

GOVERNMENT DECISION IN PRINCIPLE ON AN ACTION PROGRAMME TO PROTECT BIODIVERSITY IN FORESTS IN SOUTHERN FINLAND, THE WESTERN PARTS OF THE PROVINCE OF OULU AND THE SOUTH-WESTERN REGION OF THE PROVINCE OF LAPLAND

DECISION IN PRINCIPLE

On the proposal of the Ministry of the Environment, and the matter having been prepared by the Cabinet Committee on Economic Policy and the Cabinet Finance Committee, the Government has decided today, 23 October 2002, to supplement Finland's National Forest Programme 2010 with an action programme to protect biodiversity in forests in southern Finland, the western parts of the province of Oulu and the south-western region of the province of Lapland.

GENERAL

The Government has decided to supplement Finland's National Forest Programme 2010 with an action programme to protect biodiversity in forests in southern Finland, the western parts of the province of Oulu and the south-western region of the province of Lapland. Some of the actions are based on biodiversity preservation measures which are currently in use. Others are partially or completely new, and they will have to be evaluated through pilot projects and feasibility studies and assessment of their outcome.

The proposed actions are based on improved protection for habitats and structural features which are crucial for forested landscapes and threatened species. The action programme will not affect the implementation programme for conservation programmes for 1996-2007 decided by the Cabinet Committee on Economic Policy on 4 June 1996. The proposed new actions are based on voluntary participation by forest owners.

The action programme comprises both long-term and short-term actions. Most of the short-term actions will be started in 2003-2005. In most cases the implementation of long-term actions cannot be started until after 2007.

ACTION PROGRAMME

1. Restoration and management of habitats in nature conservation areas

The objective of the restoration of habitats is to restore habitats altered by human actions to a state that is as close as possible to their natural state. In forests restoration may focus on species, forest structure or actions. Most of the restoration measures are one-off actions, but their aim is to initiate long-term natural processes such as stand succession with the eventual emergence of dead and decaying trees or paludification.

Ecosystem management is the term for measures which maintain or improve biodiversity without restoring the natural forest structure or processes. Examples include the continuous maintenance of herb-rich forests and wooded meadows as predominantly deciduous, management of esker forests, as well as maintenance of wooded pastures, wooded meadows and other traditional biotopes.

Restoration is essential in protecting the biodiversity of nature conservation areas, because at present only part of the forests and peatland in the nature conservation areas in southern Finland and

Ostrobothnia are in their natural state. Since the natural recovery rate is rather slow in most ecosystems, restoration is often the most effective way of securing the preservation of threatened and endangered species.

Focusing restoration primarily on those nature conservation areas which are most important for biodiversity is the most ecologically effective approach. The sites marked for restoration must form sufficiently large, unified areas to enable consistent maintenance of burnt and decayed wood in the area and to ensure effective planning and implementation of measures.

Studies by Metsähallitus, which is a State enterprise and social and public authority in forest issues, have identified 673 sites for restoration in existing nature conservation areas in southern Finland and Ostrobothnia (out of a national total of 800 sites), with a total surface area of some 33,000 hectares. This area comprises nature conservation areas and programme areas managed by Metsähallitus, with the exception of the areas transferred from the Ministry of Defence and the Finnish Forest Research Institute in 2002. The studies also excluded the new nature conservation areas to be transferred to Metsähallitus management by 2007, which are estimated to total 100,000 hectares. The cost of drawing up restoration plans for the existing nature conservation areas which so far do not have such plans would come to about EUR 2.3 million (out of a national total of EUR 2.7 million for all areas).

In forests on mineral soil restoration involves burning certain areas of forest, allowing for more dead and decaying trees, and cutting small clearings in the middle of even aged tree stands. The costs of burning (160 sites, 960 hectares) come to about EUR 0.97 million, those of increasing the dead and down trees (10,430 hectares) to EUR 2.6 million and those of group selection felling (5,210 hectares) to EUR 1.1 million. Restoration of mineral soils could be implemented largely by personnel working in the Forestry Unit of Metsähallitus.

In nature conservation areas there is a total area of about 16,600 hectares of peatland which needs restoring. The total cost for restoration would come to about EUR 9.3 million. Part of the work could be undertaken by personnel of the Forestry Unit of Metsähallitus.

The total cost of the one-off restoration actions in wooded traditional biotopes (wooded pastures, grazed forests, burnt-over woodland, and wooded meadows; a total of 117 sites and 1,341 hectares) in Metsähallitus nature conservation areas will be EUR 2.3 million. 60% of the work could be carried out by personnel of the Forestry Unit of Metsähallitus. The annual maintenance costs of these areas will be EUR 0.56 million, with maintenance mainly carried out by personnel from the Forestry Unit of Metsähallitus.

According to present estimates, other management actions in the nature conservation areas will be less significant. The costs for management of herb-rich forests (970 hectares), forests dominated by southern species of deciduous trees (15 hectares) and threatened forest species will come to some EUR 0.42 million, of which personnel costs account for nearly half. A more detailed study of the need for management will require mapping of biotopes in the nature conservation areas (cf. proposal 2).

The Government resolves

that a proposal be made to increase the 2003 State budget allocation for the restoration and management of existing State-owned nature conservation areas by EUR 1 million.

The Government calls for

the business operations of the Forestry Unit of Metsähallitus to be used to fund restoration and management to a sum of EUR 1.2 million in the form of forestry labour costs;

inclusion in the budget proposals of an allocation to the Ministry of the Environment of EUR 2 million for 2004-2007 for the management of nature conservation areas on privately owned land; and

adequate restoration and management resources to be reserved for new nature conservation areas at the time they are founded.

The Government declares

that the need for additional funding for management of nature conservation areas on privately owned land in 2004-2007 will total EUR 2 million. Land owners and Regional Environment Centres will agree on the implementation of the management measures.

2. Collection of basic information on nature conservation areas

There is no up-to-date basic information on the forest stands in existing nature conservation areas, and in the case of some areas, there are no site details either. The absence of basic stand-level information is an obstacle for the planning of management and use of the areas in question, and makes it more difficult to identify possible shortcomings in protection. Metsähallitus estimates that the information needed for an area of 1.25 million hectares can be acquired mainly through remote sensing technology, but some 450,000 hectares will also have to be inventoried in the field. Preliminary estimates indicate that the cost of gathering basic information on State-owned nature conservation areas will be EUR 5.6 million for the whole of Finland and EUR 2.8 million for southern Finland. This estimate does not include the new nature conservation areas to be transferred to Metsähallitus management by 2007. The surface area of these new areas is estimated to be about 100,000 hectares. The cost of gathering basic information on privately owned nature conservation areas (some 50,000 hectares) will be about EUR 1 million.

The Government resolves

that a proposal be made to increase the 2003 State budget allocation to the Ministry of the Environment for the collection of basic stand-level information on nature conservation areas by EUR 0.5 million. The total need for additional funding in 2003-2006 will come to EUR 3.8 million.

and calls upon

Metsähallitus to collect the basic stand-level information on nature conservation areas in southern Finland and Ostrobothnia in 2003-2006;

and calls for

adequate resources for collection of this basic information to be reserved for new nature conservation areas at the time they are founded.

3. Establishing criteria for conservation

The Government considers it essential that common criteria based on nature conservation biology are established for actions 1 and 4-9 to ensure cost-effective targeting of actions. A working group in the

Forest Biodiversity Programme for Southern Finland (METSO) has defined the specific structural features and rare habitats of forests that are crucial to ensure continued biodiversity (see Appendix 1 p. 6). The working group based its assessment on current ecological knowledge, the report of the expert group on the conservation needs of forests in southern Finland and Ostrobothnia (ESSU), evaluation of threatened species, and the network of nature conservation areas (the SAVA project). The METSO working group draws special attention to section 10 of the Forest Act, concerning particularly important habitats. The criteria will be further specified in the light of the work of the METSO working group and the latest research findings, with the aid of experts from the Ministry of the Environment, the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, the Finnish Environment Institute, the Finnish Forest Research Institute and the universities.

The Government calls upon

the Ministry of the Environment to appoint a broad-based expert committee at the end of 2002 to further specify the criteria based on nature conservation biology for pilot projects proposed by the METSO working group. The criteria will be finalized and available for use at the end of 2003.

4. Voluntary conservation through natural values trading

Trading in natural values is a procedure whereby a landowner or his authorized representative enters into an agreement to maintain or improve specified natural values of his forest and in return receives a regular payment from the ‘buyer’ of these natural values, for example, the State or a forest conservation foundation. The agreement may define specific areas within which the owner is required to maintain a rare species or specific elements essential to biodiversity (e.g. dead and decaying trees). The environmental and forestry authorities will consider proposals based on the criteria explained in action 3. Agreements will be made based on the needs of sellers and buyers, and they may be in force for a limited period or until further notice. When an agreement ends, the area concerned can then be used as the landowner sees fit.

It is hoped that trading in natural values will preserve and improve biodiversity in areas used commercially, where legislation and forestry recommendations cannot adequately ensure this. This type of trading can also promote the preservation or occurrence of certain forest structures or habitats and help guide appropriate management of, for instance, the wooded areas and ecological corridors between nature conservation areas. Through extensive local cooperation, preparations have been made for trading in natural values in Satakunta, where a pilot project will be implemented in 2003-2007.

The Government resolves

that a proposal be made to increase the 2003 State budget allocation to the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry and the Ministry of the Environment for the implementation of pilot projects in natural values trading by a total of EUR 0.40 million. The total need for allocations in 2003-2007 will be EUR 2 million.

5. Competitive tendering

In competitive tendering, the environmental authorities invite landowners to submit tenders on areas to be protected based on the criteria explained under action 3, and the price at which they are willing to offer their sites for protection. This is voluntary for landowners. As a result of competitive tendering, the authorities approve the sites which best correspond to the criteria for protection. Protection can then

be implemented in practice by establishing a privately owned nature conservation area on the site, through a fixed-term agreement or by the State purchasing the area as a nature conservation area. The choice of method depends on the natural values of the site, its location and the proposal of the landowner. If protection is established through a fixed-term agreement, the area can again be used as the landowner sees fit after the end of the agreement.

The Government declares

that funding of a total of EUR 1 million will be needed in order to fund competitive tendering pilot projects in 2004 and 2005;

that measures which involve the acquisition of land by the State will be funded within the framework of action 7.

6. Nature management areas

Nature management areas are areas founded on the basis of a proposal from the landowner where conservation, forestry and other commercial uses are coordinated. In these areas, forestry work in the immediate vicinity of a site with specific conservation values (as defined in section 29 of the Nature Conservation Act or section 10 of the Forest Act) will be limited to actions which do not endanger the special features of the site in question. Nature management areas will be established in accordance with the provisions of the Nature Conservation Act. Such an area can only be established upon application by the landowner, and the parties to the agreement are the landowner and the Regional Environment Centre. When the agreement ends, the area can be used as the landowner sees fit.

A nature management plan will be drawn up for the area, setting out normal forestry and felling suggestions as well as special nature management measures. The plan will be drawn up in collaboration between the landowner, the Regional Environment Centre and the Forestry Centre. The plan will also comprise an evaluation of financial losses arising from restrictions on use and the cost of work needed to maintain the natural values of the site. The landowner will be fully reimbursed for the losses and costs involved.

The Government calls upon

the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry and the Ministry of the Environment

to study the potential for establishing nature management areas in 2003; and

to include in their study corrections of the shortcomings in the funding system for nature management) (see action 10). The potential for using this action and the costs involved will be evaluated in connection with the study.

7. Using Metsähallitus's revenue from land sales and land exchange for acquisition of areas with high conservation value

More landowners have proved willing to offer areas that are excluded from nature conservation programmes but valuable for biodiversity to the State for protection against full compensation than can be funded with the current resources of the environmental administration. There are good grounds for acquiring such areas for the State especially in cases where they are in the immediate vicinity of nature conservation areas.

Metsähallitus has implemented and funded land acquisitions for conservation programmes in accordance with the 1996 decision of the Cabinet Committee on Economic Policy by exchanging some of its own land for such areas, and by selling forest and individual plots of land and channelling the sales revenue into the acquisition of nature conservation areas. Metsähallitus's authorization for this task ends at the end of 2004. However, due to supplementation of Finland's Natura 2000 network in compliance with the Commission's instructions and certain other unforeseen costs, Metsähallitus will still incur expenses of about EUR 12.5 million for 2005. The total funding thus comes to about EUR 200 million. Metsähallitus has invested about EUR 16.7 million of the proceeds from the operations of the Forestry Unit in purchasing replacement land for forestry operations.

Metsähallitus has expressed its willingness to continue acquisitions of land for protection in 2005 and beyond. Work will start immediately after the end of the acquisitions duty under the present nature conservation programmes.

The Government calls upon

Metsähallitus to continue acquisitions of sites with high conservation value in 2005-2014 in accordance with the criteria set out in action 3 through voluntary transactions and exchanges in areas which are in need of further nature conservation areas due to geographical or ecological considerations.

The Government declares

that a need exists to authorize Metsähallitus to continue to sell plots and exchange forestland to the extent that there is interest among landowners. Funding during the next ten years will total about EUR 5 million annually.

8. Pilot project "Cooperation network for forest biodiversity"

Landowners are willing to manage their forests in ways which promote biodiversity, but the available measures for protecting biodiversity do not always support their initiatives sufficiently. Biodiversity values do not conform with property boundaries, so cooperation across boundaries and among groups of landowners helps protect biodiversity more effectively.

In the pilot project for a cooperation network for forest biodiversity, forest biodiversity is protected at the local level on the basis of voluntary participation and landowners' own initiatives. The landowners play a key part in setting targets. The pilot project may also include participation of local authorities, NGOs and other stakeholders. The pilot project is similar to competitive tendering (action 5) but has a broader impact both geographically and in terms of content.

Cooperation may centre on, for instance, a national park, a State-owned hiking area, a recreation area belonging to a municipality or parish and commercial forests belonging to various landowners. The cooperation network promotes biodiversity through the exchange of experiences and learning, particularly in cases where the preservation of habitats and species requires action in relatively extensive areas within which measures vary depending on ecological needs. The cooperation network should promote social and economic sustainability, for instance rural entrepreneurship, employment and eco-tourism, provided that measures connected with these areas are proposed in the pilot projects.

The pilot projects will be implemented in areas which are particularly important for the preservation of biodiversity according to the criteria set forth in action 3. In addition to ecological values, the pilot

projects included in this experiment must involve innovation, extensive cooperation and interaction, and a striving to create new operating traditions. The role of the State is to support the network in planning and funding. The cooperation network does not require an unbroken and clearly defined area, but it invites voluntary participation of landowners who are interested in protecting biodiversity.

The pilot projects to be started will involve close cooperation among landowners. Project organization will vary by project and the management responsibilities will be agreed with other local stakeholders and regional authorities. The projects will not place any obligation or restrictions on landowners who elect not to participate.

The Government calls upon

the Ministry of the Environment and the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry to prepare a pilot project for the promotion of forest biodiversity through local cooperation.

The Government declares

that, in order to plan and implement two to four pilot projects, the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry and Ministry of the Environment will need a total of EUR 2 million during 2004-2006.

9. Nature conservation programme based on the Nature Conservation Act

New nature conservation areas can help make the network of nature conservation areas in southern Finland and Ostrobothnia more representative and help preserve areas which have specific natural value. Systematic planning based on a nature conservation programme is the best way of ensuring that measures focus on the most valuable sites and permanent natural values.

According to the Metso working group, actions 1 (Restoration and management of habitats in nature conservation areas) and 7 (Using Metsähallitus's income from land sales and land exchange for acquisition of areas with high conservation value) can be used in the short term to protect the biodiversity of the forests of southern Finland and Ostrobothnia. Actions 4 (Voluntary conservation through trading in natural values, 5 (Competitive tendering), 6 (Nature management areas) and 8 (Pilot project "Cooperation network for forest biodiversity") focus on developing new flexible methods for protecting biodiversity. Information on their results will become available by 2007. By then, there will also be more research and monitoring information available on biodiversity both in commercial forests and nature conservation areas. Based on these estimates and results, it will then be possible to decide on the need for a nature conservation programme under the Nature Conservation Act, and on its required extent.

The Government calls for

a decision to be made in 2007 on the need for a protection programme under the Nature Conservation Act for the forests in southern Finland and Ostrobothnia, after the end of the funding programme for the ongoing conservation programmes, drawing on experiences from the other actions;

and calls upon

the Ministry of the Environment and Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry to study the ecological, social and economic impact of actions 4, 5, 6 and 8 with a view to assessing the need for a nature conservation programme.

10. Nature management in commercial forests

Nature management in commercial forests helps preserve biodiversity in these. There are provisions on nature management in the Forest Act, and in some cases forest owners may be eligible for State subsidies for it. Targets are set for nature management in the regional objective programmes for forestry. Various forestry sector organizations have produced instructions and recommendations for good nature management practices in commercial forests. Forest management recommendations, advisory services and certification are important voluntary incentives in support of nature management. Metsähallitus has drawn up landscape ecological plans for the State-owned forests it manages.

According to the Act on the Financing of Sustainable Forestry (1094/1996), forest owners are eligible for environmental support in reimbursement of significant financial losses arising from protection of forest biodiversity. The grounds for granting this form of environmental support have drawn criticism, especially concerning the payment schedule and the definition of what is considered a significant financial loss. State support is also granted for the planning and implementation of forest nature management projects across parcel boundaries. Projects have been implemented in cooperation between forest owners and other bodies, such as municipalities, environment centres and conservation organizations.

With reference to Finland's National Forest Programme 2010, the State budget allocation for promoting nature management in commercial forests was raised from EUR 1.7 million to 4.2 million per year. Almost half of this has been used for surveys of especially valuable habitats in privately owned forests as referred to in the Forest Act. These should be completed in 2003.

If a forest owner incurs a significant financial loss from maintaining the special characteristics of a site, he or she is entitled to environmental support under the Act on the Financing of Sustainable Forestry. By the end of 2001, agreements on environmental support had been drawn up for a total area of 3,300 hectares. The annual sum of support comes to about EUR 1.5 million, which will allow new agreements to be made on about 1,500 hectares per year.

The balance sheet of Metsähallitus, a State-owned enterprise, includes sites of high biological value in which the protection of biodiversity can be improved. These special sites include forests of special environmental value, sites which are important for landscape ecology, ecological corridors and areas where biodiversity needs to be improved, as well as some forests with recreation value, scenic sites and recreational sites, areas transferred from the Ministry of Defence to Metsähallitus and other sites adjacent to conservation areas. Metsähallitus estimates that far greater ecological benefits can be gained by focusing actions which maintain and promote biodiversity on these areas than by spending the same amount of funding evenly across the full area of Metsähallitus forests.

The Government calls for

a proposal to be made that the State budget's annual allocation of EUR 4.2 million for nature management in commercial forests be used in its entirety for environmental support and nature management projects once the ongoing survey of habitats ends, and it is proposed that the allocation be gradually stepped up to EUR 8 million by 2007;

and calls upon

the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry to rectify the shortcomings in the support system for nature management in connection with a study concerning the definition and creation of nature management areas (action 6); and

Metsähallitus to improve the efficiency in the protection of biodiversity and in the inventory and protection of areas with high conservation value at special resource planning and landscape ecological planning sites and areas adjacent to nature conservation areas. Measures to be taken and their focus will be determined as a joint project between the Forestry Unit and the Natural Heritage Services of Metsähallitus by the end of 2004 based on the criteria set forth in action 3. Costs and lost stumpage earnings will be estimated in connection with this. The proposed measures do not place any restrictions on normal forestry routines in State-owned commercial forests during the drafting of the report.

11. Training, forest management planning and advisory services

Training in forest biodiversity has steadily increased over many decades both at vocational institutes and in forestry studies in higher education. The Forest Act, environmental and quality management systems, and certification require biodiversity to be taken into account in forestry operations. Organizations and enterprises in the forestry sector have provided the relevant training for their staff, fostering awareness of natural values in their organizations. A special degree in nature management has been introduced as a joint project in the forestry sector, and 2,847 people took it between 1997 and 2001. Planning and implementation of this decree received State support. People who took this decree were already working in the sector, professional forestry workers and forest owners. Experiences of this decree will have to be taken into account in developing basic and advanced training and education in the forestry sector, which falls within the administrative sector of the Ministry of Education, and in training for forest owners.

The amount and quality of biodiversity information in forest management planning has improved due to the introduction of geographic information and regular updates. Forestry Centres produce basic information for planning through their regional inventory. Regional inventory data are available to forest owners when making forest management plans for their own forestry holdings. Forest owners are free to decide what kind of plan they want and who should draw it up. Forest management plans for individual forestry holdings cover roughly 50 per cent of the surface area of privately owned forests, and the aim of Finland's National Forest Programme 2010 is to attain 75 per cent coverage. A forest management plan with more information than usual on natural values is available at no extra cost as part of a nature management project for regional special sites.

Metsähallitus's landscape ecology plans were completed in 2000. According to these plans, 129,000 hectares of State-owned forest (30,000 hectares of it in southern Finland and Ostrobothnia) were removed from timber production and 205,000 hectares (37,000 hectares of which in southern Finland and Ostrobothnia) were redesignated for limited commercial use only. An international evaluation group which performed an evaluation of the landscape ecology plans considered the results a remarkable achievement.

Forest-sector companies which own forests have also begun to take biodiversity into account more in their planning, designating some 100,000 hectares of forest for restricted use or protection on their own initiative.

Forestry Centres and forestry societies have the statutory task of providing advisory services for forest owners. Biodiversity issues have come to the fore in the advisory services in recent years, but the opportunities created in section 6 of the Forest Act, for instance, have not been fully exploited as yet.

Under the section in question, felling can be undertaken in the manner required by the special character of a site, if the site has particular importance for the protection of forest biodiversity, the landscape or multiple use of the forest.

Birds have been a special focus of forestry training and advisory services in recent years. For instance, guidebooks have been prepared on how to take into account the capercaillie and birds of prey in connection with forestry operations, and training has also been provided for personnel in the sector. This year, extensive cooperation resulted in the publication of a guidebook entitled 'Forestry and bird life'.

The Government calls upon

the Ministry of Education to take into account the experiences gained on the new decree in nature management in its development of basic and further training in the sector;

Metsähallitus to develop landscape ecology plans based on, for example, the recommendations of the international evaluation group;

and calls for

the forest planning system to be developed in a way that allows the forest owners to have forest plans drawn up on the basis of regional information collected by the Forestry Centres according to their own needs;

and calls upon

the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry to commission an evaluation on the effectiveness and development needs of advisory services on forest biodiversity in 2005.

12. Habitats of particular importance as defined in the Forest Act and the Forest Insect and Fungi Damage Prevention Act

Under section 10 of the Forest Act (1093/1996), the special features of habitats in a natural or near-natural state which stand out from their surroundings and are of particular importance must be preserved. This refers to the immediate vicinity of springs, brooks, small ditches which form a permanent watercourse, and small ponds, herb-rich hardwood-spruce mires grass-rich hardwood-spruce mires, fern-rich hardwood-spruce mires and eutrophic paludified hardwood-spruce forests, treeless fens located south of the province of Lapland, fragments of nutrient-rich wooded meadow, small fragments of coniferous forest on undrained peatland, gorges and gullies, and steep slopes and the forests immediately below them, and sandy or rocky ground, boulder fields, fens with few trees and flood meadows which produce less timber than nutrient-poor coniferous forest.

Corporate owners have mapped out the habitats of particular importance on their own land and land they administrate. Sites as defined in the Forest Act have been identified in 0.5 per cent of the surface area of commercial forests owned by forestry companies and 1 per cent of the surface area of State-owned forests managed by Metsähallitus. The Forestry Centres have mapped out habitats of importance in privately owned forests. The results will be available in 2003. It is estimated that particularly important habitats represent about 70,000 hectares of the surface area of privately owned forests, with 60,000 hectares of this located in southern Finland and Ostrobothnia. This corresponds to about 0.7 per

cent of the total surface area of privately owned forest in these areas. The number of habitats of particular importance in privately owned forests comes to about 150,000.

Problems have emerged in identifying and defining habitats of special importance as defined in the Forest Act. Due to their large number, these Forest Act sites are not statutorily marked in the terrain, as is the case with protected landscape types under the Nature Conservation Act. Clear identification and definition of these sites is, however, essential if their special character is to be preserved despite forestry operations in the area. Furthermore, this will require unhindered flow of information between forest owners and field workers performing forest management operations and felling, especially in the case of work during the winter season. In terms of preserving the special features of a site, the most problematic landscape types are fragments of wooded meadows, springs, brooks and small ditches, and their immediate vicinity.

Under the Forest Insect and Fungi Damage Prevention Act (263/1991), damaged softwood must be removed from the forest if it occurs to an extent which may give rise to the spread of insects which damage the forest. If more than 10 per cent of the trees in one hectare are damaged or if there is one or more stand of at least twenty damaged trees in the forest, the trees must be removed from the forest or other measures taken to prevent the spread of such insects. It should be noted, however, that dead and decaying trees are also important for forest biodiversity, particularly in habitats of particular importance as defined in the Forest Act.

The Government calls upon

the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry to prepare an advance decision procedure in 2003, whereby a Forestry Centre can give advance information to a forest owner or a person planning or implementing forest management or felling operations on the borders of a habitat of particular importance as defined in the Forest Act;

the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry to continue with measures to harmonize the definitions of habitats of particular importance in different parts of Finland; and

the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry to draw on research results to discover how much damaged softwood can be left in the forest to decay without danger of spreading insect (the results are to be available in 2003), and to adjust its Decision on the prevention of insect and fungi damage in forests (1397/1991) accordingly.

13. Protecting biodiversity in municipal and State-owned forests used for recreational purposes

Municipal and State-owned forests used for recreational purposes hold potential for creating buffer zones for existing nature conservation areas, thus improving the network of nature conservation areas. The most effective way of harnessing this potential is to provide support for planning and to develop measures which help reconcile recreational use, targets for protecting biodiversity and commercial forestry.

The Government calls upon

the Ministry of the Environment, together with the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, the Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities and Metsähallitus, to promote the protection of biodiversity in municipal and State-owned forests used for recreational purposes by developing the planning of

these areas in 2004-2006 in a way which reconciles the aims of recreational use, targets for protecting biodiversity and commercial forestry.

The Government declares

that the funding need of the Ministry of the Environment for protecting biodiversity in municipal and State-owned forests used for recreational purposes in 2004-2007 totals EUR 0.5 million.

14. Need for research and surveys

Research and monitoring information are fundamental for continuous development of forest biodiversity. Research on biodiversity is carried out at a number of research institutions and universities. However, more research is needed particularly on the following topics:

Ecological research needs:

1. Restoration and management of nature conservation areas
2. The significance of areas excluded from commercial forestry, forests in limited commercial use and voluntary protection
3. The impact of the Forest Act, certification and nature management of commercial forests on forest biodiversity
4. Development of measures to protect forest biodiversity
5. A study of natural sites outside the network of nature conservation areas which are valuable for biodiversity

Economic research needs:

6. Costs and cost-effectiveness in forest protection
7. The cost of nature management in commercial forests
8. The impact of forest protection on regional economies
9. The importance of forest protection on tourism
10. The benefits of protection, citizens' support for protection and the general public's willingness to pay for forest protection
11. The implications of forests in restricted commercial use for timber production
12. The impact of forest protection on the international competitiveness of the forest industry
13. The impact of forest protection on the timber supply of the forest industry and its multiplier effects

Social research needs:

14. A study in rural sociology: the social impact of forest protection

15. The demographic and geographical distribution of the employment effect of forest protection

16. The employment effect of forest protection and protection programmes already implemented

In addition, pilot or experimental projects (actions 4, 5 and 8) require research and monitoring focusing on the cost-effectiveness of these projects, their social acceptability, their employment effect and impact on biodiversity.

The Government resolves

that a proposal should be made to allocate a total of EUR 0.3 million in the 2003 budget to the Ministry of the Environment for a forest biodiversity research programme. The funding need up to 2007 will be EUR 1.5 million; and

that a proposal be made to allocate a total of EUR 1 million in the 2003 budget to the Ministry of the Environment for research and monitoring of endangered and little-known species. The funding need up to 2007 will be EUR 10 million.

The Government calls for

a broad-based biodiversity research programme to be started for the period 2003-2007, coordinated by the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry and in cooperation with several funding bodies;

and calls upon

the Finnish Forest Research Institute, in cooperation with other organs responsible for monitoring biodiversity, to develop a forest biodiversity monitoring system based on a preliminary study during 2003-2005;

the Ministry of the Environment to earmark EUR 0.1 million from the 2003 budget for the forest biodiversity monitoring system. The funding need up to 2007 will be EUR 0.5 million;

the Ministry of the Environment to implement the studies proposed by the second monitoring committee for threatened species (2001): more research on threatened and little-known species, more effective monitoring of threatened species and better information systems; and

the Ministry of the Environment and Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry to reserve five per cent of the project resources of pilot projects 4, 5 and 8 for the purposes of research and monitoring.

15. Forest conservation foundation

According to a study made by the Department of Forest Economics at the University of Helsinki (Kuuluvainen et al. 2002), three out of four Finns (74%) are in favour of protecting forest biodiversity, even if taxation were raised as a result. People are willing to pay an average amount of about EUR 110 per household per year for ten years for a programme that would protect about half of the endangered species in Finland's forests. In other words, Finnish households would be willing to pay a total sum of about EUR 2 billion over the next ten years for such a protection programme. The favourable attitude of

the general public should be used to best advantage to secure additional funding for the protection of forest biodiversity.

The Government calls upon

the Ministry of the Environment to investigate the potential for a forest conservation foundation based on voluntary contributions and similar alternatives during 2004. Funding from such a foundation could be used for actions to protect forest biodiversity.

16. Monitoring of the action programme

The actions put forward in the action programme are also presented in Finland's National Forest Programme 2010. This means that it would be logical to include the monitoring of the action programme in the tasks of the broad-based Forest Committee appointed by the Government. The Forest Committee has 19 members and it acts as an advisory body for the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry under the chairmanship of the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry. After the end of the term of office of the first Forest Committee, a new Committee was appointed for the period from 19 June 2002 to 18 June 2005. At the regional level, monitoring of Finland's National Forest Programme 2010 is the responsibility of 13 Regional Forest Committees appointed by the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry.

On 15 October 1998, the Ministry of the Environment appointed a broad-based monitoring group for Finland's national action programme for biodiversity for a term of office extending to the end of 2005. The monitoring group coordinates and monitors the implementation of the programme and monitors the state of biodiversity throughout the country, compiles summary reports and draws up proposals for adjustments and development of the programme. The monitoring group is supported by two expert committees, one of which – the committee for research, monitoring and data systems — prepared a proposal for nationwide monitoring of biodiversity in 2001 (Suomen ympäristö 532).

The Government calls upon

the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, with support from the Forest Committee, to take responsibility for monitoring and evaluation of the action programme as a whole;

the Ministry of the Environment, with support from the monitoring group of Finland's national action programme for biodiversity, to take responsibility for monitoring the action programme's impact on biodiversity;

and calls for

the results of monitoring to be enclosed with the monitoring report of Finland's National Forest Programme 2010;

and calls upon

the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry and the Ministry of the Environment to draw up an overall evaluation of the ecological, social and economic impact of the action programme by 2006.

17. The Government's recommendations

In its report, the Government Committee for the Protection of Forests in Southern Finland (Metso) included several proposals which partially or wholly focused on parties outside the State administration. The Government recommends that the proposals in question should be implemented.

The Government recommends

that the forest management recommendations of forestry organizations are reviewed in the near future on the basis of new research information and practical experience. Amendments should focus particularly on preserving mature aspen and dead and decaying trees;

that the forestry organizations take birds into account in forest management operations even more than so far through training and joint projects;

that information and advisory services are deployed to promote landscape ecological planning and the application of voluntary protection measures in forests owned by municipalities, church parishes and other organizations. Forest industry enterprises which own forests should also take ecological considerations into account more in their planning;

that universities, research institutions and funding bodies give priority to research needs considered essential by the Government Committee for the Protection of Forests in Southern Finland (Metso);

that EU programmes are used during the 2000-2006 programming period for projects which are important on the regional level, within the priorities and funding frameworks of the present programmes;

that different pilot projects are funded in order to create new operating models for using different actors and sources of funding in, e.g., the regions covered by the cooperation network for forest biodiversity; and

that attention be given to ensuring that management of natural landscapes and maintaining landscape types are included as an objective in EU programmes during the next programming period 2007-2013. This applies particularly to programmes implemented with funding from the European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund (EAGGF), as well as programmes to maintain employment with ESF funding and development of enterprises with funding from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF).

THE NEED FOR GOVERNMENT FUNDING FOR THESE ACTIONS

In order to implement this action programme, the funding and labour input of the Ministry of the Environment, the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry and Metsähallitus will have to be increased (Table 1). Over the period 2003-2007 the action programme will generate a need for additional funding totalling EUR 61.7 million, of which EUR 29.3 million will come from the Ministry of the Environment and EUR 11.4 million from the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry. Metsähallitus's income from land sales and labour costs will be EUR 21.0 million. In addition to these costs, there will be costs incurred from protecting areas under nature management (action 6) and Metsähallitus's special sites (action 10), which cannot be accurately estimated at this time.

Table 1. Additional funding needed for METSO programme from the Ministry of the Environment, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, and Metsähallitus during 2003-2007.

Object of funding	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	Total additional funding 2003-2007
	Budget	Addition to 2002 level					
EUR million							
Management and maintenance of conservation areas (35.20.22)	15.34						
+Restoration and management (1)		1.00	2.25	2.25	2.25	2.25	10.00
+Collecting basic information (2)		0.5	1.1	1.1	1,1		3.80
Reimbursements related to conservation	15.41						
+Trading of natural values (4)		0.20	0.20	0.20	0,20	0,20	1.00
+Competitive tendering (5)			0.50	0.50			1.00
+Cooperation network (8)			0.25	0.50	0.25		1.00
Development and planning (35.99.22)	8.91						
+Research, surveys (13, 14)		1.3	2.0	2.5	3.2	3.5	12.50
Ministry of the Environment, total¹⁾	39.65	3.0	6.3	7.05	7,0	5,95	29,30
Promoting management of forest nature (30.31.45)	4.20						
+Trading of natural values (4)		0.20	0.20	0.20	0.20	0.20	1.00
+Cooperation network (8)			0.25	0.50	0.25		1.00
+Other additional funding (10)			1.35	1.10	3.35	3.60	9.40
Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, total	4.20	0.20	1.80	1.80	3.80	3.80	11.40
Metsähallitus, funding for conservation programmes 2002-2004 (30.33)	15.10						
+Acquisition of special sites (7)				5.00	5.00	5.00	15.00
Metsähallitus (30.33) Restoration of conservation areas using revenue from business operations 2003-2012 (1)		1.20	1.20	1.20	1.20	1.20	6.00
Metsähallitus, total²⁾	15.10	1.20	1.20	6.20	6.20	6.20	21.00
Additional funding, total		4.4	9.3	15.05	17.0	15.95	61.70
- of which budget appropriations		3.2	8.1	8.85	10.8	9.75	40.70

¹⁾ The costs of nature management areas 6) are not known. The need will be assessed in connection with the study.

²⁾ The costs of Metsähallitus's special sites (action 10) are not known. They will be established by the end of 2004.