



Mr. Sigurður R. Helgason
The Icelandic Sea Minerals Ltd.
(Íslenska Kalkpörungafélagið)
Hafnarteigi 4
465 Bíldudalur

Reykjavík, 18.03.2011
Tilv. 21.1.1/KAL
JS/sdk

Re: Harvesting of calcified seaweed in Arnarfjord, NW Iceland

Referring to our meeting 22 February 2011 at the Marine Research Institute (MRI), Reykjavik where environmental issues regarding the exploitation of maerl in Arnarfjord, NW Iceland were discussed. Representatives of the Íslenska Kalkpörungafélagið ehf (IK), the Icelandic Sea Minerals Ltd. expressed their emphasis on sustainable harvesting of the maerl-beds.

The IK presented a report on a recent video survey of the maerl-beds that shows large shallow areas where dead *Lithothamnion* fragments cover the bottom without the usual top-layer of living maerl with its associated fauna and flora. It is clear that limiting the harvesting to these areas instead of areas covered with live maerl will significantly reduce the ecological impact of the exploitation. It is also important here that the harvesting will be based on digging into the substrate, rather than scraping the surface horizontally to minimize the surface area affected. It is estimated that the harvesting area now affected is less than 2% of the calcified surface area in the Arnarfjord.

In shallow areas with dead *Lithothamnion* fragments covering the bottom and too shallow for the establishment of normal maerl-bed communities, harvesting will, in time increase water depth and thereby presumably improve conditions for the establishment of live flora of calcified algae.

The MRI welcomes the plans of the IK for experimenting in "re-seeding" the ditches left by the harvesting to hasten the recovery of their biota.

It may be added in this context that the MRI is initiating biological studies in the maerl-beds in the Arnarfjord area, including growth and calcification measurements of the calcified algae forming the beds.

On behalf of the Marine Research Institute,

Jóhann Sigurjónsson
Director-General

Address:

Skúlagata 4
P.O. Box 1390
121 Reykjavík
Iceland

Telephone:

+354 575-2000

Telefax:

+354 575-2001

Website:

www.hafro.is

E-mail:

hafro@hafro.is