenile seal with attached satellite tag being released

CASPECO PROJECT COMPONENT I

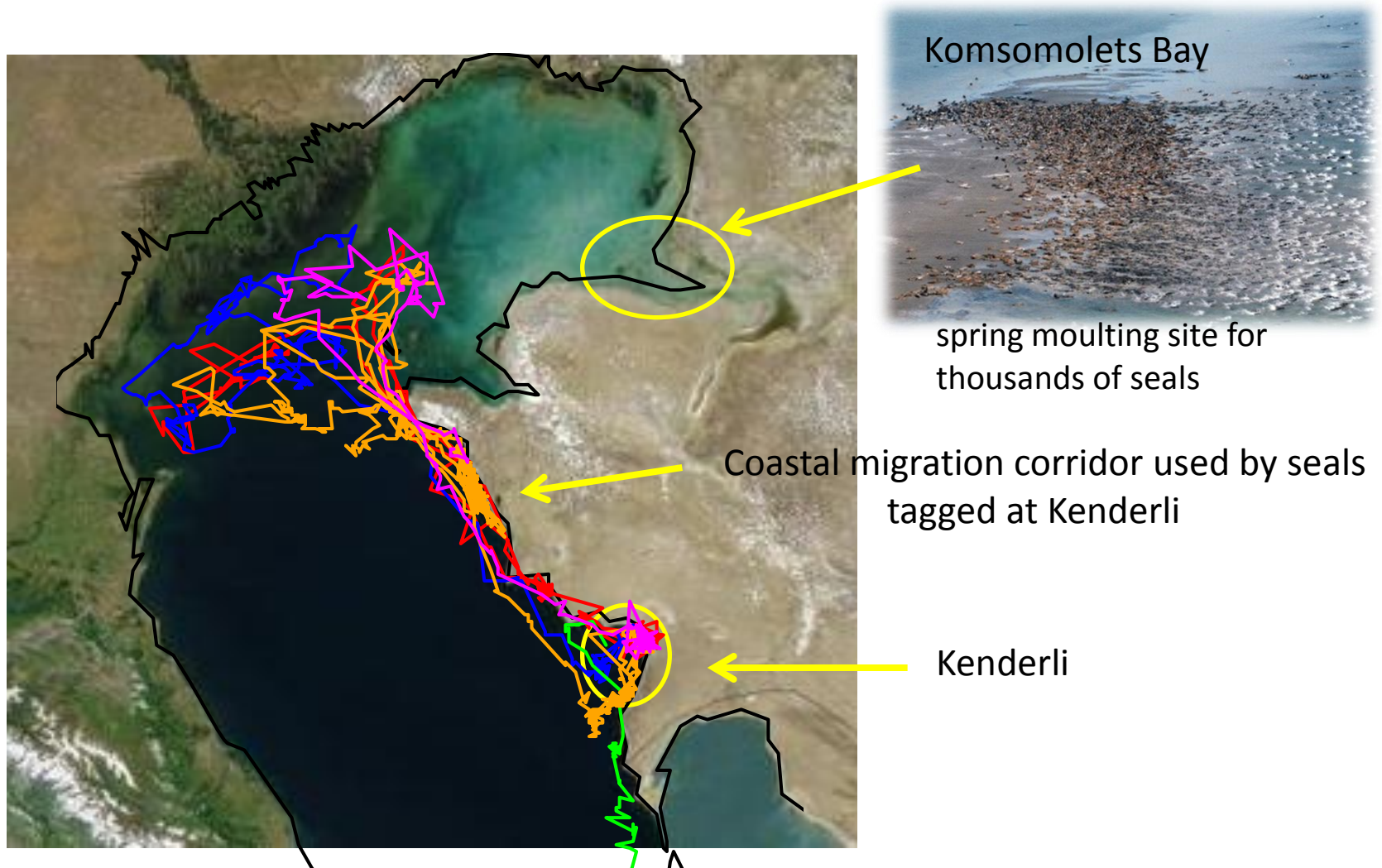
CREATION OF SPECIAL PROTECTED AREAS FOR THE CASPIAN SEAL

(c) Critical habitats for the Caspian seal throughout the Caspian were identified under the Caspeco SSPA project and protected areas in Kazakhstan agreed for pilot implementation. The sites were selected on the basis of aerial surveys and a ongoing satellite telemetry programme.



Fig. 1. Potential candidate Special Protected Areas (SSPA) for the Caspian seal. Orange Category 2 sea icons indicates potential at sea SSPA. Blue Category 1. Red: Category 1. Blue: Category 2.

The pilot SSPAs chosen are Komsomolets Bay (principal moulting site for the breeding population), Kenderli (resting site for all age groups throughout the year) and the Kazakh coastal migration corridor



Biodiversity Protocol

Article 10 Management of protected areas

Section 1: regulation of vessels, fishing, construction, exploration, scientific research methods, fishing

Section 2: monitoring, involvement and training of local communities, SSPA Managers and scientific personnel

Seal monitoring is to be included under the **Environment Monitoring Programme (EMP)** of the Convention. It may be coordinated through the Caspian Seal Conservation Network



Baseline monitoring of seals in SSPAs

Monitoring includes regular seal counts (with photographs) and indicators of fishing effort (type, number, location of nets; onshore and offshore disturbance)

Monitoring by



Using established methodologies

Biodiversity Protocol

**Article 11 Procedures for the establishment and
listing of protected areas**

Procedure outlined, to be implemented 2013–16

CaspEco project Component 1

Seal Special Protected Area Scoping and Inception Plan

Final Report, May 2012

Prepared by

University of Leeds Consultants to CaspEco project
Kazakhstan specialists S. Timirkhanov and Z. Tleulenov

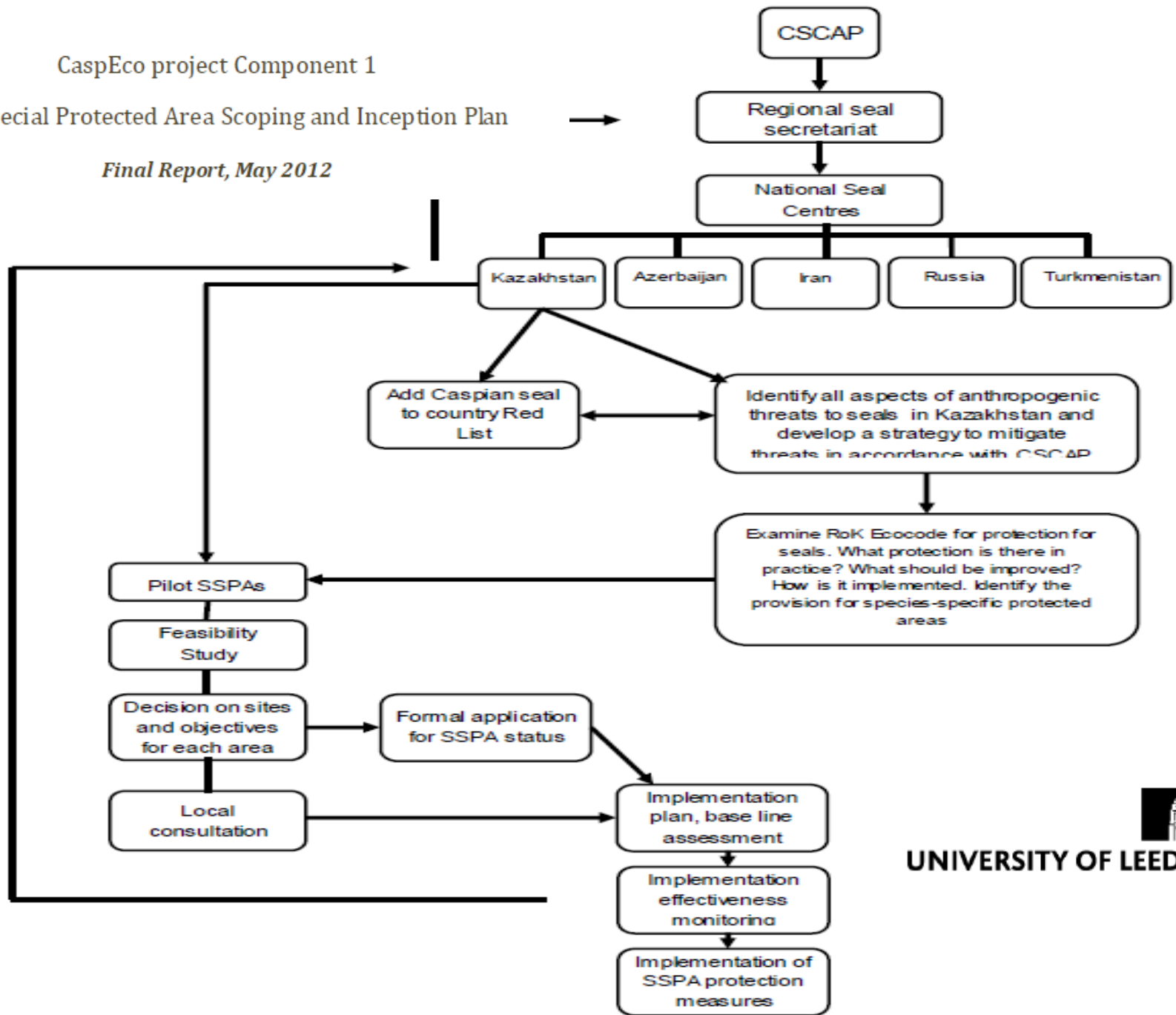


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CaspEco project Component 1

Seal Special Protected Area Scoping and Inception Plan

Final Report, May 2012



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The timetable for this process has been planned:

(x) The timing of this process should be:

2012: Start of 1–2 year feasibility study, to be ready by mid-late 2014

2014: 3rd-4th quarter of 2014 the state environmental review will be received and (in accordance with the field programme 'Zhasyl Damu' for 2010-14, the feasibility study and report authors, together with the FC (and in consultation and cooperation with the Committee of Forestry and Hunting), shall introduce the proposal of SSPA creation to the Kazakh Government.

2015: The State Budgetary Committee will make funding available for the KzSC and pilot SSPA in the budget for 2015. If this proceeds, the Kazakh Government will sign the decree on establishment of the SSPA in the middle of 2015.

2016: The management plan for SSPA will be finally approved.

Interim funding for feasibility study needed to start this process



**Possibility of Governments of Caspian States
creating a joint fund to implement
Seal Protected Areas
for the
feasibility study in Kazakhstan and implementation
throughout the Caspian into the future**

- **Administration and coordination (National and Regional Seal Centres)**
 - **Baseline Monitoring (funded through EMP)**
 - **Operational SSPA monitoring (funded through EMP)**
 - **SSPA patrolling**
 - **Alternative livelihoods (to reduce poaching)**
 - **Training, education, PR**

Much has been achieved over the past 10 years in Caspian seal conservation biology, development of the regional conservation action plan (CSCAP) and network of scientists (CSCN), and finally the preparatory work for the pilot seal protected areas (SSPAs) . The next step is to move on towards practical implementation.



Thank you for your attention

