



METSO Newsletter

NEWSLETTER OF THE FOREST BIODIVERSITY PROGRAMME FOR SOUTHERN FINLAND 2008-2016 (METSO)

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FINLAND'S NEW METSO PROGRAMME TO FURTHER ENCOURAGE VOLUNTARY CONSERVATION

The METSO Forest Biodiversity Programme for Southern Finland for the period 2008 - 2016, approved by the Government on 27.3.2008, will continue to promote voluntary conservation schemes similar to those tested in the programme's pilot phase. The pilot showed that the most effective way to preserve biodiversity in the mainly privately-owned forests of Southern Finland is to get forest-owners committed to conservation on a voluntary basis.

The METSO Programme will be kick-started with the protection of 10,000 hectares of State-owned forests in Southern Finland by 2010. The main focus of the new programme will nevertheless be in private forests, where new schemes will be increasingly adopted from 2010 onwards, following the completion of earlier conservation programmes. The first sub-programme, preparation of the ecological site selection criteria for the METSO Programme, is due to be finalised by the end of May 2008.

Funding already ear-marked for the next four years

The recent Government decision has enabled the METSO Programme to get fully under way. The programme will run for nine years, overlapping the periods in office of at least three governments. Funding decisions have so far guaranteed 182 million euros of financing for the programme until 2012. "This is an unprecedented investment in safeguarding forest biodiversity," said environment minister **Kimmo Tiilikainen** at the programme's launch. During the years 2008-09 previous nature conservation programmes will be completed at a cost of some 80 million euros, extending Finland's network of protected areas by some 45,000 ha.

Metsähallitus's - a state enterprise responsible for managing State-owned forests in Finland - enhanced role in the METSO Programme over the next few years guarantees a kick-start to a new wave of forest conservation. The preservation of naturally valuable features will be increasingly prioritised in commercially managed State-owned forests, while a further 10,000 hectares of State forest are to be fully protected.

Last year Metsähallitus's capitalised some 60 million euros cash to the State budget and worth of 28 mil-



ARHTI KOTISAARI

Hepatica is a well-known early spring flower most commonly found in southernmost regions of Finland, where it particularly thrives in hazel groves.

lion euros services related to social responsibility and public facilities, including biodiversity.

Enhanced conservation possible alongside commercial forestry

The METSO Programme was launched at the same time as Finland's new National Forest Programme for 2008 - 2015, of which the METSO Programme is one element. The co-ordinated preparation and launch of the two programmes intends to illustrate that the commercial use of Finland's forests can be harmonised



The mountain everlasting (*Antennaria dioica*) thrives in nutrient-poor soils on sunlit slopes. This once common flower has become scarce in Finland due to soil eutrophication.

with the conservation of their biodiversity to benefit the livelihoods of everyone working with forests.

Cost-effective voluntary conservation

The key idea behind the METSO Programme is that conservation should be cost-effective and voluntary. The programme's pilot phase showed that the best way to preserve biodiversity in Southern Finland, where most forests are privately owned, is to get forest-owners committed to conservation on a voluntary basis. Finland's Minister of Agriculture and Forestry **Sirkka-Liisa Anttila** stresses that the attitudes of forest-owners to such voluntary conservation is crucial. "As many as 96% of the forests in Southern Finland are commercially managed. This means that what happens in these forests is of the utmost importance for the region's biodiversity. During the pilot phase of the METSO Programme the voluntary aspect worked well, and that's what we're now building on in the programme," says Anttila.

Promoting METSO through advisory services and publicity

The METSO Programme necessitates seamless collab-

oration between Finland's forestry centres, regional environment centres and forest-owners. The pilot phase of METSO Programme showed that voluntary schemes can work well, but information about such schemes still needs to be actively spread. This is to be done by increasingly promoting METSO's conservation schemes in training, publicity work and the advice given to forest-owners.

During the preparation of the METSO Programme it was considered vital to involve a wide range of stakeholders, and this is also true for the programme's successful implementation. In training and advisory services local expertise and good relations with forest-owners will be crucial.

Monitoring and evaluation continues

The implementation of the new phase of the METSO Programme will again be overseen by a special monitoring group assigned to review how well resources have been allocated and assess the need for further resources. The programme will be evaluated three over its time span, the first evaluation of future needs being conducted in 2012.

The METSO schemes in commercially managed forests will mainly commence in 2010 on the basis of preparatory work that is already under way. One important process is the ongoing revision of ecological site selection criteria, which should ensure that the conservation of the most valuable sites is duly prioritised.

New permanent and temporary protected areas

The METSO Programme targets to extend Southern Finland's current network of protected forests with the addition of permanently established nature reserves with a total area of some 88,000 ha. Sites amounting to an estimated 8,000 ha may additionally be designated for temporary protection, meaning that the total area under protection or conservation will expand by almost 96,000 ha.

Additional areas totaling 10,000 ha within State forests protected sooner than planned. Metsähallitus is also now drawing up forest management plans that prioritise biodiversity in areas of importance for the coherence and interconnectivity of Finland's network of protected areas.

Conservation measures will be intensified in both private and State-owned protected areas. Metsähallitus will restore and manage natural habitats in sites within existing and new protected areas where



METSO is both an acronym for the Finnish name of the Forest Biodiversity Programme for Southern Finland, and the Finnish name of the capercaillie (*Tetrao urogallus*), a rare game bird.

such measures can clearly improve the prospects for safeguarding biodiversity. Metsähallitus is also drawing up national guidelines and procedures to increase the cost-effectiveness of habitat restoration work, to organise monitoring, and to enhance risk management. Also in privately-owned protected areas habitat restoration and management measures may be conducted, provided with the landowner's approval.

Biodiversity can also be increasingly conserved and managed in certain forests owned by the State or local authorities where land use options are limited, for instance by the need to ensure their value for recreational purposes. Metsähallitus will complete ecological inventories of Finland's seven national hiking areas, and use this information in new management plans to be drawn up over the period 2008-2010.

Measures to boost biodiversity in commercially managed forests

Sites of value for biodiversity will continue to be managed as necessary in State-owned commercially managed forests, and such schemes can provide models for measures in forests under other forms of

ownership.

Commercially managed forests under private ownership must also be managed with more attention given to the need to safeguard their biodiversity. It is intended that forest conservation and management measures as defined in Finnish legislation on the financing of sustainable forestry should be carried out in private commercially managed forests.

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Crucial biodiversity targets

The METSO Programme (2008-2016) aims to halt the ongoing decline in the biodiversity of forest habitats and species, and establish favourable trends in Southern Finland's forest ecosystems by 2016, in line with internationally defined biodiversity targets.

New site selection criteria of the METSO Programme ready in May 2008

The ecological site selection criteria for the METSO Programme are due to be finalised by the end of May 2008. The preliminary findings of the evaluation of the statuses of biotopes in Finland (LUTU) are being used to shape the new criteria.

Sites are to be selected for the measures within the METSO Programme so as to ensure that resources are as cost-effectively and purposefully directed as possible to conserve and safeguard biodiversity. The site selection criteria are being defined to support decisions made concerning both protected areas and commercially managed forests, but they are not intended to be applied too rigidly.

The criteria cover the most important forest habitats and structural features of forests for biodiversity. The locations of sites in relation to existing protected areas are also important. Consideration should also be given during site selection to regional factors including impacts on local businesses, recreation, tourism and cultural values.

The Ministry of the Environment and the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry will subsequently prepare special programmes for each of these habitat types.

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Significant wooded habitats for biodiversity include:

- Herb-rich forests
- Heathland forests with plenty of decaying wood
- Forests adjacent to springs and pools
- Wooded mires and the wooded margins of open mires
- Swampy woodlands and wooded flood meadows
- Sunlit slopes on sandy esker ridges
- Biodiversity sites along emergent coastlines
- Wooded heritage biotopes
- Wooded habitats on calcium-rich bedrock and ultra-alkaline soil
- Wooded cliffs, bluffs and boulder fields important for biodiversity

Particularly significant structural features, ecological orientations and other habitat features:

- Decaying wood: decayed fallen trees, dead standing trees, stumps, snags, holed trees, windthrows
- Large, old deciduous trees: aspens, birches, goat willows, rowans
- Trees of southern broad-leaved species
- Burnt wood from large trees
- Features associated with herb-rich woodland, spruce mires, springs, high moisture levels, swampy terrain and fens
- Influence of groundwater or calcium, nutrient-rich bedrock
- Natural or easily restorable hydrological conditions
- Diversity of tree species and ages, openness of the canopy layer

METSO AND FINLAND'S INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENTS

The METSO Programme is an integral part of Finland's implementation of various international agreements. METSO makes significant contributions towards the sustainable development objectives set out by the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF), and the Ministerial Conferences on the Protection of Forests in Europe (MCPFE). Maintaining and enhancing the biological diversity of forests is also one of the key resolutions agreed the MCPFE Vienna Conference (April 2003).

METSO IN BRIEF

METSO - the Forest Biodiversity Programme for Southern Finland (2003-2007 and 2008-2016) - is part of Finland's National Forest Programme. METSO contains several sub-programmes, including projects applying innovative voluntary means for landowners to promote biodiversity in the forests of Southern Finland. The programme aims to apply cost-effective measures to ensure that the most ecologically valuable forest sites in Southern Finland are temporarily or permanently protected.

Finland is the most forested country in the EU, with 72% of the land area covered by forest. 61% of the total of 20 million hectares of forest is owned by private families. The private forests consist of 444.000 holdings, shared by 920.000 owners. So every sixth Finn is a forest owner. The average holding size is only 24 hectares and the average size of cutting areas 1-2 ha. Finnish forestry is sustainable: annual cuttings are around 60 million m³ and the growth at least 80 million m³ per year. 95% of forests are PEFC certified.

The METSO Programme has been carefully prepared through processes involving involving stakeholders from forest industry associations and forest-owners' organisations to the Finnish Association for Nature Conservation and WWF Finland, as well as the two ministries responsible for the Programme. METSO is backed up by intensive research, monitoring and evaluation work.

METSO website: www.mmm.fi/metso/international

