



# METSO PROGRAMME

Forest Biodiversity Programme for  
Southern Finland  
2008 - 2016

# Working with forest-owners to benefit nature



The METSO programme encourages Finnish forest-owners to protect and manage their ecologically valuable forests to benefit biodiversity.

The compensation they receive for their voluntary participation in the programme provides a welcome source of income to make up for losses of timber sales.

# Safeguarding biodiversity



The METSO programme aims to safeguard biodiversity in the forests of Southern Finland, where

- most forests are privately owned by local families
- relatively few extensive areas of forest are presently under protection
- the forest habitat types that can be protected under the programme are home to many rare and threatened flora, fauna and fungi
- their protection can also promote landscape conservation, the recreational use of forests, and nature tourism.



## Safeguarding biodiversity (2)

The METSO programme particularly aims to protect unspoilt natural forests.

- such forests can particularly be recognised by the presence of plenty of dead and decaying wood, burnt wood, and large broad-leaved trees.
- detailed ecological criteria are applied when sites are selected for the programme.
- forests that adjoin existing protected areas are considered to have added value as ecological buffer zones that enhance the conservation values of previously designated nature reserves.

# Habitat types covered by the METSO programme



- 1) herb-rich forests
- 2) heathland forests with plenty of decaying wood
- 3) forests adjacents to springs and pools
- 4) wooded mires and the wooded margins of open mires
- 5) swampy woodlands and wooded flood meadows
- 6) sunlit slopes on sandy esker ridges
- 7) biodiversity sites along emergent coastlines
- 8) wooded traditional agricultural biotopes
- 9) wooded habitats on calcium-rich bedrock and ultra-alkaline soil
- 10) wooded cliffs, boulder fields and other rocky areas important for biodiversity



## SITE SELECTION CRITERIA

Special publications produced through the METSO programme help Finnish forest-owners to consider whether their forests meet the programme's site selection criteria.

### **The related publications are available from**

- regional forestry centres
- regional centres for economic development, transport and the environment (ELY centres)
- METSO programme website: [www.metsonpolku.fi](http://www.metsonpolku.fi)

Full details of the ecological site selection criteria are presented in a Finnish-language publication produced by the Ministry of the Environment.



## The METSO programme enables the forest-owners to protect their forests

- permanently
- temporarily
- managing them in environmentally sensitive ways

Suitable forms of protection are agreed between land-owners and the authorities on a site-by-site basis, according to sites' natural values and forestowners' wishes.



# Permanent protection



Commercial forestry may no longer be practised in forests designated for permanent protection, but protected forests almost always remain accessible to the public under Finland's liberal land access rights.





## Permanent protection

Privately owned forests may be permanently protected through the METSO programme in three ways:

### 1) Privately owned protection areas

- may be set up through compensation agreements between the environmental authorities and landowners who wish to maintain their ownership, and influence any future nature management work carried out in their forests.



## Permanent protection (2)



2) Forest areas suitable for protection may be sold to the state

- by their owners to the state at agreed prices, for future management by the state enterprise Metsähallitus.



## Permanent protection (3)



### 3) Land exchanges

- may be the best solution for forest-owners who wish to see a particular ecologically valuable site protected, but also continue to practice forestry in another comparable area of forest. The availability of state-owned land for such exchanges varies between different regions of Finland.





## Temporary protection

- 1) Environmental forestry subsidy agreements can be signed by the authorities and forest-owners covering ten-year periods, as defined by the Act on the Financing of Sustainable Forestry.
  - Such subsidies are typically paid out to compensate forest-owners for safeguarding extensive areas of ecologically valuable forest habitat types mentioned in the Forest Act or the site selection criteria for the METSO programme.



## Temporary protection (2)

- 2) Forests may also be temporarily protected under the Nature Conservation Act for variable periods of up to twenty years through agreements between landowners and the environmental authorities.
  - Agreements are defined on a site-specific basis. Sites suitable for such protection include areas of forest habitat whose natural features may change considerably over a relatively short time-span.



# Nature management in forest habitats



Nature management work involves measures to maintain, increase or restore valuable natural features in forest habitats.

- Methods include grazing, mowing and the removal of selected trees.
- Nature management schemes are planned together with landowners, who are not expected to cover any of the related costs, however.

## Nature management in forest habitats (2)



Forest habitat types where nature management is often necessary, include:

- Herb-rich broad-leaved woodlands
- Springs and streams no longer in their natural state
- Artificially drained spruce mires, fens and other nutrient-rich wooded mires
- Sunlit slopes on sandy esker ridges
- Wooded traditional agricultural biotopes



## Decisions on METSO sites made by the regional authorities



- Decisions on the permanent or temporary protection of sites selected for the METSO programme are made by the regional centres for economic development, transport and the environment (ELY centres).
- Regional forestry centres make decisions on environmental forestry subsidies and support for nature management schemes, in accordance with the Act on the Financing of Sustainable Forestry.

# New opportunities for forest-owners



The compensation paid to forest-owners whose land is protected under the METSO programme provides a welcome alternative source of income for landowners who might wish to contribute to the conservation of forest biodiversity.



## Compensation for permanent protection



- Where forest-owners agree to establish private protected areas on their land, they receive agreed sums of tax-free compensation corresponding to the financial losses they incur, based on the market value of the timber in the area to be protected.
- Where areas of forest are sold to the state, the prices paid are generally based on the market values of comparable local properties used for commercial forestry. Income from such land sales is tax free.
- Straightforward land exchanges may be agreed between forest-owners and the state in areas where state-owned forests of comparable value are available to enable such exchanges.

# Compensation for temporary protection and nature management



- Environmental forestry subsidy payments are based on the current local values of the quantities of timber immediately ready for harvesting. Subsidy payments are not taxable.
- Where forests are protected temporarily under the Nature Conservation Act, tax-free compensation is paid on a site-by-site basis according to the financial losses incurred by forest-owners in terms of unrealised timber sales.
- The costs of nature management schemes are entirely covered by subsidies paid out in accordance with the Act on the Financing of Sustainable Forestry. Forest-owners benefit from such schemes by having the ecologically valuable features on their land managed without incurring any costs.

# Metso is also the Finnish name of the capercaillie



Metso is a well-known forest bird that has become scarce in Finland in recent years.

Capercaillies and many other forest birds, animals, plants and fungi will benefit greatly from the protection of increasing areas of forest under the METSO Forest Biodiversity Programme for Southern Finland.





## New METSO spirit

Finnish forest-owners are actively encouraged to contact their regional forestry and environmental authorities to find out whether their forests may qualify for protection under the METSO programme. METSO has helped to build up a new spirit of understanding and collaboration between landowners and the authorities.





Read more information on

**METSO**

<http://www.metsopolku.fi/metso/www/en/index.php>