



METSO Newsletter

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

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PREPARATION OF METSO'S SUCCESSOR ON SCHEDULE - MANY NEW CONSERVATION AGREEMENTS SIGNED THIS SUMMER

The preparation of a programme to build on the METSO Forest Biodiversity Programme for Southern Finland is progressing on schedule, applying research findings and experiences gained during METSO's pilot phase (2002-2007).

Meanwhile, this summer plenty of tenders were submitted by forest-owners offering to establish permanently protected areas in their lands through METSO's voluntary schemes. The idea of privately-owned protected areas has proven to be particularly popular, but larger sites have also been tendered for purchases.

Good progress towards the continuation of METSO

According to Sirkka **Hautojärvi**, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of the Environment, and chair of the working group preparing the new scheme to succeed METSO, preparatory work is progressing according to plan in tandem with the drafting of a new National Forestry Programme (NFP). After the related reports are processed, a Government decision-in-principle on the continuation of METSO is due to be made by the end of this year, probably together with approval of new NFP.

Hautojärvi also chaired the committee that drafted the current METSO Programme, but she stresses that the tasks faced by the two groups have been very different: "We're in a completely different situation today, thanks to the expansion of our knowledge base through the METSO pilot phase. The METSO Committee's work was tough, as there was no clear vision of where we were heading; but now everyone has their own clear perspective from which to contribute to discussions - even if their visions might not be exactly the same!" she says.

The voluntary conservation means piloted in the first METSO Programme have been widely approved by stakeholders throughout Finnish society. Hautojärvi sees the consolidation of these tools as standard practice in forest management and conservation as the "hard core" of METSO II, even if there is still



PERITTI HOKKANEN

"The continuation of METSO has to be defined from the perspectives of nature conservation and customer service, rather than organisational concerns," says Sirkka Hautojärvi, chair of the working group preparing the new programme.

scope to enhance such schemes on the basis of past experiences.

METSO II will also involve monitoring, assessments and research. The working group is still considering possible focuses for research work. "One new emphasis is expected to be the impacts of climate change on the ways we preserve biodiversity and manage commercially exploited forests," explains Hautojärvi.

In November 2007 the working group's preliminary proposals will be discussed at a wide-ranging stakeholder seminar. For details of progress on the preparation of the successor to the METSO Programme see the website of Finland's environmental administration www.environment.fi -> Nature conservation -> Protecting forests -> Preparation of the METSO forest biodiversity programme for 2008-2016.

PRIVATE PROTECTED AREA “STILL FEELS LIKE OUR FOREST”

Martti **Saarinen** has long dreamt that the 23 hectares of forest he purchased near his holiday home in Mäntyharju in 1980 could become a private protected area. The new Saarisjärvi Nature Reserve is located in the Finnish Lake District, in one of the focus regions where sites may be designated for permanent protection under the METSO Programme. “I hadn’t heard of METSO before, but I got interested when a friend told me that he had done a deal to establish a private protected area on his land,” explains Saarinen. “I think the compensation was fair, especially since I have spared this forest from logging ever since I acquired it, even though I could sometimes have needed the extra income,” adds Saarinen, who is a retired electrical engineer. “Now I’m in my seventies, I’ve been worrying about what will happen to these forests when I’m no longer around, but now I’m happy this has been resolved. “

Saarinen stresses that forestry is a cornerstone of Finland’s economy, and he is quite satisfied that his neighbours are using their land for commercial forestry and farming. “I think that the voluntary aspect of METSO really is the best way to deal with forest conservation,” he emphasises. “But more information still has to be provided so the right people can be found.” He believes that advisors from local forestry management associations are the best people to do this job, since they know both the local forests and their owners. Saarinen has also assisted in the sale of two neighbouring sites to the State for establishment as nature reserves. Both areas had recently been inherited jointly by several people. The whole cluster of protected areas now has an extent of more than 40 hectares, almost completely encompassing an unspoilt lake.



AHTI KOTISAARI

Forest-owner Martti Saarinen’s land is now marked out as a private nature reserve.

Agreements tailored to landowners’ needs

The newly protected forests lie over the lake from Saarinen’s holiday home. His wife **Merja** stresses that the couple still feel that the forest belongs to them - and the land itself still is under their legal ownership. Saarinen believes it is important for forest-owners to get actively involved in the drafting of agreements



AHTI KOTISAARI

Merja and Martti Saarinen agree that the forests on the other side of the lake, newly established as a reserve under a voluntary METSO scheme, still feel like their own property.



AHTI KOTISHARI

One side of the new Saarisjärvi Nature Reserve is bounded by this stream, whose water levels have been altered by beavers in the past.

- and also in later developments in the new reserves. Saarinen does not have any plans to attract visitors, but it is also possible during the establishment of private protected areas to allow for future nature tourism activities or other developments envisaged by landowners, as long as sites' natural conservation values are not endangered. On Saarinen's reserve elk may be hunted with his permission as the landowner. The right to fish or pick wild berries and edible mushrooms were not restricted in the contract. Small predatory mammals such as mink may be hunted, but not other game animals or birds.

Capercaillies, lynxes and bears

Saarinen recently found traces revealing that a bear had roamed unseen through his reserve, which also contains two capercaillie courtship display sites. A lynx also regularly passes through. "That's where it often sits, on that rock," says Saarinen. "Last winter I found the imprint of its rear end complete with its bob-tail. And beneath that cliff it had caught a hazel grouse."

The Saarisjärvi Nature Reserve mainly consists of natural old-growth coniferous heathland forest. The terrain and topography are highly varied, and there is plenty of decaying wood in both standing and fallen trees. According to Markku Heikkinen of the South Savo Regional Environment Centre, the reserve's forest habitats clearly meet the criteria used in the METSO Programme to define ecologically valuable sites.

Plenty of tenders for voluntary conservation schemes

Forests can also be purchased for permanent protection by the Finnish State through voluntary sales under METSO tendering schemes, using Metsähallitus's funds derived from the sale of other less ecologically valuable properties. Alternatives to landowners thus include the sale of their property to the State, exchanging properties, or establishing private protected areas on their land. METSO's total annual budget for all these schemes is about 5 million euros. "This summer we have received plenty of tenders, with private protected areas clearly the most popular option," says forest ecology consultant Antti **Tiihonen**, who has been working since last spring as a METSO protected area purchaser based at the South Savo Regional Environment Centre. Another ecological consultant, Jukka **Ruutiainen**, is based at the Pirkanmaa Forestry Centre, and the pair together cover all METSO acquisitions throughout Southern Finland.

According to Eero **Melantie**, who processes tenders at the Ministry of the Environment, between midsummer and the beginning of September more than 50 tenders were received covering areas that meet the METSO criteria, with a total extent of 462 ha. "Private protected areas have been most widely offered in numerical terms, but in terms of their total area the sites purchased by the State are almost as extensive, thanks to the acquisition of two large areas," says Melantie.

For additional information on METSO:

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DEDICATED TO NATURE CONSERVATION

Natural products entrepreneur Kaarina **Davis** from Hämeenkyrö is one of many landowners who wish to ensure that their forests are forever spared from the axe. The four hectares of herb-rich forest inherited by Davis, which have not been extensively logged for decades, represent a small treasure trove of biodiversity. For a nature-loving owner such a place is a precious heirloom. "I'm sorry about every tree that has had to be cut down, even to repair our house!" she says. Davis is even reluctant to cut firewood for an idyllic old cottage that she has reverently restored with her husband in fields on another part of the property.

"When I inherited the property a man from the forest management association said that it urgently needed cutting. He didn't even mention the option of protection, although he did say I would have to leave a buffer zone around that gorge," says Davis. "I used to be a nurse and I've only just trained to become a natural products entrepreneur. On the course I was surprised to hear about the option of compensation for voluntary conservation. I didn't hesitate for a moment, and my forest is now a private protected area."

"There really should be more information available about alternatives for forests," says Davis, explaining that such information could both encourage forest-owners who now live in the cities and have "forgotten" their forests, to manage their forests commercially, and on the other hand, get diehard country folk to support more conservation. "This could create a better balance in the forests," says Davis, who also acknowledges the importance of commercial forestry in the right places.

Volunteering to leave forests unexploited

But Davis cannot imagine allowing commercial logging in her own forests. "If I won the lottery, I'd buy more forest and protect it," she laughs.



-This forest is very dear to me, says Kaarina Davis, whose land has now been protected at her own initiative through the METSO Programme.

In the 1970s Professor Pekka **Kilki** of the Finnish Forest Research Institute devised a utility function to describe forest-owners' objectives. In those days timber production was the only widely recognised goal, but Kilki wisely left room for other targets, too. Today Kaarina Davis is an example of the other aims defined in Kilki's model, which has since been used as a basic tool in Finnish forestry. Thankfully there seem to be enough forest-owners in Finland with such attitudes willing to help modern forestry to achieve its multiple objectives by voluntarily leaving their forests unexploited. These forest-owners deserve compensation for the economic losses they suffer, especially since society today increasingly values nature, protected forests and unspoilt landscapes.

Conserving biodiversity is an essential part of sustainable forestry in Finland today. People working in forestry are increasingly conscious that their positive attitudes and actions to promote biodiversity can greatly improve the public image of the forest industry and sales of wood-based products. At the same time opportunities for income and employment are growing in tourism and other fields related to conservation.

Interviews and original text: Ahti Kotisaari. English translation: Fran Weaver.

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.

