

THE ROLE OF RECREATION AND NATURE TOURISM IN MANAGING STATE OWNED FORESTS IN FINLAND

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Abstract

Metsähallitus governs the State-owned forestry lands, wilderness and conservation areas, and water areas in Finland (12.5 mill. ha, 1/3 of the country's total area). These include seven Natural Hiking Areas, particularly suited for outdoor recreation. Recreation and nature tourism are considered in the management of other areas, as well. The strength of Metsähallitus is the holistic multi-objective management of all kinds of areas as one whole.

The aims in commercially managed areas are two-fold: to produce profit to the State revenue and to enhance the multi-functionality of forests. Concerning the latter, special emphasis is put on biodiversity, recreation, reindeer husbandry, and Sámi culture in the northernmost Finland. Metsähallitus uses an advanced multi-stage planning system. In multicriteria natural resources planning, alternative land-use plans of large regions are assessed in terms of economic, ecological and socio-cultural sustainability. An interactive participatory planning process is applied. Natural resource plans are then implemented by means of detailed operational planning.

In commercially managed State forest lands (3.6 mill. ha), timber cuttings are strongly restricted or entirely eliminated in around 16% of the total area. In that, recreational use of forests is widely considered – especially in areas important for nature tourism. In addition, scrub and waste lands within forestry land (1.5 mill. ha) are available for recreation and tourism. Most of the protected forests, wilderness areas, etc. (4.0 mill.ha) and water areas (3.4 mill. ha) are also suited for recreation. The Government Programme of Prime Minister Matti Vanhanen's second Cabinet outlines that "sustainable tourism and recreation activities in conservation areas will be promoted". This is in line with the aims of Metsähallitus.

In addition to all what different state-owned areas as themselves enable, units of Metsähallitus provide many-sided recreation and nature tourism services, and also actively participate in the related research and development work.

Key Words

Multiple-purpose forestry, natural resource management, nature tourism, recreation, state-owned areas