

Finland's first local forest programme completed alongside national heritage landscape

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The first local forest programme in Finland was completed in December 2007. The programme was created for the Koli and Hattusaari area in co-operation with local residents and experts. The villages of Koli and Hattusaari are located in North Karelia, in the town of Lieksa on the western side of Lake Pielinen. The area outlined for the local forest programme amounts to 11,375 hectares and it includes the Koli National Park in its entirety.

Part of an international project

The local forest programme was drawn up as part of the international, three-year ELAV project (Enhancing Local Activity and Values from Forest Land through community-led strategic planning). The aim of the project was to examine the opportunities offered by forests for the development of rural economy and improved vitality. The project was funded by the Interreg IIIB Northern Periphery programme of the European Regional Development Fund, with participation from forest organisations from Finland, Sweden, Norway, Iceland and Scotland. Further funding for the Finnish section of the project was obtained from the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry.

Solid expertise behind the research

In addition to local people, the Finnish case study, i.e. compiling the local forest programme, had participants from three expert organisations, the Finnish Forest Research Institute (Metla), the Forestry Centre of North Karelia and the Forest Management Association of North Karelia.

Metla was responsible for technical support, regional forestry calculations and a survey of funding sources. The Forestry Centre compiled information about the forest resources, loggings and forest management work in the area's private forests. The Forest Management Association calculated the employment effect of wood production and forest management work in the programme region. The Forestry Centre and the Forest Management Association also offered support and advisory services to forest owners throughout the project.

The cornerstone of drawing up the forest programme was taking local people's wishes and needs into account. The entire process was interactive due to, for example, the local working group and several different seminars and field trips. It was also possible to utilise the planning expertise of other countries in the international project.

Programme for years to come

The forest programme describes the current state and the production and utilisation possibilities of local forests, as well as

the outlines of local communities for the development of forest use for the next ten years.

The development objectives for forest use are divided into three main groups: the commercial use of wood resources and energy wood, other values of forests, and employment. All of the objectives are connected to one another.

Objectives related to commercial use of wood resources and energy wood:

- Maintaining good productivity in forests.
- Supporting the growing of quality wood.
- Reducing damages caused by moose.
- Increasing the harvesting and use of energy wood.

Objectives related to other values of forests:

- Restoration and maintenance of footpaths outside the national park.
- Implementing an extension to the Herajärvi Trail.
- Opening scenic views at important sites.
- Developing nature-based tourist services.
- Developing the utilisation of the summer theatre venue and other places of cultural value.

Objectives related to employment

- Creating new jobs in the villages.

In addition to the objectives for the development of forest use, measures to achieve the objectives and possible actors to implement the objectives have also been recorded in the forest programme. The programme presents examples of funding sources for the measures, discusses the economic, ecologic and social impacts of the measures and describes the implementation of programme follow-up.

For the villagers' use

The forest programme may be used as a background document whenever the villagers are seeking funding for joint support and development projects. The forest programme also provides a channel to outline local views on forest use for the preparation of regional and national forest programmes and regional land use plans. The planning methods created in connection with drawing up the programme may also be utilised in other rural areas where the reconciliation of forest-based business activities and other forest use is challenging.

Further information

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