



METSO Newsletter

THE FOREST BIODIVERSITY PROGRAMME FOR SOUTHERN FINLAND (METSO) 2003-2007

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EXPANDING VOLUNTARY CONSERVATION AND NATURAL FORESTRY METHODS - PROPOSALS FOR METSO II READY FOR APPROVAL

Proposals for a programme for the years 2008–2016 to succeed on the pilot phase of the METSO Forest Biodiversity Programme for Southern Finland were presented to Finland's Minister of the Environment Kimmo Tiilikainen on 8th January 2008. The proposals mainly focus on conservation schemes involving the voluntary participation of private forest-owners. The working group responsible for the proposals has estimated that funding amounting to 734-1,254 million euros will be needed for the whole programme. Implementation would bring an estimated 100,000-200,000 hectares under protection – potentially doubling the total area of forest protected or conserved in Southern Finland. Natural forest management measures would also be funded through the programme in a total area of 82,000-173,000 ha in the region's commercially managed forests.

New ways of thinking

Various voluntary conservation schemes have already been successfully tested during the pilot phase of the METSO Programme (2002-2007). The working group believes that such measures can become standard practice in Finland. The schemes involve landowners offering to protect their ecologically valuable forests to meet society's demand for nature conservation, in return for negotiated compensation.

"Conservation imposed from above often leads to conflicts and time-consuming appeal processes," said Environment Minister Kimmo **Tiilikainen**. "Collaboration between different actors and a range of voluntary conservation means will lead to better and faster results."

According to Tiilikainen, Finland faces two great challenges related to the country's forests: the need to provide raw materials for the forest industry; and the need to conserve biodiversity; but he believes that both of these challenges can be met at the same time. "METSO will give forest owners a new way to benefit from their property by opening up a market for cherished natural values, providing an alternative to selling timber," he added.



AHTI KOTISÄÄRI

Finland's Minister of the Environment Kimmo Tiilikainen receives proposals for the new METSO Programme from his ministry's permanent secretary Sirkka Hautojärvi, who chaired the working group that drafted the proposals.

Smart strategies for conservation

Nature conservationists have called for specific targets for total areas or percentages of the region's forested area to be protected in the new programme, but permanent secretary Sirkka **Hautojärvi** of the Ministry of the Environment, who chaired the working group that drafted the proposals for the new programme, feels that such fixed quantitative targets do not necessarily reflect the realities in changing natural environments. Instead she stresses the need for flexible conservation tools that enable the authorities to react to changing

conditions. "In METSO we've been looking for and learning about new ways to conserve nature in the forests of Southern Finland, which are mostly privately owned," she explains. "It's vital that the tools within METSO can be adapted to cope with the increasing uncertainties resulting from climate change. This is why research, monitoring and assessments play such an important role within METSO."

Increased interest in conservation

According to Hautojärvi, the success of METSO II will depend on two key factors: wider social approval for nature conservation, and the integration of conservation thinking into all activities related to forests. But she believes that the pilot phase of the programme has already brought both of these goals nearer. "In METSO we trust that people will want to act to conserve nature, and that incentives will work better than compulsory measures,"

The working group's proposals do not envisage any new conventional conservation programme as such. Instead of presenting landowners with delimited areas for compulsory conservation, as has been common practice in Finland in past programmes, the authorities will inform landowners what kinds of areas they wish to conserve, and wait for them to submit favour-

Crucial biodiversity targets

The new METSO II Programme 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.

able offers.

A learning process for the authorities

Hautojärvi stresses that the authorities will also need to change their ways. "Marketing, communications and collaboration with forest-owners are all truly client-centred ways of working, which are quite different from the traditional ways administrators have communicated with humble citizens. We've learned that top-down conservation can be effective, but it is liable to generate conflicts resulting in intolerably slow and cumbersome administrative and legal processes. Voluntary conservation schemes will enable us to get areas under protection immediately."

According to Ilkka **Heikkinen**, Nature Conservation Director of the Ministry of the Environment, adopting this new administrative culture is a challenge that the environmental authorities are eager to grasp.



"This will entail the development of new forms of collaboration between different organisations, new levels of openness, and a willingness to work in new ways," he says.

Green organisations: a good programme with some serious deficiencies

The environmental NGOs involved in the preparation of the new METSO Programme (the Finnish Association for Nature Conservation (FANC), its Swedish-language sister organisation Natur och Miljö, and WWF Finland) issued statements expressing their dissatisfaction with the finalised proposals, particularly concerning the inadequacy of measures proposed for State-owned forests. According to WWF Finland's forest expert Harri **Karjalainen**, many ecologically valuable sites in the vicinity of existing protected areas could easily be beneficially protected. Karjalainen also expressed worries that voluntary offers from landowners to protect their forests might not be as forthcoming as the authorities hope. WWF Finland is also concerned that increasing demand for timber will lead to increased logging around existing protected areas, leaving them isolated among extensive clear cut areas. "It

remains to be seen how the conservation message comes through alongside the rising logging targets expected in the coming National Forest Programme," says Karjalainen.

FANC's Harri **Höittä** believes that if logging is intensified, forests with valuable natural features will inevitably be logged. FANC is also concerned about the availability of adequate funding.

The environmental organisations were much more positive about the measures proposed for privately-owned forests. In the region covered by the METSO Programme only about 10% of all forests are owned by the State, and the most ecologically valuable sites not yet under protection are generally found in the 72% of the region's forest that are privately owned.

Specific forest features sought for protection

In selecting sites for conservation the authorities will apply ecological criteria developed and tested during the pilot phase of METSO. The working group has proposed that these selection criteria should be

SAFEGUARDING BIODIVERSITY IN PRIVATE FORESTS

Proposals on natural forest management plans, natural values agreements, and natural management projects

Natural values trading schemes for commercially managed forests funded through Finland's Act on the Financing of Sustainable Forestry enable the preservation of smaller areas of privately-owned forest where ecological values may be changing over time, or may require careful management. The preservation of such features may also be possible alongside restricted commercial forestry. Through such schemes it is hoped that biodiversity could be safeguarded in newly protected sites with a total area of 82,000–173,000 ha by 2016.

Natural forest management plans will be drafted for sites within privately-owned forests that meet the ecological criteria of the METSO Programme. Plans will include proposals for the natural forest management measures that need to be carried out in addition to other planned forestry measures, which may include logging where this does not disturb significant natural values.

Natural values agreements are signed between the authorities and forest-owners for clearly defined periods for specific sites whose natural values meet

the METSO ecological criteria. Through such agreements forest-owners commit themselves to carry out measures beyond normal forestry practices in order to help preserve and increase forest biodiversity, in return for compensation.

Natural management projects involve the conservation of sites in more than one landowner's property. Such projects may involve:

- the active restoration and management of forest habitats on mineral soils
- measures to safeguard biodiversity in wooded mires
- the management of open sunlit habitats and nutrient-poor forest habitats
- controlled burnings to promote biodiversity, and the preservation of naturally burnt sites
- sparing selected groups of retention trees to safeguard biodiversity

The new measures proposed for commercially managed forests will also require the approval of the EU Commission and amendments to Finland's Act on the Financing of Sustainable Forestry.

adapted for incorporation into practical guidelines, with regional emphases defined by experts during 2008. These regional focuses will also consider the impacts of conservation on regional economies, recreational opportunities, tourism, and cultural values.

A two-pronged strategy for State forests

The new proposals recommend a two-pronged strategy for State-owned forests and protected areas: natural values will be protected wherever they are found - also in commercially managed forests - while extended networks of protected areas will be built up over the longer term. Such networks should particularly be established in the vicinity of existing protected areas, in order to guarantee continuity at local level and help build up larger clusters of protected or conserved forests. It is hoped that biodiversity will eventually be safeguarded within areas amounting to 82,000–173,000 ha in privately-owned forests that have previously been commercially managed, through various voluntary means including agreements on the preservation of natural values or natural management methods.

Building consensus

Finland's Minister of the Environment Kimmo **Tiilikainen** praised the way that METSO's innovative voluntary

measures have helped to create a new consensus on conservation. "Even if we have not yet been able to reach a unanimous conclusion on policies for State-owned forests, it is very significant that the new measures for private forests have been so widely welcomed, since such forests account for 80-90% of the forests in Southern Finland." Tiilikainen hopes that Metsähallitus, the organisation responsible for managing Finland's State-owned lands and protected areas, will continue to seek satisfactory solutions in State-owned forests.

Government decision expected soon

The working group's proposals are currently being circulated in preparation for them to go before the Government, who are due to make a decision-in-principle on the proposals in tandem with Finland's draft National Forest Programme for 2015.

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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 - is part of Finland's National Forest Programme 2010. METSO contains 17 sub-programmes, including pilot projects designed to test innovative voluntary means for landowners to promote biodiversity in the forests of southern Finland. The METSO Programme aims to design and test cost-effective measures to acquire the most ecologically valuable forest sites in southern Finland for temporary conservation or permanent protection.

Forestry is typically practised on a small scale in Southern Finland, where average cutting areas are only 1-2 ha. METSO piloted new ways to increase biodiversity under such conditions, complementing the work done through several other programmes since the 1997 Forest Act.

The METSO Programme was carefully prepared through processes involving many stakeholders such as forest industry associations, forest owners' organisations, the Finnish Association for Nature Conservation and WWF Finland, as well as the two ministries responsible for the Programme, so as to complement and supplement Finland's National Forest Programme 2010. Like the rest of the National Forest Programme 2010, METSO is backed up by intensive research and evaluation work.

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



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