



# Parks & Wildlife Finland 2015–2016

## Natural wonders – our key asset



METSÄHALLITUS

# Well-being from Parks and Wildlife

Metsähallitus's Parks & Wildlife Finland unit is well known for its work managing Finland's national parks and providing services for people who enjoy hunting and fishing. We have also often helped to resolve conflicts related to Finland's forests, by finding ways to protect nature while also enabling forest resources to be used sustainably.

We have also gained an international reputation as forerunners thanks to our efforts to help Finland's indigenous Sámi people preserve their traditional culture.

The importance of our work to Finnish society has also grown in other ways. We have particularly made significant contributions by promoting sustainable tourism and finding innovative ways to enhance public health.

The benefits of our work are directly reflected in local jobs and income. In 2015 the total number of visits to our national parks rose by 15%. These visitors generated local economic impacts amounting to a record total of almost 142 million euros. We have also helped to strengthen Finland's international brand as a beautiful, clean and safe destination.

Our many EU-funded projects also create jobs and valuable new infrastructure



around Finland. The Boreal Peatland LIFE project, which ended in early 2015, created employment for local contractors amounting to 90 person-years. Our many joint projects have helped to build up fruitful regional and international partnerships. We are currently coordinating Finland's largest ever EU-backed environmental project, whose budget of 20 million euros will be used to improve our lakes and rivers in collaboration with various partners.

The indirect benefits of our work are reflected in the ways Finns now appreciate the health benefits of outdoor activities. Surveys show that people estimate the value of a hiking or hunting trip at more than 200 euros.

Ongoing government spending cuts represent a challenge for Parks & Wildlife Finland. In 2015 we had to reduce our workforce by more than 100 person-years, but we were still able to achieve and often exceed our objectives for productivity, effectiveness and quality.

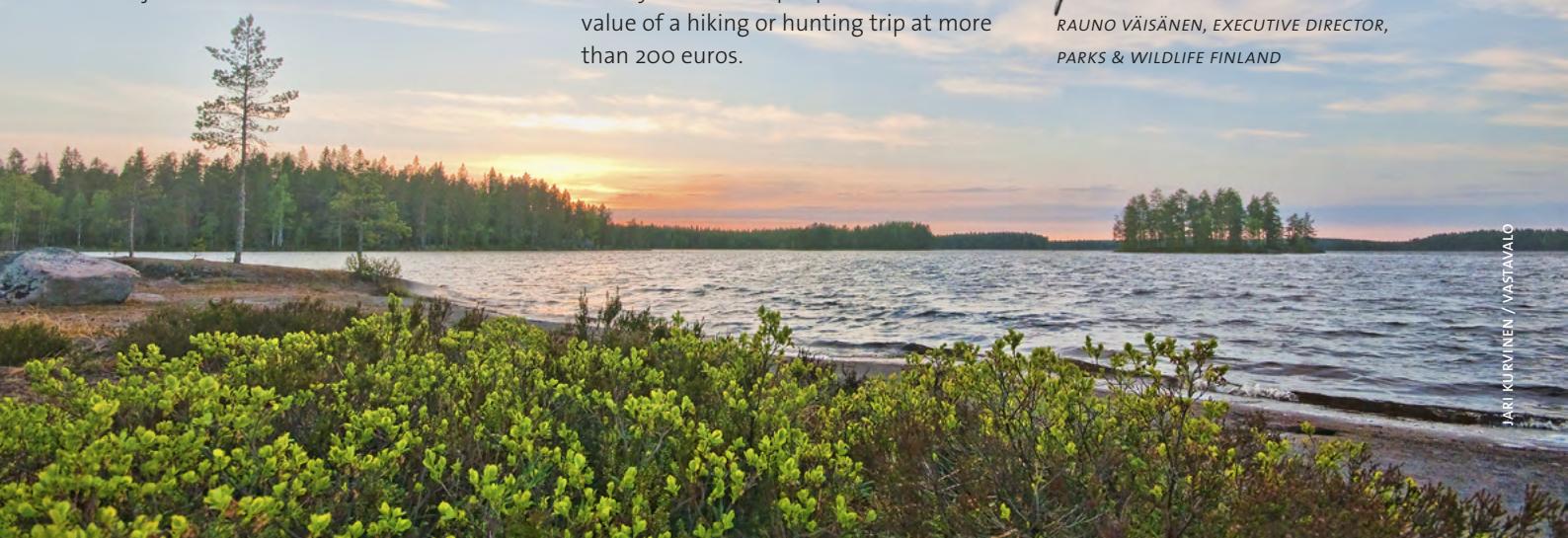
Long-awaited new legislation on the role of Metsähallitus came into force in April 2016. Metsähallitus's former Forestry unit, in its new state-owned corporate form, will be a new yet familiar partner for Parks & Wildlife Finland.

We will continue our productive work as part of Metsähallitus under government supervision. Public funds will be channelled into developments designed to improve public well-being, while the various objectives set for state-owned lands and waters will be duly harmonised.

Public interest in the new legislation has shown that Finns truly cherish our shared natural heritage, care about how it is managed, and understand that the well-being created by nature amounts to much more than the economic value of exploitable natural resources.

MAY, 2016

RAUNO VÄISÄNEN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,  
PARKS & WILDLIFE FINLAND





Koli National Park attracted more than 167,000 visitors in 2015, boosting the local economy by an estimated 17.7 million euros. TÉA KARVINEN / P&WF

## Benefits for everyone

Parks & Wildlife Finland (P&WF) manage many nature reserves and historic sites throughout Finland, while also providing services for hunters and fishers in state-owned lands and waters. We also promote nature conservation more widely through collaboration with Finland's neighbouring countries and international organisations.

**M**anaging protected areas creates employment across the country. We currently have about 400 permanent staff and another 400 temporary employees. We use public funds to

**Each euro of investment in national parks brings €10 to the local economy**

[WWW.METSA.FI/WEB/EN/  
ECONOMICBENEFITSOFNATIONALPARKS](http://WWW.METSA.FI/WEB/EN/ECONOMICBENEFITSOFNATIONALPARKS)

provide facilities for outdoor recreation such as trails, nature centres and websites. Our official partner firms addition-



*Services specially designed for Chinese visitors are provided in the most popular national parks.*

ANNA HAUKKA / P&WF

**Spending time in natural settings brings health benefits including reduced stress and blood pressure.**

[WWW.METSA.FI/WEB/EN/  
HEALTHBENEFITSFROMNATIONALPARKS](http://WWW.METSA.FI/WEB/EN/HEALTHBENEFITSFROMNATIONALPARKS)

ally provide many nature tourism services that enable people to enjoy our areas sustainably.

The private sector thus benefits greatly from our investments in national parks' infrastructure, in terms of income and employment.

National parks also have a positive impact on public health. Studies show that even spending just a short time in natural settings can reduce stress, while longer trips significantly enhance both physical and mental well-being. It helps that the Finnish legal concept known as Everyman's right gives everyone free access to the countryside, regardless of who owns the land.

Our work greatly helps Finland to meet its international commitments on nature conservation. Our experts ensure that we effectively procure and use funds to protect threatened species and promote outdoor recreation. Our wide-ranging projects are carefully realised through collaboration with our key partners. They also provide worthwhile work for many volunteers.

A view over Vallisaari island shows its close neighbours: the World Heritage Site of Suomenlinna fortress islands and Helsinki city centre.



# Enhanced services and cost-effective nature conservation



JOONI PENTTINEN / P&WF

*Eastern pasque flowers thrive on sunlit esker slopes. Suitable habitats for this endangered flower have been restored through the Light & Fire LIFE project.*

We cherish Finland's natural and cultural heritage and strive to increase awareness of environmental issues. We also use public funds to provide free facilities for many kinds of outdoor recreation and to create favourable conditions for nature tourism.

We have successfully realised the objectives defined for us by Parliament and the ministries who supervise our work. Examples of our achievements in 2015 and our ongoing work in 2016 are listed below.

## Combining nature tourism and awareness of cultural heritage

We continue to develop facilities for visitors on three beautiful islands formerly

### **Lights On!**

THE EU-BACKED PROJECT AIMS TO SPOTLIGHT EIGHT HISTORIC ATTRACTIONS IN FINLAND AND ESTONIA.

— [WWW.METSA.FI/WEB/EN/LIGHTSON](http://WWW.METSA.FI/WEB/EN/LIGHTSON)

used exclusively by the defence forces. Örö, in the Archipelago Sea opened to the public in 2015; while Vallisaari and Kuninkaansaari, just off the coast of Helsinki, opened in May 2016.

We are also actively improving facilities and organising events at historical sites including castle ruins, the Russian Tsars' old fishing lodge at Langinkoski, and a traditional Sámi farmstead in northern Lapland.

We work with many partners to find ways to make the most of our attractions. Increasing the popularity of historical sites can help to ensure funding for their future management, while also creating opportunities for local service providers.

## User-friendly services

We launched a new system for the sale of hunting, fishing and snowmobiling permits and for cabin rentals. 125,000 fishing and hunting permits were sold for state-owned areas in 2015. Income from permit fees is used to manage fishing waters and game habitats.

Information on more than 300 destinations for outdoor recreation is freely available through our Nationalparks.fi website, which attracted almost 10 million hits during 2015 (in Finnish, Luonto.on.fi).

Our free Excursionmap.fi service provides detailed online maps of Finland's national parks, wilderness areas and other natural attractions. The service was used 3.2 million times last year (in Finnish, Retkipatka.fi).

Additional facilities for visitors have been provided e.g. in our two new national parks – Teijo and Southern Konnevesi – and in Finland's most visited national park, Pallas-Yllästunturi.

## Over 3,000 volunteers

THE VOLUNTEERS HELPED US TO REALISE NATURE CONSERVATION PROJECTS. OUR VOLUNTEERS' EFFORTS DURING 2015 ADDED UP TO A TOTAL OF 28 PERSON YEARS. – WWW.NATIONALPARKS.FI/EN/VOLUNTEERWORK

## Monitoring and managing natural habitats

Since Parks & Wildlife Finland is responsible for monitoring the state of protected areas throughout Finland, we continuously update our data on threatened species and biotopes to help us target conservation measures as effectively as possible. We have particularly chosen 23 Natura 2000 biotopes whose conservation status we will work to improve through targeted measures.

We have adapted our GIS systems to help us plan and monitor protected areas and manage data on species and biotopes. We have also continued to compile new data on underwater habitats in the Baltic Sea, while enhancing the management of marine areas.

We updated and published our Principles of Protected Area Management in

Finland. The publication is available at [julkaisut.metsa.fi/julkaisut/show/2005](http://julkaisut.metsa.fi/julkaisut/show/2005).

With the help of EU LIFE funding we are running several ongoing nature conservation projects. Through the Species-rich LIFE project we have managed habitats including herb-rich woodlands and meadows to help preserve their rich biodiversity in almost 60 sites across Finland. The Light & Fire LIFE project focuses on restoring valuable sunlit habitats. Through these two projects alone we managed natural habitats with a total area of more than 4,000 hectares in 2015.

To protect the Saimaa ringed seal – a unique freshwater seal found only in Finland's Lake Saimaa – our staff and volunteers created 200 artificial snowy breeding dens on the frozen lake early in the winter of 2016, when in many places there was insufficient snow for the seals to make natural dens. A record number of seal pups, 79, was born.

## IN 2016:

### A new 20-million-euro project Freshabit-LIFE

LAKES, RIVERS AND OTHER WATER FEATURES WILL BE RESTORED TO PROMOTE NATURE CONSERVATION AND TOURISM.

### Celebrating Finnish nature

SPECIAL EVENTS FOCUSING ON NATURE WILL BE PLANNED AROUND THE COUNTRY TO MARK FINLAND'S CENTENARY OF INDEPENDENCE IN 2017, COORDINATED BY PARKS & WILDLIFE FINLAND'S FINNISH NATURE DAY TEAM.

### Working towards the inauguration of Hossa National Park in 2017

IN PREPARATION FOR THE OPENING OF FINLAND'S 40TH NATIONAL PARK AT HOSSA, WE ARE IMPROVING THE AREA'S SERVICES TOGETHER WITH LOCAL PARTNERS.



TAPANI MIKKOLA / P&WF

Use of the Excursionmap.fi online service increased by 70% following the launch of a mobile version.



## METSÄHALLITUS'S ADMINISTRATIVE RESPONSIBILITIES FROM 15.4.2016

*Metsähallitus's Parks & Wildlife Finland Unit is responsible for the following activities in relation to the state-owned lands and waters administered by Metsähallitus:*

- Protecting species and biotopes
- Managing Finland's protected areas network and designating new protected areas
- Cherishing Finland's cultural heritage, including historical sites
- Providing services for visitors
  - Maintaining routes and other facilities
  - Guiding and advising visitors
  - Running informative websites
- Providing services for hunters and fishers
  - Permits for hunting, fishing and off-road vehicles
  - Management of fishing waters and game habitats
  - Ranger services and supervision

## AREAS MANAGED BY PARKS & WILDLIFE FINLAND AS OF 1.1.2016

- 39 national parks, 19 strict nature reserves and 643 statutory protected areas (totalling 1.7 million ha)
- 12 wilderness areas in Finnish Lapland (totalling 1.5 million ha)
- 2,954 other protected areas (totalling 1.0 million ha)
- Historical sites including about 350 legally protected buildings or structures and 2,000 ancient sites

*In line with new legislation redefining the work of Metsähallitus from 15.4.2016, Parks & Wildlife Finland will continue to provide facilities*

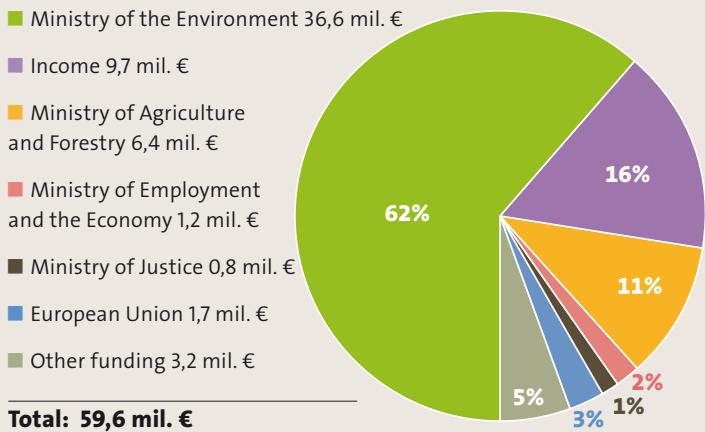
*for outdoor activities including hunting and fishing in all of the areas administered by Metsähallitus. P&WF will also continue to oversee the protection of threatened species and fulfil administrative tasks related to fishing and marine management in state-owned waters.*

## CUSTOMER SATISFACTION LEVELS IN 2015

*Users of our facilities for outdoor recreation gave us a high rating of 4.32. Customers purchasing fishing and hunting permits gave us a rating of 3.8 (on a scale of 1–5).*

## P&WF FINANCES IN 2015

*The activities of Metsähallitus's Parks & Wildlife Finland are largely financed from the national government budget. We also obtain EU funding and income from the sales of hunting and fishing permits.*



# Discovering wild Finland

Our 39 national parks welcomed a record total of more than 2.6 million visitors in 2015. More and more people are discovering these national treasures, including many visitors from other countries. Finland's own population is just 5.5 million.

The most visited park was the large Pallas-Yllästunturi in Finnish Lapland, with an estimated 525,600 visitors.

Nuksio National Park, where visitors can discover wild forests and lakes within easy reach of Helsinki, was the most popular park in the south, with 343,800 visitors. The Finnish Nature Centre Haltia on the fringes of the park welcomed 128,300 visitors.

Five other parks famous for their spectacular scenery, Koli, Repovesi, Oulanka, Pyhä-Luosto and Urho Kekkonen national park, each welcomed more than 100,000 visitors. Our marine national parks are also increasingly attracting visitors keen to explore the beautiful islands.

One of the national hiking areas, Hossa in NE Finland, will become our 40th national park in 2017. The rivers and prehistoric rock paintings attracted 53,000 visitors to Hossa in 2015. With the national park status and improved services, Hossa is expected to attract many more visitors.

More than a million people visited our nature centres and other customer service points during 2015 to enjoy their exhibitions and find out about opportunities for outdoor pursuits.

The total income and job impacts of the national parks in 2015 were 141.5 million euros and about 1,400 jobs (full-time equivalent) and for the hiking areas 12.2 million euros and about 131 jobs (FTE).





## Metsähallitus Parks & Wildlife Finland

### Income from natural areas

- Every euro of public money invested in the services provided in our national parks brings benefits amounting to ten euros to local economies.
- Each purchaser of a permit for hunting or fishing contributes an average of 233 euros to the local economy.
- Finland's international image is enhanced, bringing in more tourists.

### Health from natural areas

- A visit to a natural area like a national park reduces stress and improves fitness.
- Each year visitors to Finland's national parks walk a total of some 34 million kilometres – about 850 round-the-world trips. Hunters typically walk about 10 km during a day's hunting.
- Easy and well-signposted routes and informative websites encourage people of all ages to enjoy the outdoors.

### The future for nature

- To encourage youngsters to get out into the countryside we provide attractive facilities for families, motivating learning environments for school groups, and opportunities to participate in voluntary work.
- Active nature conservation work preserves Finland's natural riches as part of global biodiversity.
- Income from permit sales is used to enhance game habitats and fishing waters.

[www.metsa.fi/web/en/  
parksandwildlifefinland](http://www.metsa.fi/web/en/parksandwildlifefinland)

INFORMATION ABOUT THE WORK  
OF PARKS & WILDLIFE FINLAND

[www.nationalparks.fi](http://www.nationalparks.fi)

UP-TO-DATE INFORMATION ON FINLAND'S  
NATIONAL PARKS AND OTHER HIKING DESTINATIONS

[www.excursionmap.fi](http://www.excursionmap.fi)

FREE NATIONAL MAP SERVICE  
FOR HIKERS, HUNTERS  
AND FISHERS

[www.eräluvat.fi](http://www.eräluvat.fi)

PERMITS FOR HUNTING AND FISHING  
IN STATE-OWNED LANDS AND WATERS

 [www.instagram.com/finnishparks](http://www.instagram.com/finnishparks)

FINLAND'S NATIONAL PARKS ON INSTAGRAM

 [www.facebook.com/suomenkansallispuistot](http://www.facebook.com/suomenkansallispuistot)

FINLAND'S NATIONAL PARKS ON FACEBOOK

 [www.youtube.com/user/Mhlpviestinta](http://www.youtube.com/user/Mhlpviestinta)

PARKS & WILDLIFE FINLAND ON YOUTUBE