

Tools and approaches for combining forest-based tourism and forestry in Finland

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Producing timber or landscapes for tourists – do forestry and tourism have joint interests?

Today, in many rural regions in Finland the key development areas are forestry and tourism. In North-Finland substantial amount of tourism activities are located on state owned conservation and hiking areas around tourism centres. However, increasing amount of tourism activities including motorized use of nature has expanded tourism also into timber production forests. The quality of landscape and environment is one of the elements defining the quality of a nature tourism service. In Finland, forestry as a large industry has significant impact on the quality of landscapes. Therefore, synergies and conflicts between forestry and tourism need to be more comprehensively studied.

Tourists mainly evaluate the environment in terms of landscape, where attractive scenery becomes one of the most important reasons for the choice of destination. Tourists' and recreationists' attitudes are particularly negative towards intensive management practises clearcuttings, which is a widely used method in commercial forests. Therefore, new forest management methods to find a balance between traditional economic and less tangible amenity benefits of forests has to be developed.

This paper outlines the main problems related to expansion of tourism in Finland in timber production forests and suggests some approaches for intergrative approach. The key questions are how forestry and tourism development should be combined, what are the environmental expectations of different segments of clientele, and what type of adaptations in forest management practises are economically viable as a whole in rural areas. Moreover, new types of agreements and markets are needed between entrepreneurs and private landowners to achieve mutual benefits in tourism development at local level. These approaches include development of a compensation system for a voluntary based recreation and scenic value trade targeted to increasing production of amenity benefits of forests in tourism areas in private ownership.

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