



J.nr. 2020-13774  
July 2, 2020

### **LIFE project on management of the American mink**

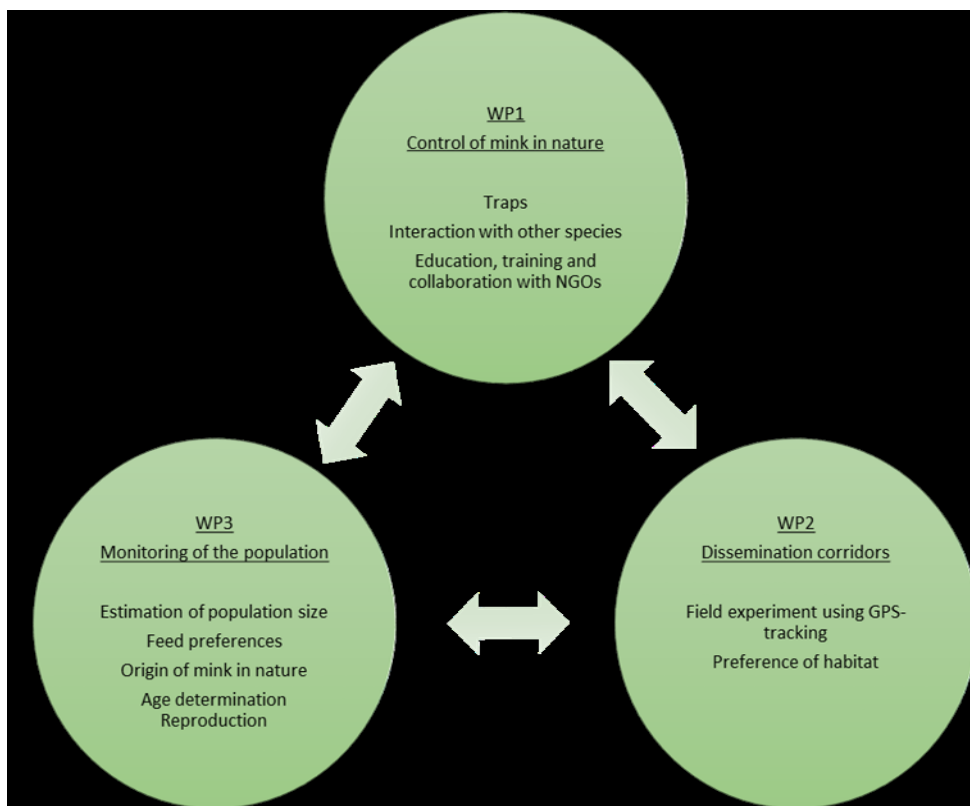
Management of the American mink would benefit from a cross-border effort and a coherent toolbox for member states striving for an optimal and efficient control or even eradication of American mink in the wild. Therefore initiating a transnational LIFE project on the American mink may support Member States with the presence of American mink. The project should focus on developing best practices and guidelines for eradication in the nature to support conservation efforts for native species affected by American Mink. Best practice projects means projects that apply appropriate, cost-effective, state-of-the-art techniques, methods and approaches taking into account the specific context of the project.

### **Proposal for a LIFE project regarding the American mink**

Denmark propose a LIFE project regarding the management of the American mink (*Neovison vison*) and propose that the project should run for a period of four years.

This project should build on knowledge and local knowhow from previous projects (e.g. LIFE projects in Spain, Poland and France) on controlling American mink in nature and ensure synergy between the scientific knowledge and practical field experiences with control of American mink to protect endangered species.

Denmark has identified topics that may be covered in three work packages as drafted in figure 1:



**Figure 1: Work packages (WP) in the LIFE project regarding the American mink (*Neovison vison*).**

### Work package 1: Control of mink in nature:

The purpose of this work package is to establish the most cost-effective method to manage American mink in nature. The work package will focus on establishing a network of volunteers to assist in the practical control and to evaluate efficiency of traps in a given area in order to minimize by-catch and injuries on trapped animals in live traps. The results will form the basis for a best practice for setting traps and identify optimal locations for trapping in different types of habitats. In connection with work package 2 intervention studies of the efficacy of trapping in dissemination corridors may be carried out.

This work package may address items like:

- Establish education, information and cooperation with relevant NGO's
- Trap types - live catch vs. kill traps
- Identify optimal location of traps
- Trap supervision (e.g. physical, remote)
- Development/use of traps with recognition of trapped species. (Only American mink can activate the traps while other species cannot activate the traps)
- Interaction between American mink and relevant species (e.g. otter, European mink).

### Work package 2: Dissemination corridors

The purpose of this work package is to provide information on dissemination routes, dispersal distance, and survival rate. This work package will include experimental studies using a GPS tracking device to identify the pathways from the farm to the preferred habitat. The results can provide important information regarding catch of newly escaped farm mink and identify optimal placing of traps in dissemination corridors. If efficient, the number of mink surviving in an area and the proportion of farmed mink will decrease.

This work package may include tasks like:

- Experimental studies using farmed mink with a GPS tracking device to assess the dissemination corridors from a farm
- Identify habitat preferences

### Work package 3: Population monitoring

The purpose of this work package is to develop practical methods to monitor the population in focus areas where control is ongoing. Further, the task will focus on examination of all mink trapped in nature. For each mink age, weight and length will be measured using a standardized protocol and reproductive success in females. The measures can establish the origin of the trapped mink: farm or nature. In addition, a feed preference study can evaluate if there is a difference in feed preferences between newly escaped mink and mink born in the nature. The results from the female reproduction success and age of the mink give possibilities to determine the turnover rate as well as the hunting pressure in the area. These assessments can assist to address the optimal focus in the area: e.g. reduce survival of unintentional escapes through increased trapping in dissemination corridors, or to increase hunting pressure.

This work package may include:

- Methods for accurate estimation of population size. Focus on establishing practical methods for nonprofessionals
- Determine the origin of the mink (farmed or born in nature)
- Feed preference study
- Assessing the age of trapped mink
- Evaluate female reproduction success
- Calculation of turn over and hunting pressure/killing rate

### **Future actions to proceed forward with a LIFE project on American mink**

Member States can apply for LIFE funded projects on the management of American mink, locally, nationally or transnationally in collaboration between several Member States. Denmark propose to use the EU LIFE programme as a tool for protection of native species and effective management of the American mink as an invasive alien species. A project on the management of American mink is expected to belong to the “Nature and Biodiversity” priority area.

The EU co-financing rate is typically around 55%, but within the Nature and Biodiversity priority area it can go up to 60% or 75% in specific cases. Furthermore, co-funding from the mink production sector should be pursued.

The LIFE application process is initiated by submitting a concept note of 10 pages. If the concept is selected to the second stage, a full project proposal based on the feedback from the LIFE programme can be submitted.

A full-time position must be set aside to prepare the concept notes – and if selected to the second stage - the full application in order to ensure coordination with the other applicant countries. Denmark are willing to take lead if requested by other LIFE partners, provided the Danish national funding can be achieved. Further on in the process it may be appropriate if different Member States are responsible for each of the three work packages. Member States may choose which or all of the three work packages they are interested in participating in.

Each Member State has a national LIFE contact point that can assist with the application. These national contact points organize information and networking events and proposal writing workshops in the different EU countries.

Member States interested in joining a LIFE programme application is asked to contact the Danish representative no later than the 25<sup>th</sup> of September 2020 in order to be included in a future workshop to write the concept notes. Kindly do this by email to [cabal@mfvm.dk](mailto:cabal@mfvm.dk) cc. [merje@mfvm.dk](mailto:merje@mfvm.dk) with your name, title, email, organisation, country and which of the three work packages they are interested in participating in.

Also please, do not hesitate to contact Caroline Bald at [cabal@mfvm.dk](mailto:cabal@mfvm.dk) if you have any questions.

### **Tentative timetable for further work on a LIFE project on management of the American mink**

<b>Tentative timetable</b>	<b>Action</b>
<b>September 2020</b>	Interest of declaration from Member States
<b>September-December 2020</b>	Inputs from Member States to be addressed at the workshop
<b>December 2020</b>	Workshop including interested scientific partners. Output: draft concept note
<b>March 2021</b>	Member States ensure funding for the work packages of preliminary interest according to declarations in drafted concept notes
<b>July 2021</b>	Deadline for applicants to submit concept notes
<b>October 2021</b>	Notification of applicants if their concept note has been pre-selected: shortlisted applicants are invited to submit full proposals
<b>February 2022</b>	Deadline for applicants to submit full project proposals. Notification of applicants if their proposal has been selected
<b>July 2022</b>	Signature of individual grant agreements