



METSO Fact sheet / April 2009

Forest Biodiversity Programme for Finland



VASTAVALORI / SAMPO KIVINIEMI

The Forest Biodiversity Programme METSO 2008–2016 aims to halt the ongoing decline in the biodiversity of forest habitats and species, and establish stable favourable trends in Southern Finland's forest ecosystems.

The METSO Programme is targeted to both private and state-owned lands. Funding for the programme is 180 million euros until 2012.

The programme aims to:

- improve Finland's network of protected areas
- continue and enhance the application of nature management methods in commercially managed forests
- to improve the knowledge base on forest biodiversity conservation
- increase collaboration between forest and environmental organizations
- provide advice to forest owners
- train professional foresters
- improve communication

A new way of conservation thinking

METSO brings a new way of thinking to Finnish nature conservation. It is a radical shift away from authorities simply designating protected areas to voluntary conservation agreements between the authorities and forest owners.

This voluntary-based approach has been warmly welcomed by forest owners. An increasing number of them are interested in preserving ecologically valuable forest habitats by offering their forests either for temporary conservation or for permanent protection.

A set of new, voluntary and incentive-based policy instruments, such as natural values trading and competitive tendering, were tested in the pilot phase of METSO in 2003–2007. The results of the pilot phase show that the forest sites that have been protected through voluntary measures generally have high ecological values. Voluntary measures used in the METSO Programme have also gained widespread acceptance among forest owners. The total funding for the pilot phase was 60 million euros.



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Ecological shopping list

The site selection criteria define what kind of ecologically valuable habitats are to be protected in the programme, in other words they form "an ecological shopping list". The criteria are based on the ecological structure of forests and on forest habitat types important for biodiversity.

Sites are especially favoured where habitats are well preserved in their natural state or could easily be restored, where they host rare or endangered species, and where they are close to protected areas. On a smaller scale, measures are particularly taken to conserve forests that are rich in biodiversity because they contain features such as decaying wood, burnt or charred wood, mature broad-leaved trees, large aspen trees, nutrient-rich soils, springs, brooks, and other natural water features. Consideration may also be given to impacts on economic activities, recreation,

tourism and cultural values.

Conservation under the METSO Programme is based on forest owners' voluntary competitive tendering. The authorities compare tenders and choose the most suitable sites and negotiate conservation agreements with the forest owner. In the case of permanent protection, the forest owners' views on appropriate compensation are taken into consideration.

The conservation agreement can also be made for a specific time period, according to forest owner's preference. Active nature management of the site can be included in the agreement as well as the management costs. Forest owners value the voluntary approach, the independence in decision-making and the chance to retain their property rights in the available conservation schemes.

State-owned lands and METSO

Additionally, METSO contributes to the management and restoration of state-owned lands. Metsähallitus, the state-run enterprise that manages the state-owned forests, has restored about 30 000 hectares of state-owned lands. Metsähallitus has also protected 104 new sites on state-owned lands that cover 13 500 hectares, of which about 10 000 hectares are forests that

fulfil the selection criteria defined for the programme.

The monitoring of the programme is supported by a working group appointed by the Ministry of the Environment. Research plays an important role in assessing the METSO Programme's long-term ecological, economic and social impacts.

Further information:

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