



METSO Newsletter

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

Published by the Finnish Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry and Ministry of the Environment

4/2005

November 2005

EVALUATION OF METSO APPROACHING - STATE-OWNED FORESTS WELL PROTECTED - FINNS FIND CONSERVATION IMPORTANT

Evaluation of the METSO Programme will take place next year, the first interim report having been published already. Metsähallitus who is responsible for managing State-owned forests in Finland, surveyed its forests in Southern Finland using METSO conservation criteria, and redesignated 5,000 hectares of forests from commercial use to conservation.

The Finns consider conservation of forests important. 100,000 Finns signed a forest petition, and ENGOs demonstrated in September in Helsinki to redesignate more forests under permanent protection in Southern Finland.

FIRST INTERIM IMPACT REPORT ON METSO PUBLISHED

The first interim report has been published on the ecological, economic and social impacts of the METSO Programme. The impacts of the METSO Programme are to be monitored for its entire duration. This first interim report covers the years 2003-2004, and consists of internal evaluations of the pilot projects for voluntary conservation measures, and data collection and habitat restoration in protected areas.

The evaluation material in total will include monitoring reports, statistical data, field survey data, records of discussions, research results, and questionnaires completed in internal project evaluations.

Evaluation results

The diversity of the sites offered for METSO projects is evaluated using ecological conservation criteria. Respondents generally felt that these criteria were suitable, at least where habitats and the structural features of forests are concerned. In some sites, however, the necessary measurements and assessments were considered to be demanding and difficult. It was also suggested that the task of collecting data on species was difficult to accomplish using the limited resources available for the pilot projects.

Additional guidelines were thought to be needed to facilitate the selective inclusion in METSO projects



METSO field workers evaluating the ecological value of a site from the *natural values trading* scheme, as part of a survey that compared sites included in the scheme with sites not included and with other ecologically valuable sites in private forests nearby.

of sites with other habitat types than those covered by the existing criteria, especially where sites in the vicinity of protected areas are concerned.

Another idea worth developing was the suggestion that the criteria could be usefully applied in the planning of natural management measures for the landowner's forest holding.

The report indicates that both forest owners and other stakeholders generally see the METSO projects in a positive light. The METSO schemes have increased co-operation between different organisations.

Metsähallitus's project on the restoration and management of habitats in protected areas was partly seen as providing work for local forestry services contractors, but the METSO projects were otherwise not thought to be having any significant impact on employment in the forestry sector as yet. The economic impacts of the measures within the METSO projects for forest owners were also generally seen as being minor, whereas the impacts on nature tourism and rural tourism were evaluated positive.

The respondents generally gave a favourable rating to METSO's impacts on nature tourism, rural tourism and other uses of forests such as outdoor recreation and nature study. Where cultural values are concerned, the pilot projects' most significant impact was considered to be increasing landscape values.

English summary of the interim report: www.mmm.fi/METSO/international, under the title EVALUATION OF METSO PROGRAMME.

ECOLOGICALLY VALUABLE STATE-OWNED FORESTS WELL PROTECTED

Commercially managed State-owned forests in Southern Finland have been surveyed by Metsähallitus to see which areas meet the ecological conservation criteria used in the METSO Programme. Metsähallitus published recently the final report of the project, called Natural management of commercially managed forests.

On the basis of the report, Metsähallitus has redesignated forests that meet these criteria, together with several other sites, to leave them outside areas that are commercially managed. Metsähallitus' decision protects the most ecologically valuable State-owned forest in Southern Finland that were still unconserved.

The total area conserved was almost 5,000 hectares. Related to the total area of Finland's State-owned forests in Southern Finland the area is considered relatively small, but it only reflects the fact that the most ecologically valuable sites in State-owned forests had already been identified and protected previously under several nature conservation programmes and in the Natura 2000 network.

The protection decision will reduce annual logging income by about €823,000, and increases unemployment by 11-50 man-years.

State-owned forests have limited chances to protect biodiversity in Southern Finland

Environmental expert Petri **Heinonen** of Metsähallitus, who led the project, sees Metsähallitus' chances limited to protect effectively more biodiversity in Southern Finland. In the past project, he also sees obvious reasons for the scarce findings of feasible new areas for protection.

"Firstly, only 5% of the forests in the METSO region are State-owned, as most of the forests in Southern Finland are owned privately by individuals and families. Secondly, more than half of the forest species threatened in Finland need grass-herb forests, which grow on very fertile soils. Such soils are rare in State-owned lands, and in practical terms they are all protected already," says Heinonen. He refers to earlier conservation programmes like the National Parks and Strict Nature Reserves Programmes [1978],

Table 1. Areas that will now be set aside from commercial management by Metsähallitus as part of the METSO project *Natural management of commercially managed forests*. (figures in hectares)

METSO habitat types	Forestland	Forestland (incl. unproductive areas)	Total area
Heathland forests with plenty of decaying wood	3 302	3 315	3 324
Spruce mires	586	598	598
Swampy woodlands and wooded flood meadows	28	30	33
Natural forests on emergent coastline	69	73	73
Grass-herb woodlands	142	143	143
Sunlit slopes on eskers and moraine features	8	8	8
Wooded pastures and meadows	1	1	1
Other habitat types			
Pine mires (E Finland)	159	261	297
Fens (SW Lapland)	18	97	115
Other sites (W Finland)	349	357	360
TOTAL	4 661	4 883	4 952



MATTI PHILATIE

More than half of the forest species threatened in Finland need grass-herb forests, which grow on very fertile soils. They are also the most species-rich forest habitats in general. In the photo rare Mezereon (red berries) in an alder glade. Liperi, Central Finland.

the Mire Protection Programme [1979], the Herb-rich Woodland Protection Programme [1989], the Shore Protection Programme [1990], the Old-growth Forest Protection Programme [1992] and the Natura 2000 programme [1998].

South from Oulu Province, grass-herb forests account for just 3% of State-owned lands, but as much as 20% of privately owned forests. The project surveyors managed to identify 143 ha of these type of forests, although the report describes of them as limited value. "The sites newly protected under this project are mainly bilberry- and lingonberry-type heathlands forests, which are already widespread in existing protected areas," says Heinonen. In contrast, only about one per cent of Finland's grass-herb forests have been protected.

Heinonen also explains that almost a third of Finland's threatened species (28%) live in reforested forest meadows - habitats, which are virtually absent from the State-owned forests. "This means that in practice the only threatened species that we can help are those associated with old-growth forests and other heathland forests, which account for only 13% of all the country's threatened species."

Also the Director of Nature Conservation at the Ministry of the Environment, Mr Ilkka **Heikkinen**, questioned earlier this spring at the publication of the results, whether biodiversity can still be efficiently increased in Southern Finland by expanding the protection of State-owned forests.

Counting the cost of protection

The cost of the project amounted to €791,100, most of which relating to field surveying work. The annual running costs of the protection decision were calculated in terms of losses in logging income and unemployment in man-years. Income losses were calculated as amounting to €823,000 a year. The sum was described as significant, and amounts to €177 per hectare per year. The straight reduction in employment in forest work was estimated as 11 man-years, but with the compound unemployment effects in the whole forest industries the unemployment rises to 50 man-years.

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FINNS FIND CONSERVATION IMPORTANT - ENGOS DEMONSTRATED FOR ENDANGERED SPECIES

Six Finnish environmental non-governmental organisations' (ENGOS) collected a Forest petition to redesignate more forests under permanent protection in Southern Finland. The petition, run from January till August, was signed by more than 100,000 Finns.

Some 200 hundred nature conservationists demonstrated in Helsinki on 19 Sept 2005 to speed up forest protection demands. The demonstrators, each carrying a sign with a slogan and the name of an endangered, threatened or vanished species, ended in front of the Ministry of the Environment, where the petition was handed over to Mr. Jan-Erik **Enestam**, Minister of the Environment.

The main demand of the petition is forest protection in Southern Finland should cover five percent of the forest area by 2010 and 10% in the long run. ENGOS' claim that that most of this could be achieved protecting State-owned forests, the communes and other collective bodies. The ENGOS also claim a funding programme for forest conservation, with an annual minimum of €75 million.

“Not percentages, but quality”

According to Minister Enestam, the Ministry shares the protection concerns of the ENGOS, but the main



Demonstrators for the Forest petition in Helsinki in front of the Ministry of the Environment, expressing their concern for the endangered species and the amount of protected forests in Southern Finland.

issue is the choice of methods. “Protection values are not found in percentages; quality is what matters most for the species. The present protection area is not enough, but we want to direct protection as effectively as possible. Even ten percent would not be enough if the protected areas were of poor quality”, Minister Enestam says.

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.

METSO Programme: www.mmm.fi/metso or www.ymparisto.fi/metso



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