

A National Commission for a Revision of Sweden's Maritime Limits

Background

A clear definition of geographical limits and boundaries is an important condition in order to exercise a country's jurisdiction. The existing Swedish legislation is based on a revision made in the early 1960's and is, to some extent inaccurate and complicated to interpret. This makes it impossible to use the existing legislation for production of an accurate digital version of the baseline and the territorial sea limit. The commission in the 1960's, which led to the existing legislation, also suggested that a revision of Swedish maritime limits should be made every 30 years due to land erosion and the existence of post-glacial rebound in the northern part of Sweden. In 2011 the Ministry for Foreign Affairs appointed a commission with directives to adapt Sweden's maritime limits and boundaries legislation to meet today's demands.

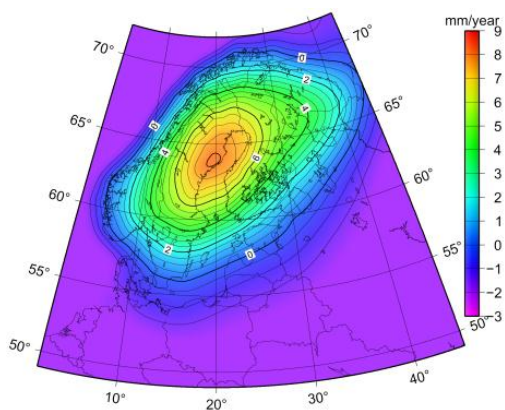


Fig 1 Post-glacial rebound in Sweden is approximately 1 cm per year in some specific areas.

Revised legislation

The commission should examine the existing Swedish legislation and propose a revised version of Sweden's legislation of maritime limits and boundaries. The new legislation should be easy to interpret and possible indirect definitions, in the existing legislation, should be eliminated.

Revision of the Swedish baseline

The commission should, based on appropriate geographical material propose an optimized revision of Sweden's baseline. The coastline, which is used as a normal baseline, and the straight baseline should be identified and stored in an accurate and correct way in order to meet the demands of today's modern applications, such as Geographical Information Systems (GIS). Appropriate geographical material should be acquired from the Hydrographic Office at the Swedish Maritime Administration (SMA), the Swedish Meteorological and Hydrological Institute and Lantmäteriet (The Swedish mapping, cadastral and land registration authority).



Fig 2 Personnel from the Swedish Hydrographic Office perform field work for a revised Swedish baseline. Here a beautiful day in May 2012.

Adjustment of the territorial sea limit

Based on the revised version of the baseline an adjusted version of the Swedish territorial sea limit should be calculated and proposed. Technical support will be required by the Hydrographic Office at SMA. In connection to this the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs could assume responsibility for approaching neighboring countries where existing agreements might be affected.

Contiguous zone

Apart from a proposed revised legislation, revision of the baseline and adjustment of the territorial sea limit the commission should also consider the possibility of establishing a contiguous zone. According to United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), article 33, all states have the option to establish a contiguous zone up to 24 nautical miles from the baselines. Within the contiguous zone the coastal state has a limited jurisdiction within the areas of customs, tax, immigration, health care and protection of archeological and historical discoveries.

Result and proposal

The national commission should propose amendment of the Swedish constitution, which the revision may lead to, and present the overall result of the commission by 31 December 2013 the latest.