



METSO Newsletter

FOREST BIODIVERSITY PROGRAMME FOR SOUTHERN FINLAND (METSO) 2003-2007
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VOLUNTARY METSO MEASURES EFFECTIVE ON THE LAND UPLIFT COAST

'From Sea to Forest' co-operation network project, launched to protect the biodiversity of forests on the land uplift coast of Finland, has been an even greater success than anticipated. A total of some 370 hectares of forests and coastal meadows in various stages of development along the land uplift coast has been obtained under fixed-term or permanent protection based on landowners' voluntary offers. According to landowners, the good points of the project were that the protection is voluntary, that the available protection schemes were varied, and that communications of the authorities were transparent. Some 60 people participated in the excursion to the land uplift coast on 24 August 2006.

METSO, the Forest Biodiversity Programme for Southern Finland, is approaching its evaluation. The last METSO excursion on 24 August was made to western coast of the Gulf of Bothnia, where the land is still raising from the sea after the heavy load of last ice age. A METSO pilot project called 'From Sea to Forest' intends to protect the biodiversity on these unique areas of natural primary succession.

High percentage of offered areas attained protection

The protection of forests on the land uplift coast has made substantial progress. In northern part of the coast, more than 70 per cent of the land area offered by landowners for the pilot has been now conserved through land purchase, trade with natural values or so called agricultural environment protection scheme. In fact, forest owners offered a lot more land for protection than the programme budget allowed to accommodate in the pilot. The land now protected has increased the protected land area in forests on the land uplift coast by a significant 20 per cent. From the point of view of biodiversity, it is important that some of these new areas border on existing protected areas.

In the northern part of the coast, two major areas were selected to the pilot: the Hanhikivi headland in Pyhäjoki (420 hectares) and Halosenniemi in Haukipudas (40 hectares). The latter was completely protected in the project. Landowners at these sites were invited to offer their land for protection in the way of their own choice. Also they could choose to make a fixed-term or permanent contract, or sell the area to the state.



JUHA NIEMI

Moist herb-rich forest on the land uplift coast of Finland, with a considerable number of decayed trees. Hanhilehto, Pyhäjoki.

"The purpose of the project is to preserve unified series of succession in land uplift areas. Known as 'primary succession', the flora on the exposed sea bed develops through meadow, willow stands, alder groves and birch groves gradually towards coniferous forest. The experiment went very well," says project leader Irmeli **Ruokanen**, head of forestry and environment at the Regional Forestry Centre of North Ostrobothnia.

"In the northern part of the coast we made in advance a survey of sites valuable enough for inclusion, based on aerial photography, land use plans and various reports. Then we approached landowners in these sites by letter. This targeted marketing explains in part why there was such great interest on the part of the forest owners."

In the period 2004-2006, the co-operation network participants in the northern part of the uplift coast were the Regional Forestry Centre of North Ostrobothnia, the North Ostrobothnia Regional Environment Centre and the Northern Finland Forest Owners Union.

Open discussion - a key to the success

In southern part of the uplift coast, the project is run by the Regional Forestry Centre of Coastal Finland. Forest owners' unions and forest management associations are playing a highly important role in marketing new agreements.

"It took training in the field, open discussions and unravelling of knots left over from the painful Natura 2000 programme before we were able to move on with landowners to the next stage. Once the forest professionals from all the bodies involved had got together in a grove by the sea, and we were discussing on the primary succession, the importance of decaying wood for endangered species - having an expert from the Regional Environment Centre, responsible for the Natura implementation - the time became slowly ripe for discussing the METSO's new approach of forest conservation that is based on voluntary offers by the landowners, leading possibly to contracts against compensation", says Annikka **Selander**, head of forest management at the Regional Forestry Centre of Coastal Finland. "To put it shortly, we succeeded creating a new operating model for forest conservation", she concludes.

In the southern part of uplift coast, forest planner Björn **Stenmark** from the Forestry Centre was responsible for negotiating with forest owners. "We discussed options for voluntary protection at training sessions for forest management associations and in the media. An article published in a local paper immediately inspired forest owners to contact me. Once the first forest owner had concluded a trade with natural values with the Regional Forestry Centre, the information spread very quickly through the grapevine. We have had more offers than we were able to accommodate in the experimental project," says Stenmark.



JAN LINDSTROM

Kauko Ojala was the first to sign a contract to protect the northern land uplift coast of the Gulf of Bothnia. He is pleased with the varied voluntary protection options provided by METSO. Although he initially had his doubts, he is now well pleased with the scheme.

Praise for the voluntary approach and the large range of protection options

The first reactions of forest owners to the new protection project were hesitant.

"At the first meeting, everyone was very cautious, but once we explained the terms to them, there was general enthusiasm for joining in. It is important for us that the protection is voluntary and that landowners can retain ownership of the protected land areas if they want to," says Kauko **Ojala**, who was the first to sign an agreement on trade with natural values in the northern coastal area.

Pirkko and Ahti **Liukkonen**, who own forest in Halosenniemi, were also eager to participate. Living in Naantali in Southern Finland, they represent the ever-growing body of 'remote forest owners'.

"It was certainly an easy project to participate in. We feel that it is important for the government to contribute to protection schemes so that the forest owners are not stuck with the bill. A major percentage of Europe's natural-state forests is located up here in the north, and it is important for us to shoulder our responsibility in protecting the biodiversity of forests. The Kvarken area was recently designated a Natural World Heritage site, which also shows that the natural environment here is worth protecting," explains Ahti Liukkonen.



JAN LINDSTRÖM

Pirkko and Ahti Liukkonen from Naantali were pleased to link their birch groves with the co-operation network. Being 'remote owners', they hope to receive information on research findings on biodiversity in the area through the Internet, for instance.

The Liukkonens hope that biodiversity research will be carried out in the areas linked to METSO and that the results of that research will be communicated to forest owners.

"Overall, the different options for voluntary protection offered by the co-operation network were very well received among forest owners. The popularity of the trade with natural values was probably due to the 10-year time limit and the fact that the land owners retain ownership. Keeping inherited land in the family is an important sentimental value for many forest owners," explains Ruokanen.

"Another important finding was that an area identified by officials as valuable, even if it is an extensive area, can be brought completely or almost completely under protection if a wide range of protection alternatives are available. However, for this to succeed, forest owners must be informed of the options by letter and given advice as to the protection values of his forest."

Trade with natural values the most popular

In the northern part land-rise coast, the forest owners in the sites covered by the project agreed to place some 250 hectares of forest under fixed-term or permanent protection. This was additional to the already existing protected land of 80 hectares in the region. Voluntary fixed-term agreements

on trade with natural values were concluded with 14 land owners on land areas totalling 163 hectares, while agricultural environment protection scheme agreements were concluded with four land owners on land areas totalling 11 hectares. In a trade with natural values, the land owner undertakes to uphold certain agreed natural values at a specific site against compensation. The government has purchased 26 hectares of forest as nature reserves. A further 18 hectares to be covered by agricultural environment protection scheme agreements is still under negotiation.

The average compensation per hectare for ten years was EUR 565 under an agreement on trade with natural values and EUR 406 under an agricultural environment protection scheme agreement. In land purchases, the average one-off compensation per hectare was EUR 6,400; this rather high figure is explained by the fact that valuable coastal properties were included.

In the southern part of the land-rise region, a total of 63 forest owners have offered land areas for protection. One of the pilot areas was in Halsö in Korsnäs and the other on Raippaluoto island. Eight agreements on trade with natural values were signed, covering some 30 hectares in all. Further negotiations are still going on. Some 10 hectares of land are covered by the agricultural environment protection scheme in forestry.

Continuation for METSO desired

METSO has introduced wholly new devices for protecting the biodiversity of Finnish forests, based on the motivation of a forest owner to protect his own forests. The experimental project will end next year. Project leader Mikko **Kuusinen** from the Ministry of the Environment summarized the five years of experience at the end of the excursion day seminar.

"It is obvious that there is a need to enhance the protection of biodiversity. Since voluntary means have been received so well, they should be mainstreamed in the future. However, we need a wide range of devices. Natural management of commercial forests, consultation, and improving the ecological efficiency of existing protected areas also have a part to play. It is vital to secure sufficient funding beyond 2007," points out Kuusinen.

Kuusinen feels that the restoration and management of nature reserves should be continued beyond 2012. Also, more research findings are needed both on biodiversity and on the means for protecting it. Monitoring information on the development of biodiversity will also be needed continuously in the future.

Deputy Director General Pentti **Lähteenoja** from the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry was in agreement in his closing statement for the day. He considered that METSO has irrevocably changed the face of biodiversity protection in Finland, and that the principal merit of METSO is that forest owners have clearly become more favourable to



On the Kalajoki coast, the rate of the land uplift from the sea is about 1 cm per year.

protection with the introduction of voluntary means of protection. (Original text by Jan Lindström, Tapio)

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Direct address to this Newsletter: www.mmm.fi/metso/international/METSO_Newsletter_5_2006.pdf.

Coming soon:

Nov 2006: Final evaluation report of the METSO Programme

METSO AND INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENTS

The **METSO** Programme is an integral part of Finland's implementation of various international agreements. METSO makes significant contributions to meeting the objectives for sustainable development 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 one of the resolutions of 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 practiced on a small scale in southern Finland, where average cutting areas are only 1-2 ha. METSO is piloting 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, METSO is backed up by intensive research and survey work and will be evaluated.

English pages of the METSO Programme: www.mmm.fi/metso/international