



Metsähallitus Natural Heritage Services Annual Report 2008

METSÄHALLITUS

INNOVATOR



Finland's national parks and strict nature reserves, wilderness areas and national hiking areas and state-owned public waters that were managed by Metsähallitus 31.12.2008.

- Information on the management of the areas: www.metsa.fi > Natural Heritage.
- Information on the areas and services: www.outdoors.fi, www.excursionmap.fi.

© Metsähallitus 2009
© NLS of Finland 1/1MML/09



Metsähallitus, Natural Heritage Services

Natural Heritage Services, Steering Units
P.O. Box 94, 01301 Vantaa, Finland
tel.int. +358 205 64 100

Natural Heritage Services, Lapland
P.O. Box 8016,
96101 Rovaniemi, Finland
tel.int. +358 205 64 100

Natural Heritage Services, Ostrobothnia
Torangintaival 2,
93600 Kuusamo, Finland
tel.int. +358 205 64 100

Natural Heritage Services, Southern Finland
P.O. Box 94,
01301 Vantaa, Finland
tel.int. +358 205 64 100

Metsähallitus Natural Heritage Services protects and manages Finland's most precious natural treasures such as national parks. We ensure that natural resources are used sustainably, and we provide services and facilities for outdoor activities including hiking, fishing and hunting.

Our work involves the comprehensive administration and responsible management and utilisation of State-owned lands and waters, based on our extensive expertise. Natural Heritage Services has striven to enhance its work throughout Finland to ensure that the management and steering policy goals of the Finnish State are realised productively and cost-effectively at operational level.

We work in partnership with tourism firms to provide memorable natural experiences for Finnish and foreign visitors.

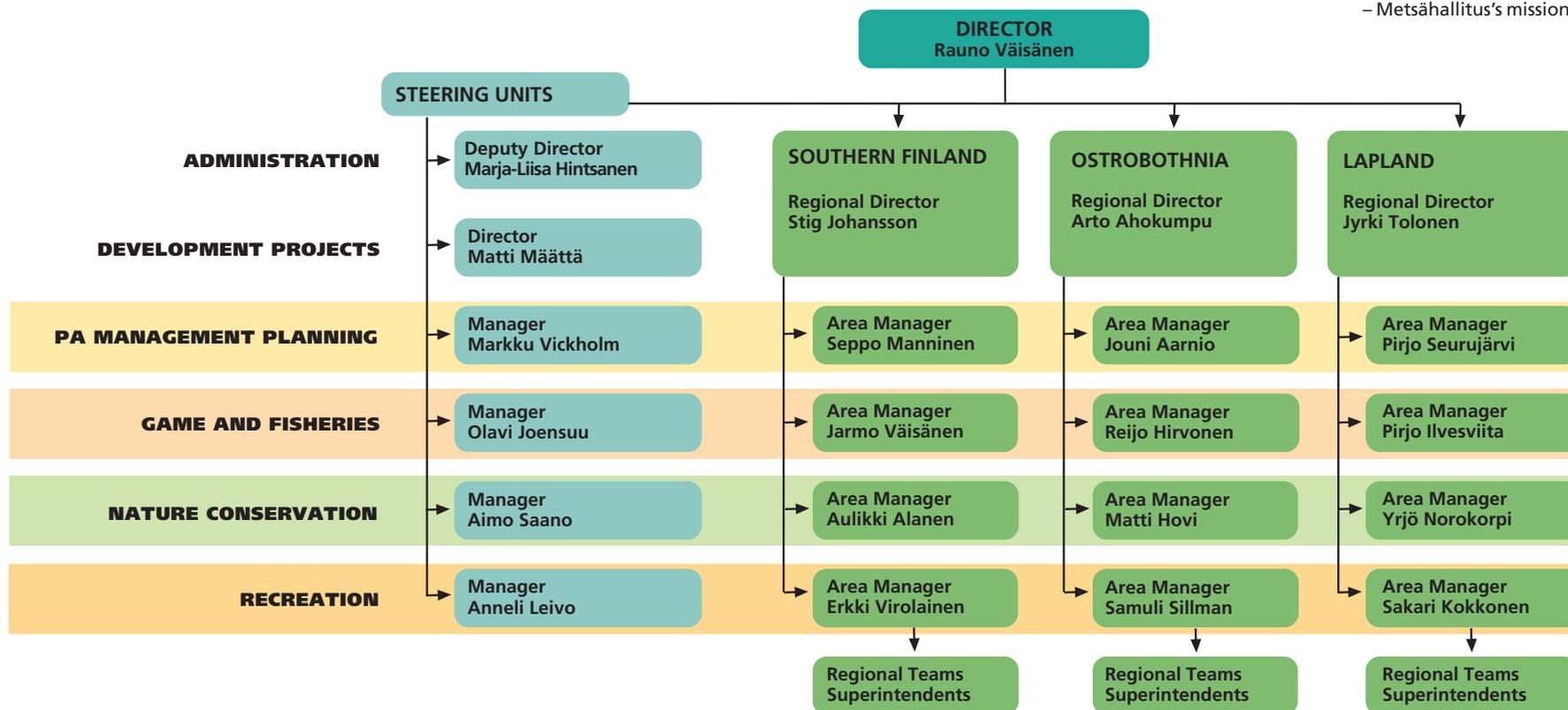


GREY-HEADED WOODPECKER (PICUS CANUS). DRAWING: JARI KOSTET

Conserving and utilising nature's riches

– Metsähallitus's mission

PROCESSES



Contents

Local co-operation based on a comprehensive vision	1
Improved productivity	3
Active conservation work essential for threatened species and biotopes	4
Nature vital for economic and personal well-being	7
Ensuring the sustainability of hunting and fishing	9
Management plans address many goals	10
Natural Heritage Services a trusted lead partner	11
Conserving and utilising nature's riches	12

EDITOR: PÄIVI ROSQVIST, TIINA GRAHN

TRANSLATION: FRAN WEAVER

LAYOUT: MARIANNE KATAINEN

FRONT COVER: RESEARCH WORK IS CONTINUING IN AREAS TRANSFERRED TO METSÄHALLITUS FROM THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE FINNISH FOREST RESEARCH INSTITUTE AT THE BEGINNING OF 2008. IN SAANA FELL NATURE RESERVE, NATURAL HERITAGE SERVICES HAS BEEN SURVEYING ARCHAEOLOGICAL RELICS AND THREATENED PLANTS. PHOTO: JARI KOSTET

BACK COVER: A YOUNG EAGLE OWL (*BUBO BUBO*) IN THE SIPOON-KORPI NATURE RESERVE, JUST EAST OF HELSINKI. PHOTO: ANTTI BELOW

METSÄHALLITUS, NATURAL HERITAGE SERVICES 2009

P.O. BOX 94 (VERNISSAKATU 4),

01301 VANTAA, FINLAND

TEL.INT. +358 205 64 100

WWW.METSA.FI

WWW.OUTDOORS.FI

WWW.EXCURSIONMAP.FI

ERWEKO PAINOTUOTE OY, HELSINKI 2009

800 COPIES

ISBN 978-952-446-714-8 (PRINTED)

ISBN 978-952-446-715-5 (PDF)



Printed matter
441 032

Local co-operation based on a comprehensive vision

Natural Heritage Services manages Finland's national parks and other protected areas with the aim of preserving Finland's natural features and providing services for everyone interested in nature. We also manage State-owned waters. This wide-ranging work provides valuable employment and creates suitable settings for nature tourism and scientific research. We also work to promote the sustainable use of State-owned commercial forests. Our goals are set by Parliament, and defined in detail by the Ministry of the Environment and by the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry.

Metsähallitus renewed its strategy in 2008, aiming to ensure that State-owned lands and waters are administered responsibly and productively.

Metsähallitus Natural Heritage Services manages Finland's most valuable natural areas so as to preserve their biodiversity and natural features. Our constantly developing national network of protected areas managed comprehensively by top experts forms a basis for the protection of species and biotopes, and the preservation of Finland's cultural heritage. A report published by the National Audit Office in 2008 confirmed that Natural Heritage Services manages Finland's protected areas effectively and productively.

Our work in protected areas is also important in the context of minimising the negative ecological impacts of climate change. Such threats are a serious problem. Will Finland's arctic fell plants or the unique Saimaa ringed seal vanish for ever? How will our valuable game and fish stocks fare? Could we even lose the willow grouse? Species-specific conservation measures, the restoration of forest and mire habitats, the management of traditional farmland biotopes, the rehabilitation of fishing waters and the active management of game habitats will all become more important. Protected areas also serve as significant carbon stores.

Natural Heritage Services plays an important economic role at regional level. In many areas we provide a platform for tourism, and work together with local firms, municipalities and other partners to strengthen the local, regional and national economy. Together with our partners we cherish the characteristic close relationship between Finns and the natural environment, and promote public health by providing facilities that encourage more people to get outdoors. For Finland's foreign tourists, our national parks provide natural sights and experiences that become a key element in their image of Finland. In our national parks they can feel genuinely close to nature!

Natural Heritage Services succeeded well overall in achieving the productivity targets set for 2008. The administrative transfer of Koli National Park from the Finnish Forest Research Institute to Natural Heritage Services at the beginning of the year went smoothly. We also had a busy year internationally, gaining widespread recognition for our activities in Finland. Our work has now expanded to cover tasks related to the international Ramsar Convention on the conservation of wetlands.

During 2008 we also resolved to enhance our communications work, in recognition of the importance of maintaining dialogues with our partners in Finland and abroad, and with our client groups including hikers, fishers and hunters. We have strengthened our management of hunting and fishing issues by enhancing the inspection of such issues from the perspective of society's wider expectations. We have also made new partnership agreements with the University of Joensuu, the Sámi Museum and the Finnish Tourist Board.

Events during the year 2008 have clearly shown that Natural Heritage Services' strong position is based on our internationally recognised expertise, our integrated and productive practices, and our nationwide network of locally managed areas meeting a wide range of objectives.



KEIJO KALLUNKI

Rauno Väisänen
Director of Metsähallitus Natural Heritage Services



The Syöte National Park, between Northern Ostobothnia and Finnish Lapland, is blessed with perfectly preserved examples of natural old-growth forests. The park is involved in a programme run by the EUROPARC federation of protected areas to promote sustainable tourism.

JORMA LUHTA

Improved productivity

Metsähallitus produces services related to natural resources for a wide range of clients from individual citizens to large corporations. Metsähallitus's administrative tasks are divided into business activities and natural heritage services – which cover nature conservation as well as services related to the public recreational use of natural areas, fishing and hunting, log-floating infrastructure and tree seed bank management. These administrative tasks are largely funded from the national government budget.

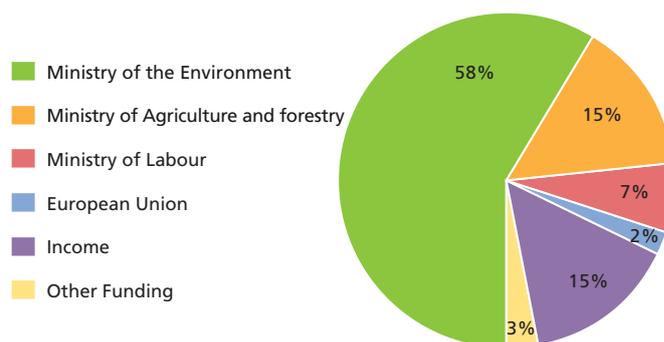
Metsähallitus Natural Heritage Services manages State-owned areas reserved for nature conservation and hiking, and ensures that natural resources are used sustainably. In 2008 the total extent of these areas amounted to 70,360 km², including new land areas totaling 189 km². This increase was largely due to the transfers of certain protected areas from the administration of the Finnish Forest Research Institute.

Higher levels of productivity and staff satisfaction

Natural Heritage Services' overall productivity improved by 8% compared to 2007. At the same time staff satisfaction levels also increased, according to the results of a questionnaire survey. Productivity is measured using models devised by Statistics Finland. Measures of overall productivity quantify the value of completed work in relation to the costs incurred.

Statutory protected areas, wilderness areas, national hiking areas, recreational forests, areas reserved for future protection, and public water areas managed by Metsähallitus as of 1.1.2009.

Type of area	No. of areas	km ²
National parks	35	8 855
Strict nature reserves	19	1 536
Other nature reserves	360	5 392
Privately-owned nature reserves	92	87
Areas established by Metsähallitus decisions	24	8
Statutory protected areas (total)	530	15 878
Areas reserved for conservation programmes	1 589	7 411
Protected forests	272	413
Other protected sites	412	2 015
Wilderness areas	12	14 903
National hiking areas	7	356
Other recreational areas	22	1 406
Other areas	41	3 628
Public water areas (where not included above)		24 350
All areas of land and water		70 360



A total sum of 51.9 million euros was used to finance the operations of Natural Heritage Services in 2008.

The total work input continued to decrease, amounting to 513 man-years in 2008. The share of the work funded through employment schemes declined in activities related to recreation in Northern Finland. The share of work done by temporary staff declined to 34%, from 38% in 2007. At the end of the year, Natural Heritage Services had 381 permanent employees and 150 temporary staff. The number of permanent staff increased as previously temporary positions became permanent, largely due to the continuation of the METSO forest biodiversity programme. The total number of employees nevertheless declined considerably compared to 2007. The average age of permanent staff was 47.7, while temporary staff tend to be younger, with an average age of 38.7 years. Women account for 33% of permanent employees and 45% of temporary staff.

Convicts from open prisons were employed in protected areas and recreational areas in the regions of Häme and Uusimaa. An agreement signed last year with the regional prison service of Southern Finland has made Metsähallitus the largest single external employer of convicts from open prisons. The total work input of convict staff amounted to 32 man-years in 2008.

“Metsähallitus is a functionally appropriate and appropriately managed whole in which the Natural Heritage Services unit operates effectively. The performance management process between the Ministry of the Environment and Metsähallitus functions well, and cooperation is close and smooth. Natural Heritage Services has been able to manage its nature conservation duties according to objectives.”

NATIONAL AUDIT OFFICE, PERFORMANCE AUDIT REPORTS 162/2008. METSÄHALLITUS AS A STATE ENTERPRISE AND AS A MANAGER OF NATURE CONSERVATION UNDER THE MINISTRY OF THE ENVIRONMENT.

Active conservation work essential for threatened species and biotopes

The Natural Heritage Services aims to preserve Finland's cultural heritage and biodiversity, especially in Finland's extensive network of protected areas. The conservation work concerns three main areas: species, habitats and cultural heritage. Close collaboration with universities, research institutions and international expert organisations can help us to improve our working practices and data resources.



Managing traditional agricultural landscapes also involves research work. Experts from Metsähallitus and the Finnish Environment Institute studying fungi in pastures on the island of Jussarö in the Ekenäs Archipelago National Park. RUUT RABINOWITSCH-JOKINEN

The importance of our well managed protected areas and Finland's developing network of protected areas is increased by the realisation that the global target of halting the ongoing decline in biodiversity by 2010 will evidently not be reached. Threatened species can only survive if enough areas of suitable habitat can be preserved. Metsähallitus is responsible for the protection of certain species in Finland. Numbers of white-backed woodpeckers (*Dendrocopos leucotos*) continued to increase in 2008. Metsähallitus has protected and managed areas of suitable habitat for these rare woodpeckers, and amateur ornithologists have participated in monitoring work. Contrastingly, the total population of the already endangered Saimaa ringed seal (*Phoca hispida saimensis*) has declined in recent years to an alarmingly low level, largely due to the deaths of seals in fishing nets.

Conservation work guided by a robust knowledge base

Natural Heritage Services has continued to conduct surveys of many biotopes and species around Finland. Underwater habitats have been inventoried in areas totaling 5,800 hectares, well over the target. Biotope data from land areas totaling 76,400 ha in northernmost Finland has been stored in a geographical information system. Further south we have prepared for the continuation of the METSO forest diversity programme during the period 2008–2016 by analysing the need for biotope inventories, habitat restoration, natural habitat management and monitoring in State-owned protected areas. Together with the Finnish Forest Research Institute we have launched a project aiming to enhance the cost-effectiveness of habitat restoration and natural habitat management work.

A series of two-year species inventories conducted in protected areas for the METSO programme ended in June. These surveys and checks on occurrences of threatened species produced a wealth of useful data to apply in the management of protected areas and evaluations of the conservation status of species. Surveyors added data from a total of 19,000 observations into the national environmental administration's data system, with most observations concerning occurrences of polypore fungi.

Managing privately owned protected areas

In 2008 Natural Heritage Services began to also manage privately owned protected areas as part of the METSO forest biodiversity programme. Such areas are particularly important in

“Protected areas are crucial for the conservation of natural and cultural values. In addition, national parks have increasingly become equal to the tourism brand of countries. In recent years Finland and Metsähallitus Natural Heritage Services have become world leaders in protected area management. The evaluation conducted in collaboration with WCPA and the recently published report 'State of the Parks in Finland' have shown that the protected areas in Finland are well managed and in a good condition. Furthermore, Natural Heritage Services are playing a growing role in supporting global goals and programmes. A good example of this is their taking on the leadership of WCPA in Europe.”

NIK LOPOUKHINE
CHAIR, IUCN WORLD COMMISSION ON PROTECTED AREAS (WCPA)



The coastal dunes at Vattaja near Kokkola feature a biotope that is rare in Finland. Partners in an EU LIFE project have been working to prevent overgrowth, establish grazed pastures, and restore a local lake. Signs, beach facilities and a DVD film about the area have been provided for visitors. LENTOKUVA VALLAS

Southern Finland, where the State owns few forests, making it harder to protect large enough areas of certain biotopes. Natural Heritage Services will now take responsibility for the management of many privately owned nature reserves. Such work is planned in close co-operation with landowners and the regional environment centres.

New partnership with the Sámi Museum

Surveys conducted in various parts of Finnish Lapland revealed almost 180 previously unknown prehistoric and historic relics as well as many other sites valuable in terms of cultural heritage. Metsähallitus Natural Heritage Services and the Sámi Museum have signed a new partnership agreement, in recognition of our common goal to cherish Sámi cultural heritage. This goal can be reached with the help of exhibitions, instruction for visitors, marketing, environmental education, research and communications work.



Reindeer herders used to gather at the old reindeer corral at Vuomaselkä to separate their animals. In autumn 2008, many older and younger herders met at Vuomaselkä to exchange their reminiscences at a European Heritage Days event. Staff from the Urho Kekkonen National Park picked up a lot of useful information from the participants. INGA-BRIITTA MAGGA

“ Metsähallitus has played an integral role in helping North Karelia to gain international recognition as a centre of expertise in the forest sector. Taking care of our natural resources brings the region plenty of welcome jobs and livelihoods. The popular local tourist attractions of Koli and Ruunaa are the jewels in this crown.”

PENTTI HYTINEN
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE REGIONAL COUNCIL OF NORTH KARELIA



The Ruunaa Hiking Area, run by Metsähallitus in Lieksa, was chosen as Finland's best outdoor destination for 2009 in a poll conducted by Finn-expo, due to its excellent range of facilities and activities. Many local firms also provide services for visitors in the Ruunaa area. HEIKKI RÄSÄNEN

Nature vital for economic and personal well-being

Visitors to the national parks managed by Metsähallitus can enjoy unique natural attractions and experiences at first hand. Our facilities enable visitors to move safely around natural areas while preserving sensitive natural features. Our Outdoors.fi website, signs, notice boards and many customer service points provide a wealth of advice and information about Finland's natural and cultural heritage.

Protected areas also produce a wide range of socio-economically valuable services for society, known as ecosystem services. The local economic impact of the country's most popular protected areas in terms of their recreational use and nature tourism has been estimated to be about 250–300 million euros annually, creating employment amounting to 3,500 man-years.

Collaboration with tour operators is increasing and intensifying. During 2008 we entered into 56 new partnerships agreements with businesses, all of which endorse our special principles for sustainable nature tourism in protected areas. A nature tourism plan has been prepared for the area around the national parks of Seitsemien and Helvetinjärvi, aiming to make the area a leading attraction in the Pirkanmaa region for nature tourism and cultural tourism by 2020.

“Metsähallitus Natural Heritage Services is one of our most important partners at the Sámi Parliament, and our collaboration has worked well. Metsähallitus Natural Heritage Services has set a good example by producing its web services in the Sámi language. Hiring an information officer who speaks Sámi is particularly an important example for other authorities to follow, and this has improved the services offered by Metsähallitus considerably.”

KLEMETTI NÄKKÄLÄJÄRVI
PRESIDENT OF THE SÁMI PARLIAMENT

National parks still very popular

We achieved almost all of our targets related to recreation in 2008. The total number of visits to national parks increased by 170,000 from 2007, to 1,755,500. Some of this increase was due to the transfer of Koli National Park to Metsähallitus's administration, and the more accurate surveys of visitor numbers in the Urho Kekkonen National Park, but there were also increases in visitor numbers at parks including Nuuksio, Liesjärvi, Pyhä-Luosto and Pallas-Yllästunturi.



Building a traditional log sauna at an old Finnish farm in Russia's Paanajärvi National Park. Sites restored through collaboration between the twinned parks of Paanajärvi and Finland's Oulanka National Park provide visitors with both a roof over their heads, and a window into history. MINNA KORAMO

The total number of visits to customer service points also rose, to 859,000, at least partly due to the opening of the new visitor centre at Hailuoto at the end of 2007, and the transfer of the Ukko Visitor Centre at Koli to Metsähallitus.

The total number of clients receiving guidance from Metsähallitus declined by more than 10,000 compared to the previous year, largely due to changes in calculation methods, but also due to a reduction in the resources available, and lower visitor numbers at some customer service points.

The Outdoors.fi/Luontoon.fi website received 2,108,000 hits. This was less than in 2007, due to the less frequent use of

search engines, and in reality the number of actual users of the site increased by 19%. The Retkikartta.fi map website, which was launched in 2007 for hikers, hunters and fishers, received 979,700 visits.

Customer satisfaction levels remained high, based on feedback from 5,660 clients.

New visitor centres for the most popular parks

The newly extended Kellokas Visitor Centre at Ylläs reopened in November 2008. A new exhibition, featuring local history and cultural heritage as well as nature, has been produced with support from both the EU's European Regional Development Fund and the Finnish government programme VILMAT, which aims to promote nature tourism and the recreational use of natural areas.

The planning of a new visitor centre for the Nuuksio National Park, funded by Metsähallitus, the City of Espoo and Solvalla Sports Institute commenced in 2008, led by Natural Heritage Services. A new property management company, Nuuksiokeskus Oy, has been set up to build the centre, which is expected to open its doors in 2011 along the main route leading to the park in Espoo.

“ I appreciate the chance to get out into the wilds with our cub group easily, using public transport, so the Nuuksio National Park has always been a good option. The cubs have learnt a lot of useful skills there, and enjoyed experiences we can't offer them in the city.”

HANNA GRÖNLUND
LEADER OF THE LOCAL SCOUTING ASSOCIATION "EARTH SPRITS"



Hikers in the Nuuksio National Park. RAIMO SUIKKARI

Ensuring the sustainability of hunting and fishing

The numbers of hunters and fishers using State-owned areas are still increasing, as more people move to the cities from their rural roots where they would more likely use locally owned fishing waters and hunting grounds. This gives Metsähallitus an even greater responsibility to ensure that hunting and fishing are sustainable. In 2008 we adopted a unique new monitoring system covering fisheries planning, to help our staff to improve the management of fishing waters and the intensity of fishing. A similar system was already in place for hunting.

In autumn 2008 our responsibilities were highlighted when game surveys revealed that game birds had failed to breed effectively, just before the hunting season was due to start. Natural Heritage Services was obliged to ensure the sustainability of hunting by promptly resolving to limit or even stop the sale of permits in some areas. Sales consequently declined, and were halted in parts of the Oulu, Kainuu and Lapland game management districts.

The careful monitoring of game and fish stocks and catches is a cornerstone of our work. The new fisheries planning and monitoring system is based on feedback about catches in specific localities submitted by fishers via the internet. The system compiles catch data, enabling us to follow trends in catches in every lake larger than five hectares, for instance. This helps us to scale permit sales and water management measures accordingly. Hunting trends are already monitored through a parallel system.

Natural Heritage Services is also participating in several projects designed to improve the habitats of game animals, birds and fish. Prospects for the willow grouse (*Lagopus lagopus*)

“Metsähallitus Natural Heritage Services acts in accordance with my view that ‘Nature is the Lord’s workings in action, and people have a right to utilise it, but not destroy it.’ To benefit people who use nature and as an example to others, Natural Heritage Services first prepares the ground and sows the seeds, and then offers others the chance to reap the harvest provided by nature in the longer term. This way of working benefits both game and the hunters who seek to utilise it, and is acceptable among all kinds of people in society.”

ESKO EELA

HONORARY CHAIRMAN OF THE FINNISH HUNTERS’ ASSOCIATION



KEIJO PENTTINEN

in regions with coniferous forests are particularly worrying. In 2008 we consequently commissioned the Finnish Game and Fisheries Research Institute to monitor these birds for research purposes. Habitat restoration work has also been carried out in 300 ha of marshland habitat to benefit willow grouse, and in 15 other sites to increase the breeding success rates of other game birds. Notable fishery enhancement projects included a major scheme to restore migratory fish populations in the River Ii in Northern Ostrobothnia.

Hunting clubs and game management associations collaborated with Metsähallitus in South Savo on the drafting of a management plan for the Pihlajavesi Natura area to harmonise hunting, recreational activities and conservation targets.

The Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry approved changes in the legislation covering licences sold by Metsähallitus. Archery hunters can now obtain a separate seasonal licence; permits for the hunting of small game can now be purchased by mobile phone; a new type of small game permit was introduced for the hunting of waterfowl and hares; and the regional lure-fishing permits have been replaced by a national permit.

Our wardens in Northern Finland have particularly focused on the supervision of fishing and snowmobiles in protected areas. In Eastern Finland the authorities organised unpublicized inspections aiming to clamp down on the illegal hunting of bears, wolves, lynx and wolverine.

Management plans address many goals

Land use and management in protected areas on State-owned lands are guided by specific management plans. These plans are drawn up by the Natural Heritage Services, who also ensure that the views of local residents, firms and authorities are duly taken into account.

One of our largest, if less visible tasks over the coming years is to complete the necessary land acquisitions for Finland's nature conservation programmes, and establish new properties as protected areas. The targets for land acquisitions for both the METSO programme and earlier conservation programmes have so far been exceeded, as has a goal concerning the establishment in Natura areas of properties under protection or designated for future protection.

In 2008 Natural Heritage Services drafted management plans for as many as 37 Natura areas, including the national parks of Liesjärvi, Puurijärvi–Isonsuo, Isojärvi, Torrjonsuo, Seitsemäinen, Perämeri, Riisitunturi, Lemmenjoki and Pallas–Ylläs-tunturi, as well as the wilderness areas of Muotkatunturi, Pais-tunturi and Tarvantovaara.

“Having grown up in Northern California where wild scenery is outside the door, and after visiting many of the great national parks of North America including Yosemite, Yellowstone, and the Grand Canyon, I can say that Finland has every reason to be as proud of its national parks as we are of ours in America. Some of the best wilderness experiences of my life have been in Finland in national parks such as Lemmenjoki, Koli and the Archipelago. In addition, the ease of access, the quality of service, and the amount of information about Finland's national parks are of the highest standard. I can without hesitation recommend Finnish national parks as an ideal destination for the nature tourist.”

PETE BALDING

FREELANCE TEACHER AND WRITER, SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA / HELSINKI, FINLAND

A management plan drafted for the Ekenäs Archipelago and eastern areas of the Hanko Archipelago is binding for Metsähallitus, but only recommendatory for other land-owners. Most of the area covered by the plan belongs to the Natura 2000 network.

A management for the Hämeen kangas military zone in SW Finland harmonises various local land uses, specifically covering the defence forces' requirements, landscape management issues



An easy-access nature trail at Jämijärvi in Hämeen kangas leads to a beautiful spring at Uhrilähde. Many national parks have similar facilities, enabling everyone to get close to nature. RAMI TUOMINIEMI

and the area's natural, cultural and recreational amenity values. Metsähallitus also drafted a new natural resources plan for Eastern Finland for the period 2008–2017. Logging across the region will increase by a million cubic metres annually while goals for nature tourism and recreational activities at the same time will be prioritised more, through planning, co-operation with businesses and customer services. New protected areas with a total extent of 6,000 ha will be established. The plan is fully in line with the National Forest Programme and the METSO forest biodiversity programme.

Natural Heritage Services a trusted lead partner

Partners involved in the development of the Kvarken Archipelago World Heritage Site managed to obtain considerable external funding. The three-year Kulma project, which aims to exploit the cultural heritage of Koillismaa and the Oulu region for tourism, was meanwhile launched with the help of regional development funding from the EU's structural funds. But a transition between EU funding periods was not favourable to Finland. In 2008 new funding was only sufficient to enable the launching of a single project in the new LIFE+ period, related to the conservation of marine habitats.

Natural Heritage Services initiated the Kulma project in collaboration with five local municipalities and 165 tourism firms. The project aims to enhance the branding of cultural heritage in the popular tourist destinations of Kuusamo, Kalajoki and Rokua. Work will progress in three phases: surveys, restoration and branding. The first phase was largely completed through surveys of sites including cultural environments.

In 2007 the national government granted Metsähallitus a supplementary budget of 600,000 euros to develop the Kvarken Archipelago World Heritage Site. These funds were used to acquire shares in a local property development company, to plan and manage the site, and to set up a nature trail and viewing tower at Svedjehamn. Renovation work on buildings and facilities for guiding visitors has continued in collaboration with the local municipal authorities through a structural funds project.

We also collaborated with the Ostrobothnia Employment and Economic Development Centre on the establishment of a 30 kW ambient source heating system at the Mäskär Island nature information station near Pietarsaari. This facility obtains enough ambient heat from the sea to replace the 15,000 litres of fuel oil formerly used to heat the pilot station every year. The station now serves as a visitor centre for nearby nature reserves and is a popular base for boaters. Metsähallitus has rented out the building to a local association that runs a restaurant, rents out accommodation, and provides guidance for visitors.

“The designation of the Kvarken Archipelago as a UNESCO world heritage site has created great interest in this area. Together with Metsähallitus we are building a viewing tower and restoring a nature trail that will both give visitors an insight into the area's unique moraine formations. Local firms will also benefit from these developments.”

RURIK AHLBERG
MUNICIPAL MANAGER OF KORSHOLM, AND MEMBER OF THE KVARKEN ARCHIPELAGO
WORLD HERITAGE COMMITTEE.

“Unspoiled natural settings, the unique natural attractions of national parks and the high quality services provided in connection with the parks are all vital assets for tourism in Finland. They can provide unforgettable experiences for visitors, whether they come with their families or their colleagues, or from abroad. Collaboration between the tourism sector and Metsähallitus has recently been enhanced in the right directions, enabling us to work together as partners to provide sustainable nature tourism services and serve our customers better.”

JOKKE KÄMÄRÄINEN AND ANNE MURTO
TOUR OPERATORS, RUKAPALVELU LTD.

Nature and history in focus in the borderlands

The twinned national parks of Oulanka in Finland and Paanajärvi in Russia have been collaborating closely for 15 years. The year 2008 saw the end of an EU neighbourhood programme project aiming to promote wilderness areas, experiences and well-being through improved guidance for visitors interested in nature. Visitors to Paanajärvi can now see traditional buildings made in the style of the 1930s on an old Finnish farm and in a former Karelian village. The project has also boosted Metsähallitus's co-operation with local tour operators.

The four-year Fennoscandian Green Belt LIFE project was also concluded. It aimed to ensure the favourable conservation status of 13 Natura 2000 sites in Koillismaa and Kainuu, by restoring forest habitats and formerly drained mires, and creating habitats with plenty of decaying wood or natural fire damage. The project was led by Natural Heritage Services, with additional funding from the Finnish Forest Research Institute and Kainuu Regional Council.

Two projects led by Metsähallitus Natural Heritage Services within the EU neighbourhood programme for SE Finland and Russia included a project focusing on “People, nature and harbours”. This work has aimed to preserve important sites for nature around the Eastern Gulf of Finland, while also increasing commitment to conservation among local residents and other groups. In the Lake District, a management plan drawn up in collaboration with other stakeholders for the Pihlajavesi Natura area particularly aims to promote the conservation of the endangered Saimaa ringed seal. In the Eastern Gulf of Finland, Natural Heritage Services has been developing inventories of underwater habitats, and conducting surveys of seal numbers.

Conserving and utilising nature's riches

In 2009 Metsähallitus's work will be guided by a new operational strategy that focuses on the comprehensive and productive administration of State-owned lands and waters.

Metsähallitus Natural Heritage Services is known internationally as a pioneer in protected area management and natural resource use. Our new action plan aims to enhance our work in our four main operational areas.

In 2009:

We manage natural resources and protected areas productively and responsibly.

- We will restore more than 3,000 hectares of habitat in forests, mires and traditional agricultural biotopes as part of the METSO biodiversity programme.
- We will safeguard game bird stocks by scaling hunting levels as necessary and preparing a national plan for the management of game bird populations.
- We will strive to reduce the number of deaths of Saimaa ringed seals in fishing nets by extending protective measures and intensifying supervision and awareness-raising.
- We will conduct inventories of 4,000 hectares of underwater habitats, so as to help experts plan measures to protect the Baltic Sea.
- We will draft a report on factors affecting the possible establishment of a national park at Sipoonkorpi.
- We will support the management of protected areas in NW Russia.

We give everyone the opportunity to experience nature closely.

- We will improve facilities in areas popular for recreation, including Nuuksio, Inari, Rovaniemi and Saariselkä, while also ensuring that these areas are used sustainably.
- We will further enhance the Ruunaa Hiking Area, which was voted as hiking destination of the year in March 2009.
- We will promote mobile phone sales of fishing permits, and intensify the compilation of information on catches.
- We will restore buildings of historical importance in the Koillismaa and Oulu regions as part of the Kulma project.
- We will collaborate more closely with local firms, reindeer-herders' associations and municipal and regional policy-makers.

We are a reliable and attractive partner in the tourism sector.

- We will be involved in high-quality programmes for the sustainable development of tourism at Syöte, Kalajoki, Oulanka, Pyhä-Luosto and Ylläs.
- We will highlight the experiences available in national parks as part of Finland's international image, aided by our collaboration with the Finnish Tourist Board.
- We will improve our visitor centres and the services they provide for tourists, tour operators and amateur naturalists.
- We will increase the attractiveness of the Oulanka and Archipelago national parks to foreign tourists through the international nature tourism network PAN Parks.
- Together with local actors we will develop the Kvarken Archipelago World Heritage Site and the Koli National Park to serve rising numbers of visitors.

Our skilled and satisfied staff achieve good results.

- We will improve our data systems to help increase our productivity.
- We will take responsibility for European regional tasks within the IUCN's World Commission on Protected Areas, and for the implementation of the international Ramsar wetlands agreement in Finland.
- We will encourage staff to reach targets through a system of results-based incentives.
- We will participate in the national public sector productivity programme without compromising the welfare of our staff.
- Our own environmental programme will reduce our carbon footprint and other environmental impacts.





Estimated numbers of visits to visitor centres and customer service points in 2008

Blåmusslan	17 000
Ekenäs	21 000
Hailuoto	35 400
Hautajärvi	7 500
Hossa	43 600
Häme	16 300
Kalajoki	19 800
Kellokas	59 400
Kilpisjärvi	13 000
Koilliskaira	18 000
Oskari	11 400
Oulanka	67 100
Pallastunturi	39 900
Petola	20 600
Pyhätunturi	29 600
Ruunaa	7 500
Savukoski	6 200
Seitseminen	33 900
Siida	111 600
Skierri (Fell-Lapland)	24 300
Syöte	30 500
Teijo	25 100
Terranova	21 900
Ukko	46 400
Visitor centres total	727 000
Etiäinen	10 500
Ivalo	11 600
Karhuntassu	41 000
Kiehinen	46 100
Nestori/Saimaa Nature Exhibition*	21 400
Ruka	1 400
Customer service points total	132 000
Total	859 000

* Now a nature exhibition and information point located in the Savonlinna Provincial Museum.

◀ "The spirit of Pallas" can be felt by anyone visiting this famously beautiful part of Finnish Lapland. REINO KALLIOLA 1948

Estimated numbers of visits to national parks in 2008

Archipelago	51 000
Eastern Gulf of Finland	17 000
Ekenäs Archipelago	49 000
Helvetinjärvi	33 000
Hiidenportti	9 000
Isojärvi	11 000
Kauhaneva-Pohjankangas	3 500
Koli	110 000
Kolovesi	6 500
Kurjenrahka	31 500
Lauhanvuori	10 000
Leivonmäki	14 500
Lemmenjoki	10 000
Liesjärvi	29 500
Linnansaari	29 000
Nuukio	175 500
Oulanka	163 000
Pallas-Ylläs	329 500
Patvinsuo	12 000
Perämeri	5 000
Petkeljärvi	20 000
Puurijärvi-Isosuo	11 000
Pyhä-Häkki	13 500
Pyhä-Luosto	114 000
Päijänne	14 500
Reposesi	75 500
Riisitunturi	8 000
Rokua	23 500
Salamajärvi	9 000
Seitseminen	44 500
Syöte	34 500
Tiilikajärvi	6 500
Torransuo	22 500
Urho Kekkonen	252 000
Valkmusa	7 000
Total	1 755 500

Estimated numbers of visits to national hiking areas in 2008

Evo	50 000
Hossa	53 000
Iso-Syöte	25 500
Kylmäluoma	31 000
Oulujärvi	25 000
Ruunaa	87 500
Teijo	75 000
Total	347 000



Metsähallitus Visitor Centres and Customer Service Points.

Contact information and services: www.outdoors.fi > Customer Service.



Information on nature and facilities for visitors: www.outdoors.fi

Metsähallitus Natural Heritage Services: www.metsa.fi



METSÄHALLITUS

150 YEARS

INNOVATOR