



METSO Fact sheet / October, 2019

METSO – The Forest Biodiversity Programme for Southern Finland



TOIMIMUKKONEN

The Forest Biodiversity Programme METSO 2008–2025 aims to halt the ongoing decline in the biodiversity of forest habitats and species, and establish stable favourable trends especially in Southern Finland's forest ecosystems. During the first ten years of implementation, the programme has established its status in safeguarding biodiversity.

The programme aims to:

- promote voluntary-based conservation
- improve the network of protected forests
- promote nature management in commercially managed forests
- increase collaboration between forest and environmental organisations, forest owners and other stakeholders
- improve the knowledge base on forest biodiversity
- improve communication and education on the biodiversity of forest habitats and ecosystem services

A new way of conservation thinking

METSO has changed the way of thinking of nature conservation in Finland. METSO also offers tools for sustainable forestry. It is the most important investment to voluntary conservation in Finland.

The voluntary-based approach has been warmly welcomed by forest owners, NGOs, forest companies and authorities. An increasing number of forest owners are interested in preserving ecologically valuable forest habitats by offering their forests either for temporary conservation¹ or for permanent protection. Active nature management of the sites can be included in both temporary conservation agreements or in permanent ones. The site selection criteria define which habitats are accepted

for conservation. Forest and environmental authorities assess the suitability of each site. Forest owners get full financial compensation equivalent to the value of timber at the protected site. With permanent protection, the compensation is tax-free.

Forest owners value the voluntary approach, the independence in decision-making and the chance to retain their property rights when participating in the available conservation measures. According to a recent assessment, the forest sites that have been protected through voluntary measures in the METSO programme generally have high ecological values.²

The funding for the METSO programme has been approximately 30 million euros per year.

Ecological shopping list

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

Sites where habitats are in their natural state or could easily be restored are especially favoured. In addition, rare or

endangered species or good ecological connectivity increases the ecological value of the site. The criteria also contain factors 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 if they also support biodiversity conservation.



JUKKA RUUTAINEN

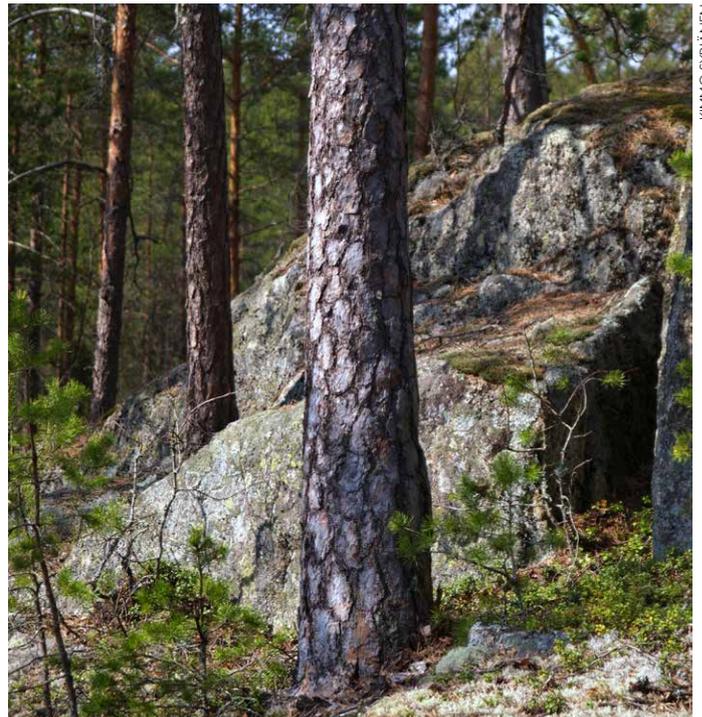
Targets and results

The objectives for METSO are to have 96,000 hectares of forest established as permanently protected areas and to safeguard biodiversity on 82,000 hectares of forest habitats in commercially managed forests by means of fixed-term environmental forestry subsidy agreements (10 years) and nature management projects.

By the end of 2018, about 72% of the target set for the protected areas had been achieved. This includes almost 56,000 hectares offered by private forest owners and 13,000 hectares protected by the State. In commercially managed forests, some 56% of the target had been reached by the end

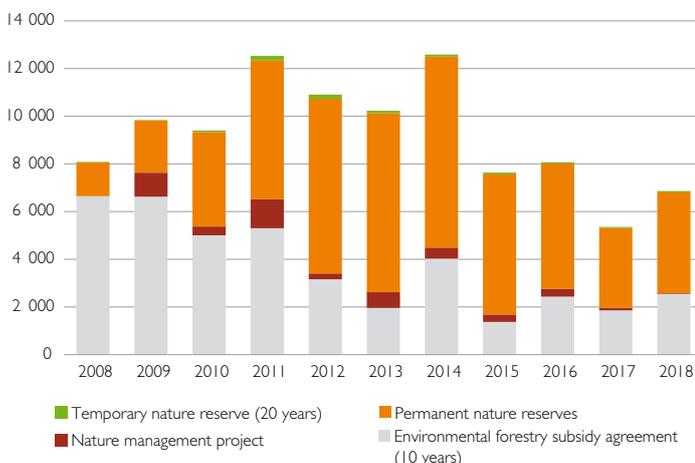
of 2018. This includes 41,000 hectares of subsidy agreements and 4,700 hectares of active nature management. Most of the protected sites are heathland forests rich in decaying wood and wooded mires.

With these targets, the METSO programme also forms a part of Finland's implementation of various international agreements and commitments, such as the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the EU 2020 Biodiversity Strategy. METSO is coordinated by the Ministry of the Environment and the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, and it is implemented by regional environmental and forest authorities.



KIMMO SYRJÄNEN

Annual area (ha) of voluntary conservation in the METSO programme.



TEEMU KLUSIMURTO

1 Temporary nature reserve for 20 years or subsidy agreement for 10 years.
 2 Hohti, J., Halme, P., Hjelt, M., Horne, P., Huovari, J., Lensu, A., Mäkilä, K., Mönkkönen, M., Sajeva, M. & Kotiaho, J. 2019. Kymmenen vuotta METSOa – Väliarviointi Etelä-Suomen metsien monimuotoisuuden toimintaohjelman ensimmäisestä vuosikymmenestä. [Ten years of METSO – An interim review of the first decade of the Forest Biodiversity Programme for Southern Finland.] Publications of the Ministry of Environment 2019:4. Ministry of the Environment, Helsinki. 116 p. <http://urn.fi/URN:ISBN:978-952-361-003-3> (in Finnish with an English abstract)

Further information:

METSO programme's website
<https://metsonpolku.fi/en-US>

Ministry of the Environment
 P.O. Box 35, FI-00023 Government, Finland
www.ym.fi/en

Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry
 P.O. Box 30, FI-00023 Government, Finland
www.mmm.fi/en