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Principles of Protected Area Management in Finland



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Principles of Protected Area Management in Finland

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Author(s) Metsähallitus

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Abstract

The majority of the surface area in the Finnish network of protected areas is owned by the state and managed by the government agency Metsähallitus Parks & Wildlife Finland. Already in 1992, Metsähallitus adopted a recommendation on the principles of nature reserve management, which has been updated and supplemented several times. The structure and focal points of the guidelines have been substantially changed since the previous version published in 2014. Numerous additions and clarifications have been made to the principles. Links between protected area activities and the changing broader operating environment are further elucidated and the examination of measures taken in anticipating and adapting to climate change is enhanced.

The publication describes Finland's protected areas and their objectives, and the role of protected area networks in promoting the objectives of nature conservation and sustainable use. The basis of adaptive planning and management principles for protected areas are also presented. The practices and principles for the conservation and management of natural habitats, species and cultural heritage are reviewed, as well as the steering of recreational use, wildlife management and other forms of use in protected areas, to ensure their sustainability.

A significant part of the principles of protected area management is derived directly from national statutes, while some are best practices defined by Parks & Wildlife Finland as the owner and manager of the areas. In connection with the update, the principles have been revised to correspond to the amended Nature Conservation Act (9/2023) and other up-to-date legislation as well as the European Commission's guidance on the management of Natura 2000 sites.

The publication is not a binding guideline referred to in normal legislation - it is primarily a tool intended to support the practical work of Parks & Wildlife Finland's own personnel. It is also a way to inform stakeholders about the operating principles of Parks & Wildlife Finland.

The Principles of Protected Area Management in Finland apply to the following areas governed and managed by Parks & Wildlife Finland:

- statutory nature reserves
- wilderness areas
- sites designated in national Nature Conservation Programmes and in the EU Natura 2000 network that will be established as statutory nature reserves by proper site-specific enactments.

Where applicable, the principles can also be used to support, among others, management of state protected forests and hiking areas governed by Parks & Wildlife Finland. The principles do not apply to the management of privately-owned protected areas, for which separate guidelines are updated under the direction of the Ministry of the Environment.

The Principles of Protected Area Management in Finland guidelines were approved policies for Parks & Wildlife Finland on 7 December 2022. Decisions on principles are made and reviewed continuously as necessary, and they can be updated in a separate appendix to the publication. The publication is updated as a whole, every few years. The text has been updated in 2024.

Keywords protected areas, nature reserves, wilderness reserves, Natura 2000 sites, management and use, principles, instructions

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Tekijä(t) Metsähallitus

Julkaisun nimi Suojelualueiden hoidon ja käytön periaatteet

Tiivistelmä

Valtaosa Suomen suojelualueverkoston pinta-alasta on valtion omistuksessa ja Metsähallituksen Luontopalvelujen hallinnassa ja hoidossa. Metsähallitus vahvisti jo vuonna 1992 luonnonsuojelualueiden hoidon periaatteita koskevan suosituksen, jota on päivitetty ja täydennetty useaan otteeseen. Nyt hyväksytyn ohjeen rakennetta ja asiapainotuksia on merkittävästi muutettu edellisen vuonna 2014 julkaistun version jälkeen. Periaatteisiin on tehty koko joukko lisäyksiä ja täsmennyksiä. Toiminnan kytkentää laajempaan toimintaympäristöön ja siinä tapahtuviin muutoksiin on selkeytetty sekä mm. ilmastomuutokseen liittyvien ennakointi- ja sopeutumistoimien tarkastelua on vahvistettu.

Julkaisussa kuvataan Suomen suojelualueet ja niiden tehtävät, suojelualueverkoston rooli luonnon suojelun ja kestävästä käytön tavoitteiden edistämiseksi sekä esitellään suojelualueiden sopeutuvan suunnittelun ja hoidon perusteet. Lisäksi käydään läpi luontotyyppien, lajien ja kulttuuriperinnön suojelun ja hoidon käytännöt ja periaatteet sekä suojelualueiden virkistyskäytön, erätalouden ja muiden käyttömuotojen ohjaus kestävyuden varmistamiseksi ja niihin liittyvät periaatteet.

Merkittävä osa suojelualueiden hoidon ja käytön periaatteista johtuu suoraan säädöksistä ja osa on Luontopalvelujen alueiden haltijana ja hoitajana määrittelemiä parhaita käytäntöjä. Päivityksen yhteydessä periaatteet on tarkistettu vastaamaan uudistettua Luonnonsuojelulakia (9/2023) ja muuta ajantasaista lainsäädäntöä sekä Euroopan komission laatimaa ohjeistusta koskien Natura 2000 -verkoston alueiden hoitoa.

Julkaisu ei ole normilainsäädännön tarkoittama sitova ohje vaan ensisijaisesti Luontopalvelujen oman henkilöstön käytännön työn tueksi tarkoitettu työväline. Se on myös tapa kertoa sidosryhmille Luontopalvelujen toimintaperiaatteista.

Suojelualueiden hoidon ja käytön periaatteet koskevat Luontopalvelujen hallinnassa ja hoidossa olevia

- lakisääteisiä luonnonsuojelualueita
- erämaa-alueita
- valtion hallinnassa olevia, lakisääteisinä valtion luonnonsuojelualueina toteutettavia kansallisten luonnonsuojeluohjelmien, Natura 2000 -verkoston ja kaavojen kohteita.

Periaatteita voidaan soveltuvin osin käyttää tukena myös mm. Luontopalvelujen hoidossa olevien suojelumetsien sekä Metsähallituksen hallinnoimien valtion retkeilyalueiden hoidossa. Periaatteet eivät koske yksityisten suojelualueiden hoitoa, jota koskien ylläpidetään ympäristöministeriön johdolla erillinen ohjeistus.

Suojelualueiden hoidon ja käytön periaatteet on linjauksina hyväksytty Luontopalvelujen käyttöön 7.12.2022. Periaatteellisia linjauksia koskevia päätöksiä tehdään ja tarkistetaan tarpeen mukaan jatkuvasti ja niitä voidaan päivittää julkaisuun erillisenä liitteenä. Kokonaisuutena julkaisua päivitetään muutaman vuoden välein. Teksti on ajantasaistettu vuoden 2024 aikana.

Avainsanat suojelualueet, luonnonsuojelualueet, erämaa-alueet, Natura 2000 -alueet, hoito ja käyttö, periaatteet, ohjeet

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Presentationsblad

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Författare Forststyrelsen

Publikation Principer för skötseln och användningen av skyddsområden

Sammandrag

Största delen av arealen för nätverket av naturskyddsområden i Finland är i statens ägo och förvaltas och sköts av Forststyrelsens Naturtjänster. Forststyrelsen fastställde redan år 1992 en rekommendation om principerna för skötseln av naturskyddsområden, och denna har senare uppdaterats i flera omgångar. Den nu godkända anvisningens struktur och betoningar har ändrats avsevärt efter föregående version som publicerades 2014. En hel del kompletteringar och preciseringar har gjorts i principerna. Verksamhetens koppling till en mer omfattande verksamhetsmiljö och de förändringar som sker i den har förtydligats och bl.a. granskningen av framförhållnings- och anpassningsåtgärder i anslutning till klimatförändringen har stärkts.

I publikationen beskrivs Finlands skyddsområden och deras uppgifter, skyddsområdenas roll i att främja målen för skyddet och ett hållbart nyttjande av naturen. Även grunderna för adaptiva planering och skötsel av skyddsområdena presenteras. Därtill presenteras praxisen och principerna för skydd och skötsel av naturtyper, arter och kulturarv samt styrningen av och principerna för rekreatjonsbruk, jakt och fiske och andra användningsformer på naturskyddsområden i syfte att trygga en hållbar användning.

En betydande del av principerna för skötseln och användningen av skyddsområden baserar sig direkt på lagstiftningen medan andra grundar sig på bästa praxis som har definierats av Naturtjänsterna i egen-skap av den instans som besitter och förvaltar områdena. I samband med uppdateringen har principerna granskats så att de motsvarar den reviderade naturvårdslagen (9/2023) och annan uppdaterad lagstiftning samt Europeiska kommissionens anvisningar om skötseln av Natura 2000-områdena.

Publikationen är inte en sådan bindande anvisning som avses i normlagstiftningen utan i första hand ett verktyg som är avsett att stöda Naturtjänsternas egen personal i dess praktiska arbete. Detta dokument är också ett sätt att presentera Naturtjänsternas verksamhetsprinciper för intressentgrupperna

Principerna för skötseln och användningen av skyddsområden gäller i Naturtjänsternas förvaltning varande

- lagstadgade naturskyddsområden
- ödemarksområden
- objekt som staten förvaltar och som förverkligas i form av lagstadgade statliga naturskyddsområden och som ingår i de nationella naturskyddsprogrammen, nätverket Natura 2000 och planerna.

De nya principerna kan dock i tillämpliga delar användas som stöd även vid skötseln av bl.a. skyddsskogar som förvaltas av Naturtjänsterna samt statens strövområden som förvaltas av Forststyrelsen. Principerna gäller inte skötsel av privata skyddsområden, för vilka separata anvisningar uppdateras under ledning av miljöministeriet.

Principerna för skötsel och användning av skyddsområden har godkänts som riktlinjer för Naturtjänsterna den 7 december 2022. Beslut om principiella riktlinjer fattas och justeras vid behov kontinuerligt och de kan uppdateras som en separat bilaga till publikationen. Som helhet uppdateras publikationen med några års mellanrum. Texten har uppdaterats under året 2024.

Nyckelord skyddsområden, naturskyddsområden, ödemarksområden, Natura 2000-områden, skötsel och användning, principer, anvisningar

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Dahkki(t)	Meahciráđđehus
Almmustuhttima namma	Suodjalanguovlluid dikšuma ja ávkkástallama prinsihpat

Čoahkkáigeassu

Váldooassi Suoma suodjalanfierpmádaga viidodagas lea stáhta oamastusas ja Meahciráđđehusa Luond-
dubálvalusaid hálddašemis ja divššus. Meahciráđđehus nannii jo jagi 1992 luonddusuodjalanguovlluid
dikšuma prinsihpaid guoskkahan ávžžuhusa, mii lea ođasmahttojuvvon ja dievasmahttojuvvon juo mánggi.
Dál dohkkehuvvon rávvaga ráhkadusa ja áššedeattuhusaid leat mearkkašahhti vugiin rievdadán ovddit jagi
2014 almmustahttojuvvon veršuvnna manjá. Prinsihpaide leat dahkkojuvvon olu lasáhusat ja dárkilmas-
timat. Leat dahkan čielggasmahttimiid doaibmama laktimii viidasut doaibmanbirrasii ja das dáhpuhuvvi
rievdadusaide ja ee. leat nannen dálkkádatnuppástussii laktášan ávaštan- ja vuogáiduvvandoaimmaid
dárkkástallama.

Almmustahttimis govvidat Suoma suodjalanguovlluid ja daid bargguid, suodjalanfierpmádaga rolla
luonddu suodjaleami ja suvdilis geavaheami mihttomeriid ovddideamis ja ovdanbuktojit prinsihpat
suodjalanguovlluid vuogáiduvvi plánemii ja dikšumii. Lassin mannat čađa luonddutiippaid, šlájaid ja kul-
turárbbi suodjaleami ja dikšuma geavadiid ja prinsihpaid sihke suodjalanguovlluid áhpásmuhttingeava-
heami, meahccedoalu ja earáid geavahanhámiid stivrema vai sihkarastit suvdilisvuođa ja daidda laktášan
prinsihpaid.

Mearkkašahhti oassi suodjalanguovlluid dikšuma ja geavaheami prinsihpain bohtet njuolga ásaheami
ja oassi leat buoremus geavadagat maid Luonddubálvalusat lea guovlluid hálddašeaddjin ja dikšun
meroštallan. Beaivádahttima oktavuodas prinsihpat leat dárkkistuvvon vástidit ođasmahttojuvvon
Luonddusuodjalanlága (9/2023) ja eará áiggi dási lálkkašameami ja Eurohpá kommišuvnna gárvvistan
rávvagiid. mat guoskkahit Natura 2000 -fierpmádaga guovlluid dikšuma.

Almmustahttin ii leat norbmálkkašameami oaivvildan čadni ráva muhto vuosttažettiin bargoneavvu
Luonddubálvalusaid iežas bargoveaga geavatláš bargguid doarjjan. Dat lea maiddá vuohki mitalit
čanusjoavkkuide Luonddubálvalusaid doaibmanprinsihpain.

Suodjalanguovlluid dikšuma ja geavaheami prinsihpat guoskkahit Luonddubálvalusaid hálddašemis ja
divššus lean

- lága bokte mearriduvvon luonddusuodjalanguovlluid,
- meahcceguovlluid
- lálkageatnegahtton stáhta luonddusuodjalanguovllun ollašuhtton našuvnnalaš luonddusuodjalan-
prográmmaid, Natura 2000 -fierpmádaga ja lávaid čuoáhagat, mat leat stáhta hálddašemis.

Prinsihpaid sáhtttá heivvolaš osiid bealis ávkkástallat doarjjan maiddá ee. Luonddubálvalusaid divššus
lean suodjalanvuvddiid ja Meahciráđđehusa hálddašan stáhta vánddardanguovlluid dikšumis. Prinsihpat
eai guoskkat priváhta suodjalanguovlluid dikšuma, maid guoskkaha birasministeriija bajásdoallan sierra
ráva.

Suodjalanguovlluid dikšuma ja geavaheami prinsihpat leat dohkkehuvvon linnjemín Luonddubálvalusaid
atnui 7.12.2022. Prinsihpalaš linnjemiid guoskkahan mearrádusat dahkkojuvvot olles áigge ja daid sáhtttá
ođasmahttit almmustahttimii sierra mildosiin. Ollislašvuohtan almmustahttin beaivádahtto moatte jagi
gaskkaid. Teaksta lea dahkkon áigeguovdilin jagi 2024 áigge.

Čoavddasáni	suodjalanguovllut, luonddusuodjalanguovllut, meahcceguovllut, Natura 2000 -guovllut, dikšun ja geavaheapmi, prinsihpat, rávvagat		
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1 Introduction

The core of Finland's diverse system of protected areas consists of nature reserves already established on state-owned land under the Nature Conservation Act (NCA) and of areas reserved for nature conservation that have not yet been established, as well as wilderness reserves established under the Wilderness Act. These are the backbone of the national network of protected areas. They also form the main part of the Natura 2000 network in Finland, that is based on the European Community Habitats and Birds Directives. The national network covers about 12% of Finland's surface area and, including the additional area of Natura 2000 sites and some other types of protected areas, the coverage is about 15%.

Most of the surface area of Finland's protected area network is owned by the state and is governed and managed by Metsähallitus Parks & Wildlife Finland.

In 1992, Metsähallitus approved the recommendation Principles for the management of nature reserves – The objectives, tasks and management guidelines of state-owned nature reserves. Since then, the guidelines have been updated and supplemented several times (1999, 2004, 2007, 2010, 2014).

The updated publication Principles of Protected Area Management in Finland (henceforth the 'Principles'), was approved by the Management Group for Public Administration Services on 7.12.2022. After approval, some technical corrections and legislative updates have been made in 2024.

The guidelines apply to areas governed and managed by Parks & Wildlife Finland:

- statutory state nature reserves
- wilderness reserves
- sites designated in national nature conservation programmes, the Natura 2000 network and land use plans, that are subsequently established as statutory state nature reserves.

Where applicable, the guidelines are also used to support the management of protected forests and other protected sites managed by Parks & Wildlife Finland, including state hiking areas.

Terms "nature reserve" and "protected area" are used in the publication. It is important to understand the difference between these concepts and their significance for the management and use of the areas. In this publication, nature reserve refers to nature reserves that have already been established and where conservation regulations are in force in accordance with the Nature Conservation Act or the site-specific founding acts issued pursuant to it, which in many ways affect the management and conditions of use of these areas. The concept of a protected area is broader. It includes, in addition to established nature reserves, also sites designated to be established as nature reserves, and wilderness reserves, as well as sites protected by Metsähallitus, through its own designation decisions, that are managed by Parks & Wildlife Finland (see section 2.1).

The management of protected areas must also take into consideration the overlap between the national protected area network and the Natura 2000 network (see section 2.6). In addition to national conservation regulations, most of the nature reserves established are also subject to the conservation objectives of the Nature Directives and the Natura 2000 network. All Natura 2000 sites are also considered protected areas.

Based on the above, the Principles applies to protected areas governed and managed by Parks & Wildlife Finland. Land and water assets managed by Parks & Wildlife Finland also include some other types of areas that are not primarily covered by the Principles. These include, for example: cultural-historical sites outside protected areas that have been

defined as specific land use sites (27 sites, c. 200 ha). However, the Principles also deals in detail with the protection and management of cultural heritage, as valuable cultural features are also present in protected areas.

The Centres for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment (ELY Centres) are responsible for establishing private nature reserves. However, the active management of these areas is largely the responsibility of Parks & Wildlife Services, which works in close cooperation with both landowners and ELY Centres. As a guideline document, the Principles does not apply to private nature reserves. Separate guidelines have been drawn up for their management, which are updated by the Ministry of the Environment, ELY Centres and Parks & Wildlife Finland in cooperation. The Principles also does not apply to landscape management areas established under the Nature Conservation Act.

This publication describes Finland's protected areas and their objectives, the management and use of these areas as a whole and the related practices and principles, a significant part of which are derived directly from statutes. This is a rather complex entity, which is affected by the different "roles" of Parks & Wildlife Finland as the possessor and authority of the areas. These include:

- role as a governing authority for nature reserves, specifically for established state nature reserves
- role as a manager of Natura 2000 network sites
- roles related to other official tasks (e.g. off-road traffic) that apply to all areas managed by Parks & Wildlife Finland
- role as a landowner, which applies to all areas managed by Parks & Wildlife Finland.

In addition to the Principles of Protected Area Management guidelines, many other more detailed guides, and guidelines are used to support the management of pro-

tected areas. These are referenced in the text and compiled in the bibliography.

The content and structure of the updated publication have changed significantly compared to the previous update (Metsähallitus 2016). The framework for the management and use of protected areas is described in Chapter 3. The content and chapters of the publication are now structured as shown in Figure 5. Key changes include:

- The strategic objectives based on international agreements and national programmes have been updated.
- The link between the Principles and the Nature Conservation Act has been strengthened, and the guidelines have been updated regarding other national legislation guiding management operations.
- Issues related to the Natura 2000 network have been broadened and refined.
- The link between operations and changes in the operating environment has been clarified.
- The role of proactive ecosystem-based and adaptive planning is emphasised. Issues such as climate change, sustainable use, new activities in protected areas, and broader land use planning and advocacy have been broadened.
- A description of Parks & Wildlife Finland and the state-owned protected areas as part of Metsähallitus State Enterprise has been added to the Principles as a separate chapter.
- An appendix, Specific issues related to the use of protected areas, has been added to the Principles, addressing some minor management issues which were not included in the main text (Appendix 9).

The Principles repeatedly refers to the Nature Conservation Act and the founding

acts of nature reserves issued under it, as well as to the conservation orders of the previous ones. The Principles has been updated to correspond to the situation in 2024, when the reformed Nature Conservation Act (9/2023) and the Nature Conservation Decree (1066/2023) based on it, had entered into force. Most of the conservation provisions of the nature reserves earlier established have been updated to correspond to the new Nature Conservation Act. The conservation provisions of certain mire reserves and other nature reserves established before 1996 will be updated to correspond to the new Nature Conservation Act later.

As a rule, the principles concerning nature reserves describe the entries included in the Nature Conservation Act. However, exceptions to the (general) provisions in the Act may have been written into the area-specific statute establishing a nature reserve, which must be known and considered in the management and use of the area.

The Principles of Protected Area Management is primarily intended to support the practical work of Parks & Wildlife Services' own personnel, but it is not a binding guideline as referred to in normative legislation. However, a clear deviation from the guidelines always requires approval by the Management Group of Parks & Wildlife Finland. In addition to the internal use, the Principles publication is also one way to inform stakeholders about the operating principles of Parks & Wildlife Finland.

One of the goals of Metsähallitus' certified environmental management system is to safeguard biodiversity. The Principles document is also part of the environmental management system.

In the future, the Principles publication will be comprehensively updated every few years. The guidelines are reviewed and updated continuously by Parks & Wildlife Finland.



Patvinsuo National Park. Photo: Ismo Pekkarinen.

2 Finland's Protected Areas and their Objectives

An extensive network of protected areas has been established in Finland, both on land and at sea, and it is an important part of the global network of protected areas. Finland's network of protected areas includes areas that vary greatly in size, location, nature, and form of protection. Together they form a complementary entity of natural areas.

From the point of view of biodiversity conservation, the most important part of the protected area network consists of nature reserves established and reserved for later establishment. Extensive northern wilderness reserves supplement the network significantly. Nature reserves and wilderness reserves are complemented and connected by many other types of areas safeguarding biodiversity.

The primary function of all protected areas is to conserve and maintain biodiversity. In addition, many sites have important cultural heritage and other values. Within the limits allowed by the conservation objectives, targets related to land use have also been set for different types of areas. Protected areas produce many kinds of social benefits, including livelihoods for local communities and well-being for hikers.

2.1 Defining and categorising protected areas in Finland

At the international level, a uniform definition, classification, nomenclature and agreement system has been drawn up for protected areas, which is also applied in Finland based on international agreements.

A databased list of protected areas in the world is maintained by the World Conservation Monitoring Centre (WCMC), as part of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). The International Union for Conser-

vation of Nature (IUCN) first established the criteria for inclusion in the list and the classification of protected areas in 1994.

To be eligible for inclusion in the World Database on Protected Areas (WDPA) a site must be a protected area, as defined by IUCN:

".. a clearly defined geographical space, recognised, dedicated and managed, through legal or other effective means, to achieve the long-term conservation of nature with associated ecosystem services and cultural values".

Areas that are interpreted as protected areas are categorised based on the conservation and other objectives of the areas. There are seven IUCN protected area categories (the last of which is not used in Finland):

- Ia Strict nature reserve
- Ib Wilderness area
- II National Park
- III Natural monument or feature
- IV Habitats or species conservation/management area
- V Protected landscape/seascape
- (VI Protected area with sustainable use of natural resources).

Primary and secondary or other management and use objectives have been defined for each protected area category. These general internationally defined objectives and tasks of protected areas are largely included in the Finnish Nature Conservation Act (NCA 9/2023) and the statutes establishing nature reserves issued under it.

The principles for interpreting the IUCN definition of protected areas and guidelines for applying the protected area categories in Finland were drawn up in cooperation with

stakeholders and approved by the Ministry of the Environment in 2013. The Finnish translations of the IUCN definitions of protected areas and protected area categories are summarised in Appendix 1 and the management objectives defined for each protected area category in Appendix 2.

In Finland, a **nature reserve** (statutory nature conservation area) can be defined, based the Nature Conservation Act (NCA), as follows:

A nature reserve is a special area established under the Nature Conservation Act, the purpose of which is either to protect the original natural entity as such or to conserve, maintain or restore certain natural features, development processes, species, landscapes or cultural environment. Protection is permanent and future oriented. Any other use of the area must be adapted in such a way that it does not jeopardise the realisation of the conservation purpose.

According to the NCA (section 43), the general condition for establishing a nature reserve is that:

- 1) an endangered, rare or declining species, community, habitat or ecosystem lives or is present in the area
- 2) the site contains breeding and resting places for specimens of species referred to in Annex IV(a) to the Habitats Directive
- 3) the site contains a peculiar or rare natural formation
- 4) the site has particular landscape value
- 5) the maintenance or achievement of a favourable conservation status for a natural habitat or species requires the establishment of a nature reserve
- 6) the site is of particular importance for the ability of natural habitats and species to adapt to the effects of climate change, or

- 7) the site is otherwise so representative, typical or valuable, that its protection can be considered necessary for the preservation of biodiversity or beauty of nature.

In the latest reform of the Nature Conservation Act (in 2023), a rare or declining habitat type was added to the first establishment requirement and the landscape value or significance of the area for adaptation to the effects of climate change was added as completely new conditions.

In addition to nature reserves established under the Nature Conservation Act, there are other area types in Finland that serve the objectives of nature conservation that may, under certain conditions, meet the IUCN definition of a protected area. For example, an area belonging to the Natura 2000 network of the European Community is not a nature conservation area within the meaning of the NCA, unless it has been established as a nature reserve by a separate decision. However, all Natura sites are considered protected areas.

Appendix 3 lists for each area type, that meets the IUCN definition of a protected area, the corresponding IUCN protected area category as a preliminary starting point. Assigning categories to individual protected areas is based on national classification principles, derived from the statutes establishing the sites, management plans or conservation objectives. In Finland, the IUCN category of a protected area is approved by the party responsible for the management of the area and confirmed by the Ministry of the Environment. The categories of state-owned protected areas are approved by Parks & Wildlife Finland and, in the case of private protected areas, by the Centre for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment (ELY Centre). The protected area category of the site is recorded in the Protected Area Information System (SATJ, see section 8.2.1) and

this information is submitted to international databases along with other basic information concerning the protected area.

The classification of protected areas is coordinated by Parks & Wildlife Finland in cooperation with the Ministry of the Environment and ELY Centres. In Finland, all established state and private nature reserves and wilderness reserves have been assigned categories.

In this publication, concepts related to protected areas in Finland are used as follows:

- **Nature reserves** refer to nature conservation areas established by law or decree on state-owned land under the Nature Conservation Act or on private land by decision of the ELY Centre (previously the Environment Centre or the Provincial Administrative Board).
- **Protected areas** refer not only (established) nature reserves, but also other areas reserved for conservation purposes. These include, for example, areas that will later be established as (state) nature reserves (see sections 2.3.3 and 2.3.4), wilderness reserves established by the Wilderness Act (section 2.5), protected areas established by Metsähallitus' designation decisions and managed by Parks & Wildlife Finland, and sites designated in the Natura 2000 network where conservation objectives are secured by means other than the Nature Conservation Act.

Nature reserves and other protected areas within the national network are shown in Table 1. The table does not include Natura 2000 network sites governed by Metsähallitus' business units, but these are considered protected areas. In the table, the water column refers to both inland and marine waters.

The Principles for protected area management primarily applies to state-owned nature reserves governed by Metsähallitus and managed by Parks & Wildlife Finland, as well as areas to be established as such, and wilderness reserves. Where applicable, the Principles also guides the management of other protected areas governed and/or managed by Parks & Wildlife Finland (protected forests, other protected sites, state hiking areas).

Parks & Wildlife Finland actively manages also private nature reserves in cooperation with landowners and ELY Centres. Separate guidelines have been drawn up for the management of these areas; the document is updated by the Ministry of the Environment, ELY Centres and Metsähallitus in cooperation.

The map in Figure 1 shows the state-owned nature reserves and wilderness reserves established by the end of 2023. State nature reserves include special protection sites (nature reserves) for peatlands, old-growth forests and herb-rich forests established before 1997. The map does not show (small) nature reserves established by Metsähallitus' own decision or private nature reserves acquired for state administration.

Table 1. Number and surface area of protected areas in Finland (Metsähallitus, Parks & Wildlife Finland 31.12.2023).

Aluetyyppi	Number	Surface area (ha) Total	Surface area (ha) Land	Surface area (ha) Water
National parks	41	1,019,211	838,766	180,445
Strict nature reserves	19	153,998	151,155	2,843
Mire reserves	162	494,134	481,735	12,400
Old-growth forest reserves	73	7,725	7,470	254
Herb-rich forest reserves	45	1,059	1,048	11
Other state nature reserves	931	432,325	385,701	46,624
Statutory state nature reserves, total	1,271	2,108,452	1,865,875	242,577
Areas designated for nature conservation, to be enacted as nature reserves	2,645	525,275	386,420	138,854
State protected forests	316	53,260	36,908	16,352
Other state protected sites	290	268,337	8,507	259,830
Wilderness reserves	12	1,489,311	1,378,091	111,220
Other state-owned protected areas, total	3,263	2,336,182	1,809,926	526,256
National parks (land tenure other than Metsähallitus)	1	5,577	368	5,209
Private nature reserves	14,028	421,121	210,248	210,873
Temporary nature reserves	247	1,914	1,908	6
Habitat protection areas	1,208	2,204	1,872	333
Species protection areas	297	775	740	34
Sites designated for conservation in land use plans	147	723	475	247
Private protected areas, total	15,928	432,314	215,611	216,702
Protected areas, total	20,462	4,876,948	3,891,413	985,535

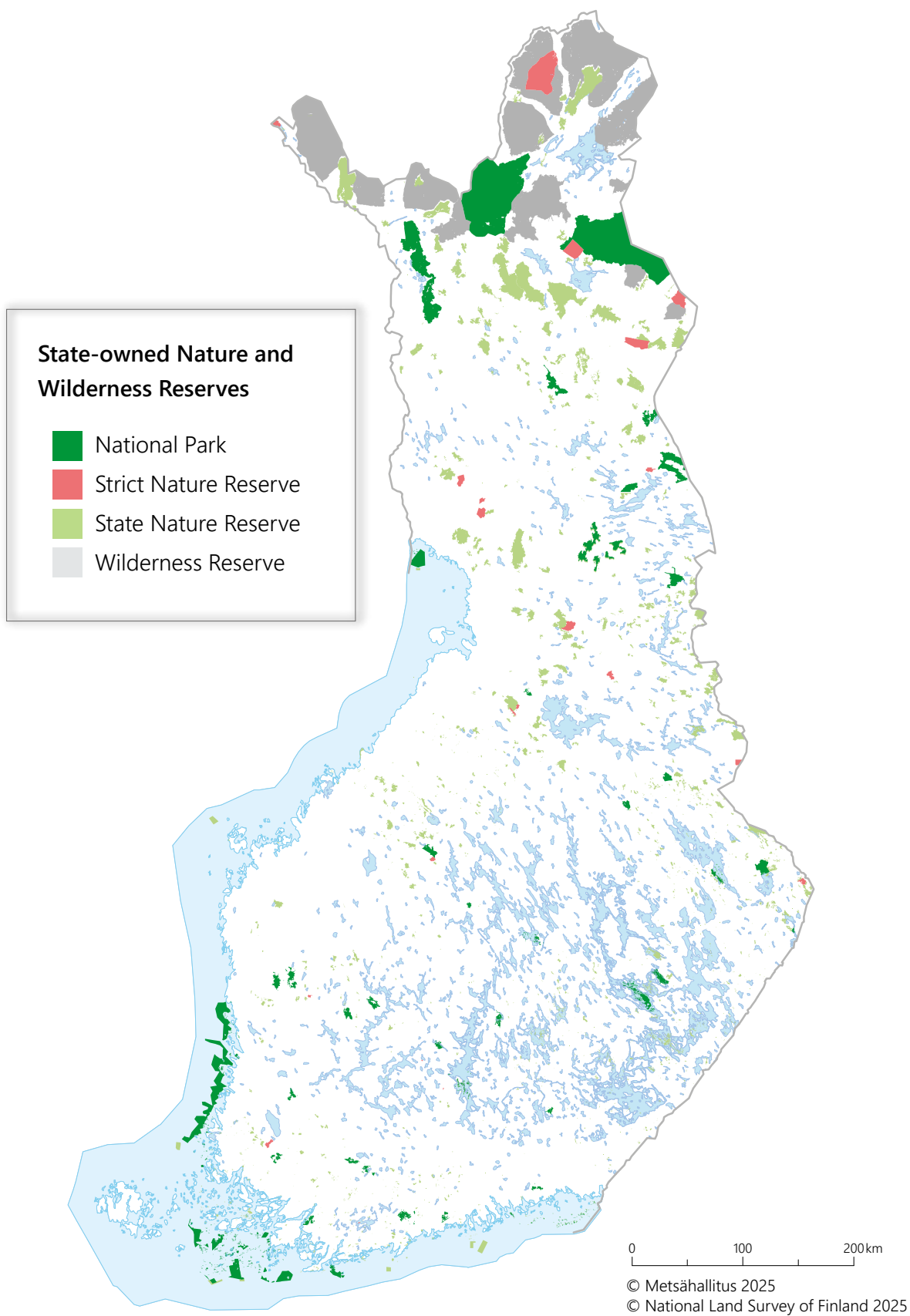


Figure 1. Established state nature reserves and wilderness reserves.

2.2 Objectives of the protected area network

The nature reserves established under the Nature Conservation Act and otherwise protected areas together form a diverse network of protected areas. The objective of the network is to preserve for the present generation and future generations enough representative and ecologically viable sample areas of all ecosystems and habitat types occurring in Finland, their geographical variation and natural stages of development. The network of protected areas also plays an important role in achieving and maintaining a favourable conservation status of habitats and species and in safeguarding cultural heritage.

The network of protected areas aims, above all, to preserve

- native nature specific to Finland, including habitat types, formations and features that are in danger of extinction.

Included in the above, or in addition, the network aims to protect:

- species and the diversity of natural genetic heritage and ecosystems
- geological and geomorphological formations, particularly those which are naturally rare, threatened or declining due to human activity
- natural succession of biological communities and other natural processes with different stages of development
- nature shaped by ancient culture, cultural landscapes and cultural monuments associated with natural areas, and related crop varieties and livestock breeds that are disappearing
- natural beauty, and landscape values
- wilderness character.

Within the limits of its conservation objectives, the network of protected areas also aims to serve:

- research and monitoring of the state of the environment
- environmental education, public awareness and nature hobbies
- nature recreation and tourism
- regional economy and local communities
- culture and traditional livelihoods of the Sámi
- provision of ecosystem services.

The Nature Conservation Act and the Wilderness Act generally define and regulate the purpose of establishing and using state-owned nature reserves and wilderness reserves. The statutes establishing nature reserves specify the grounds and objectives of conservation as well as the regulations concerning their use. The conservation provisions based on the Nature Conservation Act are discussed in more detail in section 6.2.

2.3 State nature reserves

According to the Nature Conservation Act (section 43), state-owned nature reserves include:

- national parks
- strict nature reserves
- other state nature reserves.

Under the NCA, nature conservation programmes can be drawn up to designate and reserve areas for nature conservation purposes. Through a legislative drafting process involving stakeholders, statutory nature reserves will be established from these programme sites (see section 2.3.4).

The establishment of new statutory nature reserves on state-owned land is always a political decision. Metsähallitus participates in the preparation of conservation sites under the guidance of the Ministry of the Environment.

2.3.1 National parks and strict nature reserves

A **national park**, according to the Nature Conservation Act (section 44), can only be established on state-owned land and its area must be at least 1,000 ha. The establishment and purpose of a national park are laid down in a separate act.

By 2024, 41 national parks have been established in Finland, covering a total of approximately one million hectares. National parks represent forest, peatland, lake, sea and fell habitats typical of Finland, as well as many of the best-known national landscapes.

According to the Nature Conservation Act, a national park is characterised by diverse or otherwise significant natural features, considered to have conservation value at national level. It must also be significant as a natural attraction or important for the enhancement of public awareness and interest in nature. It is permanently preserved outside economic activities that alter nature, and efforts are made to maintain or restore its natural state.

The most important function of a national park is to conserve the features, species and biological communities of the original inanimate and living nature, but it can also target traditional environments, communities, landscapes and structures created by human activity. In a national park, exceptions to the principle of general protection can be made in favour of reindeer husbandry and the natural livelihoods of the local population, if they do not cause significant or permanent damage to the conservation objectives.

Within the limits allowed by conservation, the national park also serves environmental education, instruction and general knowledge of nature by providing a place and opportunities for independent and guided observation of nature. Similarly, the national park serves natural science research and monitoring of the state of the environment. The national park also serves recreation as a public attrac-

tion open to all and by providing opportunities for hiking and experiencing nature.

The goal of national park management is that the park fulfils all the objectives listed above as well as possible. National parks are thus developed to be functional and versatile in terms of possibilities of use. As the conservation function is a priority, other activities must be adapted in such a way as not to jeopardise the conservation objective.

Due to different size, location and nature of national parks, they are developed to serve different levels of activities, accessibility and number of visits. A statutory management plan is drawn up for national parks to reconcile different activities and a regulation order to steer the use of the areas.

All national parks in Finland meet IUCN criteria for protected area category II, national park. However, Lemmenjoki National Park as a very large (2,858 km²) and wilderness-like area is classified as a category Ib wilderness area.

A **strict nature reserve**, according to the Nature Conservation Act (section 45), can only be established on state-owned land. Provisions on the establishment and purpose of a strict nature reserve are laid down by an act if the area is at least 1,000 hectares and otherwise by a government decree.

In all, 19 strict nature reserves have been established and cover a total area of approximately 154,000 ha. The sites were established in 1938, 1956, 1964 and 1982.

A strict nature reserve, according to the Nature Conservation Act, must have a significant role in safeguarding natural development, scientific research or teaching. In a strict nature reserve, there is no access outside designated roads, paths or areas without the permission of the authority that manages the site. However, there are several site-specific exceptions to total closure.

Although the Nature Conservation Act expresses the aim of keeping a strict nature reserve intact, it cannot be regarded as the sole goal of managing strict nature reserves.

Many strict nature reserves contain valuable habitats and cultural sites whose conservation requires continuous management. However, such sites make up only a small part of the total area of strict nature reserves.

As national, usually extensive and diverse nature reserves, the strict nature reserves resemble national parks. However, their objectives are emphasised in different ways: nature conservation and research predominate in strict nature reserves. Within the limits of strict protection, some strict nature reserves also have environmental education and teaching tasks. Kevo Nature Reserve (and especially the canyon included in it) is also of considerable importance for sightseeing and hiking.

All Finnish strict nature reserves meet the IUCN criteria for category Ia, except for Karkali Strict Nature Reserve, which, as a relatively small herb-rich forest area requiring maintenance and is a typical category IV habitat and species conservation and management area. If necessary, a management plan will be drawn up for a strict nature reserve.

2.3.2 Other state nature reserves

The establishment of other nature reserves in state-owned areas and the purpose of the areas are regulated by government decree or, if not exceeding 100 hectares, by Ministry of the Environment decree. Provisions on the establishment of other state nature reserves in Finland's exclusive economic zone are laid down in a government decree. (NCA section 46).

Other state nature reserves vary greatly in terms of size, nature, conservation purposes and management goals. The conservation objective of each type of nature reserve and individual site has been defined on a case-by-case basis and the constituent act incorporates the corresponding conservation provisions.

Other state nature reserves, established by law and established by decree after 1996,

are subject to the conservation provisions of national parks and strict nature reserves, where applicable. The conservation regulations of areas established by decree before 1997 have also mainly been updated to correspond to the new Nature Conservation Act. The old decrees have established nature reserves for conservation of mires, old-growth forests, herb-rich forests, among others.

Mire reserves (162 sites, total area approximately 494,100 ha) are special protection areas established by law or decree under the old (1923) Nature Conservation Act in the 1980s. Their primary purpose is to protect peatland nature, and the aim of their management is to allow paludification and other natural development to continue undisturbed. The old founding acts allowed limited forestry on mineral soils in most sites. However, Metsähallitus decided in 1994 (anticipating the obligations imposed by the EU Habitats Directive), to completely abandon the forestry use of mire reserves.

Movement, camping, berry picking, mushroom picking, fishing, hunting and similar recreational use of nature in accordance with everyone's rights (see section 12.3) will only be restricted in mire reserves, if they jeopardise the achievement of conservation objectives. Such restrictions may be necessary, e.g. in sites with valuable bird life or areas close to urban areas and good transport connections. Any restrictions are set out in the regulation orders drawn up for approximately 75 sites. Mire reserves are well suited as reference areas when studying, for example, the impacts of forest drainage and peat production on the hydrology of peatlands.

Old-growth forest reserves (73 sites, 7,700 ha) were established by decree in Southern Finland in 1994. Naturally, forestry is not allowed in these areas, but otherwise the regulations resemble those of mire reserves, with the difference that open fires and camping are prohibited. Hunting is prohibited outside the area covered by section 8 of the Hunting Act (in Northern Finland), but driving elk in

connection with hunting is permitted with the permission of Parks & Wildlife Finland (see section 13.1 for details).

Herb-rich forest reserves (45 sites, 1,000 ha) were established by decree in 1992. Their conservation objective is to preserve representative samples of the groves characteristic of the herb-rich vegetation zones and to manage the areas so that their most valuable features are preserved. Access is generally allowed by everyone's right but camping and campfires are prohibited by the conservation regulations. Hunting is prohibited in herb-rich forest reserves outside the area covered by section 8 of the Hunting Act.

Seal reserves (7 sites, 19,000 ha) aim to protect grey seals and their habitats. Some of these protected areas, established in state-owned marine areas in 2001, are also important for the protection of the Baltic ringed seal. The established nature reserves will benefit seal research and monitoring of seal populations. Access and fishing are restricted in the immediate vicinity of seal islets, and hunting is completely prohibited in the areas.

In addition to the types of protected areas described above, a wide variety of sites have been established as state nature reserves. At the end of 2023, Metsähallitus managed a total of 740 sites of this type, covering approximately 420,000 hectares. In the future, as a result of legislative drafting, both the number and coverage of these areas will more than double from the current level.

Individual nature reserves may have strict conservation regulations resembling a strict nature reserve (e.g. Annjaloanji). On the other hand, they may include cultural landscapes requiring constant maintenance (e.g. Telkkämäki). The aim of the management of some areas is to maintain particularly beautiful natural or cultural landscapes (e.g. Vehonienharju).

Other state nature reserves can, in principle, be assigned any IUCN protected area category. Large (more than 1,000 ha) and remote areas with little use and no threatening fac-

tors or specific active intervention needs may meet the definition of categories Ia (strictly protected nature reserve) or Ib (wilderness area). Small areas protecting natural values close to settlements or roads, susceptible to human impacts and/or requiring management (possibly specified in legislation) are typically Category IV (habitats and species conservation/management area). If necessary, a management plan and/or a restoration, nature management or other operational action plan guiding the measures will be drawn up for other nature reserves.

2.3.3 Nature conservation programmes and state-owned areas designated for nature conservation

To safeguard nationally significant natural values, nature conservation programmes may be drawn up in accordance with the Nature Conservation Act to reserve areas for nature conservation (NCA Section 15). The nature conservation programme is drawn up by the Ministry of the Environment and approved by the Government.

To promote biodiversity by voluntary means, an action programme may be drawn up by the competent ministry for the protection and improvement of habitats, and the habitats of species (NCA Section 14). An action programme is drawn up to promote and safeguard nationally significant natural values, but the programme can also be drawn up regionally. The voluntary nature conservation action plan is approved by the Government.

In 1978–1996, Government resolutions approved the **National Park and Strict Nature Reserve Programme** as well as the **Conservation Programmes for peatlands, wetlands, herb-rich forest, shores and old-growth forests** and their supplements (VNP 1978, 1979, 1982, 1989a, 1989b, 1990, 1993, 1995 and 1996). These national programmes define the sites covered by each programme and the means

of conservation, as well as the conservation objectives that the establishment of the sites aims to achieve.

The national nature conservation programmes have been implemented by establishing nature reserves on state-owned land by law or decree, acquiring privately owned land for the state and establishing nature reserves on private land. Similar means of implementation are used in those Natura sites that are implemented under the Nature Conservation Act and that are not included in established nature reserves or in the above-mentioned nature conservation reservations in the (so-called) old national conservation programmes.

In 2015, the **Supplementary Programme for Peatland Protection** was completed, defining peatlands with nationally significant natural values and making a proposal for selecting and delimiting such sites to the national nature conservation programme (Alanen & Aapala 2015). Metsähallitus has implemented the supplementary programme, for example, by transferring a total of 20,000 hectares of state-owned peatlands for purposes of establishing nature reserves. The protection of peatlands on private land is carried out voluntarily, for example, as part of the Helmi habitat programme.

The objective of the **Forest Biodiversity Programme for Southern Finland (METSO)** (2003–2007 and 2008–2016) and its successor programme (2014–2025) is to halt the decline of forest habitats and forest species and to consolidate the favourable development of biodiversity (Government resolutions, VNP 2002, 2008, 2014). The aim is both to expand and improve the existing network of protected areas and to develop nature management in commercial forests. The METSO Programme sets a target that a total of 96,000 hectares of areas voluntarily offered by landowners are protected for a fixed period or permanently as private nature reserves against compensation or acquired for the state. The METSO Programme is also

implemented by (statutorily) protecting areas already under state control.

The main objective of the **Helmi Habitat Programme** (2021–2030) is to strengthen Finland's biodiversity and improve the state of habitats by protecting and restoring peatlands, restoring and managing wetlands, semi-natural grasslands and woodland habitats, as well as small waters and coastal nature (Gummerus-Rautiainen et al. 2021). The aim is also to promote ecosystem services, water protection and carbon sequestration, as well as adaptation to climate change.

The degree of implementation of the conservation programmes continues to vary between programmes, regions and sites. In terms of surface area, mainly sites of the old Shoreline and Wetland Conservation Programmes are still not implemented (i.e. acquired by the state to be established as a nature reserve or protected as a private nature reserve). In terms of numbers, the largest number of sites not yet established on state-owned land are sites reserved for forest and peatland protection, which are included in the above-mentioned more recent conservation programmes.

In addition to nature conservation programmes, state areas have been designated for protection in regional and local land use plans (with SL marking). In land use planning, completely new areas not included in national conservation programmes, or the Natura 2000 network, may also be included as conservation sites, as well as green corridors connecting them (see section 16.2 for more details).

Some protected areas originally protected as private nature reserves have also been acquired for the state (181 sites, 10,200 ha at the end of 2023). Over time, such areas will be included as part of nature reserves already established or to be established as new state nature reserves.

At the end of 2023, Parks & Wildlife Finland managed a total of nearly 3,000 sites, covering approximately 568,000 hectares, of

which new nature reserves will be established or attached to existing nature reserves (see Table 2). The establishment and expansion of protected areas will take place in the legislative drafting process, which will take several more years. Most of the sites have been waiting for enactment as nature reserves for a long time. The preparation of the founding acts has been delayed for many reasons. Previously, the process was slowed down by incomplete land acquisition related to nature conservation programmes.

IUCN protected area categories will be assigned to state protected areas included in the nature conservation programmes in connection to establishment of new nature reserves. Most small southern sites, including those designated under the METSO and Helmi Programmes, protect a specific habitat type and are therefore typically classified in category IV, as habitats and species conservation and management areas.

2.3.4 Site enactment to establish nature reserves

The conservation provisions contained in the act establishing a nature reserve form a key basis for the governance and management of the area. Completion of the legislative drafting process is therefore important for the management and use of areas and related planning.

According to the Nature Conservation Act, national parks and strict nature reserves of at least 1,000 hectares are established by law. A Government decree establishes nature reserves of less than 1,000 hectares and other state nature reserves of more than 100 hectares. Other state nature reserves of up to 100 hectares are established by the decree of the Ministry of the Environment. Most of the new protected areas will be relatively small. However, an exception to this are some protected areas under the Shore Conservation Programme.

Most of the areas reserved as state conservation areas will be established as state nature reserves, which means that their number will more than double from the current level. Some of the unestablished sites will be connected to existing nature reserves, either by statutes or by technical property administration measures, upon application by Metsähallitus to the National Land Survey of Finland (NCA section 60). Due to the

Table 2. State-owned areas reserved for nature conservation that have not yet been established as nature reserves (Metsähallitus, Parks & Wildlife Finland 1.1.2024).

Designation type	Surface area (ha)
Sites designated in Nature Conservation Programmes (incl. Natura 2000)	486,000
METSO Programme sites on state-owned lands	19,000
METSO Programme sites acquired for the state	20,000
Sites designated in The Supplementary Programme for Peatland Protection	14,000
Sites designated in land use plans	19,000
Private nature reserves acquired for the state	10,000
Total	568,000

limitations related to the latter approach, it is mainly used in the area referred to in section 8 of the Hunting Act in northern Finland.

The establishment of state nature reserves is carried out in legislative drafting projects that simultaneously establish all the necessary new nature reserves in a certain geographical region (often a province). A single legislative drafting project may include from ten to more than a hundred sites, which will be established by one Government decree (areas over 100 ha) and one Ministry of the Environment decree (areas under 100 ha).

The legislative drafting work is carried out under the guidance of the Ministry of the Environment. Metsähallitus compiles basic information on the sites, draws up maps and is responsible for involving local parties. The Ministry is responsible for drafting the founding acts and circulating comments. Legislative drafting is carried out in cooperation with key local stakeholders. In this context, discussions are held with the regional authorities, munici-

palities, hunting and nature conservation organisations, among others.

From 2014 to the end of 2023, ten legislative drafting projects have been completed, establishing 700 new nature conservation areas covering more than 350,000 hectares (see Table 3). In parallel with the enactment projects, the National Parks of South Konnevesi (2014), Teijo (2015), Hossa (2017) and Salla (2022) have been established, totalling approximately 26,000 hectares.

According to estimation in 2024, about twenty more legislative drafting projects will be needed in the next few years, some of which are already well advanced, and a dozen projects have already been started. Many of the work phases preceding the drafting of decrees are largely carried out using the Protected Area Information System (SATJ). The enactment process will take a stand on, for example, various rights of way and access for which separate guidelines have been drawn up (see Metsähallitus 2022a).

Table 3. Enactment projects of state nature reserves completed in 2014–2023 (Metsähallitus, Parks & Wildlife Finland 31.12.2023)

Completed legislative drafting projects	Number	Area (ha)
Decree establishing Nature Reserves in certain state-owned areas located in the municipalities of Suomussalmi and Puolanka (Government Decree 203/2014)	17	12,400
Decree on the Kalevalanpuisto Nature Reserve (Government Decree 204/2014)	17	20,400
Decrees on Nature Reserves in the Region of Southwest Finland (Government Decree 214/2014, Ministry of the Environment Decree 215/2014)	91	13,042
Decree on Nature Reserves of Saimaa (Government Decree 441/2014)	9	13,000
Decrees on Nature Reserves in Eastern Lapland (Government Decree 646/2017, Ministry of the Environment Decree 647/2017)	42	197,556
Decrees on Nature Reserves in the southern parts of the region of North Ostrobothnia (Government Decree 644/2017, Ministry of the Environment Decree 645/2017)	40	22,350
Decrees on Nature Reserves in the Region of South Savo (Government Decree 204/2019, Ministry of the Environment Decree 205/2019)	119	11,630
Decrees on Nature Reserves in the Region of South Karelia (Government Decree 1076/2019, Ministry of the Environment Decree 1077/2019)	57	2,735
Decrees on Nature Reserves in the Region of North Karelia (Government Decree 140/2021, Ministry of the Environment Decree 141/2021)	174	36,526
Decrees on Nature Reserves in the Region of Uusimaa (Government Decree 332/2021, Ministry of the Environment Decree 333/2021)	96	8,184
Decrees on Nature Reserves in the Region of Central Ostrobothnia (Government Decree 245/2022, Ministry of the Environment Decree 246/2022)	38	15,097
Total	700	352,920

2.4 Nature reserves and other protected areas on private land

Private nature reserves are established on privately owned land (NCA Section 47). The landowner is a private person, estate, shareholder in a common area, company, association, foundation, parish, municipality, etc. Private protected areas have been established since the 1930s. At the end of 2023, circa 14,000 private nature reserves had been established, and their total area was approximately 421,000 hectares. A small part of the established private nature reserves has been acquired by the state (Metsähallitus) at a later stage – at the end of 2023, there were 181 such sites, totalling c. 10,200 ha.

Private nature reserves have previously been established by the decision of the Provincial Administrative Board, the Regional Environment Centre or later the ELY Centre. A private nature reserve may, at the request or with the consent of the landowner, be established in an area that meets the requirements for establishment under the Nature Conservation Act (see section 2.2).

A decision to establish a nature reserve may not be issued unless the landowner and the ELY Centre have agreed on the area's conservation regulations and compensations for the area. However, the ELY Centre may, without the landowner's application or consent, establish a privately owned area as a nature reserve, if the site is designated in a nature conservation programme approved by Government resolution or in the Natura 2000 network as a site to be implemented by means of the Nature Conservation Act (i.e. as a nature reserve).

An essential part of the founding resolution is the conservation orders, which define the extent to which the site is protected (i.e. prohibited and permitted activities). Many private nature reserves have outdated conservation regulations. For example, older orders do not consider all habitat types or

species to be protected under the EU Habitats Directive.

The ELY Centres are responsible for establishing private nature reserves and for marking their boundaries in the terrain. With the landowner's consent, the ELY Centre and Metsähallitus may carry out nature management measures in a private nature reserve.

In addition to permanent protection, the ELY Centre and a private landowner may, to promote nature or landscape protection, conclude an agreement on the temporary protection of an area. A **temporary nature reserve** (NCA section 48) covers the conservation site either completely or concern certain measures. The contract may be concluded for a maximum period of 20 years at a time. Information about the agreement must be registered in the Land Information System and it is valid even if the area is transferred to the new owner. There are about 250 valid contracts, covering just under 2000 ha.

In addition, a **habitat protection area** (NCA section 64) or a **species protection area** (NCA section 77) may be established by the ELY Centres' delimitation decisions on private land. To a small extent, the ELY Centres have also made these delimitation decisions for state-owned multi-use forests.

Nature reserves on private land, as well as habitat and species protection sites, are usually quite small, but they significantly complement the state protected areas. Often, private nature reserves also form mosaic-like large, uniform conservation entities together with state-owned protected areas. Such entities exist especially in the western coastal area.

Under the Nature Conservation Act (sections 91–92), the Ministry of the Environment may establish nationally valuable **landscape management areas** or the ELY Centres landscape management areas of provincial value. Among other things, they are designated to preserve the natural or cultural landscape and the historical characteristics of the envi-

ronment. Landscape management areas are established in close cooperation with local actors, such as village associations and municipalities. So far, about a dozen landscape management areas have been established in different parts of Finland.

In 2013, the national working group on applying IUCN guidelines on protected area categories interpreted landscape management areas as not being proper protected areas because their primary objective is not the conservation of biodiversity. Instead, in 2021, the so-called OECM working group (Heinonen & Alanen 2022) interpreted landscape management areas as potential OECM sites (see section 2.8).

2.5 Wilderness reserves and sites protected by Metsähallitus

In 1991, 12 wilderness reserves were established in Lapland under the Wilderness Act (62/1991), covering a total area of approximately 1.5 million hectares. They were established to preserve the wilderness nature of the areas, to safeguard Sámi culture and natural livelihoods, and to develop the diverse use of nature and its prerequisites. However, wilderness reserves also play an important role in preserving biodiversity and they are designated as Natura 2000 areas.

The Wilderness Act does not impose restrictions on the use of wilderness reserves unless it causes significant changes to nature. Based on the Wilderness Act, it is prohibited to establish mining districts and to build permanent roads, as well as to transfer or lease land or the right to use it without permission from the Government (Ministry of the Environment). However, the assignment of rights of use for natural livelihood purposes in accordance with the site management plan or for projects necessary for defence capacity or the operation of the Border Guard does not require such a permit, nor does e.g. the

transfer of rights of use contracts for the use of service facilities.

The Wilderness Act allows limited forestry in five wilderness reserves, but Metsähallitus decided already in the 1994 (anticipating regulations of the Habitats Directive) to completely exclude all wilderness reserves from felling. In addition to the Wilderness Act, the management and use of areas are regulated by several other acts – such as the Fishing, Hunting, Off-Road Traffic Acts and the Reindeer Husbandry Act. Reindeer husbandry is practised over the entire area covered by wilderness reserves.

Wilderness reserves meet the IUCN definition of protected areas, and according to the new category definition published in 2008 and its internationally accepted interpretation (Dudley 2008, Heinonen & Juvonen 2013), they have been placed in category Ib, wilderness area. A statutory management plan is drawn up for all wilderness reserves in accordance with the guidelines drawn up for the planning of national parks and other nature reserves as well as Natura 2000 sites. In the Sámi homeland, planning follows the so-called Akwé: Kon operating model and guidance drawn up within the scope of the Convention on Biological Diversity. (The procedure is described in more detail in section 10.7.3).

Through its own decisions, Metsähallitus has established protected forests and other protected sites for conservation purposes. Of these, areas administered and managed by Parks & Wildlife Finland are considered permanent protected areas according to the national interpretation. There are 316 such protected forests, totalling just under 55,000 ha, and 290 other protected areas, totalling 268,000 ha (at the end of 2023). The latter include, for example, Natura 2000 sites in the sea area whose conservation measures are implemented under legislation other than the Nature Conservation Act. In addition, they include, for example, old sea fortifications and their surrounding water areas transferred

from the Finnish Defence Forces to Metsähallitus. These areas have both natural and cultural heritage values.

2.6 Natura 2000 network sites

The network of Natura 2000 sites, based on European Community's Nature Directives, protects natural habitats and habitats of species that are becoming rarer throughout the European Union, as well as areas important for bird life. The annexes to the directives list the species and natural habitat types of Community importance for which conservation sites must be designated. There are more than 1,000 of these species and more than 200 habitats throughout the present 27 Member States. There are 132 directive species and 69 directive habitat types found in Finland.

The Natura network includes those areas that Finland has notified as Special Protection Areas (SPAs) under the Birds Directive, as well as areas that have been approved by the European Commission as Sites of Community Importance (SCI) under the Habitats Directive. Of the latter, Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) have been established by Decree of the Ministry of the Environment (354/2014). For the sake of clarity, the list of sites in the regulation includes all Natura sites, including SPA sites under the Birds Directive.

The Commission adopted a Decision establishing the list of Natura 2000 sites for the Alpine biogeographical region in December 2003 and the Boreal List in January 2005. Finland has made several additions to the original 1998 network proposal, which have been sent to the Commission for approval by decision of the Government – most recently in 2018 (see Government Resolution VNP 1999 and supplements). During 2022, in connection with the updating of the Standard Data Form SDF (for Natura site data), some needs to complement the Natura 2000 network were

further examined. In the maritime area, too, the network will be further supplemented in the coming years.

Finland's current Natura 2000 network includes 1,865 sites, of which 86 are in the independent Province of Åland (covering approximately 43,750 ha). There are 1,779 sites in mainland Finland and the total area of the network is approximately 5.0 million hectares. About three quarters of this is land and one quarter is water. The northernmost Lapland belongs to the Alpine biogeographical region, the rest of Finland to the Boreal region. The sea area belongs to the Baltic Sea region.

The entire Finnish Natura network includes 1,720 SAC and 468 SPA sites. Most Natura sites are reported either as SCI sites alone or as both SCI and SPA, and there are few sites reported as SPA only. SCI and SPA areas may overlap either fully or partially. In Finland, the Natura 2000 network covers most national protected areas in terms of surface area. The requirements of the Nature Directives are considered in their management (see sections 6.3 and 8.1.2 for more details). The map in Figure 2 shows the SAC and SPA areas included in the Finnish Natura 2000 network.

Of the Natura 2000 network in mainland Finland, 82% is state-owned land and 18% private land (see Table 4). State nature reserves and areas to be established as such account for 44% of the Natura network and wilderness reserves for 29%, i.e. together they make up 73% of the Natura network. The total share of other state areas is only 8%, most of which are marine areas protected by means other than the Nature Conservation Act, which are included in Table 4 as Other state-owned protected areas. Private nature reserves account for only 5% of the Natura network and for about a quarter of all privately owned Natura sites.

Strict nature reserves are practically fully included in the Natura 2000 network, and Natura sites overlap with more than 90% of national park and wilderness reserve area.

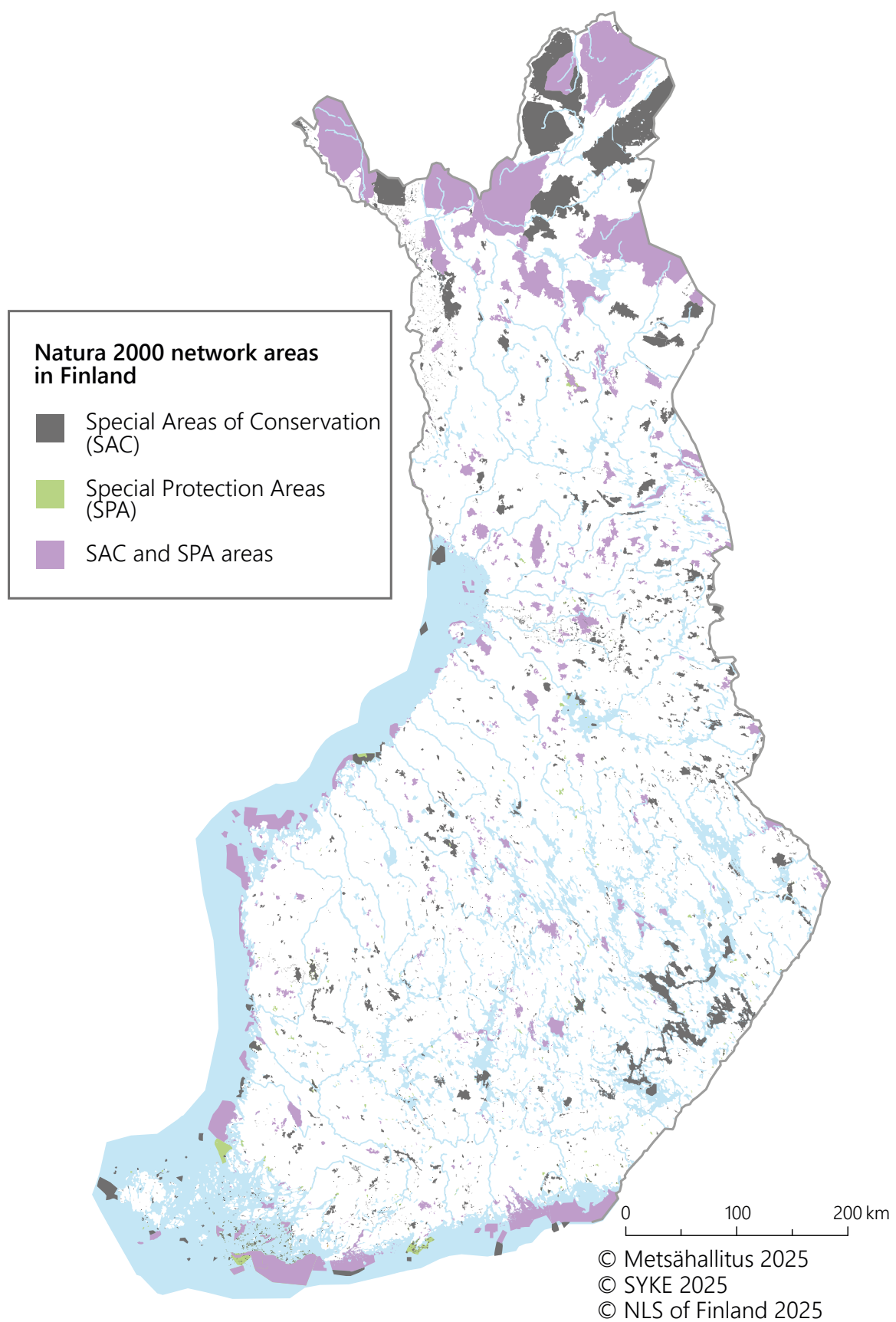


Figure 2. Natura 2000 network areas in Finland.

Table 4. The relationship between the Natura 2000 network and national designation types in mainland Finland. The overlaps between Natura sites have been eliminated. (Metsähallitus, 1.6.2022).

Area type	Natura 2000 surface area	Proportion (%) of Natura 2000 network	Area outside of Natura 2000 network	Proportion (%) overlapping with Natura	Total
National parks	925,602	18,4	89,003	91	1,014,605
Strict nature reserves	153,751	3,1	247	100	153,998
Other state nature reserves	831,303	16,6	90,524	90	921,827
Sites designated for nature conservation (to be enacted)	331,625	6,6	173,194	66	504,819
Wilderness reserves	1,434,764	28,6	54,546	96	1,489,310
Other state-owned protected sites	252,132	5,0	12,909	95	265,041
Protected forests	12,740	0,3	93,667	12	106,407
State hiking areas	20,350	0,4	3,926	84	24,276
State recreation forests	91,956	1,8	56,474	62	148,430
Other state-owned areas	47,369	0,9	-	-	-
State-owned areas, total	4,101,592	81,7	-	-	-
Private nature reserves	258,310	5,1	147,041	64	405,351
Other privately owned areas	658,825	13,1	-	-	-
Privately owned areas, total	917,135	18,3	-	-	-
Total	5,018,727	-	-	-	-
State nature reserves (established and those designated to be enacted as nature reserves)	2,242,281	44,7	352,968	86	2,595,249

Of other state nature reserves, the share is currently over 90%, but in the future the share will decrease, as the nature reserves to be established later will include more areas outside Natura (especially areas under the METSO Programme). The high overlap proportion of Metsähallitus' other protected sites with Natura is explained by the marine Natura areas they contain. Their conservation is usually realised with procedures under the Water Act. About 2/3 of the area of private nature reserves is included in the Natura network.

84% of state-owned hiking areas established under the Outdoor Recreation Act (by the end of 2023) and 62% of state recreation forests established by decisions of Metsähallitus are included in the Natura network. The means of implementing the latter and other state-owned protected sites include the Forest, Land Extraction and Land Use and Build-

ing Acts. The means of implementing Other privately owned areas are similarly varied, including those of the Water Act.

The Habitats and Birds Directives do not impose restrictions on activities in Natura areas that do not threaten the natural values on which their designation is based. Projects planned in the vicinity of Natura sites must evaluate the need for a Natura assessment, in which the potential adverse effects on conservation values are evaluated. If necessary, a more detailed Natura impact assessment will be carried out. Chapter 5 of the Nature Conservation Act contains more detailed provisions on the implementation of conservation measures in the Natura 2000 network in Finland (see section 6.3).

Natura sites fully meet the IUCN definition of protected areas, but they are not assigned IUCN categories as separate units. Site-specific categories are only assigned to

nationally established nature reserves and wilderness reserves, which means that as the legislative drafting progresses, almost 4/5 of the surface area of the Natura 2000 network will be indirectly categorised.

2.7 Protected areas under international agreements and programmes

International agreements and programmes and the types of areas designated therein are discussed in greater detail in Chapter 4. In this section, designation types related to agreements on wetland and marine protection are further elaborated, as they have wider significance in Finland's network of protected areas.

The Ramsar Convention on Wetlands (Convention on Lands of International Importance as Waterfowl Habitats) aims to

protect wetlands of international value and, more broadly, to promote the sustainable use of all wetlands and water resources. In Finland, wetlands as defined in the Ramsar Convention can be found, for example, in the habitats of the Baltic Sea and its coast, inland waters and beaches, mires, semi-natural grasslands and inland alluvial forests. Finland's network of national protected areas and Natura 2000 sites includes many different types of wetlands. In extensive national parks, strict nature reserves and wilderness reserves, as well as separately protected bird, coastal or stream waters and cultural environments.

There is a total of 49 designated Ramsar sites in Finland, most of which are also part of the Natura 2000 network. Parks & Wildlife is responsible for about half of the sites, including nine national parks. ELY Centres are responsible for many inland and coastal wetlands. The Provincial Government of Åland



The Kvarken World Heritage Site. The core of the area consists of a nature reserve and Natura 2000 areas, surrounded by a cooperation area. Photo: Pekka Lehtonen.

is responsible for a few destinations in the archipelago. The total coverage of the Ramsar areas is about 785,000 ha, of which about half are mires.

The protected areas designated under the **Helsinki Convention** (Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Baltic Sea Area), i.e. the Helsinki Commission's network of marine protected areas (HELCOM MPAs), includes 34 sites in Finland. Six of these are in the independent Province of Åland. Except for one, all MPA sites in Finland are also Natura 2000 sites. All national parks in the marine area are partly or fully included in the MPA network.

There are 17 Ramsar sites along the coast, ten of which are also in the MPA network. The Kvarken Natura 2000 area is also designated on the UNESCO World Heritage List, and the Archipelago Sea National Park is included in the corresponding UNESCO Biosphere Reserve. The planning of the management and use of MPA sites is the responsibility of Parks & Wildlife Finland, coastal ELY Centres and the Government of Åland, and is carried out in cooperation with stakeholders.

The designation types of the sea area are shown in Figure 3. Areas and overlaps are indicative in the figure. The objectives of different protected area types are integrated when planning their management (see section 8.1).

2.8 Other areas of effective conservation measures (OECMs)

Protected areas form the core of the so-called ecological network (Figure 4). To achieve their conservation objectives, it is of paramount importance that land use of areas outside protected areas can be planned so that it supports these objectives. The preservation of natural values can be safeguarded by natural sites that are excluded from commercial use, restored or managed in the vicinity of protected areas, and by more extensive green areas connecting them, that are in limited recreational or other use. A well-connected ecological network increases the possibilities for adapting to climate change.

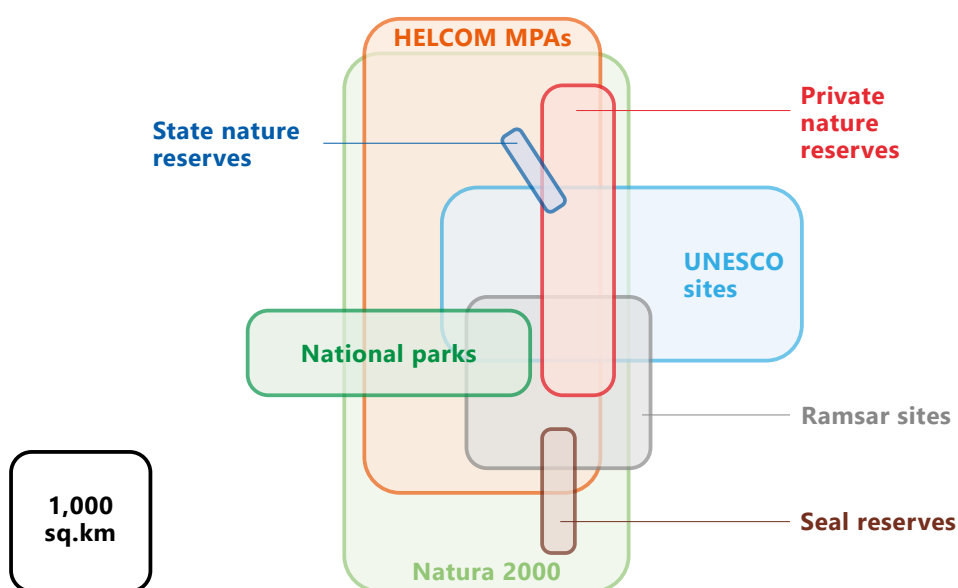


Figure 3. Extent and overlap of protected area types in marine areas of Finland.

The concept of 'other effective area-based conservation measures' (OECMs), to support the network of protected areas, emerged in the context of the Convention on Biological Diversity already in 2010. However, it was not until the 2018 Conference of the Parties (CBD COP 14) that a definition and criteria for such an area were concluded. In connection with the decision, more detailed guidelines drawn up by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) were also adopted for the identification, approval and reporting of these areas, and for monitoring the achievement of the conservation objectives of the Convention through international information systems. The national application of the OECM concept is based on these documents. The Convention on Biological Diversity and the related area-based conservation objectives are discussed in more detail in section 4.1.1.

In Finland, the OECM Working Group (Heinonen & Alanen 2022) has proposed the following possible types of areas that meet the OECM criteria:

- protected forests and peatlands of state-owned multiple-use forests (protected by decisions of Metsähallitus, e.g. within the framework of the METSO Programme and the Supplementary Protection Programme for Peatlands)
- nature value sites and other environmental value sites in state-owned multiple-use forests
- state recreational forests and other areas reserved for recreation in regional land use plans
- cultural-historical sites of high natural value
- landscape management areas established in accordance with the Nature Conservation Act (section 92)
- areas eligible for government environmental subsidies on private land (sites for the protection of valuable forest

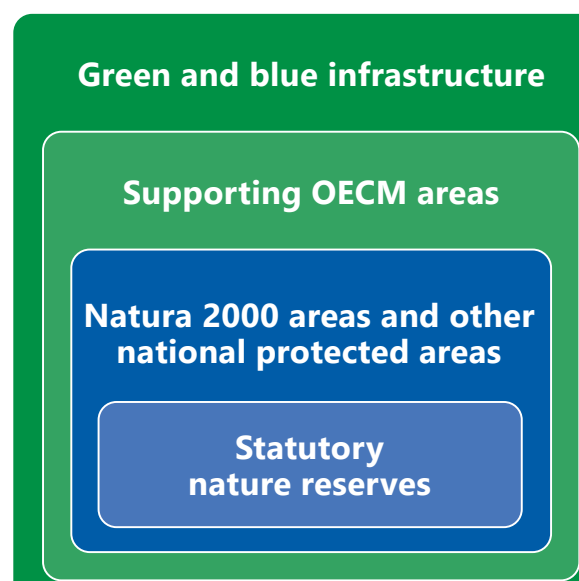


Figure 4. The ecological network in Finland.

sites and the management of semi-natural grassland)

- protected areas of UNESCO programmes (World Heritage, Biosphere Reserves, Geoparks)
- national urban parks.

Individual sites belonging to these area types can be proposed as OECM sites based on a review by an expert familiar with the criteria and approval by the managing body. The Ministry of the Environment confirms the new OECM sites, after which their basic data can be reported to the European and global protected area databases (NatDA and WDPa, see section 8.4.3).

The objective of the strategic planning of state-owned lands and waters is to maintain and promote the coverage and quality of the ecological network as part of Metsähallitus' general social obligations and strategy (see Chapter 5). Member States are also bound to do so by national land use legislation and the EU's strategic objectives (see Chapter 4). Transboundary land-use planning is discussed in Chapter 16.

3 The Framework for Management and Use of Protected Areas

3.1 General framework

The general framework for the management and use of protected areas is shown in Figure 5. Chapters 4–17 of these guidelines, the Principles of the Management and Use of Protected Areas (the ‘Principles’), are structured according to this figure, so the diagram also serves as an introduction to the content and structure of the publication in this respect.

In terms of steering the management and use of protected areas, as well as its efficiency and effectiveness, the most important and extensive part is what is done and happens within the protected areas. ‘**Management and use of protected areas**’ at the heart of the diagram describes this set of natural and other values and activities situated in the protected areas themselves. However, the management of protected area and steering of their use

also includes land use planning and lobbying related to protected areas, which integrate protected areas into the operating environment. This is illustrated by the surrounding circle.

In addition to knowing the tasks of managing protected areas and steering their use, it is important to understand WHY such activities are carried out and WHAT the key practices related to them are. The basics of the former question can be found in the sections ‘**Objectives**’ and ‘**Obligations**’ in the figure. Operating in a changing environment requires ‘**Adaptive management**’ based on best available information and engagement with stakeholders.

The Principles for the management and use of protected areas in Finland is primarily a document drawn up to support the work of Parks & Wildlife Finland personnel. The

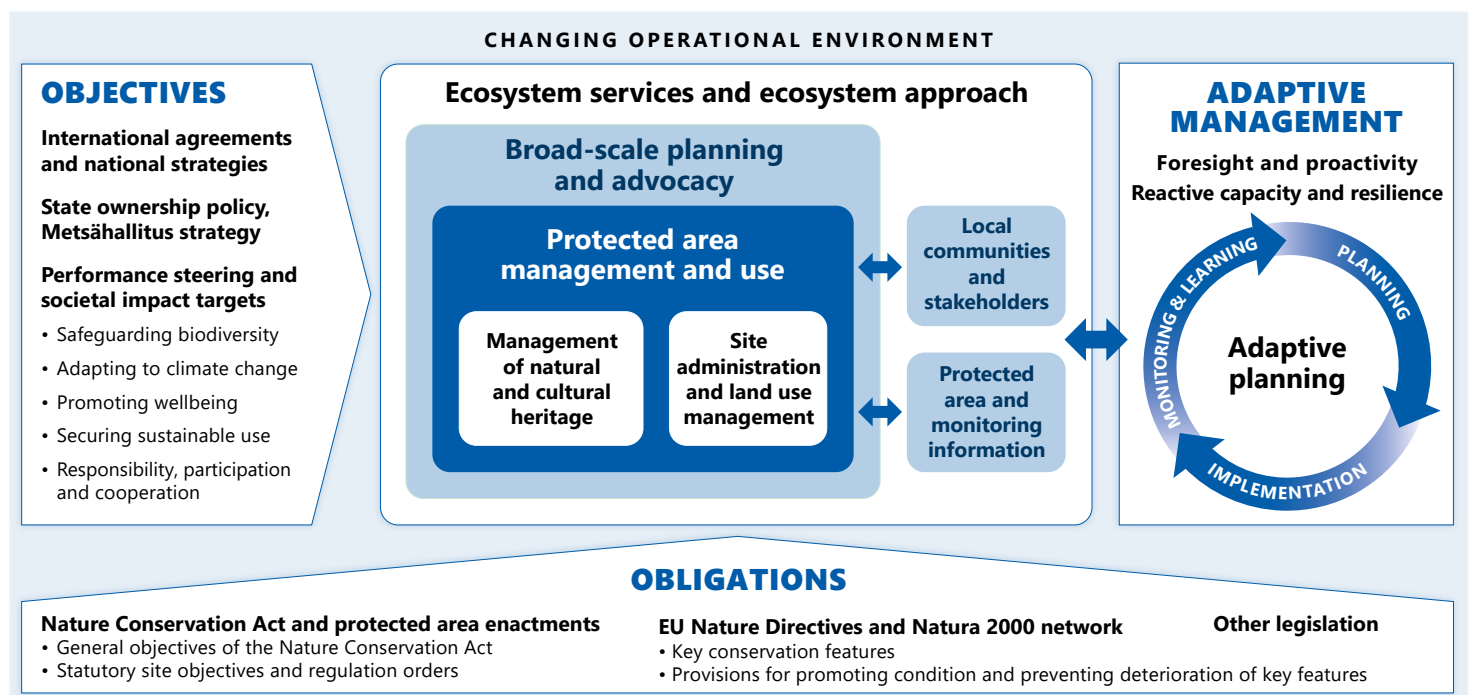


Figure 5. The framework for the management and use of protected areas in Finland.

aim of the document is, among other things, to describe the principles to be followed in the management of areas in sufficient detail, and to provide instructions and guidelines for various concrete questions that arise in practical work. In addition to these, the Principles aims to provide those working with issues related to the management and use of protected areas with an understanding of Parks & Wildlife Finland's whole sphere work. This includes the grounds for the activities, the operational practices used and the connection of the activities to the surrounding society and the international framework. The management and steering of protected areas involve a lot of coordination and reconciliation, which in part emphasises that understanding this broad entity is a prerequisite for success.

3.2 Objectives

The measures related to steering the management and use of protected areas and their scope are centrally influenced by the objectives set for these activities, the key issues of which are highlighted in the right-hand side of Figure 5.

From the perspective of protected area management, international agreements on safeguarding biodiversity and the national strategies and programmes derived from them, are a key starting point. They set long-term general goals and objectives for the protection, management and restoration of natural and cultural environments. In addition to these, the importance of climate change mitigation and adaptation has become increasingly topical in international environmental policy and in agreements and legislative projects drawn up or pending as part of it. The **conventions and programmes** important for the management and use of protected areas is described in **Chapter 4** of this publication.

Many aspects of protected area management, especially in the shorter term, are

determined through the state's ownership and related strategies, as well as through the performance guidance of ministries (Ministry of the Environment, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry). **Metsähallitus and the steering of its operations** are discussed in **Chapter 5**. The key themes of Metsähallitus' strategy – green growth, climate change, biodiversity, well-being and safety, as well as customer orientation, responsibility and cooperation – are all themes that have a significant connection to the management and use of protected areas. The impact targets defined in the state budget and performance agreement that guide the operations of Parks & Wildlife Finland are largely related to these themes. Some of these themes are also clearly linked to the above-mentioned agreements and programmes.

3.3 Obligations

The tasks of steering the management and use of protected areas are largely statutory. The 'obligations' in Figure 5 describes the set of regulations that primarily define the tasks that are included. Though the legislation defines these tasks, it does not take a position on the extent to which these tasks are to be carried out. This is largely determined by the "objectives" discussed in section 3.2. On the other hand, it should be noted that the statutes on which the management of protected areas are based contain not only "obligations" but also entries of a goal-oriented nature.

The tasks of Parks & Wildlife Finland are defined on a general level in the Act on Metsähallitus (234/2016: Section 5). Most of these tasks are related to the management and use of protected areas. The **key statutes on which the management and use of protected areas** are based are discussed in **Chapter 6**.

The obligations set by legislation for the management of protected areas are included in both national legislation and the EU Nature

Directives. The national network of protected areas largely overlaps with the Natura 2000 network (see section 2.6), which means that in most areas the management and steering of protected areas must consider not only the obligations of the national protected area but also those of the Natura 2000 site.

Of the national legislation, the most important in terms protected area management are the **Nature Conservation Act (NCA)** and the **statutes establishing nature reserves** issued under it. In Figure 5, some of the key provisions are highlighted:

- Objectives of the Nature Conservation Act (Section 1)
- Conservation orders concerning state nature reserves (Sections 49–52)
- Obligation of public authorities to promote [the favourable conservation status of] Natura 2000 sites (Section 41)
- The prohibition of deterioration of Natura 2000 sites (section 34) and the corresponding entries in the state regulations on the protection of nature reserves (sections 49–52), which prohibit activities that jeopardise the purpose of establishing the sites.

In addition to the matters mentioned in Figure 5, it is worth mentioning in this connection the precautionary principle enshrined in the Nature Conservation Act (section 7), which must be considered, for example, in all measures to guiding the management and use of protected areas and in the related planning and decision-making.

The purpose of establishing national parks and strict nature reserves is defined on a general level in the Nature Conservation Act (sections 44 and 45) and it is specified in more detail in the act establishing the area. For other state nature reserves, this definition is made in the constituent decree. The statutes establishing nature reserves also often specify the conservation regulations for the areas.

Of the provisions of the **Nature Directives, obligations relating to the Natura 2000 network** are particularly important for the management and use of protected areas. At the national level, the obligations related to the directives and the Natura 2000 network have been implemented in Finland by the Nature Conservation Act (Chapter 5 of the Act). The obligation to promote and the prohibition of deterioration of the Natura 2000 network have already been mentioned. The concept of ‘key conservation criteria’, which is important for the management and use of Natura 2000 sites, is also included in the Nature Conservation Act (section 41).

In addition to nature conservation regulations, the management and management of protected areas must consider a wide range of other **national regulations** (Other legislation in Figure 5), the most important of which are listed at the beginning of Chapter 6 and a comprehensive list of which is compiled in Appendix 5. Issues relating to these acts are dealt with in several chapters of the principles, in particular Chapters 13 and 14 on the different uses of protected areas.

3.4 Adaptive management

In the future, the rapid changes taking place in the operating environment will increasingly be emphasised in the management of protected areas. Protected areas are also increasingly integrated into the surrounding society. The challenges of steering the management and use of protected areas are growing and becoming more complex due to factors such as biodiversity loss, climate change and changes in the use of protected areas. In such a situation, the effectiveness of protected areas management depends not only on the quantity and quality of measures, but also on the policies or modes of operation used (see Figure 5).

The network of protected areas is closely linked not only to its physical environment but also to the socio-economic and cultural

operating environment of the areas. Natural processes and land use are considered at the regional and landscape level in the management of protected areas, as it aims to address difficult and complex challenges such as biodiversity loss and climate change. When defining objectives and measures for the management and use of protected areas, the interconnectedness of protected areas will be increasingly emphasised in the future.

The significance of protected areas as producers of various nature-based benefits, i.e. ecosystem services, will continue to grow. The management of protected areas follows the ecosystem approach in which measures are planned in a holistic manner, based on the best available information and in cooperation with local communities that may be affected by protected areas and their measures.

Ecosystem services and ecosystem approach are introduced in **Chapter 7**. The **Adaptive management model** is also described; and related themes **consideration of climate change, ways to ensure sustainable use**, and the **engagement of local communities and stakeholders** are further discussed.

Adaptive management required by the rapidly changing operating environment emphasises both anticipation of changes and readiness to react, for example, with regard to the surrounding land use and new activities in protected areas. Adaptive planning relies on sufficient monitoring and nature information, as well as on the consultation and involvement of local communities and stakeholders. In adaptive planning, e.g. by utilising various monitoring data, we learn about the functionality of the policies, practices and methods of the management and use of protected areas and continuously develop them further.

The **planning and monitoring of the management and use of protected areas and the information management** required by them are discussed in **Chapter 8**.

3.5 Management and use of protected areas

The most important task of steering the management and use of protected areas is to safeguard the natural and cultural values of these areas and, where possible, to improve their condition. This **priority objective** is also a clear precondition for any use of these areas. To achieve this goal, Parks & Wildlife Finland implements a wide range of **conservation and management measures in protected areas**, which are described in **Chapter 9 for habitats and species** and **Chapter 10 for cultural heritage**. Regarding conservation and management measures, these chapters also deal with, among other things, the compilation and inventory of the information they require.

The other objectives of the Nature Conservation Act (section 1) and thus also of protected areas include increasing citizens' knowledge of nature and environmental awareness and promoting nature research. According to the law, national parks must have significance as a public natural attraction or in terms of increasing knowledge of nature or general nature recreation and a strict nature reserve must have significance for scientific research and education. The uses of protected areas, in accordance with these objectives, are described in **Chapter 11 for research, teaching and environmental education**, and in **Chapter 12 on nature recreation and tourism**. The latter chapter discusses, among other things, the operating in protected areas under the Nordic concept of 'everyone's right', forms of **nature activities and hobbies, organised activities and events**, and **tourism business activities**.

The sustainability obligation which is a prerequisite for any use of protected areas also applies to uses consistent with the objectives of establishing them. The recreational use of nature and tourism produce significant health and well-being benefits that are not

recognised by conservation regulations, but which are subject to societal expectations and have been highlighted in state ownership steering, for example. Aligning objectives and cooperating with local actors and stakeholders is a prerequisite for sustainability.

In addition to forms of use in accordance with the establishment objectives, protected areas are also used for many other purposes permitted by the conservation regulations, for which ensuring ecological sustainability is an important part of the overall management and use of protected areas. **Chapter 13 deals with hunting, fishing and subsistence livelihoods**, which are of great importance especially in Northern Finland. **Chapter 14 deals with off-road and other traffic, operations in accordance with the Mining Act and leasing of areas.**

The management of protected areas also includes various **tasks related to the administration of protected areas**, which are described in **Chapter 15**. Such tasks include formation of properties and marking of boundaries of nature reserves, the transfer of new sites, management of built property and the supervision of areas.

The issues and measures discussed in Chapters 9–15 of the Principles (Figure 5 ‘Management and use of protected areas’) take place in protected areas. In addition, the management and steering of protected areas require safeguarding the values and needs of protected areas in various broader land use planning processes, as well as effective lobbying related to nature reserves and Natura 2000 sites.

Protected areas as part of broader land use planning processes are described in **Chapter 16**, which examines strategic planning of state-owned lands, regional land use planning, water management and marine spatial planning, as well as transboundary planning.

Advocacy of protected areas and influencing land use outside them are discussed in **Chapter 17**. Areas surrounding protected areas may be subject to large-scale operations, such as mining, wind power or tourism projects, for which lobbying for protected areas is essential in zoning, environmental impact assessment and various permit procedures. Advocacy related to, for example, property procedures, private roads and water areas (joint property management associations) is also important, as such matters affect a large part of the protected areas managed by Parks & Wildlife Finland. In lobbying, efforts should be made to achieve a positive outcome for protected areas as early as possible in the process.

4 International Agreements and National Programmes

The protection of Finnish nature is part of nature conservation across Europe and the world. Figure 6 shows nature conservation objectives and tools to achieve them at different scales. These form the basis and operating environment for the management and steering of protected areas.

In Finland, the key tools for implementing conservation objectives are the Nature Conservation Act, and the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan that is based on the International Convention on Biological Diversity. Cooperation is carried out within the Helsinki Commission (HELCOM) for the

well-being and biodiversity of the Baltic Sea, and nature conservation in the polar regions is promoted, for example, through the programmes of the Arctic Council (eg. Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna, CAFF).

At European level, the main measures to promote nature conservation are based on the Bern and Bonn Conventions and the Council of Europe Habitats and Birds Directives, which implement the objectives of these agreements. A key tool for protecting biodiversity and natural resources in the European Union is the Natura 2000 network, which includes most of Finland's national pro-

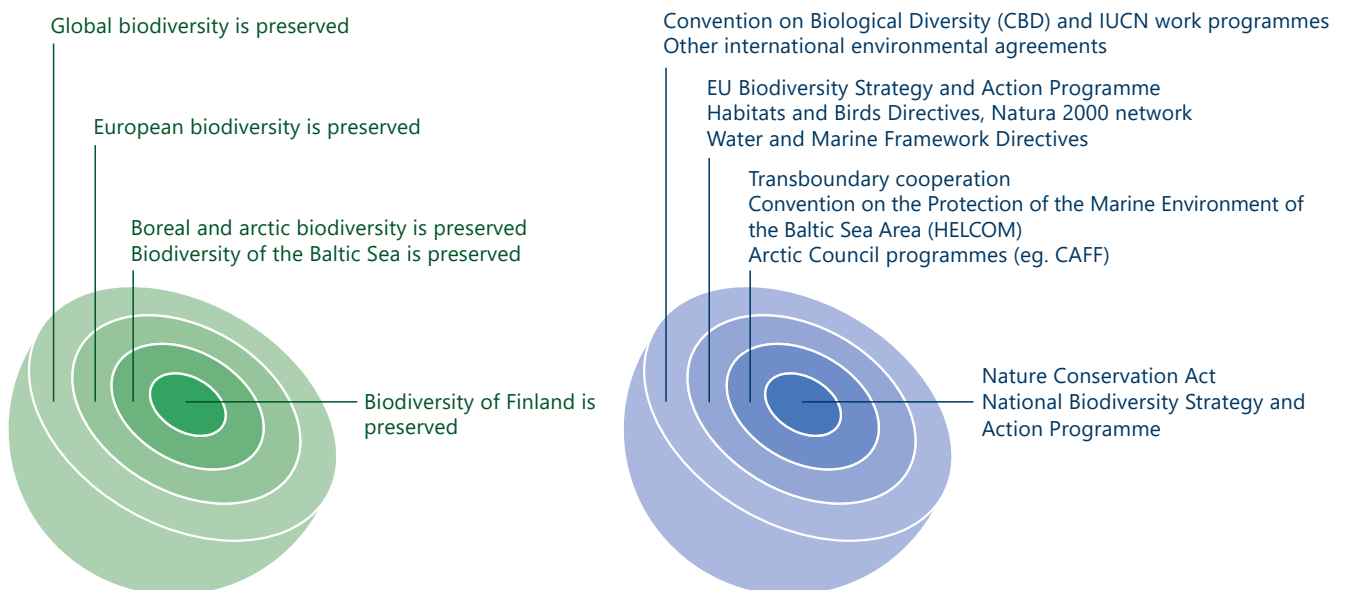


Figure 6. Strategic objectives and instruments for nature conservation and site management.

Alternative text: Two drawings in the shape of half an onion. Both have four rings. In the first, the texts are from the inside out: 1) Biodiversity of Finland is preserved, 2) Biodiversity of the Baltic Sea is preserved, 3) Boreal and Arctic biodiversity is preserved, and 4) Global and European biodiversity is preserved. The second contains the following texts from the inside out: 1) the Nature Conservation Act, the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan, 2) Cooperation with neighbouring regions, the Baltic Sea Convention and Action Programme, 2) Transboundary cooperation, Convention on the Marine Environment of the Baltic Sea Area (HELCOM), the Arctic Council programmes (e.g. CAFF), 3) the EU Biodiversity Strategy and Action Programme, the Nature Directives and the Natura 2000 network, the Water and Marine Framework Directives, and 4) the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and IUCN work programmes.

tected areas. Water protection is promoted, for example, through river basin management plans based on the EU Water and Marine Framework Directives. Cultural environments are safeguarded within the framework of the European Cultural Heritage Strategy.

The objectives and measures of the National Climate Change Adaptation Plan for 2030 also aim to promote the preservation of biodiversity and tangible cultural heritage. The National Strategy for the Recreational Use of Nature emphasises the importance of protected areas in the promotion of national health and well-being, among other things.

4.1 International environmental agreements and strategic programmes

4.1.1 The Convention on Biological Diversity

The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), signed by Finland in 1992, is a key global tool for promoting the protection and sustainable use of nature. The aim of the Convention is to protect the diversity of the Earth's ecosystems, plant and animal species and their genetic resources, to promote the sustainable use of natural resources and to share the benefits arising from the use of natural resources. The central idea is to include maintenance of biodiversity as part of all activities that change nature – such as agriculture and forestry, fishing and hunting, construction, land use planning, tourism and housing.

The CBD Conference of Parties COP-15 in December 2022 negotiated the Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) and goals up to 2050. The Final Document, which serves as the strategic plan for implementation in 2022–2030, sets concrete targets to be achieved by 2030 (Kunming-Montreal Global Goals).

The Final Resolution agreed as one of the four long-term goals to maintain, enhance or

restore the integrity, connectivity and adaptive and resilient capacity of all ecosystems, while significantly increasing the surface area of natural-like ecosystems by 2050. Concrete global targets to reduce threats to biodiversity and to reach the above-mentioned primary objective were summarised in eight targets, the first three of which concern the planning, management, restoration and protection of sites (in total, the decision comprises 23 targets).

Target 1 emphasises the importance of inclusive spatial planning and/or effective site management that takes full account of biodiversity to mitigate biodiversity loss caused by land and sea use change, especially in habitats that are important for biodiversity and ecologically intact.

Target 2 aims for at least 30% of degraded land, inland water, coastal and marine areas to be effectively restored by 2030 to improve biodiversity status and ecosystem functions and ecosystem services, ecological integrity and connectivity.

Target 3 aims to ensure that at least 30% of land, inland water, coastal and marine areas, in particular areas of importance for biodiversity, ecosystem services and functions, are effectively protected and managed through ecologically representative, well-connected, equitably and fairly managed systems of protected areas and other biodiversity (OECM) areas supporting the network of protected areas.

According to the Resolution, protection shall be implemented by recognising areas traditionally dominated by indigenous peoples and local communities, where appropriate, and linking them to wider landscapes, seascapes and oceans, while ensuring that any sustainable use of these areas is appropriate and fully consistent with the achievement of their conservation objectives, recognising and respecting the rights of indigenous peoples and local communities.

Many work programmes of the International Union for Conservation of Nature

(IUCN) support the achievement of the objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity. IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA) and its Global Protected Areas Programme promote the objectives for protected areas. Special themes include good governance of protected areas and management effectiveness, as well as harmonised classification of protected areas and global data management. The work will be taken forward in a wide range of working groups and projects and supported, for example, through handbooks and reports compiling the best practices.

The World Database on Protected Areas (WDPA) is a joint project with IUCN and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). The database is maintained by the World Conservation Monitoring Centre (WCMC) under UNEP. Information on the world's protected areas is available through an online service called protectedplanet.net maintained by WCMC (2024). Using WDPA data, a regular Protected Planet Report is compiled. The implementation of the objectives concerning protected areas in the CBD Strategic Plan is assessed based, inter alia, on this report. In Finland, information on protected areas is submitted to the Nationally Designated Areas (NatDA) maintained by the European Environment Agency (EEA). The procedure is described in more detail in section 8.4.3.

4.1.2 The Conventions on wetlands and the marine environment

The Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, i.e. the Convention on Lands of International Importance as Waterfowl Habitats, was adopted in 1971 and signed by Finland in 1976. The aim of the Convention is to protect wetlands of international value and, more broadly, to promote the sustainable use of all wetlands and water resources. The objectives are promoted through the Strategic Agenda (2016–2024)

and the results are evaluated periodically for meetings of the parties to the Convention.

The Convention obliges to establish protected areas on water-based lands and to promote the protection of wetlands and waterbirds of international importance. At the end of 2023, the global Ramsar network includes a total of 2,500 sites, covering 257,257,000 ha. A total of 49 Ramsar sites have been designated in Finland. They represent as well as possible Finland's various peatlands, bird lakes, bays and archipelago areas that are important for waterfowl. All Ramsar sites in Finland are also part of the Natura 2000 network. Data on each Ramsar site is maintained in the Ramsar Sites Information Service (rsis.ramsar.org, Ramsar 2024).

The national Ramsar working group prepared an action plan for 2016–2020 (Juvonen & Kurikka 2016), which provided a multi-disciplinary overview of the status, threats and opportunities of wetlands belonging to Finland's most endangered habitat types. The action plan was drawn up as part of the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan, and it has sought to contribute to the more effective implementation of the latter.

Finland is also a member of the regional Nordic Baltic Wetlands network, which aims to support the implementation and networking of the Ramsar Convention.

The Helsinki Convention, i.e. the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Baltic Sea Area, was adopted in 1992. The Helsinki Commission for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Baltic Sea (HELCOM) is an intergovernmental organisation established by the signatories to the Helsinki Convention to monitor and develop the obligations of the Helsinki Convention. The secretariat of the Commission is in Helsinki. Nine countries and the EU are involved in the cooperation; For the time being, however, Russia is not participating in the activities. Work under the Convention is promoted under the Baltic Sea Action Plan (BSAP; HELCOM 2021).

As part of the Helsinki Convention, coastal and marine protected areas of the Baltic Sea (HELCOM MPA) are designated to safeguard special natural values. At the end of 2022, there was a total of 176 of these sites. There are 34 sites in Finland, six of which are in the independent province of Åland. Site-specific data have been submitted for each area to a database maintained by HELCOM (HELCOM 2023). An appropriate plan must be drawn up for each area to manage and guide its use.

4.1.3 The UNESCO World Heritage Convention and Programmes

The World Heritage Convention, i.e. the Convention for the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), was adopted in 1972. The objective of this Agreement is to designate, conserve and present natural and cultural heritage of universal value. UNESCO maintains and annually supplements the World Heritage List of designated sites. By end of year 2023, 933 cultural and 227 natural heritage sites, as well as 39 composite sites, had been selected for the list.

There are currently six world heritage sites in Finland, designated based on their unique cultural heritage and one based on nature. The archipelago of the Kvarken uplift coast, which was accepted into the list as a unique natural heritage site in 2006. The core of the area consists of the Kvarken Archipelago Nature Reserve and Natura 2000 areas surrounded by a co-operation area. Metsähallitus coordinates the planning and development of the management and use of the Kvarken World Heritage Site. The unique values of the core areas of the world heritage sites are safeguarded in the protected areas.

UNESCO's Man and the Biosphere Programme has defined and designated so-called biosphere reserves. These are model areas of sustainable development that combine the protection of biodiversity in the liv-

ing environment, the sustainable use of natural resources and environmental research. At the end of 2023, the network comprised 748 areas worldwide, twenty of which were transboundary. Finland has two biosphere reserves. The North Karelia Biosphere Reserve was established in 1992 and the Archipelago Sea Biosphere Reserve in 1994. Biosphere reserves consist of a core area formed by one or more nature reserves and the surrounding buffer zone and co-operation area.

Sites with a globally unique geological natural heritage can be appointed to **UNESCO's Global Geoparks Network**. The network shares experiences and best practices in science education, geological heritage conservation, geotourism and sustainable development. From Finland, Rokua was appointed to the Global Geoparks network in 2010, Lauhanvuori–Hämeen kangas in 2020, Saimaa in 2021 and Salpausselkä in 2022.

The general and area-specific objectives related to the status of the UNESCO conservation programmes are promoted as part of the planning and management of the protected areas included in the demarcation of each site (see section 8.1).

The **UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage** was adopted in 2003. The aim of the Convention is to promote the protection of the intangible cultural heritage, to guarantee respect for the intangible cultural heritage of different communities, groups and individuals, and to raise awareness of the importance of the intangible cultural heritage. The Convention emphasises the transmission of traditions and cultural diversity, as well as people's engagement with cultural heritage. In Finland, the Finnish Heritage Agency coordinates this preservation of living heritage and maintains living heritage rings that support it. It also prepares items for inclusion in the national and universal list. The living heritage of protected areas is described in section 10.6.

The **UNESCO Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of**

Armed Conflict was adopted in 1954. The objective of the Convention is that the parties to armed conflict refrain from attacks on cultural property and to protect such sites from military action that would damage the object or justify a hostile reaction by the opposing party. The Convention requires that the states that have adopted it prepare for the protection of cultural heritage already in peacetime and bring the content of the Convention to the attention of their citizens and armed forces. The so-called Hague List is being prepared for Finland by the Ministry of Education and Culture. Insofar as cultural heritage sites from protected areas are included in the list, preparations are made for their protection in accordance with the Ministry's instructions.

4.2 European Union's environment policy and programmes

4.2.1 The EU Biodiversity Strategy 2030, conservation and restoration targets

In May 2020, the European Commission (2020) published a proposal for the Biodiversity Strategy for 2030: Bringing nature back into our lives, which was adopted in June 2021. The Commission sets ambitious targets for nature protection and restoration across the European Union. The aim is to halt the progress of biodiversity loss and restore natural values in all degraded habitats over the next decade through joint political decisions and programmes binding on the Member States. The targets set by the EU are in line with the objectives of the International Convention on Biological Diversity presented above.

The **EU Biodiversity Strategy** aims for a coherent Trans-European Nature Network. Protected areas should be effectively managed and form a well-connected green infrastructure in land areas and a blue infrastruc-

ture in water areas. At EU level, the target is that by 2030:

- Legal protection covers at least 30% of EU land and 30% of EU seas, and ecological corridors are integrated into the trans-European nature network. The focus of conservation should be on areas with very high biodiversity value or potential.
- At least one third (10%) of protected areas in the EU are under strict protection, including all remaining natural and old-growth forests in the EU. Peatlands, wetlands and grasslands are also important conservation targets for mitigating global warming.
- Protected areas are managed efficiently and clearly defined conservation objectives and measures are in place and their implementation is properly monitored.

The EU's common territorial protection objectives can be taken to the level of geographical areas, but each Member State has a responsibility to implement them. National targets for area protection should be negotiated and set in the form of a commitment extending to 2030. The European Commission (2022a) guidelines on spatial protection emphasise the definition of conservation criteria, objectives and measures for all site types (national protected areas, Natura 2000 and OECM areas), as well as the assessment of their implementation and effectiveness.

The Strategy also sets targets at EU level for restoration measures of already degraded habitats as follows:

- There must be no deterioration in the status of conservation values of Community interest; 30% of habitat types or species in a non-favourable state should be upgraded to a more favourable status.
- Significant restoration of carbon-sequestering and degraded areas will be carried out.

More detailed restoration targets for the 2030 strategy period will be agreed by each Member State. The Commission has developed technical guidance on how to prioritise restoration and nature management measures.

In June 2022, the European Commission published a proposal for EU restoration regulation, (European Commission 2022b). The EU Restoration Act (that became effective July 2024) aims to contribute to meeting the objectives of the EU Biodiversity Strategy. A national restoration plan will be drawn up for the implementation of the decree.

Implementation of the restoration law requires nature restoration and management in mires, forests, agricultural environments, fells, beaches, the sea and inland waters, for example. Measures to improve the state of nature include, for example, blocking peatland ditches, restoring rivers and streams to their natural state, restoring grazing to areas traditionally used for grazing and removing spruce trees from herb-rich forest groves. Measures carried out in catchment areas, such as the restoration of peatlands, also improve the condition of the downstream water systems and coastal waters. This will improve not only the state of nature, but also recreational opportunities. Nature's ability to recover from increasingly frequent extreme weather phenomena will also improve, which will improve society's resilience to environmental shocks.

Achieving the 2030 targets will require the comprehensive completion of Natura 2000 conservation efforts and a significant expansion and intensification of national conservation and restoration efforts. Measures to safeguard biodiversity are also needed in all sectors of land and water use, especially agriculture, forestry and large urban areas of the EU. The development of comprehensive spatial planning is also important.

Each Member State has drawn up a preliminary prioritised action plan for the implementation of conservation measures in the

Natura 2000 network and other linked green network areas during the funding period 2021–2027 (Prioritised Action Framework for Natura 2000, Ministry of the Environment 2021a). This so-called PAF document will be supplemented and updated as the project planning and funding period progresses.

Various EU funding programmes offer support to promote protection, restoration and other objectives. From viewpoint of Natura 2000's objectives, the most important funding tool of is the LIFE Fund. Several significant multi-year national and regional LIFE projects are underway in Finland.

4.2.2 The Nature Directives and Natura 2000 network

The Bern Convention is the Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats. The Convention was approved in 1986 and Finland ratified it the same year.

The Bonn Convention is the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS, approved in 1985). The Convention is accompanied by other agreements on the conservation of small whales, bats and migratory birds, which Finland ratified in 1999–2000. The Bern and Bonn Conventions have led to European Community legislation on the conservation of species and habitats, the Habitats Directive (1992/43/EEC) and the Birds Directive (1979/409/EEC).

The Natura 2000 network is the main means of ensuring a favourable conservation status for habitats and species in the EU, as required by the Habitats Directive. Member States shall take appropriate legislative, administrative or contractual measures in Special Areas of Conservation (SACs). This conservation means a set of measures necessary to maintain or restore natural habitats and populations of wild fauna and flora at a favourable conservation status. In addition, the Directive requires Member States to take preventive measures to avoid disruptions

and deterioration linked to foreseeable changes. In practice, the measures mean the establishment of nature conservation areas, the restoration and management of habitats, the management of use, and the assessment of the environmental impacts of projects or plans both inside and outside Natura sites. The obligations of the Habitats Directive in the management of Natura sites are discussed in more detail in section 6.3.

The conservation status of the habitat types and species mentioned in the Habitats Directive is assessed on the basis of a wide range of criteria based on the definition of favourable conservation status written into the Directive.

For a natural habitat, the conservation status is favourable when:

- its natural range and the areas where it occurs in this range are stable or expanding
- the specific structure and functions necessary to maintain it in the long term exist and are likely to continue to exist for the foreseeable future
- the conservation status of the typical species is favourable.

For a species, the conservation status is favourable when:

- population development data on the species concerned show that this species can survive in the long term as a viable part of its natural habitats
- the natural range of the species is not being reduced and is not likely to be reduced in the foreseeable future
- there is, and is likely to be, a sufficiently large habitat for the long-term maintenance of the populations of the species.

The Ministry of the Environment is responsible for organising the monitoring of wild species and habitats so that their conservation status can be assessed based on monitoring. In practice, the Finnish Environment

Institute is responsible for the monitoring required by the Habitats Directive, but Parks & Wildlife Finland plays an important role in carrying out monitoring in the areas it manages.

The conservation status of habitats and species under the Habitats Directive is assessed every six years. Entire Natura sites may also be assessed. In the 2019-2024 report, the conservation status of the Alpine and Boreal regions as well as the Baltic Sea region will be assessed in 2025. The impact of the Natura 2000 network on conservation status is a key part of the assessment.

The general objective of the Birds Directive is to maintain certain bird populations at a level that meets ecological, scientific and cultural requirements. The directive lists the species of Community importance for the conservation of which special protection areas (SPA) must be designated. A similar obligation applies to migratory birds that regularly occur in Finland, especially in wetlands. There are a total of 62 bird species in Finland, which the Natura network aims to protect. The achievement of the objectives of the Birds Directive, in the same way as the Habitats Directive, is evaluated every six years.

4.2.3 The Water and Marine Framework Directives

The Water Framework Directive, i.e. the Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on Community guidelines for water policy (WFD, 2000/60/EC), entered into force in 2000. The aim of the Directive is to protect, improve and restore waters so that their status will not deteriorate and to achieve at least good water status throughout the EU by 2027 (the original target year was 2015). The corresponding Marine Strategy Framework Directive (2008/56/EC) entered into force in 2008 and aims for a good status of the Baltic Sea by 2027 (the original target year was 2020). The aim of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive is to establish a

common framework for EU Member States' measures necessary to achieve and maintain good environmental status in the marine environment.

In implementing the **Maritime Framework Directive**, the Baltic Sea forms a separate entity like other EU territorial seas. While Member States develop their own national marine strategies for their respective sea basins, Member States sharing the Baltic Sea Region are required to cooperate to ensure that the strategies are fully coordinated, coherent and follow an integrated approach.

In Finland, the Water and Marine Framework Directives have been implemented through national statutes, the most important of which are the Act on the Organisation of Water Resources Management, i.e. the Water Management Act (1299/2004), and the decrees issued on its basis. The measures required by the Directive in inland waters are implemented in large river basin management areas through river basin management plans drawn up under the leadership of ELY Centres and related action programmes. Correspondingly, measures in the sea area are steered by means of a marine management plan and action plan drawn up under the leadership of the Ministry of the Environment. Through the basic water management measures, water management planning also has a close link to other water-related EU directives, such as the Habitats and Birds Directives.

River basin management plans link the management of protected areas and Natura areas to a larger catchment area. Water management planning is described in more detail in section 16.3.

4.2.4 The European Conventions and the National Strategy on cultural heritage

The Council of Europe has four conventions on cultural heritage, which Finland has ratified. The agreements are sometimes also

named according to the place of signature. These agreements are:

- The Granada Convention of 1985 for the Protection of the Architectural Heritage of Europe
- The Valletta Convention of 1992 on Archaeological Cultural Heritage
- The Florence Convention of 2000, i.e. the Landscape Convention
- The Faro Convention of 2005 on the Societal Significance of Cultural Heritage.

The Council of Europe's activities related to cultural heritage are outlined in the European Cultural Heritage Strategy for the 21st Century (Council of Europe 2017). The strategy sets out a cultural heritage assessment system that supports the preservation of cultural heritage based on three pillars. The sub-areas are social, regional and economic development, as well as knowledge and education.

The European Union has several actions and initiatives in the field of cultural heritage. The most important of these is the new European Agenda for Culture for 2018. Council of Europe treaties and European Union programmes have an impact on national cultural heritage work.

The National Cultural Heritage Strategy 2022–2030 (Mattila 2022) implements the European Agenda for Culture. Of the objectives of the strategy, the following are particularly important for the operation of Parks & Wildlife Finland:

- Cultural heritage knowledge and skills will accelerate the transition towards a more sustainable lifestyle.
- Cultural environments are used and managed sustainably.
- Cultural heritage actors lead the way in low-carbon and sustainable activities.
- Cultural heritage values, nature values and ecological sustainability objectives are reconciled.

- Cultural heritage information is comprehensive, up-to-date, interoperable and widely used.
- Cultural heritage is recognised as society's common capital.
- The funding base for the ambitious development of cultural heritage has broadened and its preservation is safeguarded by public funds.
- The specific nature and intrinsic value of cultural heritage is respected in economic activities.
- The value of capital is maintained by ensuring the management and development of cultural heritage and the cultural environment.
- Public funds safeguard the conditions for the protection and preservation of cultural heritage of common value.
- The rights of indigenous peoples in the use and exploitation of cultural heritage will be protected and the conditions for their realisation will be strengthened.

Of the strategy's actions, the following apply to Metsähallitus as the holder of state-owned real estate assets, as a manager of the cultural environment and as a producer of information on cultural heritage:

- The management and significance of semi-natural grasslands and other cultural landscapes will be strengthened.
- The protection of archaeological cultural heritage and the preservation of the built cultural environment will be strengthened by developing the sustainable management of sites and monitoring the effects of climate change.
- Indicators are developed and implemented for the cultural heritage sector that reflect the ecological, economic, social and cultural sustainability of activities.
- Cultural heritage information is actively shared and exploited. The development of the knowledge base and the interoperability of information will be ensured.
- Monitoring the economic, employment and regional attractiveness effects of cultural heritage will be improved.
- Sustainable tourism based on cultural heritage and environments will be promoted.

The diverse cultural environment and valuable cultural property of state-owned protected areas are managed based on national strategies and legislation (see section 10.1).

4.3 The National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan

The National Biodiversity Strategy 2035 and Action Plan implements the international and EU goals described above. The strategy and proposals for measures (Ministry of the Environment 2022) are to be approved as a Government Resolution in 2025.

The main objective and goal of the National Biodiversity Strategy is that by 2030, biodiversity loss is halted, and biodiversity has begun to recover so that by 2035 Finland is nature positive. The measures affecting biodiversity will have a positive overall impact, so that its status will be at least at the same level as in 2020. By the end of the strategy period, the trend will have taken an upward turn. In the future, the functioning of ecosystems will be safeguarded and the risks caused by biodiversity loss will be prevented.

The main objective of the strategy is divided into 22 more specific objectives. The targets concern the improvement of the state of nature, nature conservation and restoration measures, as well as reducing pressures affecting biodiversity and influencing the root causes of biodiversity loss. The aim is to improve the state of nature so that the

development of endangerment stops, the species characteristic of different habitats are safeguarded, and the development trends of ecosystem functioning improve.

The national biodiversity targets for 2030 and the goals for 2035 are in line with the EU targets [as proposed in 2024]:

- Improvement of the state of ecosystems is enhanced. This will increase the connectivity of ecosystems and improve their functioning and ability to provide key ecosystem services. The restored area will increase towards the global (30% of the degraded) and EU-level (20% of the EU) target for improving habitats and habitats for species. (2030)
- Finland's network of protected areas is complemented with sites of nature conservation value so that the network is ecologically representative and well connected and adapted to climate change. At the same time, the protected area will increase by an average of [x] percentage points per year towards the global and EU-level conservation target of 30 per cent, of which at least one third is strictly protected. (2030)
- The development of habitats becoming endangered has stopped. There are more habitat types that are improving than deteriorating, and habitat types that have so far been assessed to be preserved are not endangered. (2035)
- The development of endangered species has stopped and turned to improvement, and the species that are still viable are not endangered. The genetic diversity of species will be preserved, and the populations of weakened conventional species will recover. (2035)

The implementation of Finland's national commitments under the EU Biodiversity Strategy to improve both the conservation status (the area commitment) and the status of species and habitat types (the species and habitats commitment). As a measure to improve the state of nature, a national biodiversity restoration plan in accordance with the EU Restoration Act will be drawn up and its implementation will be launched.

The network of protected areas will be expanded by protecting the remaining old and natural forests (on state-owned land) and supplemented, especially in southern Finland, by targeting the most valuable and inadequately protected environments. The connectivity of protected areas will be improved, for example, by strengthening areas that support conservation and safeguard biodiversity.

The Helmi Habitat Programme will be implemented in accordance with the objectives to improve the state of terrestrial ecosystems, and extensive catchment area-specific measures will be implemented to improve the quality of marine and inland waters. The network of protected areas will also be improved in marine areas.

Habitats in commercial use must be managed in such a way that their structural features and other characteristics that are important for species and habitats, as well as the connectivity of the ecological network, are strengthened. Pressures from pollution, eutrophication, acidification, chemicalisation, noise, light pollution, plastics and microplastics will be reduced to a level that allows biodiversity to be preserved and restored. The prevention of invasive alien species will be intensified, especially in and around the sites that are most valuable in terms of biodiversity.

A prerequisite for achieving the main objective of the National Biodiversity Strategy is the so-called ecological transition in society. This refers to a comprehensive understanding and active measures for the

preservation and improvement of biodiversity in all sectors and at all levels of society.

The knowledge base will be strengthened, and resources will be allocated in a cost-effective manner to support the Action Plan. The coherence and compatibility of the plans in accordance with the planning system of the Climate Change Act must also be ensured – which has been set as the objective of the National Climate Change Adaptation Plan (see section 4.4.2).

4.4 Impacts of climate change and the National Adaptation Plan

4.4.1 Impacts of climate change on Finnish nature and protected areas

The **Protected Area Network in a Changing Climate (SUMI) project** was carried out in 2017–2019 by the Finnish Environment Institute, in cooperation with the Finnish Meteorological Institute, the University of Helsinki, Parks & Wildlife Finland and the University of Lapland. The key objective of the project was to produce new information on the effects of climate change on Finland's network of protected areas and on the species and habitat types found in protected areas.

The results of the SUMI project (Aapala et al. 2020) clearly show how rising temperatures, increased rainfall, droughts and extreme weather phenomena increasingly affect the conditions, species and habitats of protected areas. In water bodies, climate change can be seen, for example, as an increase in nutrient leaching and darkening of waters, which indirectly affects species and habitats.

Temperature conditions are forecast to change markedly in both summer and winter. By the end of the century, the current winter climate may disappear completely from many nature reserves in Lapland. The rate of change in the summertime heat sum is

expected to be highest in low-lying protected areas in Southern Finland.

The vulnerability of species to climate change depends on their ecology and distribution. There must be enough habitats for species to move to if the former become unsuitable for them. The negative effects of climate change are particularly pronounced in species specialising in cool northern conditions, such as fell and mire habitats, whose possibility of spreading further north is limited.

The changing climate also has a significant impact on natural habitats. The most vulnerable are coastal and fell habitats. The significance of winter for many habitat types is considerable, and many of the types identified as most sensitive to climate change, such as snow drifts, frost-affected habitats in fells, and palsa mires, are sensitive to changes in winter conditions.

The results of the SUMI project (Aapala et al. 2020) are to be applied in practical nature conservation work. The final report of the project proposes actions to strengthen the network of protected areas, manage and restore degraded habitats to improve adaptive capacity, and target conservation measures, considering the sensitivity of species and habitats to the impacts of climate change.

The **Conservation Planning in a Changing Climate (SUMI2) project** has developed concrete methods to support climate-smart conservation area planning in cooperation with Parks & Wildlife Finland (Aapala et al. 2023, see also section 7.3)

However, there are still many uncertainties related to the species-level impacts of climate change. For example, it is not known exactly which species will experience deterioration in their living conditions or how current conservation measures will affect them and their habitats. For this reason, linking climate change criteria to all measures promoting biodiversity is essential for effectiveness.

The impacts of climate change also affect the cultural landscape and traditional habitats in protected areas, as well as the current and already ruined built cultural heritage. However, not enough information is currently available on the impacts of climate change on cultural heritage and environments. In particular, the impacts of climate change on intangible cultural heritage are poorly understood, which poses challenges for the preparation of effective adaptation measures.

4.4.2 The National Climate Change Adaptation Plan

The National Climate Change Adaptation Plan (KISS2030) was approved by Government resolution in 2022 (VNS 2022). The new plan extending until 2030 is part of the planning system developed in accordance with the Climate Change Act (423/2022). The plan pays broad attention to international and EU-level adaptation obligations. The plan implements the Paris Agreement and the European Climate Law (EU 2021/11197) which require comprehensive national adaptation plans. In addition, the European Climate Law requires Member States to implement at national level the EU Climate Change Adaptation Strategy, published in 2021. At national level, KISS2030 measures aim to respond to the EU strategy, considering national needs and circumstances.

KISS2030 presents a risk and vulnerability analysis based on a scenario analysis, a vision and three goals towards which adaptation work will be pursued. The 124 objectives of the plan cover 12 themes, of which the most important for the management of protected areas relate to strategic planning at national level, the use of natural resources and biodiversity, cultural heritage and environment, the knowledge base, communication and interaction, international cooperation and the development of monitoring and evaluation. The focus is on objectives and measures that concern several administrative branches, and

at the same time the plan also guides more detailed adaptation planning in different sectors.

The KISS2030 goal (12) to adapt to the impacts of climate change and halt biodiversity loss is that the impacts of climate change are known and adapted to in such a way that the loss of biodiversity can be halted. To achieve this goal, the following measures have been recorded in the plan:

- 1) Develop the network of protected areas and its management based on research data.
- 2) Restore and manage degraded habitats to improve the adaptive capacity of nature.
- 3) Consider the effects of climate change in the planning and implementation of the conservation of species and habitats and in the scope of actions.
- 4) Monitor the impacts of climate change on species and habitats systematically and on a long-term basis.
- 5) Improve policy coherence between biodiversity adaptation measures across administrative branches.

KISS2030 Goal 12 and related measures are set out in full in Appendix 4.

Key tools for monitoring the implementation of measures are:

- Red List assessments of species and habitats
- Reporting on the Habitats and Birds Directives
- Results of long-term species monitoring
- Target indicators of the National Biodiversity Strategy
- The degree of implementation of the recommendations of the SUMI project.

The main responsible parties to implement the above-mentioned measures are the Ministry of the Environment, the Finnish Environment Institute, Metsähallitus and ELY

Centres, in cooperation with other research institutes and universities.

The climate change adaptation measures of the KISS2030 plan will be promoted by integrating the measures into the planning, decision-making and activities of all actors. The Environmental Administration's joint strategy for 2035 sets as a key impact target that the interdependence between climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution have been identified and solved together. Climate change mitigation and adaptation will also be integrated into the above-mentioned National Biodiversity Strategy and its measures (see section 4.3).

Metsähallitus has drawn up its own climate programme to concretise measures to mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change in its own sector (Metsähallitus 2024a). The state protected area network is being actively developed to promote adaptation to climate change, and preparations are being made for the challenges posed by climate change to species protection. In the planning and management of protected areas, attention is paid to anticipating, mitigating and monitoring impacts. This topic is discussed in section 7.3.

The KISS2030 target (15) for the protection of cultural heritage and the environment is that the protection of cultural heritage and the cultural environment from the impacts of climate change has improved, their integration into adaptation policies has strengthened and the use of knowledge contained in cultural heritage and the environment for adaptation solutions has improved by 2030. This goal will be achieved, for example, by developing competence, information management and flow as well as monitoring the effects of climate change. Similar actions are included in the above-mentioned National Cultural Heritage Strategy to 2030 (Mattila 2022).

4.5 The National Strategy for Recreational Use of Nature

The National Strategy for Recreational Use of Nature 2030 was confirmed by Government resolution in 2022 (VNP 2022). The strategy has been drawn up with the support of experts from ministries, public administration, research institutes and organisations. Of the objectives of the recreational strategy, the key objectives for the management and use of protected areas are:

- Securing sustainability as a basic prerequisite for recreation and nature tourism in protected areas: developing indicators and monitoring, supporting respect for nature through communication and guidance, safeguarding biodiversity and ensuring carrying capacity through visitor management and service structures.
- Accessibility of local nature: ensuring equality and accessibility of recreational use in services provided by protected areas, opportunities offered by protected areas as local recreational sites.
- Promotion of health and wellbeing: significance of protected areas from the perspective of public health and wellbeing, increasing effectiveness by developing services and cooperation, development of indicators and monitoring.
- Identification and cooperation of resources: Identification and strengthening of informational, financial and cooperation needs for recreational services and areas in protected areas.
- Diversity of recreational use: anticipating changes in recreational uses of protected areas, seeking sustainable coordination, taking climate change into account.

An action plan for 2023–2025 has been drawn up to guide the implementation of the strategy's key projects (Ministry of the Environment 2023). The action plan includes a total of 35 measures, and Metsähallitus is the main responsible party for eight of them. In addition, Metsähallitus participates in the implementation of 11 measures and in the monitoring of the implementation of the strategy in its coordination group and secretariat. In its operations, Metsähallitus supports the objectives set for the entire period of the strategy, even more extensively than the measures defined in the action plan. The mid-term review of the strategy will be carried out in 2025. Based on this, an action plan for the rest of the strategy period extending to 2030 and a possible research programme will be prepared.

The well-being benefits produced by the recreational use of protected areas and themes related to ensuring sustainability are discussed in Chapter 7 of this publication, issues related to research and nature education are discussed in Chapter 11, and the guidance of recreational use and the planning of service infrastructure is discussed in Chapter 12.



An accessible campfire site in Oulanka National Park. Photo: Minna Koramo / Metsähallitus.

5 State Protected Areas as Part of Metsähallitus

5.1 Tasks, organisation and steering of Metsähallitus

The tasks, organisation and management system of Metsähallitus are largely defined in the Act on Metsähallitus (234/2016) and in the rules of procedure issued under it by the Board of Directors. Metsähallitus is also included as one of the state authorities for nature conservation as defined in the Nature Conservation Act (section 9). According to the Act, "Metsähallitus is responsible for tasks related to the management and steering of use of the state-owned protected area network and other official tasks assigned to it in this Act".

According to the Metsähallitus Act, Metsähallitus is a state-owned enterprise that uses, manages and protects state-owned land and water assets under its governance in a sustainable and profitable manner. Metsähallitus conducts business within the framework of the social obligations laid down by law and specified in the state budget and carries out the public administration duties assigned to it.

As an essential part of the sustainable management and use of natural resources, Metsähallitus must take sufficiently account of the protection and appropriate enhancement of biodiversity. Metsähallitus must also consider the requirements of the recreational use of nature and the promotion of employment. The management, use and protection of natural resources managed by Metsähallitus must be coordinated in such a way that the preconditions for practising Sámi culture in the Sámi homeland and the conditions for reindeer husbandry in the Reindeer husbandry area in accordance with the Reindeer Husbandry Act are secured.

Metsähallitus National Parks Finland and Wilderness Service Finland (together Parks & Wildlife Finland) are responsibility units in charge of public administration duties, while the business units are Forestry Ltd and Property Development. Metsähallitus engages in forestry in a limited liability company referred to as Metsähallitus Forestry Ltd in the Act on the State Forestry Company (235/2016). Property Development engages in business operations (wind power, land extracts) and is responsible for and/or coordinates many matters common to Metsähallitus, such as land use planning, acquisitions and disposals of real estate assets, leasing matters, management of property and land use information, and cooperation with state actors using Metsähallitus areas. These common issues also concern the state-owned protected areas.

Metsähallitus' areas of responsibility, group functions and subsidiaries together form the Metsähallitus Group (see Figure 7), which is referred to as Metsähallitus in communications. The Metsähallitus Group consists of the Metsähallitus State Enterprise, Group functions, Property Development and Public Administrative Services. Public Administrative Services consist of National Parks Finland and Wilderness Service Finland. The Metsähallitus enterprise consists of subsidiaries, which are Metsähallitus Forestry Ltd, MH-Kivi Ltd, Siemen Forelia Ltd and Nuuksiokeskus Ltd, of which Metsähallitus owns 68%.

Metsähallitus' policies, binding instructions and decisions are issued based on the rules of procedure. The Board of Directors of Metsähallitus has confirmed eight policies supporting Metsähallitus' strategic management. Important for the management of

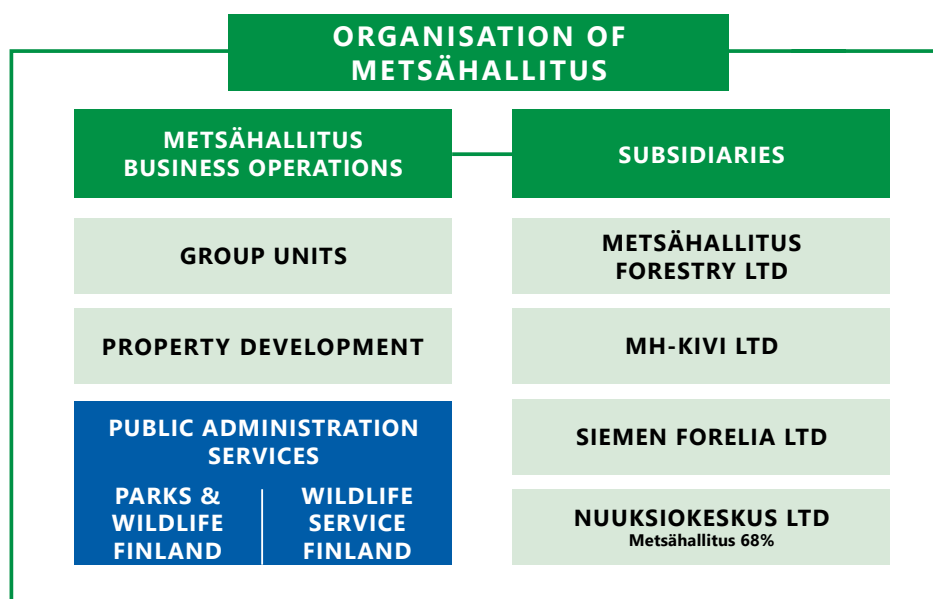


Figure 7. The organisation of Metsähallitus State Enterprise and its business units.

state-owned protected areas are policies on land and water asset management, responsibility and environmental issues (the last two have been combined at the beginning of 2023).

In addition to the responsibility policy, Metsähallitus' responsibility work is guided by the responsibility programme and the Code of Conduct, which describes the key responsibility principles, guidelines, objectives and measures. Each Metsähallitus employee is responsible for ensuring that responsibility is realised in their own work. Like other units, Parks & Wildlife Finland ensures that Metsähallitus' responsibility principles are reflected in its operations towards customers, partners and other stakeholders.

In its operations, Metsähallitus complies with a certified environmental management system in accordance with the ISO 14001 standard, and Metsähallitus' environmental policy is based on the requirements of this standard. The functionality of the environmental management system is assessed annually, significant environmental aspects and risks are mapped, environmental objectives are defined and their implementation monitored. The Environmental and Quality Handbook contains a wide range of guide-

lines related to the operation of Parks & Wildlife Finland, most of which are related to the management and steering of the use of state-owned protected areas.

5.2 The Public Administration Services

The public administrative duties of Metsähallitus are defined in section 5 of the Metsähallitus Act. Of these tasks, the following concern state protected areas, either exclusively or to a large extent:

- tasks based on the Nature Conservation Act and the statutes of nature reserves established under it, other tasks related to the protection of habitats and species, and the acquisition of nature conservation areas
- management and use of the network of protected areas and other land, water areas and other property intended for the management of Metsähallitus' public administration duties
- provision of nature and hiking services related to the recreational use of nature and the preservation of cultural heritage property.

In addition to the above, Metsähallitus' public administration duties include tasks prescribed for Metsähallitus in the Wilderness Act (62/1991), the Fisheries Act (379/2015), the Skolt Act (253/1995), the Off-Road Traffic Act (1710/1995), the Hunting Act (615/1993), the Act on the Organisation of Water Management and Marine Management (1299/2004), the Rescue Act (379), the Reindeer Husbandry Act (848/1990), the Act on Structural Subsidies for Reindeer Husbandry and Subsistence Livelihoods (986/2011) and the Outdoor Recreation Act (606/1973). These tasks are carried out both in state-owned protected areas (within the framework defined in nature conservation regulations) and in Metsähallitus' areas outside them. Public administration tasks also include wilderness supervision in accordance with the Act on Surveillance of Fishing and Hunting (1157/2005), which is also carried out in all areas of Metsähallitus.

For the management of public administration duties, Metsähallitus has a separate unit for Public Administration Services (Parks & Wildlife Finland), which consists of National Parks and Wilderness Service. The Director of National Parks decides on administrative matters related to public administration duties and official matters concerning the responsible unit Public Administration Services, except for matters related to fishing, hunting and wilderness supervision, as well as matters concerning personnel performing these tasks, which are resolved by the Director of Wilderness Service.

The Director of National Parks and the Director of Wilderness Service have issued a joint decision on the management of public administration duties (1717/2021) (1717/2021), to which the decisions of both directors on the further delegation of their decision-making powers are appended.

Expenditure arising from the performance of public administration duties is mainly financed from the state budget, but partly also from external project funding and revenue accruing from the performance of public administration duties.

5.3 Steering of Metsähallitus' operations

Ownership policy

In the longer term, Metsähallitus' operations are guided by the Ownership Policy Guidelines 2024–2027, approved by the Ministerial Committee on Economic Policy. According to them, Metsähallitus manages state-owned land and water assets as a single entity with the aim of achieving the broadest and most diverse overall benefit to society. Metsähallitus will implement Finland's strategic objectives of the Government Programme to achieve carbon neutrality by 2035, strengthen carbon sinks and storages, and halt the loss of biodiversity. The ownership policy includes policies that apply to Metsähallitus as a whole, policies concerning business operations and policies concerning public administration duties, many of which are related to state-owned protected areas.

Metsähallitus' strategy

The present strategy *Fostering our Future*, updated in 2024 and approved by the Board of Directors of Metsähallitus, includes the key objectives and policies of Metsähallitus' operations. It considers the ownership policies and the changing operating environment. The strategy promotes the implementation of international agreements, such as the UN Sustainable Development Goals (Agenda 2030). The strategy is rolling, and its implementation is reviewed and updated annually.

The purpose of Metsähallitus' operations is "Fostering natural values and taking care of our shared wealth responsibly across generations".

Metsähallitus' vision consists of four societal impact goals: green growth, carbon-neutral Finland, healthy nature and the world's happiest people. These are implemented through objectives divided into six main strategic themes, the achievement of which

is monitored with strategic indicators. Action plans are drawn up for the implementation of the strategy and a set of indicators is defined for the monitoring of measures.

The main themes – green growth, climate and biodiversity, and well-being, safety and security – describe strategic goals that will result in the activities creating value for nature, people and society. The other themes – customer orientation, responsibility and cooperation, capable and equal personnel, and productivity and impact – are cross-cutting and describe how tasks will successfully proceed and the direction in which the operations are to be developed.

The objectives set for Metsähallitus in the ownership policy and strategy are taken to regional and site level in the planning of Metsähallitus' operations. Natural resource planning based on broad stakeholder consultation plays a key role in coordinating objectives at regional level. The natural resource plans take a stand on, for example, certain

issues related to the management and steering of state-owned protected areas. Natural resource plans are approved by the Board of Directors of Metsähallitus. Natural resource planning is described in more detail in section 16.1.

Budget and performance management

Metsähallitus operates under the guidance of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry. The Ministry of the Environment steers Metsähallitus in terms of public administration tasks within its sector. National Parks Finland works as part of the so-called Y-Group (Government Environment Administration), which, in addition to the Ministry, also includes other environmental administration, i.e. the Finnish Environment Institute and the Centres for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment (ELY Centres).

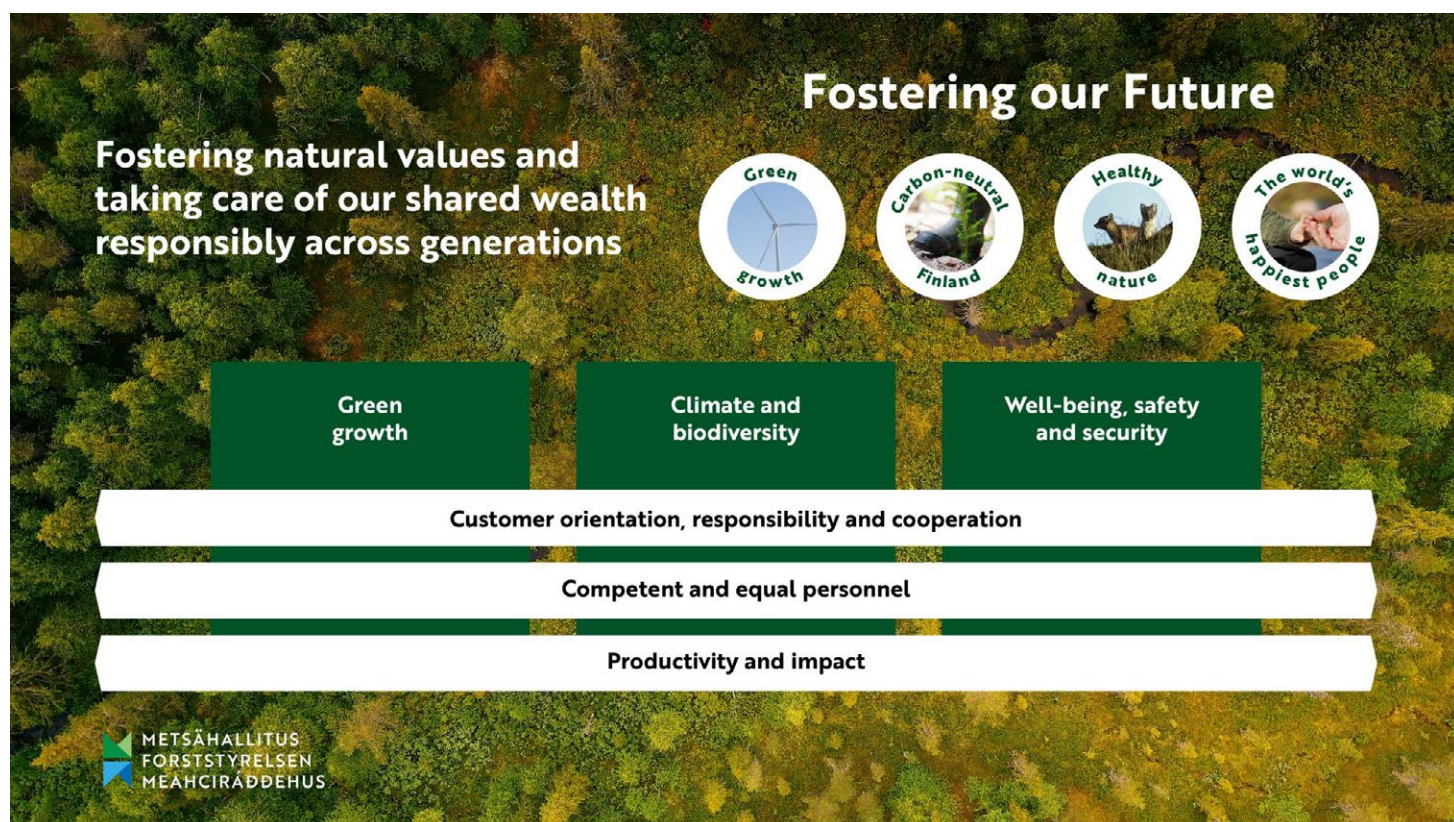


Figure 8. Metsähallitus' strategy Fostering Our Future, the purpose of operations, impact objectives and strategic main themes.

In connection with the processing of the state budget, the Parliament approves Metsähallitus' key service objectives and other operational objectives on a general level. After this, the relevant ministry will decide in more detail on Metsähallitus' service targets and other operational performance targets, as well as on the result and revenue recognition target. The management of Metsähallitus' general social obligations is considered when setting Metsähallitus' performance targets.

Each year, Metsähallitus concludes a performance agreement with the Ministry of the Environment and the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry on the public administration duties it performs. The agreement sets out the objectives for the year in question and the indicative targets for the next four years (see Metsähallitus 2023b).

The performance agreement includes both societal impact targets and targets related to

operational performance and resources. The social impact objectives of the agreement (e.g. 2025, see Figure 9) have already been defined in the state budget and ownership policy guidelines, but the agreement specifies them with measures and indicators, for which a target and preliminary target values are set for the year in question and preliminary target values for the next four years.

The following impact targets are closely linked to the management and use of state-owned protected areas: A1, A2, A3 and A6. Also relevant for protected areas are targets A4 and A5.

The measures and indicators defined in the performance agreement, as well as the verbal objectives in the annual annex to the agreement, provide concrete guidance on the annual level for activities related to the management and use of state-owned protected areas during the year in question.

A. Impact of operations

(society, customer, citizen, nature)

A.1 Biodiversity is protected and the condition of the habitats of species populations is improved on land, in inland waters and at sea.

A.2 The values of the protected area network and the sustainable use of game and fish resources are safeguarded through planning and advocacy based on up-to-date information.

A.3 The use of nature for recreation and tourism, as well as hunting and fishing, is sustainable, ethical and responsible.

A.4 Versatile and customer-oriented nature and wilderness services increase well-being and create vitality.

A.5 Cultural property is cherished and the conditions for practising Sámi culture are secured in the Sámi homeland.

A.6 Appreciation of nature increases through multi-channel communication and customer service.

Figure 9. The Performance agreement of 2025: Social impact objectives for operations of the Public Administration Services (Parks & Wildlife Finland).

The State Real Estate Strategy

Metsähallitus' operations are also guided by the central government's common strategies and policies. The most significant of these is the Government resolution on the State Real Estate Strategy 2030, adopted in 2021 (VNP 2021a). The resolution applies to state-owned land and water assets as well as built properties and archaeological sites. In accordance with the strategy, Metsähallitus has identified strategic cultural-historical real estate assets for the state in 2014.

The Government resolution also contains several policies that are important for the management of protected areas, such as the following:

- The objective of the real estate strategy is to manage the state's real estate assets in an efficient, sustainable manner that ensures the overall interest of the state. When assessing the overall interest of the state, consideration is also given to, for example, safeguarding cultural heritage, combating climate change and safeguarding biodiversity.
- In the State's ownership policy, central government real estate assets are classified into strategic holdings, fixed real estate and divested properties. It is necessary for the state to own strategic objects due to the performance of state functions or the nature of property. It is appropriate for the state to own operational real estate due to the performance of the state's duties, social or economic significance or the nature of the property, and they are actively developed.
- The state must be a forerunner in achieving the carbon neutrality target. Actors managing the state's real estate assets must determine the current state of their own climate load and set concrete targets for reducing their carbon footprint. The achievement of the objectives must be monitored and, if necessary, developed.



Alexander's battery in Vallisaari Nature Reserve. The culturally and historically valuable fortress island is also a diverse natural destination. Photo: Kirsi Nikkola.

The entries and policies of the State real estate strategy are referred to in sections 10.4 Preserving and managing built cultural environments, 15.2 Taking possession of transferred sites and 15.3 Managing built assets. Other key government strategies whose objectives are promoted as part of the management of protected areas are described in Chapter 4.

5.4 Lands and waters of Metsähallitus

State land and water assets governed and managed by Metsähallitus are directly owned by the state. Metsähallitus acts as the holder and steward of state-owned land and water areas, and Metsähallitus extensively exercises its right to speak in this role.

Metsähallitus manages approximately one third of Finland's surface area, totaling 12.6 million hectares. Land and water area and proportion area shown in Table 5 and Figure 10 (surface area numbers differ slightly because the table shows the situation in January and map in December 2023).

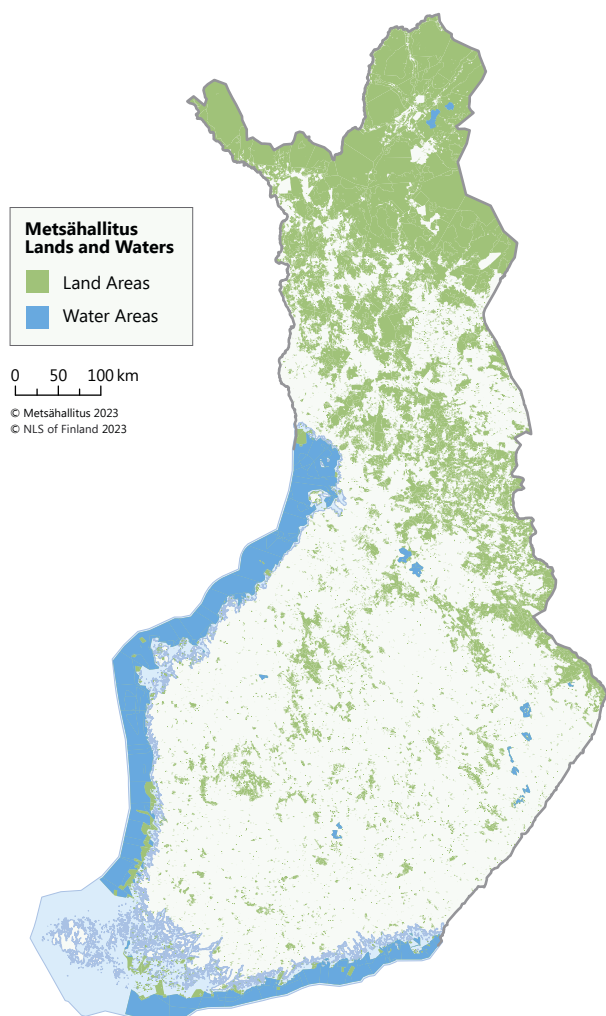
State nature reserves, like other areas managed by the Public Administration Services (Parks & Wildlife Finland), are included in the so called other equity of Metsähallitus' balance sheet as a separate item.

Table 5. Lands and waters governed by Metsähallitus (Metsähallitus, January 2023).

Lands and waters administered by Metsähallitus	Land (ha)	Water (ha)	Total (ha)	Land (%)	Water (%)	Total (%)
Statutory nature reserves	1,851,000	242,000	2,093,000	20	7	17
Areas designated for nature conservation	366,000	137,000	503,000	4	4	4
Wilderness reserves	1,378,000	111,000	1,489,000	15	3	12
Other protected areas	44,000	276,000	320,000	1	8	2
State-owned protected area	3,639,000	766,000	4,405,000	40	22	35
Commercial forest	4,887,000	245,000	5,132,000	53	7	41
Other special areas	642,000	2,403,000	3,045,000	7	70	24
Total	9,168,000	3,414,000	12,582,000	100	100	100

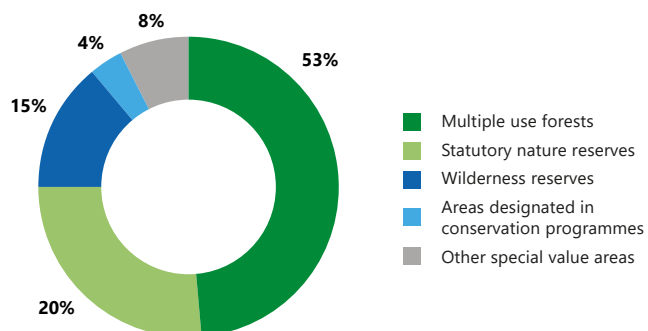
A State land and water areas

Total state owned area 125,760 km²



B State land areas

Total land area 91,570 km²



C State water areas

Total water area 34,190 km²

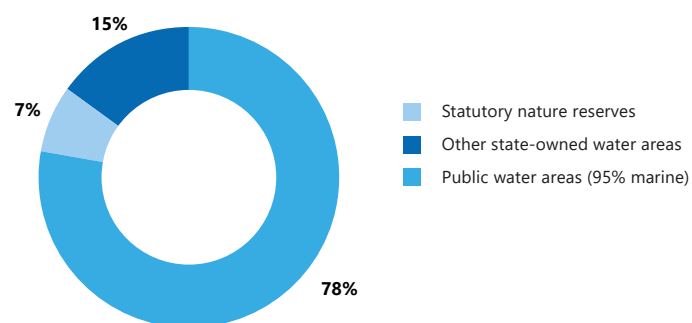


Figure 10. State land and water areas governed by Metsähallitus (Metsähallitus December 2023).

Alternative text of the figures.

A. Map of areas governed by Metsähallitus show that most of land areas are concentrated in eastern and northern parts of the country, with scattered land areas in the south. Total state owned area 125,760 km².

B. Proportions of state land areas are shown as percentages: 20% statutory nature reserves, 15% wilderness reserves, 4% areas designated in conservation programmes, 8% other special value areas, 53% multiple use forests. Total land area is 91,570 km².

C. Proportions of state water areas are shown as percentages: 7% statutory nature reserves, 15% other state-owned water areas, 78% public water areas, 95% of these are marine. Total water area is 34,190 km².

6 The Nature Conservation Act and Other Statutes

In Finland, the most important national legislation for steering the management and use of nature reserves is the Nature Conservation Act (NCA 9/2023). Of international legislation, the most important are the EU Habitats and Birds Directives, which also have been transposed nationally largely through the Nature Conservation Act. Due to their importance, this chapter of this document deals in detail with the Nature Conservation Act (sections 6.1 and 6.2) and the Natura 2000 network defined by it and the Nature Directives (section 6.3).

In addition to the above, also many other regulations must be considered in the management of protected areas. A comprehensive list is compiled in Appendix 5. The most important individual acts include, but are not limited to, the following (in brackets are the sections(s) of this document in which the matters of this law are specifically discussed):

- Antiquities Act 295/1963 (section 10.4)
- Hunting Act 615/1993 (section 13.1)
- Fisheries Act 379/2015 (section 13.2)
- Skolt Act 253/1995, Reindeer Husbandry Act 848/1990 and Act on Structural Subsidies for Reindeer Husbandry and Natural Livelihoods 986/2011 (sections 13.2 and 13.3)
- Off-Road Traffic Act 1710/1995 (section 14.1)
- Act on Private Roads 358/1962 (section 14.2)
- Mining Act 621/2011, amendment 505/2023 (section 14.3)
- Land Tenancy Act 258/1966 (section 14.4)
- Real Estate Formation Act 554/1995 (section 15.1)
- Land Use and Building Act 132/1999 (section 17.2).

The new Building Act (751/2023) entered into force on 1 January 2025; A new Land Use Act is being prepared. These will replace the Land Use and Building Act of 1999.

Up-to-date national statutes can be found in the Finlex.fi service, which is a public and free-of-charge Internet service for legal material owned by the Ministry of Justice. Some statutes have English translations and are accessible from the web service.

6.1 The Nature Conservation Act

Chapter 1 General provisions

The first chapter of the Nature Conservation Act (NCA) contains specific sections on the objective of the Act (section 1), definitions (section 3), protection of Sámi culture (section 6), precautionary principle (section 7) and environmental awareness (section 8).

The aim of the Act is:

- safeguarding biodiversity
- preserving the natural beauty and landscape values
- promoting adaptation to climate change
- supporting the sustainable use of natural resources and the natural environment
- increasing citizens' knowledge of nature and environmental awareness, and
- promoting of nature research.

To achieve these objectives, nature conservation must aim at achieving and maintaining a favourable conservation status for Finland's natural habitats and wild species. Sustainable use above refers to the sustainable use

of parts of biodiversity (including inanimate nature), as distinct from the wider sustainable use of natural resources (see NCA section 3).

State-owned nature reserves have their own special objectives defined in the Nature Conservation Act or the founding acts issued under it, but at the same time, the management of the protected area network plays a key role in achieving the general objectives of the Act.

Section 6 on the protection of Sámi culture includes a prohibition on weakening Sámi culture and an obligation to promote the conditions for practising Sámi culture. In addition, the section includes a prohibition on weakening traditional Sámi livelihoods and subsistence livelihoods in the Skolt region. The entries in the section must be considered, for example in Metsähallitus' operations and decision-making (see section 10.7 of these guidelines for more details).

The precautionary principle (NCA section 7) is general and guides the application of the Act. It must also be considered in all resolutions and decisions related to the management and steering of protected area use. The principle must be applied, for example, when considering permit decisions issued under the Nature Conservation Act and their conditions.

The authorities responsible for implementing NCA section 8 on environmental awareness shall promote environmental education and the environmental awareness of citizens, private and public actors. The section forms a clear legal basis for guidance and customer communications related to state protected areas (see section 11.3 of these guidelines for more details).

Chapter 2 Nature conservation authorities and other actors

The second NCA chapter defines, among other things, state authorities for nature conservation (section 9). Metsähallitus is included and is responsible for tasks related

to the management of the state protected area network and other official tasks assigned to it in this Act.

Chapter 3 Nature conservation planning

In the third NCA chapter, the section on the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (section 13) highlights, among other things, the regional biodiversity action programmes drawn up by the ELY Centres, in cooperation with the key actors in the area. Such action plans can also promote biodiversity on state-owned land and protected areas, which is why it is important for Metsähallitus to participate in the preparation and implementation of the action programmes.

In the section on monitoring nature conservation (section 18), Metsähallitus is mentioned as one of the parties responsible for monitoring, together with ELY Centres. This includes the number and surface area of protected areas and their ecological status, as well as natural monuments, on both state-owned and private lands. More detailed provisions on the organisation of monitoring and the related duties of the authorities have been laid down in the Nature Conservation Decree.

Chapter 5 Natura 2000 network of the European Community

As most state-owned protected areas are also part of the Natura 2000 network, the provisions of NCA Chapter 5 concerning the network are important for the management and steering of protected areas. The sections concerning the prohibition of weakening the conservation criteria features (section 34) and the implementation of the Natura 2000 network (section 41) are particularly significant. Section 35 on the assessment of projects and plans is also important, because the authority granting the permit or approving the plan is obliged to request a statement on the impact assessment concerning the project not only

from the ELY Centre but also from the Natura 2000 site holder (i.e. Parks & Wildlife Finland on state-owned lands).

The obligations of the Natura Directives relating to the implementation of conservation measures in the Natura 2000 network are discussed extensively in section 6.3 of these guidelines.

Chapter 6 Nature reserves

Chapter 6 of the NCA includes regulations concerning both state and private nature reserves. At the beginning of the chapter, the types of nature reserves and the general conditions for establishing nature reserves (section 43) are defined. These apply to all nature reserves, regardless of their type and ownership (state/private), and they are followed by provisions on special conditions for establishing national parks (section 44), strict nature reserves (section 45) and other state nature reserves (section 46). More detailed provisions on the purpose of establishing national parks, strict nature reserves and other state nature reserves are laid down in the founding statutes. (See section 2.3 of these guidelines for more details.)

Sections 49–52 of the NCA contain general conservation provisions pertaining to state-owned nature reserves that are essential for their management. These are discussed in detail in the next section 6.2. of these guidelines.

The section on safeguarding certain rights (section 55) includes an obligation to ensure the prerequisites for maintaining and developing the culture of the Sámi in state-owned nature reserves (supplementing the corresponding more general entry in section 6 of the Act). In addition, the section contains an entry on the validity of easements and leases, and other rights established before the entry into force of the conservation regulations after the establishment of the nature reserve.

Section 56 lays down provisions on restricting access to a state-owned nature

reserve. In a strict nature reserve, access on other than separately designated roads, paths or areas is only allowed with the permission of Metsähallitus. However, this does not apply to tasks that are necessary for reindeer husbandry, or the performance of official duties permitted by the conservation regulations concerning the area, or for exercising the special rights of local residents. In a national park and other state nature reserve, a prohibition or restriction on movement and disembarkation requires that the conservation of species or habitats in the area requires such a restriction (the argument being, for example, preventing excessive erosion of the terrain).

The necessary restrictions on access are issued by site-specific regulation orders (NCA section 58) unless they have already been issued in the founding act. Exceptions to the prohibition or restriction on movement and disembarkation may be made with the permission of Metsähallitus. According to the explanatory memorandum of the Act, a permit may be granted if the need for derogation is related to activities that support the purpose of establishing a nature reserve, or if the permit would be necessary for carrying out other activities permitted by law in a prohibited or restricted area.

Section 57 concerning the management plan of a nature reserve includes an obligation to ensure sufficient interaction when drawing up the plan, e.g. with the Sámi communities and the Sámi Parliament in the Sámi homeland (see section 7.5 of these guidelines for more details). Management plans for state nature reserves are drawn up and approved by Metsähallitus but is obliged to request a statement from the Ministry of the Environment on the plan before approving it. It is not possible to appeal against decisions approving plans.

Section 59 lays down provisions on determining and marking the boundaries of a nature reserve and section 60 on the annexation of an area to a state nature reserve (see section 15.1 for more details).

The procedural provisions of NCA Chapter 6 (Sections 56–60) also apply to previously established nature reserves, i.e. these provisions replace any special provisions contained in the statutes establishing such areas.

Chapter 7 Conservation of natural habitats

The significance of the NCA chapter 7 concerning natural habitats is greatest outside the protected area network. However, the chapter also defines several concepts that are also central to the management of state protected areas, such as:

- protected natural habitats (Section 64)
- strictly protected natural habitats and the associated prohibition of deterioration (Article 65).

The Government Decree on Nature Conservation (1066/2023) contains a list of the above-mentioned habitat types.

The chapter also includes:

- provisions on the management of threatened habitat types (section 67), which mentions Metsähallitus in relation to strictly protected habitat types and protected habitat type management and restoration measures.

Chapter 8 Protection of species

Likewise, the significance of NCA chapter 8 is greatest outside the network of protected areas. However, the chapter also defines several concepts that are central to the management of state protected areas, such as:

- protected animal and plant species, and the consequent conservation provisions (sections 69, 70 and 74)
- endangered species (section 75) and taking them into account (section 76)
- specially protected species and protection of their occurrence sites (section 77)

- species requiring strict protection under EU law and protection of their places of occurrence (Article 78)
- species of EU importance and protection of their occurrences (Article 79).

The Nature Conservation Decree lists the above-mentioned species.

The chapter also includes:

- provisions on the management of habitats of endangered species (section 80), which mentions Metsähallitus regarding the necessary management and restoration measures at the sites referred to in sections 77–79
- the section on the protection of nesting trees of large birds of prey (section 73), and
- the article on assisted dispersal of specially protected species (Article 85).

Chapter 13 Information management and communication of decisions in nature conservation

NCA chapter 13 defines the nature conservation information system (section 117) and the provisions on the information contained therein (section 118), their quality (section 119) and disclosure (section 120). The nature conservation information system is an entity that includes, among other things: Metsähallitus information systems (the present Uljas GIS system, Tammi case management system). In the future, the chapter will form the legal basis for the development of information management concerning state protected areas (see section 8.2 of these guidelines for more details).

According to Section 121, inter alia: Metsähallitus must publish the decisions it issues under the Nature Conservation Act on its website, which applies, for example, to permits granted to nature reserves under the Act.

Chapter 14 Nature conservation control, administrative coercion and penalties

The chapter contains provisions on, among other things, the organisation of supervision (NCA section 122), the right to information and inspection (section 123), action in criminal matters (section 129) and the right of seizure (by game wardens, section 133). According to these, Metsähallitus carries out surveillance in state-owned nature reserves (see section 15.6 of these guidelines for more details) and is obliged to notify the police of any nature conservation violations it detects.

6.2 Conservation provisions for state nature reserves

Provisions concerning the conservation of national parks and strict nature reserves are laid down in sections 49–51 of the Nature Conservation Act. According to section 52 of the Act, the provisions of these sections also apply to other state nature reserves, unless the section expressly provides otherwise. Thus, with some exceptions, Articles 49 to 51 apply to all state nature reserves, even though their titles refer only to national parks and strict nature reserves.

The general prohibitions concerning state nature reserves are listed in section 49. Exceptions to these are contained in section 50. Section 51 lists such activities that are permitted with the permission of Metsähallitus.

Section 49 Conservation provisions for national parks and strict nature reserves

In the national park and strict nature reserve, activities that alter nature are prohibited. These activities are therefore prohibited:

- construction of buildings, structures and roads (according to the justification, mainly refers to construction subject to building supervision and not, for

example, minor temporary structures if Metsähallitus has given its consent)

- extraction of soil and minerals and damage to soil and bedrock
- draining (e.g. peatlands)
- taking or damaging fungi, trees, shrubs or other plants and parts of plants
- the capture, killing and disturbing of wild vertebrate animals and the destruction of their nests, as well as the capture and collection of invertebrate animals.

In addition, all other activities that adversely affect the natural conditions of the area, the landscape, the conservation of species or the purpose of establishing the area are prohibited. The latter also includes the use of the area in accordance with the purpose for which it was established. According to the explanatory memorandum of the Act, for example, “causing disturbing noise by use of drones or other devices, or other disturbances to public order or endangering safety” can be considered activities endangering the purpose of establishing national parks (for more information on drones, see section 14.2 of these guidelines).

Section 50 Exceptions to the provisions on the protection of national parks and strict nature reserves

This section lists measures which are necessary for the proper management or use of the nature reserve, and which do not jeopardise the purpose of establishing the site. Measures under this section must therefore meet both conditions.

In connection with the management of the area by Metsähallitus or other actor on behalf of Metsähallitus, the following activities are permitted:

- to construct, restore and renovate buildings, structures and paths necessary for the management, surveillance,

research, public guidance and customer safety of the area, as well as for hiking and exploring the area (including, for example, shooting platforms for elk hunting to improve customer safety)

- managing and restoring natural, cultural, traditional habitats and built heritage and restoring the natural development of degraded habitats through restoration
- building a road necessary for guiding activities in the area.

In connection with other uses of the area, it is allowed to:

- pick berries and household mushrooms (i.e. mushrooms used for food and e.g. dyeing, excluding polypores – for more details, see section 12.3.4)
- fish in accordance with the general fishing rights laid down in the Fisheries Act
- engage in reindeer husbandry in accordance with the Reindeer Husbandry Act
- operate and rehabilitate roads, infrastructure and related equipment in the area
- rehabilitate maritime safety equipment and waterways, and carry out minor clearances required by safety equipment (i.e. only small-scale clearances in waterways, e.g. removal of submersible logs and reeds, and not e.g. dredging)
- map and carry out surveying work
- drive elk and white-tailed deer as laid down in the Hunting Act
- kill the wounded animal and seizing the dead game animal in a situation related to hunting outside the area
- control and eliminate plant species classified as invasive alien species and catch and kill mink and raccoon dog
- cut down a tree that poses an obvious danger to a neighbouring property.

In addition, necessary measures required for rescue operations, border control, control of infectious diseases and plant pests and animal welfare are permitted.

The above-listed measures related to other uses do not require a derogation permit granted by Metsähallitus as the holder authority of a nature reserve (cf. section 51), but an access permit granted by Metsähallitus is required in restricted areas (section 56). However, the provisions of the section only give the right to derogate from the prohibitions of section 49. In addition, the provisions of other legislation, such as the Hunting and Fishing Acts, must be complied with (see section 13.1 of these guidelines for more details). For example, the removal of mink and raccoon dogs permitted by the section requires a hunting permit issued by Metsähallitus in accordance with the Hunting Act, and the construction of a shooting platform used for elk hunting requires the landowner's consent granted by Metsähallitus.

Section 51 Exemptions from the conservation regulations of national parks and strict nature reserves subject to authorisation

This section lists the activities for which Metsähallitus may grant a permit, provided that the activities do not jeopardise the purpose of establishing the area. Such authorisation may be granted to:

- capture or kill animals, collect fungi and plants or parts thereof, animal nests and mineral samples for research or other scientific purposes or teaching (according to the explanatory memorandum, permission for research would require a research plan, but other scientific purposes, such as ringing birds, would not necessarily require one)
- reduce the number of specimens of species other than those referred to in section 50(3) if the species are too

numerous or otherwise harmful in the area (such species may be alien species, but also native species)

- remove specimens of game species that pose an obvious threat to human safety or threaten to cause significant economic damage to property
- fish in a manner other than that referred to in section 7 of the Fisheries Act
- build buildings and structures related to reindeer husbandry
- land on an aircraft
- restore and renovate buildings and structures other than those referred to in NCA section 50
- conduct geological research (meaning scientific research and mapping not related to exploration or other preparation for mining operations).

Permits under this section are granted for a fixed period and their duration may not exceed ten years. Conditions may and often need to be attached to the permit, which may include time and/or spatial constraints or measures to be complied with by the applicant to avoid or limit the harm caused by the activity to conservation values. According to the explanatory memorandum of the Act, when granting permits, the exemption provisions must be interpreted restrictively, and permits must be granted only to the extent necessary.

Section 52 Conservation provisions of other state nature reserves

The provisions on national parks and strict nature reserves stated in sections 49–51, are mostly applied also to other state nature reserves. Section 52 lists matters, for which the provision are not, or may not be applied. Deviations are noted directly in this section, and others are provided for in the regulations establishing the sites pursuant to it.

- In other state nature reserves, hunting is permitted in the area covered by section 8 of the Hunting Act and prohibited in areas outside it. However, exceptions to this general rule may be provided for in the founding regulations (see Section 13.1 of these guidelines for details).
- Fishing in public waters in the sea and in Finland's exclusive economic zone complies with the provisions of the Fisheries Act. However, if necessary, fishing in these areas may be restricted by the founding regulation (see section 13.1 of these guidelines for details).
- If the conditions laid down in the Act are met, Metsähallitus may grant a permit for exploration in a state nature reserve.
- The founding statute may also regulate (as long as these do not jeopardise the purpose of establishing the site):
 - the exercise and training activities of the Finnish Defence Forces in a nature reserve to which the Defence Forces have access rights and otherwise in waters belonging to a state nature reserve
 - the location and maintenance of aviation operations and maritime security equipment and other similar measures taken by the authorities
 - the construction of roads, wires and cables, the digging of ditches, the dredging of waterways and other similar measures
 - permitting buildings and structures necessary for the realisation of the rights of the Sámi indigenous peoples in the Sámi homeland.

6.3 Regulations and obligations of the Natura 2000 network

In Finland, the Habitats and Birds Directives have mainly been transposed and implemented through the Nature Conservation Act, Chapter 5 of which deals with the Natura 2000 network. Its entries largely correspond to the key obligations related to the management of Natura 2000 sites, particularly those laid down in Article 6 of the Habitats Directive, concerning the implementation of conservation measures and the prevention of deterioration of the conservation status of conservation values.

The objective of the Natura 2000 network is to ensure the protection of habitat types and habitats of species listed in the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) and their annexes, as well as special protection areas (SPAs) that are based on the Birds Directive (79/409/EEC).

The Habitats Directive (Article 6.1) requires Member States to take appropriate legislative, administrative or contractual measures for Special Areas of Conservation (SACs). The measures also apply to SPA areas under the Birds Directive.

The abovementioned conservation means a set of measures necessary to maintain or restore natural habitats and species of wild fauna and flora at a favourable conservation status. In addition, the Habitats Directive (Article 6.2) requires Member States to take preventive measures to avoid disturbances and deterioration linked to foreseeable changes. In practice, conservation measures include the establishment of nature reserves, the restoration and management of habitats, the management of use, and the assessment of the environmental impacts of projects or plans both inside and outside Natura 2000 areas.

Section 41 of the Nature Conservation Act states, inter alia:

“The criteria for the conservation objectives of the sites are included in the site-specific information forms in the Natura 2000 database. The authorities shall take measures in accordance with the ecological requirements of the natural habitats and species on which the protection of the Natura 2000 sites is based, and with the aim of preserving, increasing or improving them, when establishing nature reserves and deciding on other measures under this Law.”

Later (in section 41), the planning methods used in Natura 2000 sites are mentioned. When using them, special attention should be paid to the following entry:

“Similar measures must also be taken when drawing up management plans for wilderness reserves in accordance with the Wilderness Act (62/1991) and for state hiking areas established under the Outdoor Recreation Act (606/1973), as well as management plans for Natura 2000 areas by the Centres for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment and Metsähallitus, and site condition assessments of the Natura 2000 areas. The conservation objectives must also be considered when drawing up land use plans in accordance with the Land Use and Building Act (132/1999) and when making decisions concerning environmental subsidies.”

In addition to developing legislation, conservation practices and planning tools have been developed in Finland. The aim has been to create a comprehensive system that is sufficient and as appropriate as possible for the planning needs of Finland's very diverse network of Natura 2000 and the national protected areas. This system is described in section 8.3 of these guidelines.

The size of individual Natura sites, nature reserves and wilderness reserves vary from less than one hectare to more than 200 000 hectares. Some sites require annual management of habitats, others require periodic maintenance or one-off restoration. Many

sites do not require any action after the establishment of the site, apart from possible monitoring of the state. On the other hand, many areas are subject to recreational and other uses, which must be coordinated with conservation and considered in planning. In such cases, good governance requires planning cooperation with stakeholders.

At the end of 2018, the European Commission (2018) published updated guidelines on managing Natura 2000 sites and interpretation of the provisions of Article 6 of the Habitats Directive. The key concepts of the Directive explained in the guidelines are Natura site-specific conservation criteria, the conservation objectives set for them, and the necessary conservation measures, including appropriate management plans.

Data sheets for Natura 2000 sites

The Standard Data Form (SDF) constitutes the central knowledge base for the management of Natura sites and related planning. The most important information in the form is the ecological information on the conservation criteria and conservation objectives, site pressures and management.

Conservation criteria

In Natura 2000 sites, the primary objective is to maintain and improve the conservation status of the species and habitat types, grounds on which they are protected. The Standard Data Forms contain, among other things, information on the site-specific conservation criteria, such as:

- in SAC areas Habitat types in Annex I of the Habitats Directive (section 3.1 of the form)
- in SAC areas, species listed in Annex II of the Habitats Directive, and in SPA areas, species listed in Annex I of the Birds Directive and regularly occurring migratory bird species in Finland (section 3.2 of the form).

Conservation criteria include habitat types with a representative status in class A to C (excellent, good, significant) and species with a population in class A to C (relative share of at least significant). An individual Natura area can have a considerable number of protected species and habitat types. The obligation to promote protection (Nature Conservation Act section 41) and the prohibition to deteriorate conservation criteria (NCA section 34) apply to all protection grounds. However, from the point of view of practical conservation and management measures and their planning, it has been necessary to define the protection criteria that should be given special attention in each area.

The key conservation criteria of a Natura site refer to those species and habitats that are of particular importance to the site as part of the Natura 2000 network and to improve or maintain the conservation status of the habitat types and species in question. In general (but not necessarily always) the key protection criteria have also played a decisive role in the designation of the site to the network. Information on the key protection grounds is not included in the data sheet but is stored in the SDF module of the SASS system.

Improving the status of many key protected species and/or habitat types in a Natura area, or sometimes also maintaining the status as it is now, requires active conservation, restoration and management measures. The identification of key protection criteria will help to target such measures to the most important species and habitat types in each site.

Conservation objectives

The conservation objective for each Natura site is set out in section 4.2 (nature and importance of the site) of the data form. The general objective of the Natura 2000 network areas is that they serve the maintenance of the favourable conservation status (of conservation criteria features) as well as possible. A site-specific conservation objective describes whether the status of the site is already the best possible in terms of this general objective or is about to improve because of nature's own processes, or whether active measures should be taken in the area to promote the achievement of this status. This is described using one or more of the following statements:

- preserving the status of habitats and species and their habitats in the area by ensuring development in accordance with nature's own processes
- the status of habitat types and species and their habitats in the area is preserved by controlling the use of the area
- management measures maintain the status of habitats and species and their habitats in the area
- increasing the number of habitats, habitats of species or populations through restoration and management measures
- the quality of the habitat of a habitat or species or the vitality of a species' population is improved through restoration and management measures.

The conservation objective entries in the data forms are of a general nature. A more detailed definition and targeting of the conservation objective and the necessary measures are carried out in the Natura site condition assessment (NATA) and in more detailed site-specific management and operational planning (see 8.3).

Pressures and threats

For the management and planning of a Natura 2000 site, ecological data (conservation criteria species and habitat types) are the most important set of data in the Standard Data Form. In addition to these, however, measures and their planning must consider, for example, the information on threats, pressures and influencing factors on the form. The information content of the form concerning these is concise, including only the significance and targeting of the threat. The planning of site management and use requires more detailed information on these, which is defined in the Natura site condition assessment (NATA).

Necessary conservation measures

The starting point for defining the necessary conservation measures is the means of implementation of the Natura 2000 sites that have been stated in the Government resolutions on Finland's network proposal and notification (I–VIII in 1998–2018). They define the legislation for each area according to which the implementation of protection would take place. As stated in the Nature Conservation Act (section 41), when drawing up plans and making decisions under each Act, special attention must be paid to the ecological requirements of the habitat types and species on which Natura sites are based, as required by Article 6(1) of the Habitats Directive.

Statutory measures cover the general provisions of the Nature Conservation Act relating to the implementation of the Nature Directives, the statutes establishing nature reserves issued under the Act, and Government resolutions on nature conservation programmes. In addition, legislative conservation measures include the Wilderness Act, under which wilderness reserves have been established, and the Outdoor Recreation Act, under which state hiking areas (mainly

included in the Natura network) have been established. These regulations define, among other things, what activities are permitted, restricted and prohibited in the protected areas and corresponding Natura sites.

When implementation is based on the Nature Conservation Act, it is often considered a sufficient conservation measure to ensure that the nature reserve has been established or acquired for the state for nature conservation purposes. All areas reserved for nature conservation purposes in national nature conservation programmes or plans will be established as statutory nature conservation areas (the same applies to Natura sites that are located outside the previous ones and whose implementation is based on the Nature Conservation Act).

Administrative measures include, for example, decisions on the delimitation of natural habitat areas (habitat protection areas) and especially protected species (species protection areas) made under the Nature Conservation Act, regulation orders for state-owned nature reserves, and planning and permit practices determined on the basis of the Nature Conservation Act, the Water Act, the Land Use and Building Act and the Forest Act, which guide activities in protected areas.

Contractual measures consist of agreements between the managing authority and landowners to promote the conservation objectives of the Natura 2000 site and protected area. These include agreements based on the Nature Conservation Act on fixed term protected areas, environmental support agreements (such as Forestry incentive scheme Metka agreements and agricultural grazing area contracts) and fishing restriction agreements.

The definition of conservation objectives and the planning of conservation measures are also part of the implementation of conservation measures. In recent years, the European Commission has stressed the importance of these actions in all Natura sites. In Finland, the Natura site condition assessment (NATA) and the related assessment of planning needs play a key role in this.

According to the explanatory memorandum to the Nature Conservation Act (section 41), "In Natura areas that do not have special needs for action, the NATA assessment can be considered as a sufficient instrument for implementing conservation in itself". Even in areas where management plans are (additionally) required, the NATA assessment is important in documenting the status of directive values (conservation criteria features) and the need for measures to address them, and in assessing planning needs. NATA is a particularly important tool for implementing conservation, especially in areas where the means of implementation is something other than the Nature Conservation Act.

7 Ecosystem Approach and Adaptive Management

7.1 Ecosystem services and ecosystem approach in protected area management

Ecosystems, with their structures and functions, offer a wide range of products and services that are both a prerequisite for the preservation of biodiversity and a source of diverse benefits for people living in and visiting the natural environment. There are many ways to classify these so-called **ecosystem services**. One of the most widely used is the division of the UN report on the state of ecosystems (Millennium Ecosystem Assessment 2005) into production, support, regulatory and cultural services.

Production services include material outputs of ecosystem functions that people directly utilise – such as water, game and berries. Natural environments provide livelihoods for many local communities, such as reindeer pastures, for example. Correspondingly, commercially exploitable products include timber, wind power, soil materials and sea gravel.

Support services for different habitats form the basis of ecosystem functions and natural cycles. These services include soil regeneration, nutrient cycling and insect pollination. The self-regulation and purification properties of ecosystems buffer the harmful effects on nature caused by human activities. On the other hand, certain coastal habitats and wetlands, for example, can also act as flood protection for settlements.

Some uses of natural resources cause harm to the structure and functioning of the ecosystem. On the other hand, patterns of use may also conflict with the sociocultural values of the environment, such as recreational use. The utilisation of ecosystem services

always involves questions of rights and fairness. Since it is often not possible to enjoy all the services provided by the ecosystem at the same time, their use in protected areas must be conciliated, regulated and restricted.

In the planning of the management and use of protected areas, emphasis is placed on the so-called **ecosystem approach**, the principles of which are based on the key objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity (see section 4.1.1). The approach accentuates the importance of understanding and preserving the ecological functions and structures of habitats, but at the same time emphasises the importance of humans as users of the services provided by ecosystems, and the development of ecosystem management methods in a more flexible direction. The key operating principle is to distribute responsibility for decision-making in planning to the lowest possible level and to raise the benefits and impacts of the conservation and use of natural values, as well as the distribution and acceptability of impacts, as criteria for decision-making.

In practice, applying the ecosystem approach to protected areas means that the management and use of protected areas is planned holistically, based on the best available information, together with the local communities that in one way or another exploit the areas and/or operate in their vicinity. The starting point is that the preconditions for preserving the biodiversity of the area or other conservation values will not be jeopardised, but the aim is to find ways to continue the traditional use of nature and secure the preconditions for livelihood.

The national organisation and operations of Parks & Wildlife Finland support the application of the ecosystem approach. Parks

& Wildlife Finland manages state-owned protected areas throughout the country as part of Metsähallitus (see chapter 5) and is responsible for the management and planning of national parks and all other nature reserves. Parks & Wildlife Finland strives to work in continuous cooperation and contact with local communities, entrepreneurs and other stakeholders.

7.2 Adaptive management in a changing operating environment

7.2.1 The adaptive planning model

In the adaptive planning model for protected areas, the planning and implementation of management measures are closely linked to the operating environment (see Figure 11). The state of protected areas is examined by assessing their natural, cultural and recreational values, the ecosystem services provided by the areas and factors affecting values and services. The achievement of the long-term objectives set for management and use is monitored and the effectiveness of the activities is also assessed in relation to the broader goals set for the management, such as the long-term viability of habitats and species (favourable conservation status, see section 4.2.2).

This overall model of adaptive planning has been integrated into the practical work of Parks & Wildlife Finland's protected area management, for example by developing the practices of planning and monitoring areas. The current planning and monitoring system is described in detail in section 8.3.

The idea of adaptive planning and management is to utilise all available information in the development of operations. The latest research and monitoring data are applied, and drawn on feedback from stakeholders, the local population and the clientele using protected areas and their services. Best practices are learned through experience and

cooperation and actively duplicated as part of operations.

Operating in a complex and constantly changing environment – where other parties are also developing their operations – means that no ready-made and definitive information on the values of protected areas, their status and the factors affecting their status is achievable. For this reason, management and planning must constantly test new ideas, monitor the effects, learn and again adjust the activities based on the accumulated knowledge.

The idea of continuous improvement related to adaptive planning is also a key feature of Metsähallitus' environmental management system. In the system procedure, environmental aspects and risks are first defined. Based on these, environmental goals are set, and operational objectives are defined and recorded in the environmental programme. Based on the monitoring data on the achievement of the objectives, as well as audits and feedback, the various elements of the environmental management system (aspects and risks, goals and targets) are reviewed annually. Systematic auditing addresses potential problems that can be solved to improve the quality of operations.

7.2.2 Identifying conservation values and benefits

Basic surveys and inventories

According to the operating principles of Parks & Wildlife Finland, protected areas are managed in accordance with the principles of adaptive management described above and best practices based on research and experience. The activities must therefore be based on sufficient information, especially on the key conservation values of the area and their status. The required knowledge base is constantly supplemented and updated with various basic surveys, inventories and monitoring, which Parks & Wildlife Finland both

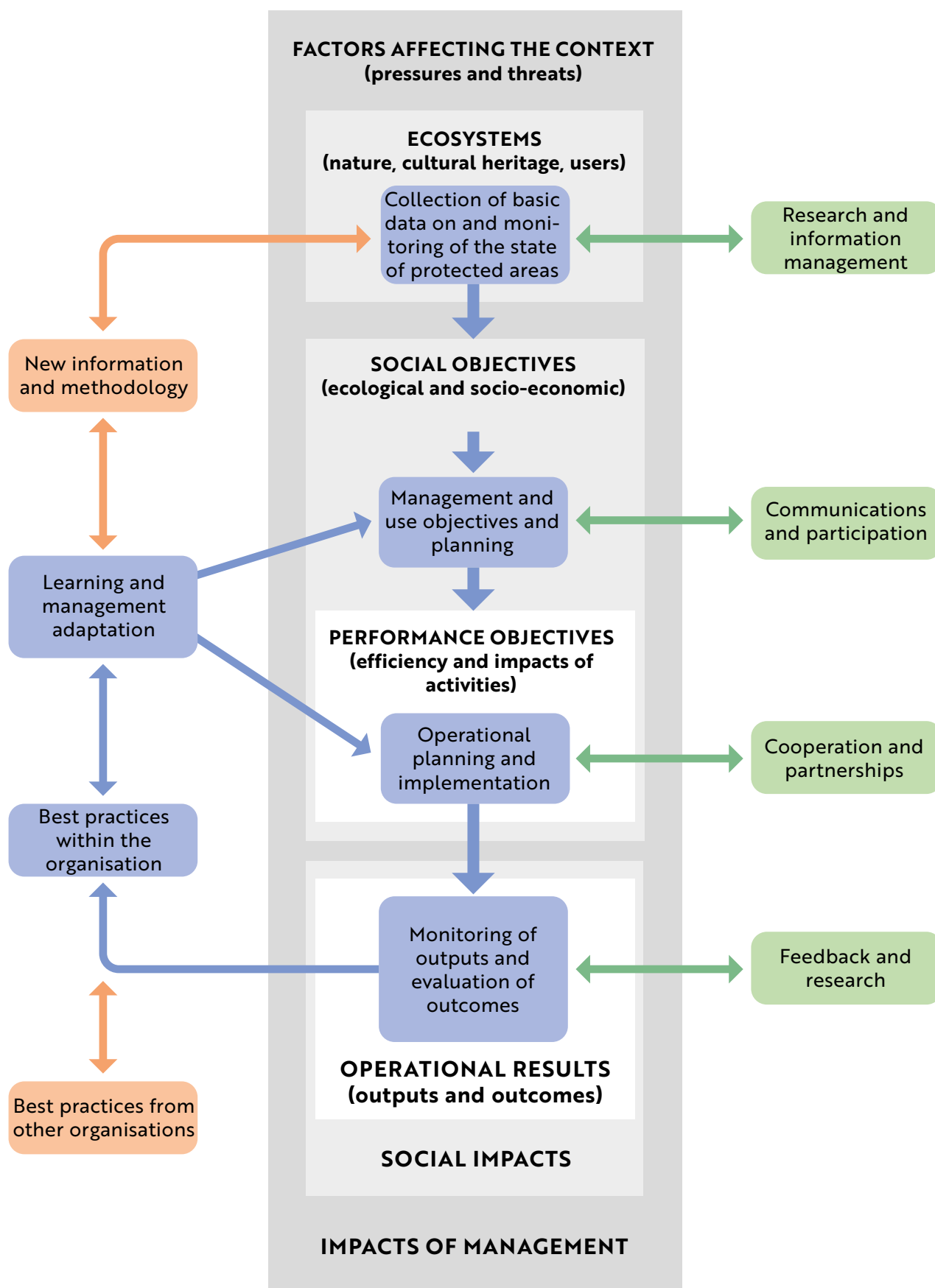


Figure 11. The framework for adaptive planning and management as a part of the broader operating environment.

carries out itself and commissions. The aim is that decisions concerning the management of areas are based on as comprehensive and up-to-date information as possible.

The level of information required to steer the management and use of areas varies depending on the objectives of the area. A prerequisite for drawing up a management plan for a protected area is that appropriate basic information is available on the area being planned. When drawing up the plan, there must be at least information on the occurrence of endangered species and, for example, information on the most valuable sites for the conservation of vegetation and bird life. Depending on the nature of the area, more detailed information may be needed. This includes, for example, data on certain habitat types and species or on the cultural values, history and former land use and recreational use of the area, such as the number and location of visits, as well as the hobbies and visiting experience of visitors. Operational planning, that is based on a management plan, often requires even more specific and detailed information about the area. For planning purposes, information often needs to be supplemented in a targeted manner.

The data collected in basic surveys and inventories are stored as comprehensively as possible in the spatial data and other information systems used by Parks & Wildlife Finland (see Section 8.2). The reports of surveys carried out or commissioned by Parks & Wildlife Finland are also stored in the Tammi case management system and archived.

Data collection concerning protected areas produces information for assessing the coverage, quality, representativeness and regional economic impact of the protected area network, as well as for assessing the state of individual areas, monitoring habitat types and species under the Habitats Directive, assessing the endangerment of habitat types and species, and comparisons between protected areas and commercial forests (see section 8.4 for more details). The collected



Endangered Yellow marsh saxifrage (*Saxifraga hirculus*). Photo: Outi Isokääntä.

material is also used, for example, in interpretative communication and in the targeting of research and as background material for it (see Chapter 11).

Values and benefits

The values of protected areas and the ecosystem services provided by the areas can be examined using the so-called **value menu**. The full text of the menu, used by Parks & Wildlife Finland as a tool for planning the management and use of the sites and monitoring their status, is found in Appendix 6. Value types are categorised by value classes in the menu. The main value classes in the menu are the following, and for each class reference is made to the section of this publication, in which the value set and related activities are described in more detail.

- Natural values (see section 9.1)
- Cultural values (10.2.1), including local culture (10.7)

- Research and monitoring importance (11.2)
- Appreciation and knowledge of nature (11.3)
- Recreational use (12.3–12.5).

The starting point for the management and steering of the area's use is the natural values on which the protection of the area is based: habitat types and species, biological communities and ecosystems, including geological features and, in large areas, their wilderness character. In addition, for many types of areas, tangible and intangible cultural heritage, including the local culture that characterises the area and its surroundings, are key values. Many protected areas, especially strict nature reserves, are important role as research and monitoring sites. In national parks in particular, aims of establishing the area are also environmental education, based on the natural and cultural environment of the areas, and recreational use that is based on everyone's right (free access).

In many areas, the sustainable use of nature also provides livelihoods for local residents and entrepreneurs. These local and natural economic benefits are broken down into value types as follows:

- Tourism business activities (see Section 12.6)
- Wilderness economy (fishing and hunting, 13.1)
- Reindeer husbandry and subsistence livelihoods (13.2 and 13.3)
- Professional picking and gathering (12.3.4).

In protected areas, (commercial) exploitation of natural resources other than that mentioned above is very limited or completely prohibited, but in some cases certain activities are permitted under the legislation on the type of site and/or the constituent act governing the site. Such measures may include, for example: restricted forestry in state-owned hiking areas (within the limits

allowed by the Habitats Directive) or ground-water exploitation in esker areas of Natura 2000 sites, etc.

The benefits produced by protected areas are examined based on how the conservation values are situated in the area, how value creation takes place in the area, which parties benefit from the use of the areas and how significantly. Significance can be measured and evaluated economically. On the other hand, the benefits may also be intangible (or, more difficult to measure materially), but perceived as valuable, such as the increase in physical and mental well-being attained by spending time in nature and exercising.

The benefits associated with the use of protected areas should be weighed against the (harmful) effects of use. For each type of value, value determination criteria or indicators characterizing the state of the value are presented in the value menu (see Appendix 6). Mapping values can be used to guide and scale activities and, in cooperation with interested parties, to coordinate various activities in protected areas in such a way as to ensure ecological and cultural sustainability while striving for social well-being in the form of economic and health benefits, for example. Central to planning is defining the limits of the change caused by the activities permitted in the area in relation to the conservation (and other) objectives of the area.

7.2.3 Setting objectives and assessing progress

The most essential part of the adaptive planning cycle for protected areas is the setting of area-specific conservation and other objectives and the definition of the necessary measures as well as monitoring of their implementation and effectiveness. The tasks set for different types of protected areas in conservation programmes and statutes (see Chapter 2), as well as the general social goals and objectives set for state protected areas in international agreements (Chapter 4) and

national political decisions (Chapter 5), guide the setting of objectives also at the regional level. In addition to maintaining and restoring a favourable level of biodiversity, the objectives of climate change mitigation and adaptation have emerged. Climate change may make it necessary to specify or even reassess the conservation objectives and key conservation values of areas. Taking climate change into account is discussed in section 7.3.

The preconditions for the use of nature reserves are set, for example, by the general conservation provisions of the Nature Conservation Act and area-specific founding statutes (section 6.2). On the other hand, e.g. in Natura 2000 sites, the conservation and monitoring measures required by the Nature Directives define how conservation objectives should be set for the site and the conservation measures defined by value (type) (see section 6.3). Conservation measures also include all means of ensuring the (ecological) sustainability of land use. These usage control tools are discussed in section 7.4.

In addition to those mentioned above, other perspectives must be considered while setting conservation and other objectives. In different parts of Finland, there are special factors and actors in the operating environment of the protected areas. These include for example, special pressures and regional tourism plans related to (local) tourism in growth centres in Southern Finland, and special areas demarcated in Northern Finland for reindeer husbandry, hunting and the Sámi homeland with their relevant regulations. Established cooperation in border regions and maritime areas outside the country's borders brings specific common objectives into consideration. The engagement of local actors in the planning of site management and the implementation of measures is particularly important in these situations. The nation-wide operating model of Parks & Wildlife Finland supports cooperation in

many ways. The procedures are discussed in section 7.5.

To achieve the objectives, set for the protected area, conservation and other measures are scheduled and resources allocated to them as part of medium-term and annual performance targets and operational planning. Parks & Wildlife Finland performance targets are set nationally and regionally (see section 5.3), systematically prioritising measures. Site-specific actions are planned by sector, for example nature management and restoration measures, and the renovation and management of service facilities, separately.

The implementation of plans and actions is monitored continuously, and the effectiveness of the measures taken is monitored and evaluated from time to time. The need to update the plans and redirect the measures are weighed as part of the evaluation. The assessment of operational needs is partly based on continuous monitoring and anticipation of changes in the operating environment. The monitoring system is described in more detail in section 8.4.

7.3 Considering climate change in protected area planning

Climate change poses new challenges to the planning and management of protected areas. Climate-smart nature conservation planning is based on an assessment of which areas are experiencing the strongest climate change, which protected areas, habitats and species are most vulnerable to change, and how to adapt to the change. Local climatic conditions and their impact on key conservation values need to be considered in operations. It is possible that key conservation values may need to be specified or reassessed due to the effects of climate change.

Preparing for climate change is not a separate part of planning; on the contrary it must be considered in a cross-cutting manner in

all plans and measures of the protected area. Considering the predicted impacts of climate change in planning and steering the use of protected areas is also part of risk management. The aim is to reduce the impact of anticipated but uncertain/unknown changes on protected areas and their conservation objectives. Protected area planning should emphasise the flexibility of conservation and management measures and prepare for significant and even extreme changes in conditions.

The European Commission has drawn up guidelines for taking climate change into account in the management of Natura 2000 sites. The guidance diagram (see Appendix 7) shows a procedure for systematically addressing climate change as part of the planning process. In connection with the planning, the projected impacts of climate change from the perspective of the planning area and the operating environment, as well as possible means of reducing the impacts and adapting to them, are examined by asking the following questions and proceeding step by step:

- What are the projected impacts in Finland, this province, the protected area in question, in the short and long term, according to the most likely scenarios of climate change?
- What are the key natural and other values of the protected area; what is their vulnerability to the effects of predicted climate change?
- What changes are likely to occur in the habitats and ecosystems of the protected area?
- How and what measures can be taken to mitigate climate change and adapt to its impact in the management of protected areas?
- What measures can be taken to minimise the impact of climate change on the key conservation values of the protected area?

- What can be done at site level, outside of the site, or at network level?
- Listing of actions, securing resources and partners
- Short, medium and long-term site management planning and impact monitoring.

Planning should also assess different future perspectives and define different strategic policies and options based on them. In this case, it becomes necessary to consider when, where and to what extent it is either 1) possible to resist/prevent unwanted changes, 2) accept them, or 3) actively direct change towards the inevitable. This adaptation process follows the so-called RAD model, i.e. resist/accept/direct change (National Park Service 2021).

The planning of the management and use of protected areas includes an **analysis of the operating environment and situational picture**. The best available climate scenario for each area is taken as the basis for planning and the initial assessment of what the change means in concrete terms for the key conservation values and management solutions of the area in question.

The projected impacts of climate change in Finland and on a regional level can be examined, for example, through the Climate Guide (Finnish Meteorological Institute et al. 2024). The Alpine biogeographical region is predicted to disappear and the Boreal region to move further north. At the regional level, climatic conditions are affected by, for example, maritime or continental gradient conditions, the length of seasons and growing conditions, as well as local elevation differences, the extent of water bodies and prevailing habitat types.

In the planning area, changes can also be examined, for example, using modelled maps produced by the project Conservation planning in a changing climate (SUMI2, led by the Finnish Environment Institute). The information produced in this project supports

adaptation to climate change especially at the level of the entire network of protected areas, but it can also be utilised regionally in examining the climate risks of protected areas and the species and habitat types within to them. Key approaches to practical conservation (site) planning may include:

- Mirroring occurrence data for selected endangered species and habitat types in old-growth forests and aapa mires with climate change rate projections (heat sum, January temperature, water balance) together with local land use pressure data (logging, drainage, construction/transport)
- Examination of the interconnectedness of old-growth forest occurrences in protected areas together with realised clearcutting pressures.

Populations of northern species are predicted to decline. Due to changes in conditions, the ranges of many other species are also shifting and the timing of events related to the seasonal cycle of species changes. The increase in extreme weather events affects the vitality and interrelationships of species populations. Species that are better adapted to changing conditions may displace those that are less adaptable. Invasive alien species can also spread to new areas.

The vulnerability of habitats and species is affected by their sensitivity to changes in conditions caused by climate change and the intensity of exposure, as well as their adaptive capacity, i.e. their ability to respond to impacts or recover from the effects of temporary extreme conditions, for example. Based on the characteristics of the species, the SUMI project identified from six groups of organisms, several species most vulnerable to climate change, that should be targeted for conservation measures.

The vulnerability of the key values of the planning area to the effects of climate change and other pressures on the area is **evaluated as part of the threat assessment of the area**,

which is part of the Natura site condition assessment (NATA) and the preparation of a management plan.

The need, possibilities and targeting of conservation measures are weighed also from the perspective of cost-effectiveness. In protected areas, the key aim is to safeguard as well as possible species whose populations are threatened by the most rapidly changing climate factors. In extreme cases, artificial assistance to the reproductive conditions of an endangered species or population strengthening through individual transfers may be resorted to (see section 9.3.3).

To safeguard the most vulnerable conservation values, the **possibility of conditional planning solutions has also been added to the tools of the management plan**. The development of the status of conservation values is monitored and, if necessary, the use of the area can be directed based on the zoning of the planning area, for example. In addition, a separate review of climate change mitigation and adaptation can be included as part of the impact assessment of the management plan.

The role of the so-called mid-term review the long-term management plans and as well as of shorter-term operational planning will be increased to better react to the combined effects of climate change (and other pressures) when necessary.

Climate-smart habitat management and restoration means, among other things, targeting active measures not only at particularly vulnerable natural values but also at particularly carbon-rich habitats. In the METSO and Helmi Programmes, the focus is on forests, peatlands and other wetlands that target protected areas and their surrounding areas. By targeting restoration and nature management with the aim of achieving coherent ecosystem entities, it is possible to support the migration of species as conditions change. The restoration targets of the EU Biodiversity Strategy also emphasise improving the ecological status of carbon-sequestering areas in an ecosystem-based manner, for example

through watershed planning. In the measures themselves, attention can also be paid to, for example, emissions from machines.

Strengthening the network of protected areas is also one of the key long-term measures to increase the opportunities for organisms to adapt to the climate impacts. Metsähallitus' climate programme emphasises decisions made in connection with natural resource planning on state-owned land and improving the ecological network of forestry areas by means consistent with Metsähallitus Forestry Ltd's Environmental Guide (Kaukonen et al. 2024). Especially in Southern Finland, conservation measures are also needed on private lands. The aim is to strengthen the network of protected areas by various means, for example, through the Biodiversea (2021–2029) and Priodiversity (2024–2031) LIFE IP projects, funded by EU and led by Parks & Wildlife Finland.

Climate-smart tourism and recreational use refer to, among other things, management solutions for recreational use that adapt to changing conditions, as well as for the placement of routes and the construction and maintenance of service infrastructure. Metsähallitus' climate programme includes practical measures aimed at preparing for increasing rainfall and natural disasters, promoting low-emission mobility and energy-efficient property management. It is also necessary to prepare for the increasing maintenance needs and costs of valuable built heritage, for example.

In accordance with Metsähallitus' strategy and climate programme, the national climate targets are promoted through wind power projects located in both land and sea areas. From the point of view of protected areas, it is important to **anticipate the environmental impact of these projects**. Advocacy in wind power planning and environmental impact assessment in such projects are discussed in Chapter 17.

7.4 Ensuring sustainable use in protected areas

The primary purpose of establishing protected areas is nature conservation (see Chapter 2). As many areas also have other secondary objectives related to the use of areas, ensuring the ecological sustainability of land use is a key task of governing and managing protected areas. As the number of visits to national parks and other attractive areas continues to grow, effective management of the harmful effects of recreational use is emphasised. In multi-objective areas, other aspects of sustainability must also be addressed (see Principles for Sustainable Tourism, Section 12.1).

According to the Nature Conservation Act (section 9), Metsähallitus "is responsible for tasks related to the management, use and management of the state's network of nature reserves and other official tasks assigned to it in this Act". Parks & Wildlife Finland steers the use of state-owned protected areas in various roles:

- as the holder authority of a nature reserve and Natura 2000 site
- as an authority in other respects, or
- as a landowner.

In its role as the holder authority for nature reserves and Natura 2000 areas, Metsähallitus prepares, among other things, statutory management plans and regulation orders to direct the use of nature reserves and Natura 2000 areas. In its roles as authority and landowner, Metsähallitus considers/ grants permits and consents and draws up right of use contracts to guide and ensure the sustainable use of areas. Table 6 summarises the means and tools used by Parks & Wildlife Finland to ensure the ecological sustainability of the use of protected areas. The measures are described in general terms below.

Table 6. Measures to ensure the sustainability of protected area use.

Means	The role of Parks & Wildlife Finland
NATA site condition assessments and related monitoring	Holder authority of nature reserve / Natura 2000 site
Development of management plans and their monitoring/mid-term reviews	holder authority of nature reserve / Natura 2000 site
Service facility planning (operational plans)	Holder authority for a nature reserve / Natura 2000 site
Drawing up regulation orders	Holder authority nature reserve / Natura 2000 site
Granting (regulatory) permits based on the Nature Conservation Act	Holder authority of nature reserve / Natura 2000 site
Granting (official) permits based on other laws	Other official authority role
Granting landowner consents	Landowner role
Drafting lease and right of use contracts	Landowner role
Drawing up cooperation agreements for nature tourism	Landowner role
Nature guidance and customer communication	Tasks associated with all roles
Supervision	Tasks associated with all roles
Advocacy	Tasks associated with all roles
Collaboration	Tasks associated with all roles

7.4.1 Planning and directing area use

The Natura 2000 site condition assessment (NATA) is carried out for all Natura sites and is updated at regular intervals. The assessment determines, among other things, the key values of the area and their condition, as well as the measures and plans required for sustainability and control of use. Repeated NATA assessment and related monitoring is a key tool for assessing the change in the protected area and the factors affecting it.

A management plan is drawn up for all national parks and wilderness reserves, but they are also drafted for other nature reserves and Natura 2000 sites, if necessary. These long-term strategic plans define, among other things, the zoning related to the use of the area and the dimensioning of visitor services and other activities. Indicators for monitoring the sustainability of recreational use are defined for the busiest sites with the greatest number of visits (see section 12.1 for details).

In the management plans, protected areas are divided into zones: 1) hiking and nature tourism zone, 2) remote zone and 3) restricted and nature value zone. A prerequisite for restricted access zones is that they are necessary for the preservation of the fauna or vegetation (species and habitats) in the area. Restrictions on movement are usually limited in time and/or space. In addition, significant zones for Sámi culture can be designated in the Sámi homeland.

Conditional provisions can be attached to the zones, which make it possible, if necessary, to flexibly direct harmful use for a fixed period or completely away from sensitive sites, e.g. to prevent the deterioration of the conservation criteria habitat type of a Natura site. Mid-term reviews at regular intervals assess the implementation of the plan's measures, the effectiveness of the measures and the achievement of the objectives.

Operational action plans are drawn up, for example, for the construction of service facilities and the implementation of hiking services on a wider scale. These plans define

in more detail the dimensioning, location and implementation of visitor services, all of which are important aspects in ensuring sustainable use.

NATA assessments and management/operational planning are discussed in more detail in section 8.3.

7.4.2 Drafting site regulation orders

Site-specific regulation orders must be drawn up for a national park, and if necessary, they can also be drawn up for a strict nature reserve and other state nature reserves (Nature Conservation Act section 58). They can also be drawn up for a state hiking area (Outdoor Recreation Act). In national parks and other state nature reserves, regulation orders may prohibit or restrict movement, camping, disembarkation and keeping a boat, ship or other means of transport (NCA Section 56). Regulation orders based on old statutes have also made it possible to issue regulations on other types of matters. The old regulation orders will later be updated to correspond to the new Nature Conservation Act. In areas for which a management plan is drawn up, the regulation orders are usually largely based on the policies already made in the plan, which are thus enforced by the regulation order.

The regulation orders drawn up by Metsähallitus are primarily intended for visitors to the area, but also partly for other user groups in the area, and they deal especially with matters that may be unclear to visitors. For this reason, in addition to the restrictions and prohibitions issued by the orders, it will include other provisions that are based either on statutes or on decisions and policies made by Metsähallitus in its role as a landowner. In this respect, the nature of the ordinance is only informative.

The entries in the regulation orders concerning the entire area also apply to areas annexed to a nature reserve after the regu-

lation orders have been issued. Restricted areas and other clearly territorial restrictions, on the other hand, do not apply to annexed areas; If a restriction on movement is to enter into force in a annexed area, the regulation orders must be updated.

During the preparation, the regulation orders will be made available for viewing. Regulation orders that have entered into force are registered in the Finlex.fi norms database.

7.4.3 Granting official permits and landowner consents

Authority permits are granted by Metsähallitus/Parks & Wildlife Finland based on nature conservation regulations or one of the acts listed in section 5(4) of the Metsähallitus Act concerning Metsähallitus' public administration tasks (see section 5.2 of these guidelines). These authorisations are public administrative decisions against which there is a right of appeal. Such permits are drawn up on presentation and both signatories must be persons to whom the Director of Parks & Wildlife Finland has delegated the powers of public administration (decision MH 1680/2021). (See, however, off-road traffic permits below).

Official permits granted in the role of the holder of nature reserves are granted based on sections 50 (derogations) and/or 56 (access permits) of the Nature Conservation Act (NCA) or similar older statutes. These permits are granted only for established nature reserves; In other areas similar rights are granted with the consent of the landowner (see below). Permits are drawn up using the Luoto system categories "deviation permit (NCA)" and "research permit (NCA)". If necessary, the right to move is also granted as part of these (permits for movement only are granted by way of derogation). Provisions on the pricing of permits are laid down in the Decree on Fees of the Ministry of the Environment (96/2024), according to which some

of the permits are fixed-price and some are free-of-charge services under public law.

Other permits granted in an official capacity include, for example, permits granted for practice of subsistence economy under the Skolt Act (253/1995: Section 9) and the Act on Structural Subsidies for Reindeer Husbandry and Subsistence Livelihoods (so-called PoLuRa Act, 986/2011: Section 87), which are free of charge under these statutes and the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry's Decree on Payments (1072/2023). The permits are drawn up using the Luoto system categories "permit under the Skolt Act" and a "permit under the PoLuRa Act".

Off-road traffic permits issued under the Off-Road Traffic Act (1710/1995: Section 4) differ from other official permits in that they can be issued based on a delegation decision made by the Director of Parks & Wildlife Finland without a presentation. The Director of Parks & Wildlife Finland has made a separate decision on the issuers of snow mobile track permits and other off-road traffic permits (MH 5613/2022). In addition, the Act on Metsähallitus (section 18) allows individual permits to be issued mechanically. Machine-based permits include track permits and off-road traffic permits during snow-covered periods, issued for residents of the three northernmost municipalities in their own municipality of residence (excl. national parks and strict nature reserves). The granting of these off-road traffic permits is automatic, and Metsähallitus does not need to consider the granting of an individual permit separately.

Customers can buy track permits and apply for off-road traffic permits outside snowmobile tracks in the Eraluvat.fi online store. Permits are granted through an electronic permit system, and they are stored in it (negative decisions are also stored in Tammi case management system). The pricing of permits is regulated by the Ministry of the Environment's Decree on Fees, according to

which track permits are fixed-price public law services at cost value, but entrepreneur and group permits related to off-road traffic and permits granted outside snowmobile tracks are commercially priced. If an off-road traffic permit granted outside snowmobile tracks is related to non-commercial research, the Fees Decree stipulates that no fee will be charged for these off-road traffic permits. The prices of other commercially priced off-road traffic permits are defined in the pricing decision of the Director of Parks & Wildlife Finland (MH 7958/2022).

Short-term transfers of the right to use land and water areas granted in the role of a landowner are made with the **landowner's consent**. In addition to this, the concept of "landowner's permission" has previously been used. However, the use of this has been abandoned in this publication and in the Luoto system, because by their legal nature they are also the landowner's consent. There is no right of appeal against the landowner's consent. At Metsähallitus, consents are granted both to protected areas and outside them, including to areas in business use. When considering consents concerning protected areas, special regulations and objectives concerning them are considered. Consents are drawn up using the Luoto system categories "landowner's consent" and "landowner's consent to research". According to the payment decrees of the Ministry of the Environment and the Ministry of Agriculture and Agriculture, such consents are priced commercially. The prices are specified in the pricing decision of the Director of Parks & Wildlife Finland). However, certain specific consents are free of charge (e.g. consent to camping and consents under the Funeral Services Act).

Completed official permits and landowner's consents drawn up with the Luoto system are also stored in Metsähallitus' case management system Tammi case management system, where they are automatically transferred from the Luoto system.

7.4.4 Influencing land use inside and outside of protected areas

Metsähallitus distributes information e.g. through online services (including social media) and printed products and aims to influence the attitudes and behaviour of hikers and users of the areas (see also section 11.3). Metsähallitus actively cooperates with local communities and strives to commit partners and stakeholders to the conservation objectives of the areas. Cooperation agreements are concluded with tourism entrepreneurs in which they commit to the Principles of sustainable tourism (see section 12.1).

Metsähallitus also supervises visitors and operations in protected areas (see section 15.6). Sustainable tourism plans are drawn up together with tourism operators for tourist areas where, for example, a national park is an important attraction factor (see section 16.1). In addition, Metsähallitus safeguards the values of protected areas through effective lobbying and by participating in land use planning processes (Chapters 16 and 17).

7.5 Involving local communities and stakeholders in planning and management

7.5.1 Participation in the planning of protected areas

The involvement of citizens and stakeholders in the planning of the management and use of protected areas, as in other Metsähallitus land use planning processes, is an established practice. Participation is enabled e.g. through cooperation groups related to planning projects, participation events and other participatory procedures. An interactive approach provides additional information on the operating environment and can prevent potential conflicts. At best, sustainable ways of cooperation and new development opportunities can be found, such as when drawing

up larger natural resource plans or tourism plans (see Chapter 16).

In the regions of Lapland, Oulu and North Karelia, there are advisory boards appointed by the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry consisting of representatives of various interest groups, whose task is to issue statements on issues of regional political significance related to the use of state-owned land and water areas. According to the Nature Conservation Act, national park-specific advisory boards may also be appointed. The management of the extensive Urho Kekkonen National Park is supported by an advisory board appointed by the Ministry of the Environment. The three northernmost municipalities in Lapland have municipality-specific advisory boards (Inari, Utsjoki and Enontekiö).

The planning of the management and use of protected areas must be as open and interactive as possible. Participation follows the guidelines for management planning (found within the SASS system, see section 8.2) and, where applicable, other Metsähallitus' good practices for participatory procedures applied in natural resource planning and these guidelines.

The level and extent of appropriate participation will be considered depending on the types of stakeholders on the one hand and the characteristics of the planning area on the other: fragmentation of land ownership, number, variability and significance of protected areas within the planning area, number of stakeholders and number and quality of expected planning conflicts. Limited participation does not necessarily include public events, whereas broad participation includes the entire spectrum of participation methods, from public events to one-on-one negotiations. In recent years, feedback has been collected through geospatial interactive web applications.

The role of the Centres for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment (ELY Centres) in the planning of Natura sites is legally stronger than that of other stakehold-

ers, as the centres are the authorities responsible for conservation of Natura sites. When private nature reserves and other areas are involved in planning projects, the ELY Centre's participation in the project group is justified. If necessary, planning can also be supported by a cooperation group consisting of key stakeholders or thematic groups dealing with specific topics. E.g. In planning projects concerning national parks, the cooperation group often plays a significant role, and cooperation can continue even after the planning project.

When the planning area includes private land, their landowners have a special position in the planning. In this case, landowners are contacted at different stages of planning. Opportunities to participate in the planning and comment on the plans are also organised as open public events throughout the planning process. Operational planning, that implements the management plan, usually involves specifying working methods and schedules, and participation is not always required on state-owned lands. However, the planning of the management measures of private lands is always carried out in cooperation with landowners and implementation of measures on private land always requires approval. Landowners are contacted as necessary also when measures are taken on state-owned land. Closely linked to participatory engagement is informing about planning, for example through Metsähallitus' online services and local newspapers, for example.

The Act on the Promotion of the Development of the Archipelago (494/1981) obligates to safeguard the vitality, nature and landscape of the archipelagoes. Under the Act, the Advisory Board for Archipelago Affairs, appointed by the Government, has been established. Metsähallitus cooperates with the Advisory Board. Safeguarding the prerequisites for archipelago culture and its objectives must be considered in all sites covered by the Archipelago Act.

Based on the Archipelago Act, the Government has designated by decree (1589/2019) eight archipelago municipalities entirely and 40 in part, covering all the country's largest archipelago areas on the coast and in inland waters. In these municipalities, there are many nature reserves. The obligations of the Archipelago Act must be considered in their management and use.

The task of Metsähallitus is to promote the preservation of the remaining archipelago culture in the areas under its control. Parks & Wildlife Finland manages five maritime national parks. The specific objective of protecting archipelago culture has been included in the regulations establishing the Archipelago Sea and Bothnian Sea National Parks. Metsähallitus is responsible for coordinating the administration, planning and development of the Kvarken Archipelago World Heritage Area. The Archipelago National Park is part of the Archipelago Sea Biosphere Reserve. Metsähallitus cooperates with the other operators in the Biosphere Reserve.

In the Sámi homeland, Metsähallitus uses the Akwé: Kon guidelines in the process of drafting protected area management plans and natural resource plans. These guidelines are connected to the implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity. They are a procedure for ensuring the participation of indigenous people in the preparation, impact assessment and decision-making of projects and plans. By following the Akwé: Kon guidelines, harmful effects on indigenous peoples can be identified and harm minimised. In Finland, the Akwé: Kon guidelines are applied in the cultural, environmental and social impact assessments of projects and plans implemented in the Sámi homeland that may affect Sámi culture, livelihoods and cultural heritage. This approach is explained in more detail in section 10.7.3.

7.5.2 Engagement in site management

In addition to planning, practical management of protected areas is also carried out together with stakeholders. Nationwide, there is cooperation with dozens of organisations and foundations in different fields, and Parks & Wildlife Finland has hundreds of local association partners. There are some twenty larger national level partners.

Expert volunteers collect valuable species data related to endangered species from protected areas, and various hunting and fishing associations participate in the eradication of harmful small carnivores in bird wetlands and archipelagos and collect monitoring data on game and fish populations. In addition, heritage environments are managed with environmental support in cooperation with landowners. Based on an agreement between the Prison and Probation Service and Metsähallitus, open prisoners have (until the end of 2024) been involved especially in the construction of service infrastructure for hikers in Southern Finland.

In addition, some national parks (currently six) have associations of friends. Through the association, interested parties can work for the benefit of the national park through various events, volunteer work and sponsor sites. Friend associations are also actively involved in the development of the national park. The Friends association activities also aim to strengthen the network of friends of the national parks.

A multitude of volunteer camps and events are organised annually in national parks and other protected areas for the benefit of nature and cultural heritage. Parks & Wildlife Finland organises volunteer work both itself and together with its partners. The most common volunteer tasks are mowing and clearing, removal of invasive species, repair of point and sheep fences and renovation of heritage buildings. The length of the volunteer working events varies from one day to a weekend or even two-week camps. Shepherd weeks in national parks and protected areas are particularly popular. Participants get to care for sheep, cows or horses, and at the same time, they participate in valuable nature conservation work.

Parks & Wildlife Finland provides various associations, school classes and hobby groups as well as private individuals with dedicated sponsor sites, such as meadows or small protected areas. Sponsoring sites give communities the opportunity to participate concretely in preserving a valuable natural or cultural heritage site. At the same time, ownership towards the site is strengthened.

Parks & Wildlife Finland also offers cultural heritage sites for adoption together with the Finnish Heritage Agency. The “adopt a monument” approach can involve keeping an eye on a cultural site (for example, a diving club keeps an eye on a wreck), collecting rubbish or carrying out minor maintenance activities.

8 Protected Area Management Planning and Monitoring

In the previous Chapter 7, the adaptive planning model and its general principles were presented. Specific issues included taking climate change into account, ensuring sustainability, and engagement of stakeholders in the management processes. This chapter describes the obligations and assessment of needs for site-specific planning, the knowledge base for site planning, the data-based planning and monitoring system, and the various planning tools used in more detail.

8.1 Integrated approach to planning obligations

8.1.1 National legislation

Management plans for nature reserves and wilderness reserves

According to the Nature Conservation Act (NCA section 57), a management plan must be drawn up for all national parks in Finland, and it can also be drafted for strict nature reserves and other nature reserves if necessary. The management plan is drawn up for the purpose of "organising management and use" and defines measures to achieve the objectives of establishing the protected area.

In established nature reserves, the founding acts guide the preparation of the management plan, but the plan specifies the objectives defined in the statutes, among other aspects. Correspondingly, under the Wilderness Act (section 7), a management plan must also be drawn up for wilderness reserves, which "shall be observed in the management and use of the wilderness reserve".

If necessary, management plans will also be drawn up for nature conservation areas that have not yet been established as statutory nature reserves, and do not yet have site-specific regulations. In such cases, the plan may also serve future legislative drafting. Planning solutions aim to anticipate and consider future conservation regulations.

At present, management plans are often drawn up for a functional entity of several sites, which may include several different nature reserves, such as those included in a wider Natura 2000 designation. Regardless of geographical definition, the management plan is drawn up according to the principles of integrated management, i.e. the values and objectives of all protected sites and types of areas within the planning area are considered, including objectives related to cultural heritage and the different uses of the area, as well as the obligations of EU Nature Directives and international agreements.

Management plans for state-owned nature reserves are drawn up and approved by Metsähallitus. However, a statement on the plan must be requested from the Ministry of the Environment before approving it. Management plans are also drawn up for state hiking areas, and these plans are presented to Metsähallitus' Management Group and approved by the Director-General.

Safeguarding Sámi and archipelago culture and livelihoods through planning

One of the main objectives of the **Wilderness Act** (62/1991) is to safeguard Sámi culture. The Nature Conservation Act contains a separate section (section 6) on the protection of Sámi culture and other entries concerning the Sámi homeland (e.g. sections 55 and 57). In accordance with the Act on the Sámi Parliament (974/1995), Metsähallitus negotiates with the Sámi Parliament on all far-reaching and significant measures – especially matters concerning the management, use, lease and transfer of state-owned land, protected areas and wilderness reserves – in the Sámi homeland. Provisions on securing the practice of Sámi culture are also laid down in the Act on Metsähallitus (234/2016), the national land use objectives under the Land Use and Building Act, the Skolt Act (253/1995), the Act on Structural Subsidies for Reindeer Husbandry and Natural Livelihoods (986/2011) and the Sámi Language Act (1086/2003). These regulatory documents are considered in planning. In the Sámi homeland, the Akwe: Kon model is used in planning (see section 10.7.3) and the plans are published in the local or Northern Sámi language.

In protected areas of marine and coastal areas and inland waters, management planning must be based on an ecosystem-based overall review and consider the obligations of the **Archipelago Act** (494/1981) (see Chapter 7). The extent and zonality of the archipelago's protected areas requires that interpretation, guidance for recreation and tourism, and service infrastructure are planned uniformly at provincial level. Instead, involving local communities and landowners focuses planning at the municipal and village level. Together with local actors, the aim is to find solutions for the management and use of areas that enable the preservation of both the natural and cultural environment.

In the Swedish-speaking coastal area, the plans are also published in Swedish.

8.1.2 Appropriate management plans for Natura 2000 sites

The EU Habitats Directive requires that for special areas of conservation (SACs) appropriate management plans specific to these sites are drawn up, or where appropriate, included in other development plans.

In accordance with the guidelines related to the latest reporting on the implementation of the Habitats Directive (for the period 2013–2018), an appropriate management plan has been defined so that the plan covers the entire area, records the current state of all conservation criteria features and indicates the location of the conservation values for which measures are necessary to maintain or improve the conservation status, defines a clear and achievable conservation objective for them and the active measures and/or other procedures needed to achieve the objective. Even if no special measures are needed, as is the case with many Natura 2000 sites in Finland, the status of the habitat types and species on which protection is based, and the conservation objectives must nevertheless be defined at the site level.

A (strategic) management plan is a necessary planning tool in Natura areas where there is a need to coordinate and guide different forms of use. Statutory management plans that require stakeholder involvement often target large and multiple-value national protected areas (such as national parks and wilderness reserves), the boundaries of which in many cases do not coincide with those of Natura 2000 sites. It is difficult to record detailed conservation measures in these plans at the level required by the Habitats and Birds Directives. Currently, the preparation of a management plan is preceded by a Natura site condition assessment (NATA) of all the Natura sites included in the planning area, which makes it possible to identify conservation measures specifically targeted at the directive values (i.e. habitats and species listed in annexes of the nature directives).

According to the mutual interpretation of the Ministry of the Environment and Metsähallitus, the planning system for Finland's national protected areas and Natura sites is an entity that includes several tools developed within geographic information systems that can be used in parallel. The planning framework includes four distinct operational processes, i.e. provincial level master planning, Natura site condition assessment, strategic management planning and operative action planning, supported by up-to-date habitat type and species data.

The Natura site condition assessment (NATA) is an autonomous and in many situations sufficient "management plan" covering the entire Natura site. The assessment includes the elements in the above-mentioned Commission guideline. The need for measures is examined at the level of the conservation criteria features (habitats and species), but especially in larger areas, measures are not always defined or documented with this level of detail. If necessary, planning is supplemented with operational planning. Other plans deemed necessary in the general master plans or their updates are considered complementary to the NATA assessment.

In connection with the reporting on the implementation of the Habitats Directive, Finland determined how to interpret the obligation to define conservation measures in SAC areas and the degree of their implementation. According to the policy agreed at that time, the following combinations meet the requirements of the reporting guidelines for Natura sites:

- A NATA assessment has been carried out and no planning needs have been identified.
- NATA has been carried out and the necessary plans are in place (even if they require updating).
- A plan has been developed that defines conservation objectives and measures (i.e. necessary conservation actions) in a similar comprehensive manner as in the NATA assessment.

For conservation to be realised, it is important to present in the management plans, to the operators in the area, the location of the key conservation criteria (at least at a rough level) and to steer operations to avoid weakening or disturbing the values. This can be aided, for example, by making better use of habitat type maps included in the management plans and of land use zones demarcated in the plans.

Efforts have been made to improve the availability and presentation of the necessary information in the plans. For example, thematic maps of habitats have been developed to better visualise conservation measures. Maps can show where the habitat types under conservation are located, what their status is currently and where the (sub)areas are located, where the extent and/or status of designated habitat types could be actively increased (good status/passive improvement/active improvement with the aim of improvement).

8.1.3 Commitments under international agreements

Some of the national protected areas are included in international agreements and programmes, the obligations of which must then be considered in the management and use of the areas and their planning. Such special areas include, for example, the Marine Protected Areas of the Baltic Sea Protection Convention (HELCOM MPAs) and the Ramsar Convention Wetland Protection Sites, as well as UNESCO World Heritage Sites and Man and Biosphere (MAB) Programme Biosphere Reserves. Some of the boundaries of these types overlap with each other, and all these sites are partly or fully included in the Natura 2000 network.

As a rule, the needs for management planning in these areas should be interpreted according to the same criteria as in Natura sites and national protected areas intersecting them, considering also other guidelines

drawn up within the scope of the agreements in question. In the following, management planning in marine and wetland protected areas is examined in more detail.

Planning the management and use of marine protected areas

The HELCOM Marine Protected Areas Recommendation, updated in 2014, stresses that all MPAs should have a management plan or (defined and documented) measures that contribute to conservation objectives. HELCOM (2006) has also published guidelines for planning the management of marine protected areas, but they are outdated in many respects. The guidelines are being updated by HELCOM's working group, in which Finland is the leading party. Thanks to comprehensive underwater inventories (in the VELMU programme), better possibilities for appropriate spatial planning are now available.

In Finland, the general guidelines (described above) on the implementation of Natura sites and the assessment of planning needs can be applied in the sea area, and the principles also apply to HELCOM MPAs. By law, a participatory management plan involving stakeholders is drawn up for all national parks in the marine area and may be considered for other nature reserves where there is a special need for steering and coordinating different forms of use. Where appropriate, operational plans are developed to target management and restoration activities. Natura sites, where conservation is implemented by other legislation than the Nature Conservation Act, may also require other planning that guides the use of the areas. Planning can be assisted by, for example, national marine management plan policies and materials compiled for maritime spatial planning (see Chapter 16). For example, in sites located in open sea areas where restoration cannot be carried out and there is little need for guidance, there is no need for special planning in

addition to the Natura site condition assessment (NATA).

Standard Data Form (SDF) information is maintained for sites in the Natura network in the sea area, and the NATA assessment is carried out for all Natura sites. The conservation criteria for the HELCOM MPA are partly in line with the conservation criteria of the Habitats and Birds Directives, but they also focus on underwater feeding, migratory and breeding areas as well as other important or endangered marine habitats and species or concentrations of species. Site information is maintained in HELCOM's MPA database and includes known habitat types and species classified as threatened and valuable by HELCOM. In addition to the directive values, other known underwater nature values must be considered in NATA assessments, which is also emphasised by HELCOM's separate recommendations for threatened habitat types and species (HELCOM 2016, 2019).

Planning the management and use of wetland protected areas

To promote the objectives of the Ramsar Convention, Finland drew up a national wetland programme for 2016–2020 (Juvonen & Kurikka 2016). As part of the action plan, efforts were made to ensure the level of up-to-date information and adequate management of existing sites in the Ramsar network. Although the implementation of the agreement requires that a managed plan be drawn up for all designated and proposed Ramsar areas, it has been decided in Finland that the need for an appropriate type of plan will be assessed at these sites in the same way as in marine protected areas, i.e. in practice, as Natura 2000 areas.

According to Parks & Wildlife's evaluation, the majority of Ramsar sites in Finland have Natura 2000 site condition assessments and the necessary management plans and/or operational plans are in place. In connection with the study, it was also noted that the information content of Metsähallitus' current

plans and NATA documents cover the key elements for appropriate management planning of Ramsar sites, as instructed by the Ramsar Convention Secretariat. The Secretariat has published several manuals related to wetland management and management of use, including guidelines focusing on the planning of Ramsar areas. Parks & Wildlife Finland has examined the NATA guidelines from the perspective of (Ramsar) wetlands and supplemented them where necessary.

Data from the Ramsar Sites Information Service (2024) and possible new inventory and monitoring data, e.g. on bird populations, is utilised in management planning. Eutrophication and many other pressures and factors affecting wetlands in the catchment area require close cooperation with actors in the operating environment of protected areas. For some Natura sites, conservation measures are also defined as part of river basin management planning (see section 16.3).

8.2 Protected area information and its management

The execution of all key tasks related to the management and use of Finland's protected areas and Natura 2000 sites, including planning and monitoring processes, is based on the use of the Uljas geographic information system and its shared data pool. The Uljas entity is developed and maintained by Metsähallitus. Uljas presently consists of six independent and integrated geographic information applications. Parks & Wildlife Finland owns the following:

- SATJ = Protected area information system
- SASS = Protected area planning and monitoring system
- SAKTI = Protected area biotope information system
- SpeciesGIS = Species data management and maintenance system
- PAVE = GIS of structures, routes and archaeological sites.

These Uljas systems are also available to other state nature conservation administration organisations (ELY Centres, Ministry of the Environment, Finnish Environment Institute). Parks & Wildlife Finland owns also a separate Visitor monitoring system (NASTA), that is available only to Metsähallitus.

In addition, Metsähallitus uses in performing its duties, the PropertyGIS system (Metsähallitus' property and land use data management application) and the separate Luoto system (Land lease and right of use contract system) maintained by Metsähallitus Property Development are part of the Uljas entity. These information systems are only available to Metsähallitus.

The technical service life of the Uljas system will come to an end in a few years. Renewal work has begun, and the new geospatial information system is expected to be in use from 2026 onwards. As part of this system development, the current tasks and operational processes handled by the system's applications are being examined (ARVO project). The aim is to make procedures more efficient and to better support workflows with the new system. Both the current Uljas, and the new system to be implemented in its place, form a central part of the nature conservation information system defined in the Nature Conservation Act (section 117).

The present Uljas system and Visitor monitoring system are shown in Figure 12. The main information applications used for protected area management are described in more detail below.

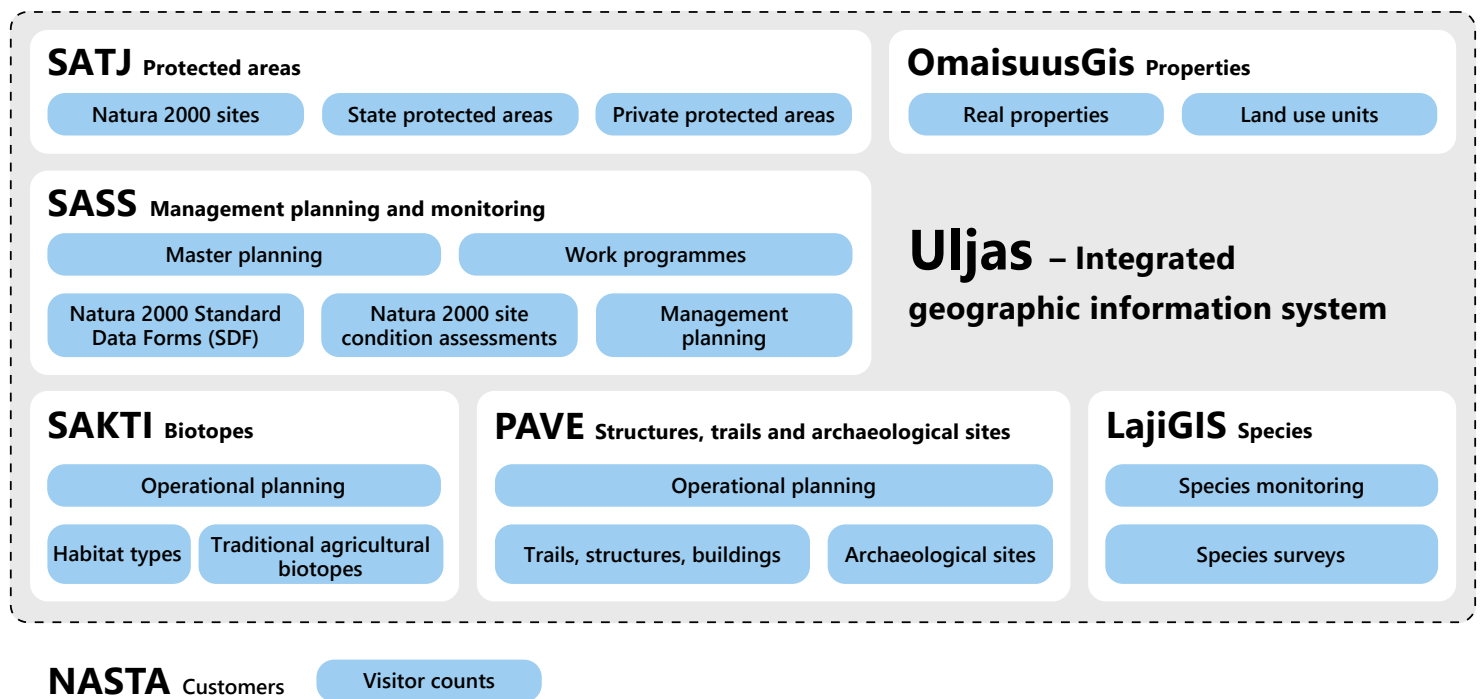


Figure 12. ULJAS integrated geographic information system for protected area management. Alternative supplementary text: ULJAS integrated GIS system consists of 5 subsystems with following modules: SATJ: state protected areas, private protected areas, Natura 2000 sites; SASS: master planning, management planning, Natura 2000 Standard Data Forms, Natura 2000 site condition assessments, work programmes; SAKTI: habitat types, traditional agricultural biotopes, operational planning; PAVE: trails, structures, buildings; archaeological sites, operational planning; SpeciesGIS: species surveys; species monitoring.

8.2.1 Systems for basic information, planning and monitoring of protected areas

Protected Area Information System (SATJ):

In addition to Natura areas, the system contains information on nature reserves/sites on state and private land (incl. natural monuments) and sites in national conservation programmes. It includes demarcation data (boundary geometries) as well as basic and foundation data for Natura and other protected areas. The system is used, for example, in the drafting of legislation on state-owned nature reserves, the establishment of protected sites on private land, land acquisition for protected areas, the management of protected properties by the Ministry of the Environment, and the production of statistics and reports on protected areas.

Protected Area Planning and Monitoring Information System (SASS):

In SASS, the main planning, assessment and monitoring processes for Natura and other protected areas form an integrated whole. The system is used to collect and maintain site-specific data needed for the planning and monitoring of Natura and other protected areas. A significant part of this data is compiled and calculated from theme-based systems (SAKTI and LajiGis). SASS is also used to monitor Natura and national sites at network level. In addition, the system manages key operational processes for the implementation of Natura site obligations.

8.2.2 Thematic (geo-)information systems

Biotope Information System for Protected Areas (SAKTI): Includes habitat type and other data collected in inventories and monitoring of protected areas on state and private land, inventory data (incl. allocation of inventories), data on restoration and nature management (planning, implementation, monitoring), data on semi-natural grasslands, and nature data on special sites (e.g. threatened habitat types and METSO sites). The system is used to draw up operational plans for nature management and restoration and work site plans for the implementation of measures on site. The SAKTI system also contains some information outside protected areas, e.g. on semi-natural grasslands.

Species data management and maintenance system (LajiGIS): The system is used to manage and maintain the species property and location data, obtained by surveying and monitoring. These include, for example, information on mapping and monitoring sites, species observations made at sites, the need for measures for species occurrences, and administrative and ecological classifications related to species. The system is also used for planning and tracking of the surveys and monitoring.

Geographic Information System of Structures, Routes and Archaeological Sites (PAVE): The system holds location and feature information on construction products, such as buildings, structures and routes, as well as archaeological sites. It is used to draw up operational plans for larger service facility and work site implementation.

The information maintained on the sites is technical, qualitative and descriptive, and includes monitoring data related to their construction and maintenance. The system is used for classifying the data and for visual analysis and reporting. Visitor infrastructure is displayed to the public on the Excursionmap.fi website.

Metsähallitus' real estate and land use information system (PropertyGis): Contains information on all state-owned properties managed by Metsähallitus. In addition, the system contains information on land use sites, such as protected areas. The geometry data of protected areas is maintained in PropertyGis, but this information is also visible in the Protected Area Information System (SATJ).

Land lease and right of use contract system (Luoto): The Luoto system is used to draw up and maintain, for example, land leases, hunting and fishing leases and concession agreements for business premises, as well as (official) permits and landowner consents. The system also handles the invoicing of contracts related to the above.

Visitor monitoring system (NASTA): The system contains visitor volume and other customer data, partly converted from earlier application ASTA. The new digital solution, introduced in 2024, was also opened as a browser-based Visitor monitoring service to external users (at metsa.fi). It shows information that is updated throughout the year on both visitor destinations (protected or hiking area, historical site, nature centre) and counting sites that are used to calculate the number of visits to destinations.

NASTA data is utilised, for example, in developing customer service, developing the quality and quantity of service structures, and allocating resources. In addition, the data is used in reporting activities, research cooperation and monitoring the sustainability and impact of operations, for example, when assessing the impacts of recreational use of nature on the regional economy and employment. NASTA is not a geographic information system, but its data is nevertheless tied to, for example, a protected area or customer service point.

Field data collection applications: SAKTI, LajiGIS and PAVE systems require field applications for compiling and processing data, from which data can be transferred to

an office application and vice versa. The first application for collecting and processing data on habitats was introduced in 2014. For the collection of species, service facilities and archaeological data, a field application was later developed for the LajiGIS and PAVE systems, which can be used with smartphones and tablets.

8.3 Comprehensive planning system for protected areas

The main elements of the planning and management system for Natura 2000 sites and nature reserves are shown in Figure 13. The figure does not include all the components of these information systems, e.g. inventories related to SAKTI and LajiGIS and maintenance of nature information. The PAVE system, which is used to draw up construction plans, is also not included in the diagram. Construction-related operational planning has not yet been integrated into the work programme included in the framework.

The planning framework shown in the figure includes four separate operational processes: the preparation of a regional master plan, Natura site condition assessment (NATA)

and the management plan using the modules of the SASS, as well as the preparation of the operational plan using the SAKTI system. In addition, this framework includes modules for maintaining information on Natura 2000 sites (Standard Data Form SDF), formulating planning and inventory needs, and drawing up a work programme. These objects are geometric (map-located) design and inventory needs representations that are formed in the above-mentioned operational processes.

The operation of the (present) planning system can be summarised as follows:

- In **master planning**, uniform criteria are used to assess site-specifically, among other things, the urgency of NATA assessments and the needs and urgency of more detailed planning, and based on this assessment, planning and inventory needs (geometric objects) of the NATA and different types of plans are formed.
- In **NATA assessments** the need for and urgency of conservation measures and more detailed planning are considered, and this assessment is used to formulate planning and inventory needs (as geometrical objects).

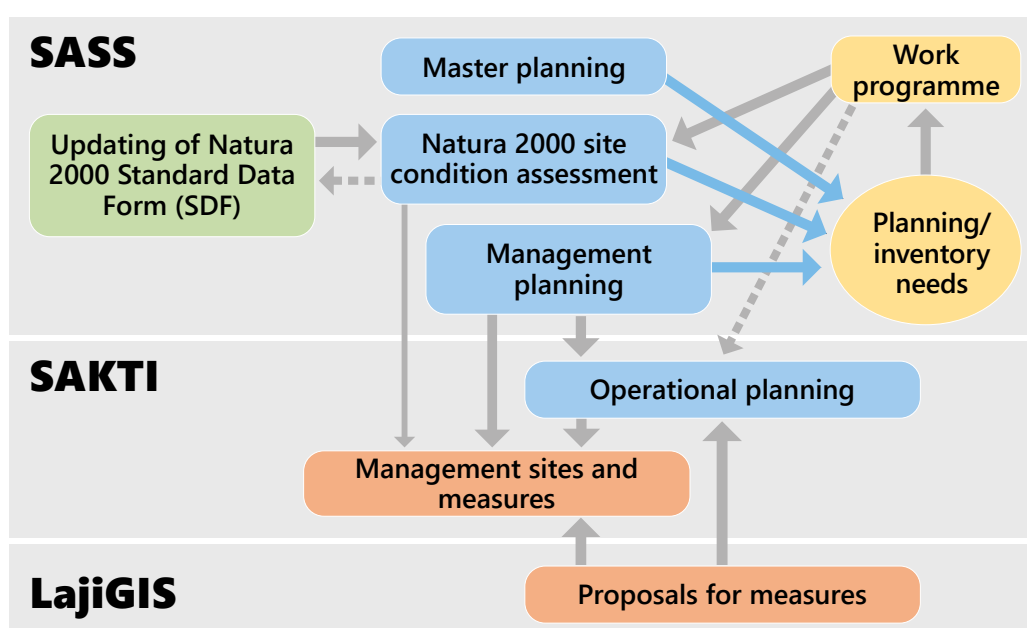


Figure 13. Schematic overview of the protected area management planning system.

- In **management planning**, the needs and urgency of operational planning are assessed, among other things, and this type of planning and inventory needs are formed (as geometrical objects) based on this assessment.
- The **planning and inventory needs** identified in the above operational processes (and registered as geometrical objects) constitute a reserve of proposed plans and inventories from which they are selected for work programmes. These objects can also be formed for various inventories missing from Figure 13 (species, habitats, traditional landscapes, aquatic nature, archaeology, built heritage).
- The **work programmes** are drawn up for Parks & Wildlife nationally and each work programme covers one calendar year. ELY Centres can also draw up their own work programmes. Work programmes are used to program NATA assessments, management and operational planning (as well as inventories needed for planning). The work programme will also be used to monitor its implementation. The work programme primarily serves the planning of operational activities and the monitoring of their implementation (this is discussed in more detail in section 8.4.1).
- **Measures** in Figure 13 refer to nature management and restoration measures. Most of these are defined in management plans, especially operational plans. The latter are drawn up both to specify measure prescribed in the management plan and as the only plan for the protected area/Natura site.
- **Work sites** are formed in SAKTI, for which a simple work site plan is drawn up. In the case of very minor measures, they can be carried out without the formation of a work site and a work site plan.

- **Proposals for measures** can be made as a geometry delimitation related to habitats not only in SASS but also in SpeciesGIS. However, the implementation of habitat management measures for species defined in SpeciesGIS is carried out using SAKTI.

The planning processes and tools included in the planning system are described in more detail below. The descriptions summarise the stages and content of these planning processes. Training material has been prepared for the use of each information system, as well as a process description for most functions and detailed instructions for filling in the data. The aim of these is to ensure that the assessment of the status of protected/Natura sites is as commensurate as possible, and that the preparation of plans follows the same principles despite the diversity of the sites.

8.3.1 Master planning at regional level

The Habitats Directive requires that necessary conservation measures are taken in Natura 2000 sites and, where necessary, appropriate site-specific management plans or more extensive development plans are drawn up. Assessing the need and urgency of such plans is the most important task of master planning. General planning is network-level planning: it simultaneously examines all Natura network sites at the regional/provincial level – in practice, master planning has been done according to the regional division of the environmental administration (ELY Centres).

The first round of master planning for Natura 2000 sites took place in the early 2000s under the leadership of the regional environment centres. Comprehensive master planning was carried out again in 2016. The general plans (13) were drawn up under the guidance of the Ministry of the Environment,

under the leadership of ELY Centres and in cooperation with Parks & Wildlife Finland.

Assessment of planning needs continued to play a key role in the master planning in 2016. To support the determination of the need for and urgency of the plans, five factors influencing the need for planning were examined: (sub)areas outside nature reserves included in the Natura site, species conservation measures, habitat conservation measures, pressures caused by nature tourism and local recreation, and other land use pressures. The Natura site review also included the definition of key conservation criteria (habitats and species of the nature directives) and an assessment of the urgency of Natura site condition assessments (NATA).

Master planning was carried out using the Master Planning and Land Use Site modules in the Protected Area Planning and Monitoring Information System (SASS). The information in the master plan was stored in the SASS system, from which document-based master plan reports were produced. These included data and summaries of the area-specific examination.

The Master Planning functionality implemented in the SASS system enables the use of various e.g. network summaries and analyses of Natura sites, but their use was limited in the 2016 master planning. The idea has been that, in the future, master planning could focus more on such examinations and analyses of the state of the regional network and changes in it.

As knowledge of nature improves and the use and threats of Natura sites change and/or possibly increase, so do the conservation status and management needs of habitats and species. The area-specific planning and intervention needs of Natura sites are currently determined in connection to Natura site condition assessments (NATA). However, master planning will continue to be needed to steer planning and prioritisation at regional level. Reporting tools can be used to monitor the progress of planning work.

8.3.2 Natura 2000 site condition assessments (NATA)

The Natura site condition assessment (NATA) is carried out in all Natura 2000 sites in mainland Finland, with the aim of updating the assessments periodically. NATA usually targets a single Natura site (sometimes two partially/fully overlapping Natura sites). NATA data is stored in the SASS system, from which a document-type NATA report can be generated.

Phases of the NATA assessment are shown in Figure 14. In addition to basic and background information, the description of the current situation includes a detailed examination of the habitat types and species listed in the annexes to the EU Nature Directives. This includes updating the information contained in the Natura Standard Data Form (SDF) and documenting the justification for the updates. Next phases include: Assessing the status of habitat types and species and the adequacy of (previous) conservation measures; Determining or verifying for each conservation criteria habitat type and species whether it is a key conservation criterion or other value, as well as its conservation objective and need for action; Defining (further) the conservation measures needed to achieve the objectives within (and beyond) the Natura site.

The key natural, cultural and use values of the area and their status as well as significant threats to the values are determined for each NATA area, and the measures needed to maintain or achieve the target state of the values and the need for more detailed plans are defined. The value menu used in defining the key values (see Appendix 6) describes all the possible values of the protected area and the indicators used in assessing the status of the values. Key values are one way to describe ecosystem services in an area. Threat assessment related to the NATA process, on the other hand, is one method for assessing conflicts between different uses of the natu-

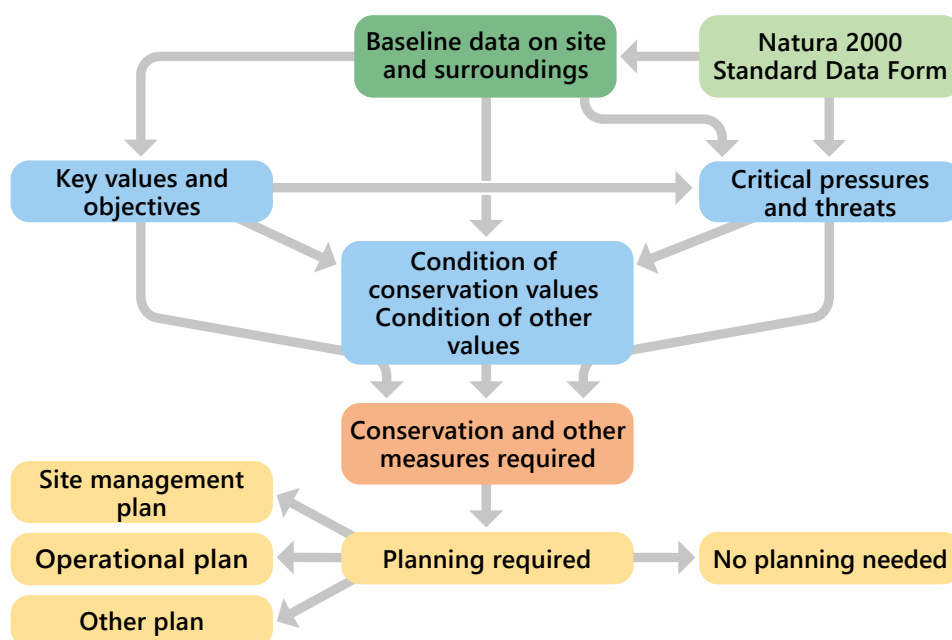


Figure 14. Key elements and work phases of the Natura 2000 Site Condition Assessment (NATA).

ral environment and natural resources as well as for weighing, for example, the potential impacts of climate change in combination with other factors affecting the site.

NATA assessments are permanent documents, like management plans, which are approved by the Parks & Wildlife Finland's responsible management (or in the case of Natura sites for which the ELY Centre is responsible, by the respective Head of the Nature Conservation Unit). The NATA document is not updated continuously. The assessment is renewed by drafting a new one based on current information. Consequently, periodic NATA assessments of an individual Natura site constitute important long-term monitoring material at site level.

NATA assessments started in 2010 on a tabular basis (using Word/Excel) and since 2015 assessments have been prepared using the NATA module of the SASS system. At the end of 2021, the NATA assessments of all Natura sites managed by Parks & Wildlife Finland (1,121 sites) had been completed in the SASS system. In Natura areas where all or

a large part of the conservation measures are carried out by means other than the Nature Conservation Act, the preparation of NATA assessments is mainly the responsibility of the ELY Centres. Most NATA assessments require the expertise of both ELY Centres and Metsähallitus, as well as cooperation with landowners. The first round of assessments of the entire Natura 2000 network was completed in cooperation at the end of 2022.

The NATA review is updated approximately every 6–12 years, or at the latest 18 years after the first/previous assessment, according to the anticipated schedule or need. The reassessment will utilise data from the previous NATA and the update will be used to monitor, among other things, the achievement of conservation objectives. The development of the status of conservation values is also used to assess the effectiveness of conservation measures at network level.

8.3.3 Strategic management plans

Management plans outline the strategic choices and main decisions for the management and use of national protected areas and Natura sites for 10–15 years.

The target area of a management plan is demarcated administratively, functionally and as an entity appropriate for the use of the planning area. A planning area may consist of one or more Natura sites, often including, in addition to established state nature reserves, unestablished state conservation programme sites and/or conservation site reservations of land use plans, as well as private nature reserves. In some cases, the planning area may also include other areas in private ownership where the means of implementing Natura objectives are other than provisions of the Nature Conservation Act. The appropriate delimitation of the planning area may also deviate from the Natura boundaries.

The main sections and work phases of the (participatory) management plan are shown in Figure 15. The process and report contain many of the same elements as the NATA assessment described above. In the plan, the required information on the current state is compiled, including analyses of the area's

natural and cultural values, use and threats affecting the values. Based on these, the long-term goals and short-term targets of the planning area are set. The land use zoning of the area and the dimensioning and location of key functions and measures are defined, together with indicators related to monitoring of the implementation of the plan and its anticipated impacts. More detailed planning of the necessary measures is usually carried out in operational plans (see section 8.3.4), the need for which is identified in the management plan or, in the case of Natura sites, already in the context of the NATA review(s).

Since autumn 2015, management plans have been drawn up using the management planning module of the SASS system. Planning data is stored in the SASS system, from which a document-type management plan report can be produced. For stakeholder engagement, a separate summary of the plan's key values and threats, goal-setting and proposed measures is also prepared as part of the management planning process. In 2019–2020, Parks & Wildlife Finland has further developed the structure and content of both the planning module and the reports to better serve both planning work and stakeholder engagement. In connection with the

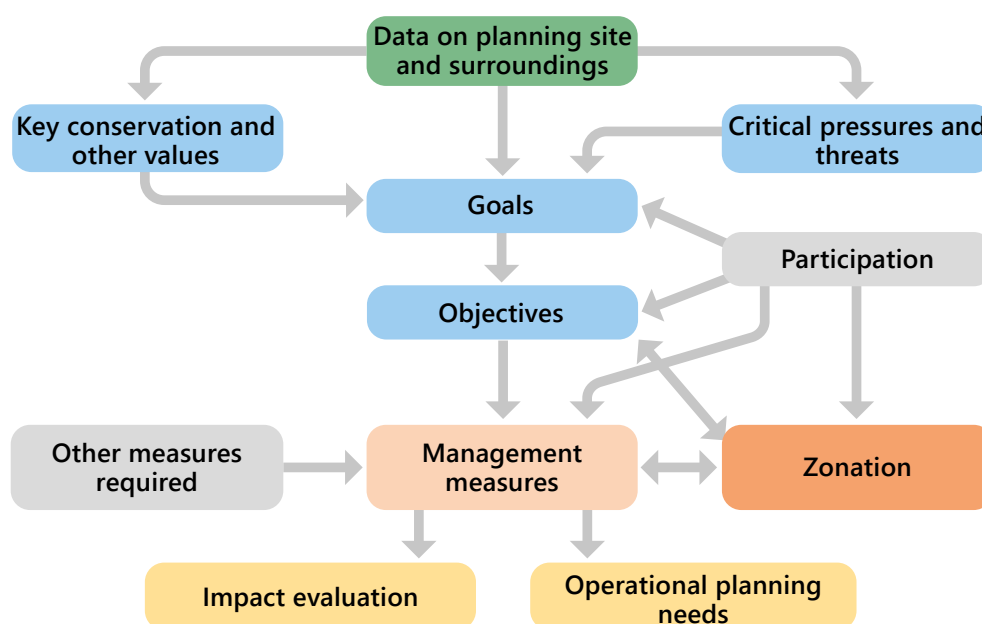


Figure 15. Key sections and work phases of the strategic management plan.

development work, a slightly new policy has also been adopted concerning the mutual role of NATA assessments and the management plans in the planning and monitoring framework.

The NATA site condition assessment(s) and site management plan together form a planning framework, and there is no need to repeat all NATA data for a (each) Natura site in the management plan. However, the management plan must include a list of habitat types and species of the Habitats and Birds Directives on which protection is based, as well as an impact assessment of the measures proposed in the plan in relation to these values.

8.3.4 Operational plans

An operational action plan is drawn up by the nature conservation administration (P&WF or ELY Centre) for a protected and Natura area. It is narrower in content and, in most cases, a narrower area delimitation than a comprehensive site management plan. However, it contains some of the same elements. Operational plans may be related to, for example: nature management, restoration or large-scale construction or renovation of service facilities. A separate operational plan or landscape management plan can also be drawn up for cultural heritage sites in protected areas. Operational plans are drawn up as plans specifying the measures prescribed in management plans.

Plans for habitat management or restoration

In some situations, the nature management or restoration action plan is drawn up as the only plan for conservation measures in the area. This is possible when the measures required in the area are limited in nature (e.g. only restoration) and there is no need to reconcile different, potentially conflicting, objectives in the planning process. Operational planning does not usually require

(broader) stakeholder involvement. However, exceptions to this are, for example, situations where the planning area includes, or is limited to, privately owned properties that are, or may be, affected by the planned activities.

The area where measures are planned may cover the entire Natura site or the national nature reserve, but often only part of this is covered by the operational plan. Several action plans can be drawn up for a single Natura site. Exceptionally, a planning site may cover more than one small Natura site or a national protected area (private nature reserve etc.).

Operational plans for nature management and restoration are drawn up using the specific planning module of the SAKTI system. Subsequent data is stored in the SAKTI system, from which an operational plan report in document form can be produced.

The stages of operational planning are shown in Figure 16. As in the NATA and the management planning process (and utilising their data where possible), habitat and species data are compiled, and key values defined. Then conservation objectives and measures are formulated and the impact of planned measures on key species and habitats is assessed.

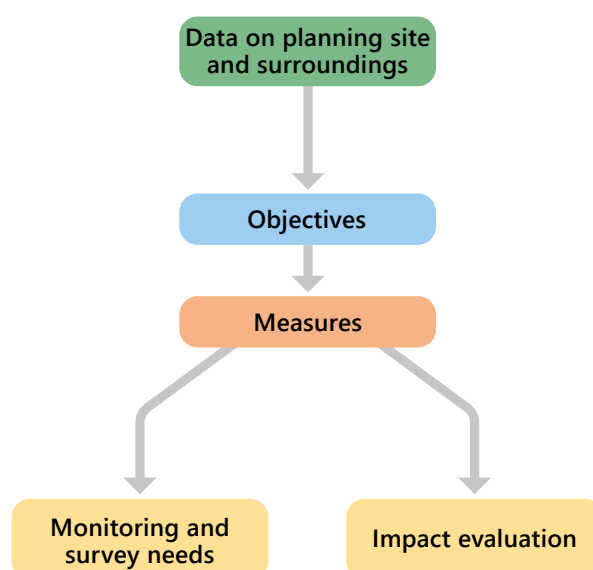


Figure 16. Key sections and work phases of the operational plan.

The operational plan is implemented through detailed work site planning. In practice, the work site means, for example: In connection with restoration, a work package carried out in one year with one machine (e.g. harvester or excavator). Habitat compartments (registered in the SAKTI system) to be targeted at a work site are usually included in one or more operational plans, but the work site can also include target compartments that are not part of operational plans. The work site is usually related to one-off work, but it can also be related to continuous management (e.g. of semi-natural grasslands). Sometimes just a simple work site plan is sufficient, for example when the number of restoration and/or nature management activities are small or their nature such that their implementation does not require the preparation of a separate operational plan. The actual need for this type of plan must always be decided on a case-by-case basis. In the following, the solutions are outlined in general.

When is an operational plan needed?

An operational plan should be prepared whenever

- the measures are not limited in number and/or simple in nature
- the implementation of measures requires a detailed assessment of their impact (account must also be taken of the combined effect of several actions)
- the measures may have a negative impact on the conservation criteria of the Natura site
- the measures require a statement from, for example, the Finnish Heritage Agency (archaeological sites) or the ELY Centre (e.g. measures affecting water balance)
- measures are taken in private nature reserves where measures require a plan confirmed or approved by the ELY Centre and/or the landowner.

An operational plan is not necessary if the measures are limited and simple, and if:

- the measures do not have a negative impact on any of the conservation criteria features of the Natura site concerned
- there is no contradiction between the objectives of the measures.

An operational plan is usually not necessary, e.g. in the following cases:

- small-scale and simple management of species
- small-scale burning measures on burnt wood continuum areas
- small-scale measures to improve the status of the Natura habitat
- measures to transform non-Natura habitat compartments into Natura habitats or other habitats of conservation importance.

In practice, sometimes the plan for a private nature reserve, that is approved by the ELY Centre and a private landowner, can be a mere work site plan. It shows what is concretely being done and how and explains why the measures are being carried out (conservation objective). A cover page may be added to the document (if necessary).

Plans for visitor infrastructure

According to the visitor management guidelines, all measures related to routes, buildings and structures are entered into the PAVE system, and plans for construction and renovation of visitor infrastructure is processed within the system. Only approved operational plans (in the system) are budgeted and attached to the annual work programmes.

The starting point for operational planning is that in a site with a valid management plan, the planned measures must be based on this plan. An operational plan deviating from the prescriptions in the management plan is to be confirmed by the designated service owner. If there is no management plan in force in the

area, the Principles of protected area management are followed. Zoning regulations are also followed in the zone area.

In principle, proposed measures and visitor use must not significantly impair the conservation values of the area. It is essential to assess whether the planned measures themselves or the solutions for recreational use or visitor facilities have an impact on the values of the natural or cultural environment. The anticipated effects of proposed construction and visitor use on the status of conservation criteria features and on endangered species are assessed. Possible impacts on archaeological cultural heritage and the built cultural environment are assessed. In addition, the effects on the landscape are estimated.

At the very beginning of the planning process, cooperation between conservation and cultural heritage experts is ensured to avoid a significant weakening of conservation values in the implementation of the measures. If a nature conservation expert estimates that the threshold for significant deterioration in the implementation of the measure will be exceeded, a Natura impact assessment must be drawn up and submitted to the ELY Centre for approval (NCA section 35). A cultural heritage expert requests the statements and permits required by the plans from the museum authority.

For certain measures, a permit is required. For example, demolition and the sale of a culturally and historically valuable site, as well as construction or landscape work. Even very small measures may be subject to a permit at certain protected sites, such as antiquities sites. Depending on the type of measure, the permit is granted either by the Building Control Authority, ELY Centre, museum authority or another state authority.

Impacts of implementing measures will also be considered, such as access routes and rights to work sites through nearby areas. At the same time, special occupational safety and health aspects or the requirements of

the environmental management system are considered.

A risk analysis of the planned measures will also be prepared to assess the threats posed by construction and use. Threats may include, for example: changes in water management, traces of transport of building materials in the terrain, dumping, etc. Documentation is made of the risk analysis so that these damages can be prevented or repaired afterwards.

8.3.5 Other plans for Natura 2000 sites

Management plans and operational plans are drawn up for Natura sites, which consist wholly or mainly of state-owned nature reserves and protected areas and private nature reserves. As stated above, the management planning area may also include, to some extent, privately owned areas where the means of implementation of protection/conservation is based on legislation other than the Nature Conservation Act. For example, areas where conservation measures are based on provisions of the Water Act, are included in many the sites.

The 2016 master planning also examined planning needs in Natura areas that consist wholly or largely of areas owned by private parties where Natura is implemented by means other than the Nature Conservation Act. In such areas, some wide-ranging development plans can be used to specify conservation measures. Certain types of land use plans and river basin management plans may be considered as such. These are discussed in more detail in Chapter 16.

In some cases, site-level plans may also be used, such as wetland restoration plans (often comparable in nature to the operational action plans discussed above) and forest plans for commercial forests. However, from the perspective of the requirements of the Habitats Directive, planning methods and practices are still partly undefined.

The ELY Centres are responsible for the overall coordination of the implementation of conservation measures in Natura sites. A site condition assessment (NATA) is prepared for all Natura sites, which examines the measures required for conservation objectives and specifies the related planning needs. The parties responsible for the necessary land use planning or other larger scale planning have a legal obligation to consider the obligations of the directives, but this is not described in detail (in this document).

According to the 2016 master planning guidelines, in areas owned by the state, municipalities and private parties where Natura is implemented by means other than the Nature Conservation Act, the purpose of the plans is "to clarify to different actors, the content and location of the natural values on which protection is based (i.e. the conservation criteria features) and to provide recommendations on how they should be taken into account in land use in the area". In terms of notification and decision-making procedures, in accordance with the prohibition on deterioration in force in the areas, it is important that the various actors have a clear understanding of the more detailed content and location of the area's conservation objectives in the area.

It has been agreed with Metsähallitus Forestry Ltd that Parks & Wildlife Finland will also prepare the NATA assessments of Natura areas managed by Forestry Ltd and request its comments on the results before final approval of the NATA document. Before forest stand planning begins, Parks & Wildlife Finland must have carried out a habitat survey in the area, the data of which has been stored in the SAKTI geographic information system.

On protected sites implemented according to the Nature Conservation Act (i.e. already established nature reserves, or sites to be established as such), information on habitats and species is at a reasonable level, but in areas covered by other measures, information on habitats and species is still quite inadequate. This makes it difficult to define and

target active conservation measures. In practice, inventories have often only been carried out in connection with project impact assessments. In addition, e.g. the VELMU inventory has focused on sampling the entire coastal area, and more detailed site-specific mapping of protected/Natura areas and values is still needed. On Natura sites where measures are implemented pursuant to the Land Use and Building Act, land use plans should be able to steer operations so that the conservation objectives of the area are not jeopardised. Much of this work is still in progress.

8.4 Monitoring the implementation and impact of management plans

The aim of Finland's network of national protected areas and Natura 2000 sites is to promote the achievement and preservation of favourable conservation status of typical and rare habitat types and species in Finland. To achieve this goal, indicative site-specific conservation objectives are set in the long term, and the measures needed to achieve the objectives are defined in the shorter term. If necessary, more detailed plans will be drawn up for the implementation of the measures. To assess whether the change towards the desired goal is taking place, it is necessary to monitor whether the necessary plans have been drawn up, the planned conservation and management measures have been implemented and the site-, habitat- and species-specific conservation objectives have been achieved, or at least whether the development has been in the right direction.

In addition to nature conservation, the national parks, wilderness reserves and other multi-objective areas have other purposes for establishment, such as recreational use and nature tourism or safeguarding subsistence livelihoods. Goals are also set for the maintenance and development of these ecosystem services indirectly produced by the natural environment, which require plans and meas-

ures to be realised. The use of areas has, or at least can have, significant effects on the state of conservation values. Therefore, planning aims to anticipate the nature and quantity of impacts by setting meters and indicators, as well as possible thresholds above which corrective action is required.

The data content of the Uljas information system, that is related to the planning and management of nature reserves and Natura areas described above, has been defined and the functionality structured in such a way that monitoring at the level of measures, sites and protected area network is possible. Monitoring and evaluation are carried out through processes such as repeated Natura site condition assessments (NATA) and mid-term reviews of management plans or certain one-off projects. Statistics and reporting on the implementation of planning and measures are also needed for a variety of purposes: annually and at regular intervals, as well as for national and international needs.

8.4.1 Planning and inventory needs and work programmes

The nature conservation administration organises the planning procedures for protected areas on an annual and long-term basis using the SASS system for protected area planning and monitoring, and its module for the management of planning and inventory needs/sites. Geometric presentations for needed activities, with preliminary urgency classes, are stored in SASS in connection with, for example, master planning of Natura areas, NATA assessments and site management planning. Different types of planning and inventory proposals form a reserve in the system, from which items are raised to the annual work programmes. In this context, the parties responsible for the proposed activities and their resource needs can be specified.

The SASS-generated work programmes can be used to monitor the progress of plan-

ning processes and inventories at both the site and regional level. The state of implementation of NATA assessments, management plans, operational plans and inventories of nature and cultural heritage can also be compiled into comprehensive network or national summaries to report progress and allocate resources where necessary.

Proactive work programmes can be used to program and coordinate planning and inventory work in the long term. For example, the NATA review is timed appropriately before the mid-term review of the management plan or the start of a new management planning project. On the other hand, updates to NATA assessments can be scheduled, for example, according to inventory implementation schedules.

8.4.2 Monitoring the impact of measures at site level

The implementation of the different types of plans, both as realised measures and impact developments, is monitored at site level, through repeated NATA evaluations and mid-term management plan reviews. These processes are carried out in expert collaboration and documented in the SASS system. They are also interconnected in many ways.

Operational planning for active conservation and management measures and the construction of service facilities, and the implementation of work sites, are carried out using thematic information systems (SAKTI, SpeciesGIS, PAVE). On the other hand, the assessment of area-specific development is largely based on conservation measures taken and changes observed in the use of areas and their conservation values. For this reason, inventories and monitoring carried out since the previous review date play a key role, as well as new data stored into the systems.

In connection with reporting on the implementation of the Nature Directives, the condition and conservation status of

the Directive's habitat types and species are assessed once every six years (evaluation for the period 2013–2018 is due 2025). Red List assessments of habitat types and species are carried out approximately once a decade (the latest were published in 2018 and 2019). In connection with the assessments, new information is formed on the habitat types and species themselves and the threats to them, as well as on the development of the status of habitats. The data from these national-level reviews are utilised in assessments of the state and need for action at the site level.

Natura site condition assessment (NATA) and update of SDF data

The update of the NATA assessment serves as a tool for monitoring the implementation of conservation measures and the achievement of conservation objectives in the Natura 2000 network site (and the national protected areas within it). As the update examines the need for planning required for possible additional measures, NATA can also serve as a monitoring tool for a site management plan. The data from NATA assessments can also be utilised, for example, in advocacy of Natura sites / protected areas.

Habitat and species data from NATA assessments are also used in updating Natura site Standard Data Form (SDF) data. During the reviews, reasoned proposals for changes to SDF data are made, which are discussed in a separate review process at regular intervals. The development of the status of conservation values is also used to assess the effectiveness of conservation measures at network level. If the information is not properly updated, its usability is poor.

The NATA assessment for all Natura sites is to be updated approximately every 6 to 12 years, depending on a pre-defined timetable or emerging need, or at the latest 18 years after the first/previous assessment. The factors affecting the frequency of updates can be divided into more general factors affect-

ing NATA's aging rate and more acute triggers to update NATA. The rate of obsolescence of data is affected at least by the need for measures in the Natura site (conservation, restoration and management of habitats and species) and their urgency, as well as by the planning needs of the site and their urgency. The nature of the habitat types and species present in the site (e.g. whether they are rapidly or slowly changing), the number and nature of threats to these values and the trends in these values may also influence the need for updating.

On a case-by-case basis, a NATA update may become necessary if there is a change in the conservation criteria or delimitation of a Natura site or a significant change in threat factors. On the other hand, an update is necessary if the inventories provide significantly improved information on habitat types and species and the need for measures, or if a change in the status of the values is detected, for example, in the case of a change in the status of the values thanks to the implementation of measures. Or, on the other hand, if in connection with lobbying, essential deficiencies in the timeliness or content of information are detected. NATA updates may also be made by topical projects concerning the area, the need for an assessment of operational planning measures, the preparation of a site management plan or its update, or the monitoring of plans (mid-term review of a management plan). At least in connection with the latter, a review of the need to update NATA will also be carried out – certain similar issues are assessed in both reviews.

For the Natura areas under Metsähallitus' responsibility, the need for NATA updates was comprehensively reviewed during 2021. Scheduling the implementation of the updates was carried out using SASS (geometric presentations of) planning and inventory needs. One of the tasks of every new NATA update is to schedule the next update.

Mid-term review and update of management plans

The management plans for protected areas and Natura sites set strategic goals related to the protection and management of natural and cultural heritage and, for example, the development of recreational use, over a time span of approximately 10–15 years. However, changes in the land use pressures and the state of values in the area or development in the operating environment may occur in an unpredictable way and speed. Based on the principles of adaptive planning, the owner/manager of the area must be able to react to change and, if necessary, reorient operations. The management plan defines indicators for monitoring the planned measures and their environmental and other impacts, to assess whether corrective measures need to be taken during the plan validity period and, if so, what kind of actions.

Parks & Wildlife Finland policy is to review implementation and impacts approximately every 5–6 years. This so-called mid-term review of a management plan will be scheduled using the “planning and inventory needs” module of the SASS system in the same way as the NATA updates described above and, if necessary, in coordination with the updates. The timeliness of the NATA assessment and the need for updates are considered before the initiation of the mid-term review. This is particularly important when the planning area is large and includes several Natura sites. The entries related to conservation objectives and measures required by the Habitats Directive can be found in more detail in the NATA reviews but are (often) stated in the management plan only in very general terms.

The mid-term review of the management plan shall be carried out as an expert assessment. It is documented in SASS and can be printed as a document-type report. The

review focuses on examining changes in the operating environment, situation and threat factors of the planning area, as well as assessing the implementation and effectiveness of the plan.

The mid-term review checks whether the action plans deemed necessary by the management plan have been drawn up and implementation started (cf. Entries made in the SASS “planning and inventory needs” module and monitoring based on SASS work programmes and SAKTI/SpeciesGIS/PAVE systems). Based on the NATA review(s) and management plan monitoring indicators, the impacts of the measures taken in the area and the success of steering recreational and other use of the area will be assessed, utilising, e.g. the so-called LAC procedure (see section 12.1).

Based on the impact assessment of the measures presented in the management plan, the need for additional measures or entirely new solutions is considered and the planning need for these is determined. For example, new/updated operational plans can be recommended, which do not require updating the management plan. If it is necessary to specify the objectives of the management plan (e.g. zone delimitations, dimensioning of service facilities) or to implement measures deviating from the policy/guidelines of the currently valid plan, the entire management plan must be renewed.

In some cases, management plans have previously been drawn up for nature reserves, the management of which, according to current understanding, no longer requires extensive participatory planning. Such management plans may (at the latest when they expire) be discontinued by the decision of the party approving/confirming the plan and, if necessary, replaced by an operational plan or NATA update.

8.4.3 Monitoring and reporting at network level

The state of national protected areas and Natura sites as well as the efficiency and effectiveness of site management are also monitored at network level and reported to many parties.

Provisions on the monitoring of nature conservation are laid down in section 18 of the Nature Conservation Act, according to which Metsähallitus and the ELY Centre(s) are responsible for monitoring the number and surface area of nature reserves and natural monuments as well as their ecological status. The definition of the content and tasks of monitoring is still at a very general level in the Act, and it will be specified in a decree to be issued later. National annual statistics can be printed out as defined standard reports from protected area information systems (SATJ, SASS, SAKTI, PAVE, NASTA), and more complex monitoring evaluations are carried out as tailor-made data analyses, if necessary.

The guiding ministries (Ministry of the Environment, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry) monitor the performance of Metsähallitus and ELY Centres in maintaining up-to-date nature information, establishing protected areas, assessing the site condition of Natura sites (NATA), planning management and use, and active nature management and restoration measures. In addition, the amount of protected area use, and its impact on the regional economy are monitored. This monitoring takes place through an annual performance agreement, related interim reporting and financial statements. For monitoring, situation picture reports are based on data contained in Uljas systems.

The endangered status of habitat types and species and the impact of area protection on the development of their status are assessed approximately once a decade. As a result of the threat assessments, the so-called red lists of habitat types and species are completed (Kontula & Raunio 2018a and 2018b, Hyvärinen et al. 2019). The work is coordinated by the Finnish Environment Institute, and Parks & Wildlife Finland participates actively in it.

Basic information on nationally designated and Natura 2000 sites is also maintained in international databases that are used to monitor how progress is being made towards the objectives of the European Union and other international strategic programmes (cf. Chapter 4). Network information on protected areas is submitted annually from Finland to the Nationally Designated Areas (NatDA) database maintained by the European Environment Agency. This data is forwarded under a cooperation agreement to the World Database of Protected and Conserved Areas (WDPA/WD-OECM).

The implementation of the Habitats and Birds Directives and the conservation status of the Directive values are reported to the EU Commission every six years. So-called country reports are also prepared at regular intervals, for example, on the implementation of international environmental agreements to their secretariats (Convention on Biological Diversity, World Heritage Convention, Ramsar Convention, Helsinki Convention). As part of this reporting, information is collected on the state of the national protected areas and the Natura 2000 networks in the Member States/Party countries, as well as on the planning and implementation of site management.

9 Conservation and Management of Habitats and Species

The main function of nature reserves is to protect biodiversity. In protected areas, biodiversity is mainly cherished by relying on nature's own processes. The key means of preserving protected areas in their natural state include (see also section 7.4):

- placement of recreational activities and the management of visitor use, e.g. with the help of service infrastructure, zones and sub-areas so that sites of greatest conservation value are preserved in as natural a state as possible
- access and other restrictions to guide visitors, reduce erosion on the terrain and reduce disturbance to nature
- control of use through agreements and permits
- guidance, education and advice aimed at influencing visitor behaviour in the protected area
- monitoring use of the area
- influencing the reduction of threats and pressures from land use outside protected areas (e.g. influencing land use planning and projects, water protection in the catchment area, see Chapters 16 and 17).

To safeguard and improve the natural values of protected areas, active habitat management is often necessary (section 9.2). In some protected areas, there are habitats altered by previous human activity, such as drained peatlands, forests that have been in commercial use or cleared streams, the natural state of which would take up to hundreds of years to restore without measures. The naturalisation of these habitats will be accelerated through restoration, such as filling peatland ditches, controlled wood burning and restoring stream beds. In addition,

the maintenance of valuable species in some habitats requires continuous or repeated management, such as mowing or grazing in traditional semi-natural grassland environments or preventing spruce in deciduous groves. Combating invasive alien species is also an important part of the management of protected areas. The statutes establishing nature reserves and the Nature Conservation Act (NCA) define the framework conditions for all activities in protected areas. Most protected areas are part of the Natura 2000 network, where deterioration of site designation values (i.e. habitats and species listed by the Nature Directives) is prohibited.

Climate change affects species and habitats and their chances of survival also in protected areas. Depending on the species and habitat, there are both winners and losers. It is essential to identify the impacts of different climate change scenarios on the key conservation values of protected areas and to assess the necessary conservation measures against this background. The more diverse the environment, the more resilient it is to the effects of climate change (ecosystem resilience). In a changing climate, the importance of nature management and restoration measures is accentuated (see sections 4.4 and 7.3).

All decisions related to the management and use of protected areas must be based on high-quality and up-to-date nature information on the habitat types and species in the areas (section 9.1). It is also important to monitor the status of species and habitats in general, the effects of recreational use on them (see section 12.1) and especially the effects of management measures taken: whether the desired changes in the status of the habitat or species were achieved (section 9.4).

9.1 Collecting habitat and species information

9.1.1 Nature habitat surveys

Data collected from protected areas include Natura 2000 habitat types and their status, forest/peatland types and structural features, restoration and nature management needs. The habitat inventory utilises various remote sensing data, such as aerial photographs and laser scanning data, but data is also collected extensively in the field. Instructions are found e.g. Natura 2000 habitat type guide (Airaksinen & Karttunen 2006), Natura 2000 habitat inventory guidelines (Finnish Environment Institute & Metsähallitus 2020) and Traditional agricultural landscape inventory guidelines (Kemppainen 2017). The aim is that all state protected areas and private nature reserves managed by Parks & Wildlife Finland have sufficiently up-to-date basic information on the habitat types and their status in the area. The data is stored in Metsähallitus' SAKTI information system (see section 8.2). Traditional biotope data can also be stored in SAKTI from unprotected private land.

Planning the management and use of inland waters and marine areas also requires knowledge of underwater habitats and species. Mapping of marine nature is carried out as basic work of Parks & Wildlife Finland and, for example, through the national underwater marine biodiversity inventory programme VELMU and the Biodiversea LIFE IP project. The VELMU programme collects habitat and species data using a variety of methods both inside and outside protected areas, both in state-owned and private sea areas. Where applicable, the data is stored in SAKTI. There are separate methods for underwater mapping of lakes and inventory of streams. The stream inventory collects information on the natural state of streams and the need for restoration.

9.1.2 Species surveys and monitoring

Information on species in protected areas is collected and updated in species surveys. Random observations of species accumulated alongside other work are also valuable. The data form the basis for more detailed species-specific surveys and planning the management and use of protected areas. Species information is needed especially on species in need of protection (see section 6.1, Chapter 8 of the Nature Conservation Act):

- endangered (section 75) and specially protected (section 77) species under the Nature Conservation Act
- Habitats Directive Annex II and Birds Directive Annex I species, particularly in Natura 2000 sites
- Habitats Directive Annex IV species in all nature reserves
- near threatened and regionally endangered species
- species that are rare outside protected areas, for which protected areas are exceptionally important in their conservation
- species that are easily disturbed or at risk of collection
- other species of conservation interest, particularly those at risk of extinction from protected areas or with a low population in protected areas
- other species in line with the conservation objectives of the site – e.g. species related to the cultural heritage to be preserved, such as ancient and war invasives.

The most important species mapping targets are areas, that are assessed based on the habitat structural features or other criteria to be significant in terms of species, especially if there are plans for recreational use or habitat management. The survey should focus especially on those groups of organisms for whose protection of the habitat in question



Mapping of underwater nature of Lake Puruvesi in the Freshabit-LIFE-IP project. Photo: Jari Ilmonen.

is of great importance. These species surveys are carried out in the planning area in order 1) to safeguard the species in need of protection living in the planning area, 2) to improve living conditions and 3) to prioritise possible alternative measures (section 9.2.1).

General species surveys and monitoring aim to obtain information in protected areas on the occurrence, abundance and distribution of species in need of protection and on species describing the quality of habitats. In connection with the preparation of the management plans (section 8.3), species surveys are carried out at least of the key groups of organisms in the habitat types in the area. The data collected in species surveys are also utilised, for example, in assessing the endangered status of species, reporting on the Habitats and Birds Directives (section 4.2.2), planning the development of the network of protected areas and assessing representativeness, and directing restoration and land

acquisition. General surveys of species have been carried out or commissioned especially on mosses, lichens, mushrooms, birds, butterflies, beetles and molluscs. The VELMU programme has carried out a general survey of species along the entire Finnish coast, including algae, aquatic plants and benthic animals. General species monitoring mainly includes bird population monitoring (line counts, archipelago bird monitoring) and aquatic plant monitoring of lakes.

Species mapping or monitoring focuses on one species and produces information on the status of both new and known species occurrences and the possible need for additional conservation measures. The occurrence data of the conservation criteria species will also be updated if necessary. In species mapping, new occurrences of the monitored species are sought, basic information is compiled about the occurrence and the factors that have affected (and continuously affect) the

occurrence, and the possible need for measures are assessed. In species monitoring, old occurrence-specific data is reviewed and updated. Most species-specific monitoring focuses on vascular plants and those species whose occurrences are actively managed (section 9.3.2).

All species observations collected in species-specific mapping and general species surveys and monitoring shall always be accompanied by information on the date, observer and location of the observation. As a rule, the location of objects is stored in the information system as an exact point or, if necessary, as precise area or line geometry.

Species observations and survey sites are stored in the SpeciesGIS system. The data from SpeciesGIS is also transferred to the Species Information Centre of the Finnish Museum of Natural History (laji.fi), from where they are openly available in accordance with the Act on the Openness of Government Activities, except for sensitive species data (see Species Information Centre 2024).

9.2 Managing habitats

9.2.1 General principles

Protected areas are managed primarily to maintain or increase biodiversity. Measures may also be taken to restore cultural or landscape values. Habitat management here refers both restoration and nature management. Restoration refers to measures that restore the structure and function of a degraded ecosystem to its natural state, usually through one-off measures, whereas the objective of nature management is to maintain a specific habitat type or habitat favourable to protected species through repeated measures. The measures aim to consider all the conservation values of the site, of which priority is given to the key conservation criteria values of the protected area. A site that is valuable in terms of nature conservation

may also be important in terms of its cultural heritage values or, for example, the quality of waterways, fishing and recreational use (e.g. many flowing waters). Habitat management implements the Helmi Habitat Programme confirmed by the Government (see section 2.3.3).

Habitat management measures must comply with the precautionary principle (cf. section 7 of the Nature Conservation Act). Actions will primarily be targeted where their nature conservation benefits are greatest, and the risks are lowest. There is usually no reason to act if natural change leads quickly enough towards the desired state of the habitat type or habitat of the species.

Habitat management measures related to vegetation, trees, water conditions or soil preparation are avoided during the nesting period of birds. Disturbing measures should be avoided, especially during the most important nesting period of birds in May–June (15.4.–15.7.). However, the impact of the timing of the measures on species must be assessed on a case-by-case basis and the measures must be timed so that they do not cause significant harm to nesting or resting birds. The benefits of controlled burning for species have been estimated to far outweigh the disadvantages so much this work can also be carried out during the nesting season of birds, if the occurrences of fowl, birds of prey and species in need of protection are excluded from burning measures, when necessary.

Habitat management must be based on good basic knowledge of the habitat types, species (section 9.1) and cultural heritage (section 10.2.1) of the area. It is important to carefully plan, implement and document the work and, in nature management, to ensure that the work is long-term and continuous. The success and effectiveness of the measures are monitored through a national monitoring network (section 9.4).

9.2.2 Restoring forests and peatlands

The aim of forest restoration is to restore the structural features of natural forests to former commercial forests located in protected areas. Forests are mainly restored by burning, which also produces burnt wood for the species that require it. Forest nature management is carried out especially in groves and hardwood forests, where the goal is usually to make the habitat predominantly deciduous, and in sunlit environments where the aim is to maintain endangered species. Instructions for forest restoration and nature management are found in the Guide to Forest Restoration and Nature Management published by Metsähallitus (Similä & Junninen 2011).

When restoring peatlands, restoring hydrology as close as possible to the pre-

drainage state is a basic requirement for mire restoration. The optimal solution would be to restore entire catchment areas. As the water level rises, the restoration of vegetation and other species begins in the peatland. The aim is to restore all mires weakened by drainage in nature reserves, if this is technically and economically possible.

An in-depth overview of mire restoration is found in the Handbook for the restoration of drained peatlands (Aapala et al. 2013). In addition to the measures described in the guide, the restoration method increasingly used is to restore water to drained peatlands from the surrounding drained areas. The principle is to direct the water flowing in the ditches past the protected mire back to the protected mire along a guide ditch. The measures often require permits from landowners and compensation for possible



Restoration of Veneneva Nature Reserve by controlled burning. Photo: Heidi Lumijärvi.

waterlogging hazards to owners of private land (Salo 2021).

Peatlands to be restored often involve small water bodies that are restored, if necessary, in connection with peatland restoration. For example, the restoration of the edge of a stream requires the restoration of a gutted stream, and the restoration of springs is important for maintaining a nutrient-rich groundwater effect in lush peatlands.

9.2.3 Managing semi-natural grasslands

Traditional agricultural biotopes are semi-natural grassland habitats with cultural influence, mainly shaped by traditional mowing and pasture farming. They include various meadows, leaf meadows, wooded pastures, forest pastures, slash-and-burn forests and moors. Semi-natural grasslands are also referred to as heritage environments and traditional habitats. A traditional biotope can

be part of a larger traditional landscape with its structures and buildings.

Traditional biotope management methods include basic restoration – i.e. clearing and removing trees, shrubs and problem plants – as well as establishing pasture areas, mowing, burning, foliage and flooding. (Grazing area contracts are discussed in detail in section 14.4.3.)

The aim of the clearing is to increase openness, revive meadow vegetation that requires light and heat, and save old, heavy trees and decaying trees. The aim of establishing and mowing pasture areas is to restore the diversity and structure of vegetation in meadows or wooded semi-natural grasslands, to reduce shading, high-growing vegetation that favours nitrogen, and to restore natural species and endangered species. The aim of less common forms of management, such as burning, foliage, flooding and slashing on a few sites, is to preserve the characteristics of different types of traditional landscapes and vegetation and



Cows grazing a traditional landscape in Southern Finland. Photo: Katja Raatikainen.

to maintain traditional agricultural working methods.

The **management of semi-natural grasslands** is usually continuous and annual. In some cases, it is sufficient to treat every two years (e.g. floodplain meadows or dry fields) or less frequently (slash-and-burn fields). The management, background and objectives of semi-natural grasslands in protected areas are described in Goals into action! Metsähallitus Parks & Wildlife Finland's guidelines for the management of semi-natural grasslands 2025 (Raatikainen 2018).

The general principle for the management sites of protected areas is that the aim is to implement annual continuous management through agri-environmental compensation. Farmers and associations can apply for environmental compensation for grazing and other maintenance costs. Volunteer work is also used, especially in the aftermath of restoration work, and volunteer camps in cooperation with nature conservation organisations are an important help at many sites.

9.2.4 Restoring water habitats

So far, restoration related to aquatic nature has largely been limited to lake nature and flowing waters. In the restoration of aquatic nature, the aim must be to influence the entire catchment area, and if necessary, also through measures outside nature reserves.

In connection with restoration, the aim is to return natural processes in flowing waters, such as flooding and natural erosion of the channel, as well as structural features such as rocks, tree trunks, water moss and other aquatic plants. With the help of structural features that retain the passage of water, the retention capacity for leaf litter in flowing waters is improved. Leaf litter is an essential factor in maintaining the ecosystem's food webs in small streams in forest areas. After logging, rapids in flowing waters are restored to a state as original as possible to restore salmonid fish populations and other aquatic

biodiversity. The restoration of flowing water habitats and their catchment areas can, among other things, contribute to national objectives related to the restoration of migratory fish populations in accordance with the National Fish Passage Strategy (Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry 2014). Things to consider when restoring streams and references to restoration guides is found, for example, in the Small Water Guide (Tolonen et al. 2019).

Protected areas include **lakes and ponds** where the water level has been lowered to increase agricultural land or reduce flood damage. The purpose of restoring these is to raise the water level to previous heights. However, in wetlands, for example, the achievement of conservation objectives may require repeated management measures (e.g. mowing of reeds). This refers to the restorative management of wetlands (Mikkola-Roos 1995). The restoration of lakes and ponds may require a permit under the Water Act when changing the average water level, and often also species listed in Annex IV of the Habitats Directive must be identified and considered in connection with such measures.

The aim of **spring restoration** is to remove structures that hinder the occurrence of spring species and restore the natural hydrology of the spring, for example by blocking drainage ditches. After restoration, groundwater-affected habitats around the spring may also gradually recover. Before restoring the spring, it is advisable to carefully assess whether the natural restoration of the site has already progressed so far that it is not worthwhile to take restoration measures, and to identify any endangered species that may have been preserved in the spring, to minimise the possible adverse effects on it.

Marine environments are constantly changing, for example due to primary land uplift and secondary land uplift (sedimentation and silting) and human activities (e.g. maritime traffic, waste-water discharges, condensate from nuclear power plants, and construction of marine and coastal environ-

ments). As a result of these changes, restoration efforts are needed in many marine areas, such as sandy bottoms (especially where associated sandy beaches are cleared), lagoons (flads and their precursors, gloes) and in wetlands and shallow bays (some of which are so-called wetlands, see section 9.2.5). Any restoration or management measure for lagoons shall be preceded by an assessment of the development stages of the lagoons in the coastal zone concerned, as well as their status and future development. The measures shall be carried out in such a way as to ensure natural succession from the precursors of the flads to gloes, and finally to coastal wetlands and bogs. The restoration of marine environments may require a permit under the Water Act, and in many cases, species listed in Annex IV of the Habitats Directive must be identified and considered in connection with restoration measures.

9.2.5 Restoring bird wetlands

Valuable inland and seashore wetlands that have overgrown naturally or because of human activity, are restored and managed, often in cooperation with local residents and other authorities.

The order of urgency for wetland restoration will be assessed in prioritisation negotiations involving wetlands experts from Metsähallitus, ELY Centres and the Finnish Environment Institute. The following criteria have been used for prioritisation (Asanti et al. 2003):

- Adverse changes in vegetation for bird populations
- Presence of endangered bird species (only species that can be affected by restoration measures are considered)
- Population changes of species depending on the wetland
- Possibility of implementing measures to improve the condition of wetland.

Restoration and management measures for wetlands include dredging, vegetation removal, digging of ponds and canals, clearing and construction of nesting islands, management fishing, grazing and raising water levels. Often, raising the average or low water level by means of bottom dam structures in outlets can produce a more long-term effect, when supported by dredging and vegetation removal, than by simply opening the water surface. The management of lakes may include management fishing, the aim of which is to reduce cyprinid fish stocks and thus food competition. In the management of coastal meadows, it is important to ensure sufficiently intensive grazing after basic clearance and, if necessary, the milling of dense and suffocating vegetation. In coastal meadows, the restoration of wetlands is directly linked to the management of semi-natural grasslands (section 9.2.3).

Before the measures, a bird population survey is carried out at the site (preferably over several years). The conservation and management needs of other aquatic organisms shall also be considered. Water analyses characterising the ecological status of the site and reports on invertebrate species are helpful in planning restoration measures. In addition, the need for management fishing should be investigated. The measures will be negotiated with the local ELY Centre and the need for a permit under the Water Act will be checked. The restoration of wetland often requires a permit under the Water Act and the species listed in Annex IV of the Habitats Directive must be identified and considered in connection with restoration measures. The effects of restoration on bird populations shall be monitored after the measures. A sufficient picture of the long-term effects can only be obtained through a bird population survey covering several years.

Experts or consultants specialising in the management of wetlands are used in planning the measures. The measures will be

implemented in accordance with the instructions of the Finnish Environment Institute.

9.2.6 Controlling invasive alien species

An alien species is an organism whose migration outside its natural range has been unintentionally or intentionally facilitated by humans. Alien species that threaten biodiversity have been classified as harmful. Species are listed in the EU List of invasive alien species, which has been supplemented by a national list and a national strategy on invasive alien species (Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry 2012). With global warming, living conditions will become more favourable for many invasive alien species.

In protected areas, the most significant invasive alien species on the EU List are Himalayan balsam, hogweed and raccoon dog, as well as species on the national list, lupin, curly rose, Canadian water blight, large knotweed species, Spanish chip snail and mink. Alien species, such as wild boar, brown hare and Cormorant, have migrated to Finland on their own without human help, and in protected areas they are treated like other natural species.

The primary objective is to prevent alien species from entering and settling in protected areas. Care must be taken in measures involving the introduction of soil from outside the protected area. Every effort shall be made to ensure that the soil to be moved does not contain, for example, seeds or root fragments of alien plant species or Spanish chip snail eggs. The most important thing in preventing the introduction of alien species is to remove the first specimens of the species before they have time to reproduce.

Invasive alien species are recorded in the habitat and species inventory (section 9.1.1) and during other field visits, and the occurrences are recorded in information systems for planning measures. The deposits shall be

destroyed or kept to a minimum if eradication is no longer possible due to the extent of the deposits. Prevention is started as early as possible, so that both the disadvantages and costs are minimised. The removal of harmful vascular plants and small carnivores is often suitable for volunteer work. Combating invasive alien species and monitoring the success of the measure is usually a continuous task for several years.

Invasive alien plants are primarily removed by mechanical means. In exceptional cases, such as the removal of large deposits, pesticides may also be used carefully planned and with special care. Guidelines have been drawn up to support the selection of control methods (Metsähallitus 2019a). The principles of the guidelines can also be used in the selection of other methods for combating invasive alien plant species. Removed plant waste of an invasive alien species shall be disposed of appropriately so that seeds or other reproductive parts of the species do not remain on the site and the species cannot spread to new areas with plant waste.

Mink and raccoon dog populations are reduced and controlled, especially in areas of high bird value. If it is possible to completely eradicate both species on the site, this should be taken as a goal, for example on some bird nesting islands. Attempts are also being made to extend the catching effort to areas outside protected areas to increase efficiency. The reduction of mink and raccoon dogs and plant species classified as invasive alien species in nature reserves does not require an exceptional permit granted by the authority managing the area (NCA Section 50), but the consent of the landowner or holder of hunting rights (Metsähallitus in state-owned areas) is sufficient. However, the reduction of other species, that are otherwise considered harmful in excessive numbers, requires a derogation (NCA section 51; see also section 13.1 of these guidelines). When reducing animal species based on nature conservation, animal

welfare aspects are considered and methods and practices used, that are as ethical as possible.

The control of alien species other than harmful invasive alien species is initiated if the alien species clearly threatens or reduces the conservation values of the area and prevention is considered justified and possible. Control of an alien plant species is usually justified if the species is clearly from another vegetation zone, its removal is practicable, and the species does not disappear on its own without intervention (e.g. planted contorta pine). Species control is always justified if an alien species clearly threatens domestic species or habitats.

Domestic species occurring in their natural range can only be prevented in protected areas in exceptional cases, if the problematic species threatens endangered species or species otherwise in need of protection, and the population of the problematic species is viable in Finland (e.g. fox in the range of arctic fox or in bird wetlands).

Beekeeping in nature reserves and other protected areas is dealt with in Appendix 9. Landowner consents are not granted for the keeping of dark honeybees (*Apis mellifera*) in established state nature reserves.

9.3 Protecting species

9.3.1 Focusing on endangered species and special responsibilities

According to section 5 of the Metsähallitus Act, Metsähallitus is responsible for the protection of species in state-owned nature reserves and other areas managed by the Public Administration Services. In addition, Parks & Wildlife Finland carries out species conservation work in private nature reserves in cooperation with ELY Centres.

In addition to the general responsibility for species protection, Parks & Wildlife Finland has a nationwide special responsibility for the conservation of certain species, regardless of the ownership and conservation status of land and water areas. Arctic fox, Saimaa ringed seal, Golden eagle, Gyrfalcon, Peregrine falcon and Lesser white-fronted goose, as well as the White-tailed eagle in the Reindeer husbandry area, are special responsibility species of Metsähallitus, and it is responsible for coordinating their monitoring nationwide. Changes to the list of special responsibility species and more detailed species-specific responsibilities are updated



The endangered Saimaa ringed seal (*Pusa hispida saimensis*) is protected, for example, by agreeing on fishing restrictions in the Natura 2000 areas of its habitat. Photo: Miina Auttila.

in Metsähallitus' performance management negotiations or in connection with species conservation strategies and programmes.

Regarding the Golden eagle, the special liability is also partly based on the Government Decree on Compensation for Damage Caused to Reindeer Husbandry by Golden Eagles (8/2002). To compensate for the damage, Metsähallitus annually surveys the nesting situation and chick production of the Golden eagle in the Reindeer husbandry area. At the same time, Metsähallitus monitors the nesting of White-tailed eagles in the Reindeer husbandry area. The responsibility for coordinating the monitoring of the Golden eagle and promoting its conservation also extends beyond the Reindeer husbandry area.

Species-specific conservation measures are mainly targeted at endangered species or species in need of protection (section 9.1.2). Conservation measures of species and habitats are usually closely linked.

9.3.2 Managing species occurrences

Most of the plant, animal and fungal species in protected areas can survive without special management measures. Maintaining habitats with favourable structural features is often a sufficient means of protecting species' occurrences. As a rule, natural processes are allowed to take place, and it is accepted that some species may disappear over time. On the other hand, species-valuable early succession habitats have also been identified, the conservation of which requires continuous or repeated management. These include, for example, semi-natural grasslands, sunlit environments and wetlands.

The activities of Parks & Wildlife Finland must not endanger species in need of protection. The occurrences of these species are always investigated before any measures are taken, and measures are planned so that they cause as little harm to the species as possible. This applies to all management and use of

protected areas, such as habitat management, visitor management, and the granting of event and other permits (see section 12.5 for more details).

Species-specific management measures for an endangered species or other species in need of protection may be necessary if the population of the species is in decline. However, the ecology of the species and its habitat must be sufficiently known so that the management does not harm the populations of the target species or other protected species.

The management of species occurrences must be planned and carried out carefully and gradually. Achievement of set objectives is assessed by monitoring, and any necessary corrective measures are taken based on the results.

The priority of management measures for different species and occurrences depends on factors such as the endangered status of the species, the significance of the occurrence or protected area for the total population of the species and other species, the urgency of the measures and the conservation objectives of the area. The needed management and other measures of all occurrences of urgently protected species have been assessed in the prioritisation negotiations coordinated by the Finnish Environment Institute (Finnish Environment Institute 2024a). Metsähallitus is responsible for implementing all measures allocated to state-owned land in the prioritisation negotiations.

Other habitat management (section 9.2) must be carried out so that the measures support the conservation and recovery of populations of species in need of protection. Measures should be targeted at the vicinity of existing species occurrences and implemented with particular care, considering the habitat characteristics important to these species and other species present in the habitat. More general habitat management also promotes the long-term survival of protected species and prevents or slows

down the decline and endangerment of more common species. As a result of these measures, the number and quality of suitable habitats for species will increase, providing opportunities for species to spread.

Measures targeting species occurrences may consist of small-scale improvement of the living conditions of the species populations (removal of individual shading spruces, exposing of soil near wild thyme vegetation) or more extensive improvement of the quality of the whole habitat (mowing, grazing, blocking ditches, removal of undergrowth spruces from the grove, addition of decaying wood). It is important to define the primary objective of site management so that favouring one species or group of organisms does not unintentionally impair the conditions of another species or group of organisms. The most important guideline in determining priority is the protection criteria for the site.

Management methods can also include removing specimens of competing species (e.g. foxes in arctic fox areas and spruces around hardwoods), handling the ground surface to awaken a seed bank, and strengthening endangered species by transplantation (section 9.3.3).

To ensure the reproduction of endangered animals, species-typical breeding sites can be added to protected areas, such as nesting blanks for birds of prey, nesting islands for Red-throated diver, auxiliary snowbanks for the Saimaa ringed seal or trees suitable for hollows. As an extreme measure, the reproduction of the species can be promoted with the help of artificial nests, with the aim of restoring the population of the species towards its natural level. If the nesting environment of the species in question provides nesting conditions for the species, there is usually no need for nesting boxes or building artificial nests. Sometimes it may be necessary to attract a species to nest in a safer place, for example from outside a protected area to a protected area. A permit for the construction of artificial nests may also

be granted for justified research reasons. The keeping of carrion and other artificial feeding is permitted in protected areas only on nature conservation or research grounds (see, however, reindeer feeding, section 13.2). On nature conservation grounds, carrions intended for winter feeding of eagles and of White-backed woodpeckers have been permitted.

9.3.3 Transferring species

A species that has previously been found but has disappeared, may be returned to a nature reserve (see, however, NCA section 87). Exceptionally, a species in need of protection may be transferred even when it is not known to have occurred in the protected area, but this area is considered vital for its survival and provides the only remaining habitat or one difficult to replace. The reintroduction or relocation of a species is undertaken if there is conservation biological reason for it, such as the restoration of the species' range or population, the threat of loss of the species' habitat, e.g. due to habitat destruction or climate change, or preservation of genetic diversity. In the case of transplantation, the impact of the measures in both the area of origin and the target area, the suitability of the target area for the species and the management and monitoring measures required for the new population resulting from reintroduction or relocation should be assessed. Primarily, species transfers are made to restored habitats or habitats under continuous management.

Species transfers shall be carried out in accordance with the following principles:

- 1) The taxonomy, habitat requirements, distribution and population development of the species to be moved are well known.
- 2) The species to be moved is endangered and there are no other means sufficient to protect it, or the species is a key species in the biological com-

munity that creates conditions for the presence of endangered species (e.g. food plant for an endangered butterfly).

- 3) The specimens to be relocated originate as close as possible to the target area and, if possible, from several different populations. The transfer does not impair the initial population. For transplantation of plant species, seedlings or seeds grown in botanical gardens are primarily used.
- 4) The species determination of the specimens to be relocated is certain and, where necessary, verified by molecular biological methods.
- 5) The target species does not occur in the target area, but the area is within its natural range, considering the effects of climate change. Strengthening the population living in the target area by transplantation may be justified if the local population is disappearing, for example because of a reduced genome. The conditions for the survival of the species in the target area are good.
- 6) The species in the target area are known and the effects of the target species on it are assessed as positive or minor.
- 7) As a rule, the target areas are restored or under continuous management (e.g. transplantation of polypores is mainly carried out on produced decaying trees). Only part of the target area is used for transplantation.
- 8) The initial population, procedures and transplanted population are well documented (location, procedures, number of individuals, dates, etc.).
- 9) Restocking is always a complementary and not a substitute for the conservation of the species.

- 10) Long-term monitoring of the transplanted population is important for the development of transplantation methods and for minimising potential harm.

Old crops, ornamental plants and weeds can also be returned to the yards and fields of heritage farms, if they do not pose a threat to protected habitat types or species.

9.4 Monitoring impact of restoration and nature management

Monitoring the implementation of restoration and nature management measures ensures that they are technically in line with the objectives. During the first follow-up after the measures, the results of the work, such as the stability of dam structures and rising water levels, are checked, and later in the 10-year follow-up, ecological success can also be assessed.

The impacts of the measures on species are primarily monitored through national monitoring networks. Monitoring networks have been established in forests to monitor the effects of increasing decaying wood, of spruce removal in groves and management in sunlit environments, to monitor the blocking of ditches in peatlands and grazing on semi-natural grasslands, and the effects of burning on moors. The monitoring is described in the Monitoring guidelines for forest and peatland restoration and management of sun-lit esker forest environments (Hyvärinen & Aapala 2009) and the Monitoring guidelines for semi-natural grasslands (Raatikainen 2009), which are presently being updated. Impact monitoring on the sites also includes monitoring populations of threatened and other species in need of protection.

10 Conservation and Management of Cultural Heritage

10.1 Safeguarding cultural heritage in protected areas

Cultural heritage arises from human activities and interaction with the environment. It reflects constant change in values, beliefs, knowledge, skills and traditions. Cultural heritage can be a material, intangible or digital thing or an environment. Cultural heritage is renewed, preserved and passed on to future generations.

Protected areas safeguard the valuable cultural environments and the living heritage related to the use of the areas. Safeguarding enhances the preservation of cultural environment that has been evaluated, found or experienced as significant. Preserving the cultural heritage of protected areas strengthens local cultural identity and links protected areas more closely to local communities. In the state-owned protected areas located in the Sámi homeland, Parks & Wildlife Finland's activities secure the conditions for maintaining and developing the culture of the Sámi.

According to the **Metsähallitus Act** (section 5), its public administrative duties include, among other things, the preservation of cultural assets. Cultural property refers to cultural environments under state control and the archaeological and built heritage sites belonging to them. Securing is realised through research, management, protection, responsible use and advocacy of the cultural environment.

According to the **Nature Conservation Act** (section 50), it is permitted to manage and restore natural and cultural environments, traditional habitats and built heritage in statutory nature reserves, as well as to restore the natural development of degraded habitats. The explanatory memorandum to the

Act states that, in addition to natural environments, nature reserves often include valuable cultural environments and built heritage, the values of which must also be safeguarded in nature reserves.

The conservation criteria and objectives laid down in the **statutes establishing protected areas** guide the use and planning of the areas. In some nature reserves, the protection of cultural heritage is a key objective for establishing the area. Conservation provisions of the new Nature Conservation Act (NCA 9/2023) replace many of the derogations previously recorded in the establishing acts. In nature reserves, all activities that adversely affect the purpose for which they are established are prohibited (NCA, section 49).

One third of the statutes establishing national parks contain various conservation objectives related to cultural heritage and related living heritage. Wide-ranging objectives can be found, for example, for the Archipelago Sea National Park: "To protect the nature and culture of the Archipelago Sea, to safeguard the traditional natural uses associated with them, to preserve a vibrant archipelago community, and for environmental research and general nature activities". Individual other nature reserves have been established, for example, to safeguard the landscape or a certain cultural environment.

According to the Land Use and Building Act (132/1999) and the **National Land Use Guidelines** based on it (Government resolution, VNP 2017), the preservation of nationally significant cultural and natural heritage values must be ensured in the use of areas. This also applies to protected areas. The **national inventories** drawn up by the authorities must be considered when planning use of the areas

(see section 10.2.1). Numerous protected areas contain nationally significant cultural heritage.

The protected areas also contain sites protected by special acts, the Act on the Protection of the Built Heritage and the Antiquities Act. The protection regulations of these sites must be considered in the management and use of the sites.

In the **State Real Estate Strategy** to 2030 (Government resolution, VNP 2021a), Metsähallitus is defined as the holder of state-owned land and water assets. The objectives of the State Real Estate Strategy must be ensured in all decisions concerning real estate assets owned or controlled by the state (see section 5.3). In accordance with the strategy, Metsähallitus identified strategic cultural-historical real estate assets for the state in 2014. It includes both archaeological and architectural heritage sites. At that time, Metsähallitus built tools for identifying the value of cultural-historical sites (Metsähallitus' valuation key) and for setting the quality of site management (Metsähallitus' quality classification for the management of cultural-historical sites) to determine the quality of the built heritage and archaeological sites. These tools have been further developed in connection with site transfers and the selection of cultural-historical sites to be actively managed.

Parks and Wildlife Finland promotes measures that implement **international agreements** signed by Finland. The most important of these are the UNESCO World Heritage Convention and the Council of Europe agreements on cultural heritage (see Chapter 4). Many of the nature conservation agreements also include obligations to protect cultural heritage, such as the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands and the Section on indigenous peoples of the Convention on Biological Diversity (8 j). All international conventions on cultural heritage ratified by Finland have not been transposed into national legislation.

10.2 Managing cultural environments in protected areas

The cultural environment is created and shaped by the interaction between humans and nature, which includes the meanings attached to it. The cultural environment includes buildings, structures, archaeological remains and their surroundings, cultural landscapes and traditional semi-natural habitats. The cultural environment also involves immaterial dimensions, such as the relationship of the human community to its environment in the past and today, including the interpretations and names associated with it.

Although nature reserves are primarily perceived as places of nature conservation, they also include a wide variety of cultural environments. Cultural environments show human activity and interaction with nature from prehistory to the present day. They can be found in different parts of the country, including at the water's edge and below its surface. Cultural environments can have archaeological, ethnological, historical, architectural or landscape value.

The concrete management measures in protected areas safeguard the natural and cultural values for which the areas have been established. Cultural environments have overlapping natural and cultural values, and their management and use are coordinated. In protected areas, natural and cultural environments, traditional semi-natural biotopes, archaeological sites and built heritage are maintained and restored. This is done in such a way that the characteristics of both natural and cultural sites are preserved.

Cultural environments often increase the biodiversity of a protected site. Traditional landscapes include endangered habitat types and species. Old buildings and structures can be nesting and resting places for bats, which should be considered in their restoration and use. All the native bat species are included in the species list in Annex IV(a) of the EU

Habitats Directive. According to the Nature Conservation Act, the destruction and deterioration of bats' breeding and resting places is prohibited. Exceptions to the prohibition can only be made with an exemption granted by the ELY Centre. Old wooden buildings and structures can also be, for example, habitats of endangered colony wasps.

Under certain conditions, species may be transferred to cultural environments (see section 9.3.4). Crops cultivated there or other cultural companion species, such as war and ancient alien species, can be returned to cultural environments. Old garden and crop species can be moved to the yards of old buildings. However, from the point of view of the natural environments in protected areas, they are alien species whose spread outside yards must be prevented. This should be considered, for example, while moving soil (see section 9.2.6).

Outside protected areas, efforts are being made to improve the nature conservation values of cultural-historical sites that have been demarcated as special state areas, so they could develop into biodiversity conservation areas that support the network of protected areas (OECMs, see section 2.8). This requires habitat and species surveys in these areas so that measures to safeguard biodiversity can be planned and implemented.

10.2.1 Identification and inventory of cultural environment values

Parks & Wildlife Finland manages the cultural environments under its stewardship so that their values are preserved. The prerequisite is that cultural heritage values of the areas are recognised. To ensure the protection of the cultural environment, sufficient knowledge of the cultural landscape, architectural heritage and archaeological sites must be available in information systems.

The national inventories drawn up by the authorities must be considered in planning

of areas so that these values are safeguarded. These inventories concern:

- valuable landscape areas (see Government resolution, VNP 2021b and Ministry of the Environment 2023a)
- significant built environments (Finnish Heritage Agency 2009 and 2024a)
- significant archaeological sites (see Government resolution, VNP 2024, National Board of Antiquities 2024b).

Provincially significant landscape and cultural heritage areas and sites are designated and defined in regional land use planning.

The inventories of cultural heritage sites in protected areas aim to collect comprehensive information on all cultural values in the areas. Such inventories should pay particular attention to the establishing objectives of the sites and to needs of coordinating management of natural and cultural heritage and any other use of the sites.

In the inventories of cultural heritage sites, priority is given to those protected areas that have special threats or significance related to the preservation of cultural heritage, are heavily used by the public or whose founding acts contain objectives related to the safeguarding of cultural heritage. The need for the management of cultural environments and related sites is assessed as part of the inventory. If nature management, restoration or service construction work is carried out over a large area and not all sites can be inspected, inventories of cultural heritage sites are targeted at areas that are known or evaluated to have archaeological and/or architectural heritage significance.

The adequacy of cultural heritage inventories of a protected area is assessed in connection to management planning. If an inventory of cultural heritage has not been carried out in the area, one must be carried out in connection with the next management plan. The need for a supplementary inventory must also be assessed in a protected area if the basic inventory is more than 10 years old

or measures are targeted at an area that has not been inventoried.

Information on cultural heritage sites in protected areas, their condition and the measures taken is maintained in the PAVE information system (see section 8.2), which is a key tool for the management, use and lobbying of sites. In 2018, information products intended for wider use were also prepared for protected buildings and archaeological sites on state-owned lands. There are separate instructions for the inventory of cultural heritage sites in protected areas and for recording data in the PAVE information system and the field application. In addition, Parks & Wildlife Finland utilises the Ministry of the Environment's built environment information system and takes part in its development (Act on the Information System for the Built Environment 431/2023).

10.2.2 A structured approach

Sites of architectural heritage, archaeology, habitats and species, and landscape conservation values are often overlapping in cultural environments of protected areas. When selecting the cultural environments to be managed, attention should be paid to all the conservation values of each site. Sites with several types of conservation values should be prioritised in the selection of management sites.

Parks & Wildlife Finland has defined sites that are primarily managed to safeguard cultural-historical conservation values. These cultural-historic sites include both architectural heritage and archaeological sites. The core of the group consists of the state's strategic cultural-historical sites. The set of cultural-historical sites of value and the quality objectives set for its conservation and management are reviewed at regular intervals based on new information, resources and data produced by inventories. There are also sites outside this target group whose conservation values must be safeguarded.

These include, for example, other protected buildings and fixed relics.

The achievement of conservation objectives is monitored regularly. The management of the cultural environment includes planning the management and use of the site, regular condition assessments by an expert, cooperation with the authorities in the area and, if necessary, arranging guidance on the site or conducting visitor surveys. In the management of the cultural environment, it is important that the work is long-term and continuous, and that the work is properly planned, implemented and documented.

A prerequisite for the use of cultural-historical sites is that the conservation values of the site are not endangered as a result. Some of the sites are managed by an external operator, an entrepreneur or an association, but even then, Parks & Wildlife Finland always sets the goals for management of the sites.

The values of sites are best considered when the management of overlapping and conflicting values of the cultural environment entity is simultaneously resolved in the planning of the area in one go. For the management to be successful, it is essential that experts from different fields are in contact with each other already at an early stage of planning the work. The planning of the work must also consider the official permits related to the maintenance and restoration of the sites and the studies required by them. To ensure a good result, professionals are always used in the planning, implementation and monitoring of work at the sites.

Measures carried out on protected archaeological and architectural heritage sites require a permit from the responsible regional museum or the Finnish Heritage Agency. The permit process takes time. At archaeological sites, the authorities may also require supervision during the measures. All this must be considered when planning measures.

Good planning also includes adapting the safety structures required for the use of sites

so that they do not alter the structure to be protected or dominate the landscape. Safety structures include not only various handrails and other structures to control access, but also ways required by fire and rescue services.

Parks & Wildlife Finland also manages areas outside protected areas, such as ruined castles and fortresses. In Metsähallitus' land use classification, these are "cultural-historical sites" (27 sites, total 200 ha), the main use of which is the protection of cultural-historical values (architectural heritage, archaeological sites, landscape). Sites in these areas are usually protected under the Antiquities Act (295/1963), the Act on the Protection of the Built Heritage (498/2010) or the Decree on the Protection of State-owned Buildings (480/1985) and valued based on the National Land Use Guidelines. Most of these properties have been valued as strategic cultural-historical real estate assets of the state. These sites are also managed in accordance with the guidelines in this document, Principles of Protected Area Management, unless otherwise essential to ensure the preservation of the sites.

10.2.3 Preserving cultural heritage in a changing climate

The climate resilience of landscape, archaeological and architectural heritage varies. Not all impacts of climate change can be prevented through management measures, but good and systematic management can ensure the preservation of the conservation values of cultural heritage. This requires good maintenance of the sites, quick repair of minor damage and regular monitoring.

Climate change is already affecting the preservation of the built heritage in many ways. The effects can be seen, for example, as extreme weather phenomena, increased humidity, temperature fluctuations, new insect pests and fungi causing decaying, as well as changes in the amount or direction of wind and rainfall. Adapting to climate change

requires carefully considered solutions for the management and conservation of sites. This means increasing the frequency of site condition monitoring so that damage can be reacted to without delay.

The most work to preserve built heritage is caused by increased humidity due to long and mild winters. Moist soil becomes waterlogged. Building frames are burdened by thermal fluctuations and increased rainfall. Increased humidity exposes them to rot damage. Mild winters also favour insect pests. In maintaining built heritage, care must be taken to ensure that the lower floor of the building is ventilated, and the foundations of fireplaces must be closely monitored to prevent fires.

So far, little is known about the impact of climate change on the preservation of archaeological heritage in the ground and water. Changes in soil also affect the preservation of archaeological heritage. For example, waterlogged soil exposes the archaeological remains to wind damage when tree roots are torn off the ground. Increased windiness and humidity also affect the preservation of ruins on the ground and may, for example, require new supporting structures to protect the original wall. The warming of sea water affects the preservation of underwater cultural heritage. Until now, wooden wrecks have survived well in deep cool water.

10.3 Protecting and managing landscapes

The landscape is defined as a part of the environment perceived by humans, which consists of living and inanimate factors, the cultural impact produced by humans and the interaction between them. The safeguarding of the natural and cultural values of landscapes guided by public administration is called landscape protection, and their practical preservation is called landscape management. The Council of Europe's Landscape Convention, ratified by Finland, outlines

the related goals, which are implemented through several acts.

As steward of protected areas, Parks & Wildlife Finland is a significant custodian of uniform natural landscapes and manager of semi-natural landscapes shaped by traditional forms of land use. The cultural landscapes of protected areas are usually environments related to the use of wilderness and the economic history of remote areas, or smaller landscapes created by the recreational use of nature. Parks & Wildlife Finland also plays a key role in underwater landscape protection. A natural sound and light environment are considered important elements of a natural landscape.

Cherishing natural beauty and landscape values is one of the objectives of the Nature Conservation Act (section 1), and landscape values and natural beauty are included in the prerequisites for establishing nature reserves (section 43). The statutes establishing national parks have highlighted, for example, the watercourse landscape of South Konnevesi,

the ridge, hill and small water landscapes of Hossa, the nationally valued landscape of Koli, the forest landscape of Teijo and the fell landscape of Salla. In addition to these, many other nature reserves have objectives related to landscape protection, such as the protection of the Punkaharju national landscape or the cultural landscape in Telkkämäki shaped by traditional slash-and-burn economy.

Many nationally valuable landscape attractions are in protected areas. Landscape attractions are largely natural areas, but they almost always have cultural-historical value and are of undeniable landscape value. Such protected sites include Pallastunturi, Kuusamo rapids, Imatra rapids, Koli, Punkaharju and Aulanko.

Many protected areas are also part of a national landscape. Finland's 27 designated national landscapes reflect the most representative natural and cultural features of different parts of Finland (Finnish Environment Institute 2014). Their election in 1994 was related to Finland's 75th anniversary



The national landscape of Punkaharju Nature Reserve in winter. Photo: Jussi Silvennoinen / Metsähallitus.

year. National landscapes have a strong symbolic value and are generally recognised in national culture, history and the image of nature. National landscapes do not have precise boundaries and therefore do not have a legally defined role in land use planning. National landscapes are attractive for tourism, and the aim is to keep changes to them minimal.

10.3.1 Landscape management in protected areas

Protected areas play an important role in the preservation of landscapes, as they are subject to little external land use pressure. In protected area management planning, landscape values are considered, especially nationally valuable landscape areas and attractions. No landscape management areas, in accordance with the Nature Conservation Act (section 91), will be designated in established nature reserves (see section 2.4).

Metsähallitus' possibilities to influence the conservation and management of the landscape of protected areas vary depending on how much of the valued landscape is within the protected area. Especially in southern Finland, protected areas usually contain only parts of valuable landscape entities. In Lapland, valuable landscape sites can also be found entirely within protected areas.

According to nature conservation regulations, it is allowed in many nature reserves to carry out "measures necessary for the conservation of environments shaped by traditional natural uses and for the restoration and maintenance of buildings and structures associated with these types of environments". Many of these traditional biotopes are part of a broader cultural landscape. It is therefore necessary to identify the main historical features of the landscape (e.g. settlements, access routes and livelihoods) as a basis for management in such nature reserves.

The most important landscape management targets of Parks & Wildlife Finland are

landscape attractions and traditional semi-natural landscapes. When planning measures for both nature conservation and recreational use, landscape issues should be considered, especially in landscape attractions and nationally valuable landscape areas. Natural landscapes usually do not require maintenance measures.

Established vantage points and scenic views from them should be kept open. Examples of significant vantage points requiring maintenance can be found e.g. in Koli, Aulanko and Punkaharju.

In landscape management, the purpose of establishing the site and the site's specific landscape values are considered. Some protected areas have been managed for decades as park-like sightseeing and recreational sites, where the goal of the management has been, for example, scenic grandeur, the robustness of trees or the small features of vegetation.

10.3.2 Considering landscape in planning of visitor services

The landscape is one of the key attraction factors of protected areas. Experiencing landscape views plays an important role, especially in sites whose founding acts contain entries related to landscape management and maintenance.

Metsähallitus' expertise in route planning and construction has been vital in preserving the landscape experience. New buildings and structures needed for site maintenance, guidance and hiking services are designed and placed so that they support the landscape experience. The structures to be built must be designed to suit the environment and landscape. Particularly scenic attractions will remain unbuilt.

Routes and hiking structures are also planned to support the landscape experience. On the trails, the visitor will find the scenic highlights. These include diverse nearby landscapes features such as cliffs, streams, meadows and magnificent trees. In

exceptional cases, remote landscapes can be opened from the route on a small scale: following the precautionary principle, some trees can be removed in front of the view. In protected areas, the aim is to keep the sound and light environment relatively undisturbed.

10.4 Protecting and managing built cultural heritage

The architectural heritage of protected areas consists of buildings created by the area's old land use. Architectural heritage is a significant part of the cultural history and landscape of protected areas. The heritage also includes construction and design, as well as the methods of construction and their history.

The built heritage of protected areas has its own special characteristics. These include locally constructed official buildings and huts made with type drawings, as well as a diverse set of folk buildings. Official buildings (e.g. forest ranger estates) and cabins made with type drawings indicate changes in wood procurement and the development of occupational safety and health. Fishing huts, reindeer huts and barns form a significant state-controlled ethnological entity. The protected areas also contain architectural heritage created for and by hiking and nature recreation.

The management of the built heritage includes measures that promote its preservation. Some of the buildings in the protected areas are protected by an official decision; The protection process of some sites is pending. Some of the sites are managed because of the values they represent, even though they do not have a protection decision from the authorities. Fixed furnishings are also considered in the maintenance of the sites: the interior surfaces of the building and structures or furniture permanently attached to the interior.

When a building under use is protected or selected as a cultural-historically valuable site of Parks & Wildlife Finland, its character

changes: the building becomes primarily a protected site that must be preserved for future generations. More information based on expert assessment is needed on the construction and condition of the site and its operating history. Maintenance must support the preservation of the values of the site. A statement from the authority is requested on the planned renovation measures. Often the opinion requires repair planning by a specialist. The implementation is carried out by professionals in cooperation with various experts. The condition of the building is monitored regularly. Many of the cultural-historical sites of Parks & Wildlife Finland have been protected by various statutes that require coordination.

If a valuable building managed by Parks & Wildlife Finland is leased, the rental contract must ensure the preservation of the conservation values of the site, for example by requiring the lessee to take the same measures that are used in the management of Parks & Wildlife Finland's cultural-historical sites.

10.4.1 Use, maintenance and repair of built heritage

A prerequisite for the preservation of the built heritage is sustainable use and maintenance that takes sufficient account of the characteristics of the sites, as well as preservation repairs.

The primary management objective of valuable architectural heritage sites found in protected areas is conservation. The sites can be used, for example, as visitor attractions, learning places or as part of recreational services. Use is the best maintenance for most sites. In many sites, the continuum of use has changed its nature only slightly, for example, many old fishing huts and reindeer huts are still used as temporary accommodation in protected areas as unlocked huts and reservation huts.



Ivalojoiki Kultala in the Hammastunturi Wilderness Reserve. In 1870, the state built a base, the Crown Station, on the Ivalojoiki River, for the supervision and administration of gold mining. The main building is an attraction. Photo: Siiri Tolonen / Metsähallitus.

The maintenance of the built heritage of protected areas is hampered by the same issues as the maintenance of the building stock in general. Many destinations are difficult to reach in roadless woods, fells or archipelagos. Therefore, their management requires careful planning. Many sites are practically inaccessible to rescue services, which must also be considered.

Good basic management of cultural-historical sites includes regular maintenance work in spring and autumn. Maintenance also includes regular condition inspections by an expert. Particular attention is paid to features that are susceptible to damage, so that damage can be repaired before it expands. The inspection data is stored in the PAVE system, which forms the maintenance book of the site.

The goal of conservation repair is to achieve the desired condition with as few measures as possible. Information and instructions on traditional building methods can be found in the korjaustaito.fi online service of the Finnish Heritage Agency (2024c).

For the management and preservation of cultural-historical sites, it is important to know the tradition of repairing the site. The goal of these sites is to preserve as much original material and structural solutions as possible. This also preserves knowledge and skills related to the maintenance and repair of old structural solutions. Carefully renovated sites also serve as learning environments and attractions. They form a coherent cultural environment experience for visitors.

There are also sites of built heritage in protected areas where it is difficult to identify the original material or structure. The local

repair and construction tradition may help in finding solutions for preservation repairs. In some cases, it may be justified to retain the solutions from the previous renovation.

In protected areas, the use of the building also sets its own conditions for repairs. Significant changes to space solutions must be carefully considered if the original construction has been preserved. It is also necessary to carefully consider how the users use the site: for example, do present-day hikers know how to heat an old cold oven carefully enough.

Various forms of folk construction are represented in the diverse built heritage of protected areas. Safeguarding the built heritage also means maintaining traditional construction and repair skills in protected areas. Special attention is paid to the structural solutions typical of traditional wood construction. These include, for example, fences and wooden roofs or foundations. The sites can also serve as teaching places, where old construction methods and the tradition of repairing can be studied and maintained.

Underused cultural-historical sites

Some of the strategic cultural-historical properties are underused or completely unused, and there is a risk of losing their conservation features. In 2023, the Ministry of Finance's Working Group on Strategic Underused Properties (STRAVA, Ministry of Finance 2023) drew up principles for state property owners for such properties, based on the State Real Estate Strategy (Government resolution, VNP 2021a). Strategic underused sites managed by Metsähallitus are typically attractions of cultural and historical value, which do not generate direct income or only sufficiently to partially cover the maintenance of the sites, but not their renovation.

According to STRAVA's policies, Parks & Wildlife Finland must monitor the use of its strategic cultural-historical sites regularly. The assessment requires sufficient information on the utilisation rate of the sites, maintenance

costs and the condition of the sites to determine the necessary investments. Efforts must be made to prioritise strategic underused buildings, considering the overall interest of the state, when government functions are placed in the existing building stock. In the case of strategic underused sites, the possibilities for minimising the costs of ownership must be assessed, considering conservation values and the safety of sites. The owner of the site must make the site's financing needs visible and maintain cost information. The owner of the property determines the financing need for ownership based on, among other things, condition surveys and maintenance planning.

Opportunities for minimising costs can also be assessed for other cultural-historic sites and protected buildings. Such measures must not jeopardise the conservation values of the sites or the customer safety of the sites used as visitor attractions.

Sale or demolition of sites containing cultural or historical values

A demolition notification must be submitted to the municipal building control authority if a building or structure in poor condition, that has or may have cultural-historical value, is planned to be demolished. This should be done well in advance of the procedure. If such a site receives a demolition permit, the site must be carefully documented (photography, measurement, description of structural properties and materials) and recorded in the PAVE system. At the discretion of the sites to be demolished, foundations can be left as a keepsake. Before demolition, it must be ensured that no bat colony is located at the site (see section 10.2).

A building or archaeological site managed by Parks & Wildlife Finland, outside an established protected area, may be sold if it is not part of the state's strategic cultural-historical real estate assets. Protected and other culturally and historically valuable sites are sold following procedures of the Land Extradition

Act. The sale of valuable objects is facilitated by up-to-date site protection regulations, so that the buyer knows what obligations he or she has.

Historical objects and artefacts

Buildings located in protected areas may contain original objects, interior decoration or utility items. Parks & Wildlife Finland does not collect or maintain museum collections, which is why artefacts must be offered as donations to the collections of professionally managed museums. Objects can be placed back to the site with a deposition agreement. If Parks & Wildlife Finland accepts donated items, the deed of donation must include information on the origin of the donated items and photographs.

The original objects in the sites and the interior decoration items acquired for them must be recognisable, for example, by means of catalogues and pictures. There is no need to catalogue utility items, such as rakes used in field work. For sightseeing sites, interior items are acquired according to the interior design made for the site. The décor may be sparse and indicative, but the objects must be in accordance with the era specified in the plan. Copies of original objects can be used.

10.5 Protecting and managing archaeological heritage

Archaeological cultural heritage consists of archaeological remains and finds created by human activity, as well as information about them. An archaeological site is a place or area of archaeological significance that has been identified and valued by an archaeological expert. An archaeological site has at least one archaeological remainder of human activity. An archaeological remain is an archaeologically verified structure, sediment or formation of archaeological significance left over from human activity.

According to the Antiquities Act (295/1963), a site that fulfils the criteria of a fixed relic is directly protected without a separate decision by the authorities. The museum authority assigns a relic identifier to the site and confirms the boundaries of the site when it is entered in the Antiquities Register. The protected areas contain many fixed relics and wrecks protected by the Antiquities Act, as well as archaeological sites protected by land use plans. In addition to these, there are archaeological sites in protected areas that are not yet known.

Protected areas are also nationally important for the protection of archaeological cultural heritage. The preservation of archaeological sites is ensured in the areas and the process of their formation is usually not interfered with.

One of the prerequisites for the preservation of archaeological sites in protected areas is that they are known. Only registered sites can be considered, when nature conservation management or recreational construction work is being planned.

Underwater sites of archaeological cultural heritage are less well known than sites on ground. The low-salt waters of the Baltic Sea have preserved internationally unique maritime structures and wrecks since the Middle Ages. Dozens of wrecks are known from the waters managed by Metsähallitus. Information on wrecks is collected as part of the underwater habitat inventory. In protected areas, efforts are made to ensure the preservation of intact wreck collections in cooperation with the Finnish Heritage Agency.

Underwater cultural heritage is even less well known in inland waters than on the sea-coast, which is why the restoration of streams always requires an archaeological examination of the restoration sites. Among other things, floating structures, fishing dams and the remains of mills along old waterways are known from protected areas.

10.5.1 Management of archaeological sites

In connection to inventories of archaeological sites, Parks & Wildlife Finland evaluates also the need for their management. Most of the archaeological sites do not need special care. To secure them, it is sufficient to register the location and nature of the sites.

There are few archaeological sites in active management; most of them are valued cultural-historical sites. Only significant archaeological sites or sites used for sightseeing are taken under active management. In addition, some sites located in semi-natural grasslands are managed. Typical management measures for the sites selected for management are clearing, tree removal, mowing or grazing. Trees are removed in a timely manner so that the roots do not damage the archaeological remains.

Some archaeological sites are suitable as sightseeing sites if their preservation can be ensured despite visitation. Sites used for sightseeing can be divided into two groups: nationally significant sites, which mainly include castles and fortifications of different ages, and other guided archaeological sites in protected areas. In addition to signage, some attractions must be provided with service and security structures. The construction of these also requires permission from the museum authority.

When choosing guided sites, attention should be paid to their durability. The nature of the site, the number of visits and the accessibility/remoteness of the site should be examined. Sites that are prone to vandalism should not be taken as guided objects. These include, for example, stone labyrinths, compass roses and some waymarks. The customer safety of guided sites must always be ensured. Visitors must not be guided to dangerous destinations that do not have appropriate safety structures. Customer safety is discussed in section 12.8.

Metsähallitus has made some contracts in which the management of a site has been transferred to a third party, for example through an “adopt a monument” agreement. However, the responsibility for preserving the conservation values of the site remains with Metsähallitus.

Archaeological sites in protected areas are mainly studied using non-invasive methods. Metsähallitus only grants permission for digging studies in protected areas for compelling scientific reasons or for reasons required for the management of the area or because the site or part of it is about to be destroyed. Encroaching on a legally protected relic always requires a research permit issued by the Finnish Heritage Agency. The work must be carried out in accordance with the quality guidelines for fieldwork in Finnish archaeology (Finnish Heritage Agency 2020).

10.5.2 Conservation and management of ruins

There are many ruins of buildings and structures in protected areas. A ruin is a building, or structure that has been partially destroyed or collapsed and has not been restored to its original use. The ruins are archaeological remains. These include, for example, castle ruins, abandoned mine shafts at gold mining sites in Lapland, and ruins of wartime fortifications.

Preserving the ruins requires diverse cooperation between the authorities. Management decisions need to be supported by various studies, as the management of sites can be approached from the perspective of both built heritage and archaeology. Some of the sites are protected both as buildings and as fixed ancient relics. At visitor attractions, also other requirements, e.g. customer safety, must be considered. Sufficient time must be reserved for reports and statements.

The management of nationally significant sites requires special expertise, which usually must be acquired as an outsourced service.

Such sites have been valued as strategic cultural-historical real estate assets of the state and are thus Metsähallitus' managed targets. Many of these strategic cultural-historical sites have a long history of management since the late 1800s. When the decision on management has once been made, Parks & Wildlife Finland will not discontinue management and ensures keeping up with present management principles. The ruins are allowed to show historical layering. Surface layers and protective covers can be made on the ruins to protect the original material.

If a ruined site or part of it is completely excluded from management, it may not stop visitor use associated with the site. Uncontrolled use is a threat to the preservation of the site. For this reason, sites whose management is discontinued, are also kept under condition monitoring.

10.6 Preserving living heritage

UNESCO's World Heritage Convention on Intangible Culture protects living heritage. In Finland, such intergenerational heritage includes, for example, everyone's rights and mushroom picking. They have been selected for the national list of intentions, from which living heritage are selected for preparation for inclusion in the UNESCO World Heritage List.

Moving around in protected areas relies on old habits and skills. This creates a natural environment for realising and maintaining the living heritage of everyone's rights by hiking, walking, rowing on the water, canoeing or moving with the wind. It also includes experiences of darkness and silence.

The purpose of establishing wilderness reserves has also been to preserve the wilderness nature of the areas and the related traditional hunting and natural livelihoods. As not all visitors are familiar with the Nordic everyone's rights and the tradition of hunting, they should be emphasized in communications and other guidance of use.

As far as possible, skills and knowledge related to the management of traditional landscapes are maintained in protected areas. They will also be passed on through voluntary work. Old working methods of slashing and burning or taking care of leaf meadows and swamp meadows require a lot of labour. For this reason, only examples of them are preserved in nature reserves.

Knowledge and skills related to the maintenance and repair of built heritage is maintained and preserved in protected areas. Built heritage sites can also serve as educational places where old building methods and the tradition of repairs can be studied and maintained.

Access rights related to traditional livelihoods support the preservation of living heritage. Living heritage related to hunting is one of the grounds for hunting and fishing rights in protected areas (see section 13.1). To safeguard the Sámi handicraft tradition, the municipal residents of the Sámi homeland have the right to take from state land, free of charge, raw materials for handicrafts in small quantities (e.g. willow, alder, birch and aspen, roots, shoe grass, meadow grass and angelica).

10.7 Safeguarding Sámi culture

10.7.1 The Sámi in Finland

The Sámi are the only indigenous people in the European Union. The status of the Sámi was enshrined in the Constitution of Finland in 1995. As an indigenous people, the Sámi have the right to maintain and develop their language and culture, as well as their traditional livelihoods. There is a separate act on the use of the Sámi language by the authorities (Sámi Language Act 1086/2003).

Since 1996, the Sámi have enjoyed constitutional autonomy regarding their language and culture in their homeland. Tasks related to the autonomy of the Sámi are carried out by the Sámi Parliament, a parliament elected

by the Sámi people. According to the Skolt Act, the Skolt Sámi Siida Administration also represents them in the Skolt region, which is part of the Sámi homeland. The Sámi homeland includes the municipalities of Enontekiö, Inari and Utsjoki, as well as the Lapland reindeer herding cooperative area in the municipality of Sodankylä (total area is 35,000 km²). The demarcation of the Sámi homeland is shown on the map in Figure 17.

In total, the Reindeer Husbandry Area covers one third of Finland's surface area. The Sámi homeland is located within the area specially designated for reindeer husbandry. The land in this area may not be used in such a way as to cause significant harm to reindeer husbandry.

There are nearly 11,000 Sámi in Finland. Today, 68% of them live outside their home region, which places new demands on teaching, services and communication in the Sámi language.

Culture is closely linked to natural resources and their sustainable use. The Sámi cultural environment often seems untouched, even though the area is in active use for traditional livelihoods. The Sámi landscape is located between the natural landscape and the cultural landscape. The area, which looks like a natural landscape, contains stories in the Sámi landscape about land use, family places, ways of using areas, access routes, natural resources, areas to be avoided for various reasons and sacred places of which there is almost no sign on site.

The traditional culture of the Sámi people is based on the diverse and sustainable use of their own area and its natural output to meet the basic needs of the Sámi people. A prerequisite for the use nature by the Sámi has been their good knowledge of nature and animal behaviour. The nature of the Sámi homeland is a sensitive, scarce and slowly regenerating fell and forest border area that is poorly suited for the industrial exploitation of natural resources.

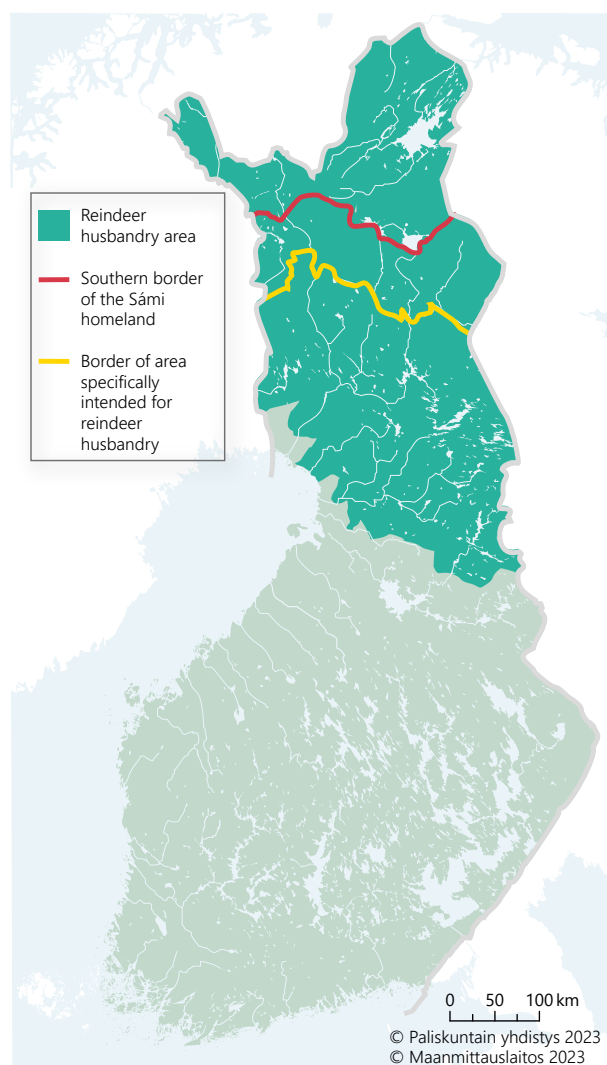


Figure 17. The Reindeer husbandry area and the Sámi homeland.

Alternative text: The map of Finland showing the Reindeer husbandry area and the Sámi Homeland in Finland. The Reindeer husbandry area covers the northern third of Finland, the Special reindeer husbandry area is situated in the northern half, and the Sámi homeland in the northernmost part of the Reindeer husbandry area.

The traditional livelihoods of the Sámi people include fishing, gathering, handicrafts, hunting and reindeer husbandry, as well as their modern forms of practice. They are also carried out as a combined economy alongside tourism and other service economies. The livelihood of a Sámi family in the Sámi homeland typically consists of many different sources of income. Although most of the

Sámi currently earn their living from other livelihoods, reindeer husbandry still has not only great cultural significance for the Sámi, but also considerable significance as an independent economy.

The practice of Sámi cultural livelihoods is protected by Article 27 of the UN Convention on Civil and Political Rights. According to the Constitution of Finland, the Sámi have the right to maintain and develop their own language and culture. Sámi culture broadly refers to the forms of Sámi culture and its livelihoods. The culture of the Sámi people is based on the diverse and sustainable use of their own area and its natural products.

Reindeer husbandry, the rights of local residents and the practice of natural livelihoods in protected areas are discussed in more detail in sections 13.2 and 13.3.

10.7.2 The role of Metsähallitus

In addition to the above, provisions on securing the practice of Sámi culture are also laid down in the Act on Metsähallitus (234/2016), the National Land Use Guidelines under the Land Use and Building Act (valid since 2018), the Skolt Act (253/1995), the Act on Structural Subsidies for Reindeer Husbandry and Natural Livelihoods (986/2011) and the Sámi Language Act (1086/2003). One of the main objectives of the Wilderness Act (62/1991) is to safeguard Sámi culture. The Nature Conservation Act contains a separate section (section 6) on the protection of Sámi culture and other entries concerning the Sámi area (e.g. sections 55 and 57). In accordance with the Act on the Sámi Parliament (974/1995), Metsähallitus negotiates with the Sámi Parliament on all far-reaching and significant measures – especially matters concerning the management, use, lease and transfer of state-owned land, protected areas and wilderness reserves – in the Sámi homeland.

Special attention is paid to the rights of the Sámi people to practise their culture in the

Sámi homeland in Metsähallitus' actions and plans. In areas under its governance, Parks & Wildlife Finland cherishes Sámi cultural environments, archaeological sites and built heritage in cooperation with actors in Sámi culture. So far, very few sites of the Sámi's built heritage have been officially protected, so the protection of Metsähallitus sites is also of national significance (e.g. Kaapin Jouni farm in Lemmenjoki National Park and Skolt fields in Urho Kekkonen National Park).

Parks & Wildlife Finland seeks to identify and understand the value and significance of Sámi holy sites in the areas under its administration. Parks & Wildlife takes care that site-related traditional Sámi information is ethically correctly used and that known sites are preserved. Parks & Wildlife also supports research carried out in the Sámi homeland. The most important partners in protecting the Sámi cultural heritage are the Sámi Museum Siida, the Sámi Parliament, the Skolt Sámi Siida Administration, the Finnish Heritage Agency and research organisations.

Metsähallitus personnel are trained to speak the Sámi language, and the language is encouraged to be used in meetings and negotiations in the Sámi homeland. In this area, all management plans for wilderness reserves and national parks are translated into Northern Sámi, and in the Skolt and Inari Sámi areas also into these languages. Guidance material is produced in all three Sami languages. Northern Sámi is one of the main languages in interpretative materials alongside Finnish and English. Parks & Wildlife Finland maintains a very extensive website in the Sámi language (metsa.fi/se). Parks & Wildlife Finland saves and actively cherishes the Sámi nomenclature tradition.

The Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention (ILO 169) has been ratified in many countries, but not in Finland. The case is still pending. In its operations, Metsähallitus complies with the Ministry of Justice's guidelines on conducting negotiations pursuant to sec-

tion 9 of the Act on the Sámi Parliament (OM 2/551/2017 Memorandum on the obligation to negotiate under section 9 of the Sámi Parliament Act).

10.7.3 The Akwé: Kon operating model in land use planning

The voluntary Akwé: Kon guidelines are part of the implementation of Article 8j of the Convention on Biological Diversity on traditional knowledge of indigenous peoples and the related work programme. The guidelines are a procedure by which the participation of indigenous people in the preparation, impact assessment and decision-making of projects and plans can be secured. By following the Akwé: Kon guidelines, adverse effects on indigenous peoples can be identified and harm minimised. In Finland, the Akwé: Kon guidelines are applied in the planning and steering of land use in the Sámi homeland within the framework of national legislation.

The Akwé: Kon guidelines are intended to be applied in cultural, environmental and social impact assessments of projects and plans in the Sámi homeland that may affect Sámi culture, livelihoods and cultural heritage.

In Metsähallitus' operations, the Akwé: Kon guidelines are best suited for application in interactive land use planning processes where consultation of citizens and stakeholders is an established practice. Such processes currently include the preparation of management plans for wilderness and nature reserves as well as large-scale natural resource plans. The Akwé: Kon guidelines can also be used, by joint decision of Metsähallitus and the Sámi Parliament and by the Skolt Sámi Siida Administration in the Skolt region, in individual projects related to special sites that have a significant impact on the conditions for practicing Sámi culture.

In accordance with the Akwé: Kon operating model developed jointly by Metsähallitus

and the Sámi Parliament (2020), Metsähallitus produces descriptions of the current state of land use on state-owned land, natural and cultural heritage sites and Metsähallitus' operations. The Akwé: Kon group evaluates the plan throughout the process and produces views on the prerequisites for practicing Sámi culture in relation to the content of the plan.

Impact assessment will become part of planning and impacts on Sámi culture can be assessed more accurately and reliably. The necessary changes to the plan can be made at different stages of the planning process. The Akwé: Kon operating model agreed between Metsähallitus and the Sámi Parliament has been found to improve planning and the related assessment of the impact of the plans on the prerequisites for practising Sámi culture. By following the instructions, negative effects can be reduced.

Metsähallitus benefits from a planning process in accordance with the Akwé: Kon guidelines. Interaction with Metsähallitus and the users of the area will increase during the working group. The Akwé: Kon working group complements Metsähallitus' participatory land use planning system.

The Sámi are represented in the Akwé: Kon process by the Sámi Parliament and also by the Skolt Sámi Siida Administration in the Skolt region. By applying the Akwé: Kon guidelines, issues important for the preservation of Sámi culture and the concerns of the Sámi people can be identified and reacted to at different stages of the process. The procedure is a tool for identifying the prerequisites for practicing Sámi culture that Metsähallitus must consider in the planning of land use and the use of natural resources.

The application of the Akwé: Kon guidelines does not remove the obligation to negotiate under section 9 of the Act on the Sámi Parliament (974/1995). In the case of a minor updating of one of the above-mentioned plans, Metsähallitus and the Sámi Parliament

may jointly agree that the project does not have to comply with the Akwé: Kon guidelines. In the Skolt region, the matter is also agreed with the Skolt Sámi Siida Administration.

If the need for planning arises, advance negotiations are initiated. In the preliminary negotiations, the Sámi Parliament, and the Skolt Sámi Siida Administration in the Skolt region, and Metsähallitus preliminarily agree on the following: objectives of the activities, content of the Akwé: Kon process and its launch, and resources to be allocated to the Akwé: Kon process and schedule set for the work (which can be specified as the work progresses, if necessary). In advance negotiations, reports to be prepared to support planning are also agreed. For the advance negotiation, Metsähallitus will provide the participants with information on key planning issues as well as proposals on resources and schedules. A protocol of the advance negotiations is drawn up, which must indicate, among other things, what has been agreed upon, what is still being negotiated and on which it is not possible to reach an agreement.

If it is agreed in advance negotiations that a jointly agreed operating model will be used in planning, Metsähallitus requests the Sámi Parliament to appoint an Akwé: Kon working group. The Sámi Parliament appoints the working group according to the principles agreed in the operating model. In accordance with the principles of the operating model, Metsähallitus appoints a draftsman for the working group on the proposal of the Sámi Parliament, who is also the working group's secretary. Metsähallitus allocates resources to the Akwé: Kon working group for participating in the process.

The Sámi Parliament and Metsähallitus, and the Skolt Sámi Siida Administration in the Skolt region, meet at intervals agreed in the operating model to assess the implementation of the plans and related projects. Reindeer herders in the Sámi homeland can participate in the monitoring process if they so wish. If a more detailed follow-up of an individual plan is deemed necessary at this meeting, such a separate meeting will be organised to agree on further actions.

The Sámi Parliament, Metsähallitus and the Skolt Sámi Siida Administration monitor the functionality and implementation of the operating model together and make an interim review of it every five years, or more often if necessary. The operating model will be developed to the extent deemed necessary.

In its operations, Metsähallitus also strives for otherwise active interaction and cooperation with the Sámi Parliament, the Skolt Sámi Siida Administration and other Sámi actors. In significant and far-reaching matters, negotiations are conducted in accordance with the Sámi Parliament Act. For locally significant individual projects, statements are requested from the Sámi Parliament and the Skolt Sámi Siida Administration in the Skolt region. Planning projects initiated by Metsähallitus will be negotiated with the Sámi Parliament, and the Skolt Sámi Siida Administration in the Skolt region, before the project begins. If the management plans drawn up for national parks leave matters significant for Sámi culture to be outlined in separate nature tourism plans, will the Sámi Parliament, and the Skolt Sámi Siida Administration, be consulted in the preparation of the plan in negotiations pursuant to section 9 of the Sámi Parliament Act.

11 Research and Environmental Education in Protected Areas

In addition to the conservation objectives and within the limits allowed by them, the aim of nature reserves and their establishment is also to promote research and monitoring of the state of the environment, environmental education, teaching and general knowledge and nature hobbies.

National parks serve natural science research and monitoring of the state of the environment (NCA section 44). Within the limits of conservation targets, the objective of national parks is also to serve environmental education and enhance general knowledge of nature by providing a place and opportunities for independent and guided observation of nature. According to the Nature Conservation Act (section 45), a strict nature reserve must be important for safeguarding natural development, and for scientific research or teaching. Within the limits of strict protection, some strict nature reserves also have environmental education functions. Enactments establishing other nature reserves also make specific reference to research and monitoring.

In nature reserves, it is possible to study the structure and functioning of ecosystems that are essentially in their natural state. As protected areas are permanent, they also offer good opportunities for long-term monitoring of natural developments and environmental changes. As environmental change accelerates, the importance of areas in their natural state – such as protected areas – as reference areas will continue to increase.

Parks & Wildlife Finland undertakes, or commissions surveys related to nature and cultural heritage in protected areas under its governance, as well as studies related to the recreational and other use of these areas, where this required for their management. Parks & Wildlife Finland also has a key role

in the monitoring of these areas. According to the Nature Conservation Act (section 18), Metsähallitus and the Centres for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment (ELY Centres) are responsible for monitoring the ecological status of nature reserves. Actual (scientific) research in protected areas is mainly carried out by external research institutes, which also have a wide range of monitoring projects in protected areas.

Protected areas offer diverse teaching and learning environments. The field stations of universities and research institutes organise diverse science education in protected areas, and comprehensive schools organise environmental education related to field trips or nature schools, for example. Metsähallitus actively communicates about the values of protected areas, and the services they offer, and activates visitors to engage in nature hobbies.

11.1 Research and monitoring in protected areas

11.1.1 Research and monitoring to support site management

Some of the research and monitoring carried out in protected areas serves Parks & Wildlife Finland's own operations and their development. Parks & Wildlife Finland supports such research and monitoring through cooperation agreements and by providing, inter alia, background materials and services (e.g. premises and transport assistance). Parks & Wildlife Finland can also participate in studies that directly serve the management of areas.

Parks & Wildlife Finland maintains active contact with research institutes in the field

to provide protected areas with research needed for management and its development. Research topics considered important for the management of protected areas include:

- Effects of climate change on the natural and cultural values of protected areas and factors affecting carbon sequestration (in forest and peatland environments)
- Terrestrial habitat management and restoration methods and effectiveness of interventions
- Mapping and modelling of natural values of aquatic habitats and methods for restoration, monitoring and watershed planning
- Special issues related to species, e.g. impact of wind turbines on birds of prey and impact of removal of alien species on waterfowl populations
- Environmental and social sustainability of land use, in particular impacts related to nature recreation (erosion, littering, disturbance)
- Factors affecting the amount of recreational use and the development of visitor surveys, e.g. the effects on well-being.

Long-term cooperation is emphasised in nature conservation research. Monitoring can be offered especially by research institutes funded by the state budget. Universities' relatively rapidly changing research groups, on the other hand, can bring innovation. In addition to these, Metsähallitus is interested in species surveys and observations obtained from amateur experts.

All of Metsähallitus' research, analysis and monitoring cooperation is based on written agreements. There are four types of contracts:

- framework agreements
- project agreements
- commission agreements
- data use agreements.

Metsähallitus has signed framework agreements and project agreements with the Finnish Environment Institute, Natural Resources Institute Finland, Geological Survey of Finland and the Finnish Heritage Agency. Similar agreements have also been drawn up with universities, higher education institutions and institutes engaged in marine and coastal research. In addition, cooperation agreements have been made with organisations concerning species monitoring (e.g. with WWF Finland, for White-backed woodpecker).

Every research or study that requires funding decisions, agreements on work, material production, or disclosure of Metsähallitus data, is usually subject to a project, commissioned research or data right agreement. Only some established monitoring can be carried out based on a framework agreement alone. The agreement states the ownership and copyright, management rights and principles of publication of the research material produced.

Volunteer experts are an invaluable help to Parks & Wildlife Finland and species conservation. Depending on the species, the work is organised either through the voluntary expert working groups on species protection of the Ministry of the Environment (Finnish Environment Institute 2023b) or through an association that protects a particular species. The volunteers work in direct cooperation with Parks & Wildlife Finland, for example, to protect the Saimaa ringed seal, White-backed woodpecker, Peregrine falcon and Gyrfalcon and to monitor the population of the Golden eagle.

11.1.2 Other scientific research, monitoring and education

Parks & Wildlife Finland offers areas also for research that does not directly benefit the management of protected areas but does not harm the natural or cultural values of the areas or the educational and recreational use of the areas.

Protected areas are well suited for general monitoring and comparison of changes in nature and the state of the environment if this does not harm the conservation values of the area (e.g. forest boundary monitoring, forest condition monitoring, integrated monitoring of the state of the environment, natural reference areas for water types in water management). Parks & Wildlife Finland assists the arrangements for such long-term studies and monitoring to the extent possible, as agreed on a case-by-case basis.

Research stations make use of protected areas

The research stations maintained by Finnish research institutes and universities form a diverse network for environmental research and monitoring (RESTAT Finland 2024). Many of them rely on nearby national parks, strict nature reserves or other state nature reserves for their research and teaching activities, the use of which has been agreed on a case-by-case basis. The research and monitoring targets cover a wide range of ecosystems from south to north and from the coast through forests and mires to fells.

The field station of the **Archipelago Research Institute** of the University of Turku (in southwestern Finland) is located on the island of Seili in the Archipelago National Park. The research institute's activities focus on multidisciplinary research in the Archipelago Sea and the Baltic Sea region, focusing on long-term monitoring of the state of the marine environment. The research institute offers facilities and opportunities for diverse teaching.

The **Tvärminne Zoological Station** of the University of Helsinki serves as a base for diverse biological research and offers facilities for field courses and seminars. The marine station studies coastal ecology in a changing environment. A large part of the research takes place in the Ekenäs National Park and Natura 2000 area.

The **Lammi Biological Station** of the University of Helsinki offers opportunities for diverse research and teaching. Research interests include food webs in lakes, ecology of forests and wetlands, and forest bird populations. Many long-term monitoring focuses on nature reserves in the Evo area.

The **Hyttiälä Forest Station** of the University of Helsinki is a field station for forest science, whose research topics include forests, peatlands, lakes and the atmosphere. The research focuses on, for example, the Siikanen Mire Reserve. In addition to the functioning of peatland ecosystems, peatland ecologists are interested in, for example, peatland restoration and peatland forest management.

The **Oulanka Research Station** of the University of Oulu (in northeastern Finland) serves biological and geoscientific research and teaching, part of which is focused on Oulanka National Park. The research station has carried out long-term environmental monitoring for decades. In addition, diverse monitoring research on climate and environmental change is ongoing, including the impact of changing snow conditions on the environment and vegetation. Studies also include the impact of reindeer grazing on environmental change and the impact of climate change on reindeer husbandry.

The **Värriö Research Station** of the University of Helsinki is surrounded by the Värriö Strict Nature Reserve. The station collects long series of observations on, for example, phenology, berry and cone crops, birds and insects, which are used to monitor changes in northern forest and fell nature and the climate factors affecting them. Today, research also focuses on the transport of air pollutants and atmospheric processes, as well as the functioning of ecosystems in northern conditions.

The **Lapland Research Institute** of the University of Turku is operating in the Kevo Strict Nature Reserve. Northern nature and the interaction between humans and nature are

studied, e.g. the effects of air pollution and reindeer grazing. The Institute also maintains diverse long-term environmental monitoring.

The **Kilpisjärvi Biological Research Station** of the University of Helsinki (in northwestern Lapland) focuses research on diverse bird and vegetation monitoring of the Käsivarsi fells (located in the Malla Nature Reserve and Saana Nature Reserve), long-term monitoring of the state of the environment and, increasingly, projects related to climate change.

Parks & Wildlife Finland has supervised some university-level theses performed in protected areas, but without coordinated funding, division of labour or thematic selection. The work has been based on a contractual division of costs between Metsähallitus and the educational institution in question.

Research permits are required in nature reserves

As a rule, research carried out in nature reserves requires a research permit. A research agreement does not replace the research permit.

According to section 51 of the Nature Conservation Act, it may be allowed in a nature reserve, with the permission of the authority or institution responsible for managing the area, and without jeopardising its purpose of establishment, to capture or kill animals, to collect mushrooms and plants or parts thereof, animal nests and mineral samples for research or other scientific purposes or teaching. Permits under this section are granted for a fixed period and their duration may not exceed ten years. Conditions may and often need to be attached to the permit, which may include time and/or spatial constraints or measures to be complied with by the applicant to avoid or limit the harm caused by the activity to conservation values. According to the explanatory memorandum of the Act, when granting permits, the exemption provisions must be interpreted restrictively, and permits must be granted only to the extent that is necessary.

Parks & Wildlife Finland grant rights for field surveys to statutory nature reserves with official permits (research permits, based on applications) and to other areas by landowner consent. Permits for research are applied for varying periods, from a few days (single sampling or experiment) to up to 5 years (organism working groups of the Environmental Administration). National research permits are prepared in compiled form.

A research permit is granted when the research does not harm species, habitats, management of the protected area and other uses. Methodological studies and experiments that may cause harmful or unforeseeable changes in nature are to be carried out outside protected areas. A research permit must be applied for in writing from Parks & Wildlife Finland (the form is available electronically in the metsa.fi online service). The application must include the purpose of the permit and the grounds for the need for the permit. The application for a research permit must also be accompanied by a research plan and a description of the tools and methods used in the research. The collection of protected species also requires a permit from the ELY Centre. In addition, movement in restricted areas, strict nature reserves and areas where disembarkation is prohibited requires an access permit (this is usually issued as part of a research permit).

The current permit practice obliges the permit holder to report annually on the use of the permit and store observation data on endangered species in the SpeciesGIS system for planning management and use of areas governed by Parks & Wildlife Finland. In connection to national research permits, Metsähallitus hopes, but does not oblige, to receive later reports and research publications based on the research. For species, only observations of species are requested from the permit holder, but no further reporting is required, unless the surveyors have made some specific significant observations concerning site management. In accordance

with the agreement between Metsähallitus and the Natural History Museum (LUOMUS), species observation data is also submitted to the national Laji.fi system.

Bird ringing is often – but not always – related to a research project. Since ringing can largely be considered to serve scientific purposes, it is generally viewed positively in protected areas. Permits can be granted to nature reserves, for example, for ringing nestlings and territorial birds even if the ringing is not clearly linked to any research project. However, for general ringing, as a rule, permits are not granted, e.g. with bird nets on sea islands. In some nature reserves, facilities that serve as bird stations have been rented for continuous research and monitoring purposes.

Permission to install a terrain camera may be granted for justified research, survey and nature conservation purposes. The keeping of carrion and other artificial feeding is permitted in protected areas only on nature conservation or research grounds. Similarly, permission may be granted for the construction of artificial nests not only for conservation reasons but also for justified research reasons.

Archaeological sites in protected areas are mainly studied using non-invasive methods. Metsähallitus may grant a permit for research encroaching on protected areas only for compelling scientific reasons or for reasons required for the use of management, or because the site or part of it is about to be destroyed. Tampering with an antiquity protected by law always requires a research permit issued by the Finnish Heritage Agency.

Geological, geophysical and geochemical surveys used to locate and study deposits containing mining minerals, as well as sampling to determine the size and quality of the deposit, are discussed as part of ore exploration under the Mining Act in section 14.3.

11.2 Nature and environmental education

According to section 8 of the Nature Conservation Act, state authorities defined in the Act, including Metsähallitus “shall promote environmental education and environmental awareness among citizens, private and public actors in order to safeguard biodiversity”.

The aim is to secure operating conditions for a sustainable future by passing on skills and knowledge related to nature and forests to coming generations through environmental education and communication. Nature education is a form of environmental education that emphasises experientiality. It supports the growth of an individual's relationship with nature and environmental sensitivity, and promotes knowledge of nature.

Nature education has a positive impact on learning. Skills related to walking in nature and its sustainable use are acquired. At the same time, awareness of the well-being effects of nature, nature literacy and understanding of how nature works will increase. Learning outdoors in nature also has health and well-being benefits: ideas flow better and creativity increases, motor skills develop, commitment to learning improves, social skills are strengthened, and group interaction increases.

Approximately 17,500 children and young people are met each year in the protected areas and service points of Parks & Wildlife Finland (estimated in 2021). These encounters take place especially in the context of guided activities, such as guided tours of exhibitions and nature trails at nature centres, nature schools and so-called nature trails as well as in cooperation with several organisations.

Nature education and youth communication are carried out by many Metsähallitus employees who interact with children, young people and educators. Staff often work together with organisations and other stakeholders engaged with children and young people. In addition, nature education

activities include organising events, providing support and training for teachers and educators, producing electronic teaching materials, projects and guidance for on-the-job learners.

Parks & Wildlife Finland provides nature and environmental education as part of the environmental administration and bears responsibility for implementing the related political programmes and agreements as well as national strategies (see Chapter 4). The activities are outlined in the summary Nature and environmental education and promotion of environmental awareness at Parks & Wildlife Finland (Metsähallitus 2021b) published in 2021.

Nature and environmental education increase the well-being of citizens, strengthen their relationship with nature, create emotional experiences and encourage them to act for the protection of Finnish nature and cultural heritage. The main tasks outlined are:

- to increase citizens' understanding of the sites managed by Parks and Wildlife Finland and their values.
- To encourage citizens to go out into nature safely, respecting natural and cultural values and other hikers.

The goals set by Parks & Wildlife Finland for nature and environmental education are to:

- 1) **Provide basic information on areas managed by Parks & Wildlife Finland**
 - tell about and describe the natural values and characteristics of the area
 - tell about various opportunities, routes and service structures for exercising in nature, as well as services that support the recreational use of areas
 - tell about the weather conditions in the area, the necessary equipment, people moving in the area, livelihoods, observed animals, birds

and ecological values of the area, and ensure customer safety.

- 2) **Contribute to the protection of the natural and cultural heritage**

- explain what kind of nature and cultural heritage protection work is being carried out, why it is being carried out, by whom, how much, how it can be supported and how to participate
- guide visitors towards environmentally friendly nature walking, adhering to hiking etiquette and the principles of sustainable nature tourism, and promote Finnish nature and cultural heritage.

- 3) **Deepen visitors' natural and cultural experiences and knowledge of nature**

- tell about broader natural processes and contexts so that people can compile and relate examples and fragmented data into personally understandable entities and relate them to basic ecological issues and human activities
- encourage and guide the use of all senses and unhurried observation and perception, which deepens the emotional experience of nature
- provide tools for knowing and enjoying nature, its species, habitats and activities.

- 4) **Provide ingredients for environmentally responsible and active citizenship**

- make nature conservation a common concern
- identify ways to promote nature conservation, both individually and collectively
- increase empathy.

The key basic messages of nature and environmental education are:

- Safeguarding biodiversity ensures nature's adaptability also in the future.

- Each of us can contribute to the comfort of natural sites and the preservation of natural values through our own actions.
- Exercising in nature invigorates, strengthens health and increases mental and physical well-being.
- Sustainable consumption patterns promote the preservation of biodiversity and climate-smart operations.
- Managing distinctive and diverse cultural environments and historical sites preserves our cultural heritage.

The key messages of nature and environmental education are included in all communications and translated into regional messages when planning nature and environmental education. Nature and environmental education have numerous target groups:

- leisure visitors to national parks and other destinations
- co-entrepreneurs, teachers, business and cultural operators, event organisers and decision-makers
- organisations and hobbyists (e.g. scouts, orienteers, mountain bikers, fishermen, hunters)
- children and young people, in particular groups of day care and school children and students from different professions.

Customer contacts and satisfaction in online and customer services, the number of visits and ecological and socio-economic impacts in the areas are monitored as part of the situational picture of the recreational use of nature.

In addition, the aim is to develop the nature and environmental education approach: to identify ways to support the achievement of the objectives of environmental education, for example, by means of field signs, digital solutions and information-based guidance in permit processes.

Nature and environmental education are planned and carried out in accordance with the nature, location and conservation objectives of (protected) areas, considering their potential and possible limitations. At the regional level, the methods are selected according to the visitor profile and the demand for guidance. In practice, the activities may mean, for example, guidance on the Metsähallitus website, hiking advice at customer service points, learning at nature centre exhibitions, guided or independent hiking in areas, participation in nature management work or the renovation of service structures, or cooperation with tourism companies.

Nature centres and some nature huts offer ready-made programmes and activity materials for schools. The programmes related to Finnish nature, nature conservation, environmentally friendly hiking and lifestyle, as well as cultural heritage are suitable for study trips, lessons, nature schools and class trips. Many partners also offer teachers help in organising nature walks.

When performing public administration tasks, Metsähallitus is a bilingual authority (Language Act 423/2003), and customers have the right to use their mother tongue also in monolingual areas. In the Sámi homeland, activities are carried out in accordance with the Sámi Language Act (Sámi Language Act 1086/2003); In addition to Finnish, the second service language in the area is primarily Northern Sámi, which is the most used Sámi language. The policy applies to, for example, official decisions, websites and customer service. Other communication materials, such as exhibitions, brochures, signage, press releases and publications, are produced regardless of the channel in languages other than Finnish when this is important for the target groups. In addition to Swedish and Sámi, materials are produced for international communication most comprehensively in English.

12 Nature Recreation and Tourism

According to the National Strategy for the Recreational Use of Nature, nature recreation refers to exercise and spending time in the natural environment (Government resolution, VNP 2022, see section 4.5). Holiday homes and tourism, insofar as they involve the above-mentioned activities, are also seen as nature recreation. The recreational use of nature thus includes all outdoor activities based on everyone's right, that take place in nature, as well as hunting and part of recreational fishing that falls outside the scope of everyone's right. Motorised mobility in nature, such as snowmobiling or motorboating, are also considered forms of recreational use.

The concept of nature recreation includes nature tourism and local recreation. According to Statistics Finland's definition, tourism is an activity in which people travel to a place outside their usual environment and stay there continuously for no more than one year for leisure, business or other purposes. Parks & Wildlife Finland has drawn up local area boundaries for visitor monitoring. Inside the boundaries recreational use of nature is counted as local recreation and demand from outside as tourism.

Although legislation does not directly set goals for nature recreation and tourism in protected areas, these are included in the purposes of establishing the areas and the duties of Metsähallitus. According to section 44 of the Nature Conservation Act (NCA), national parks must "be significant as a public natural attraction or for increasing knowledge of nature or for general nature

recreation." The law also allows the construction of buildings, paths and roads in nature reserves "for hiking and exploring the area". According to the Wilderness Act, one of the purposes of establishing wilderness reserves is "to develop the diverse use of nature and its prerequisites." According to the Act on Metsähallitus, "the provision of nature and hiking services related to the recreational use of nature and the preservation of cultural property" are its public administrative duties.

In the annual performance agreement, the Ministry of the Environment has set goals for Metsähallitus for nature recreation and tourism as part of its societal impact. The goal "Recreation in nature increases well-being and appreciation of nature" includes as indicators the total number of visits to national parks and other public attractions and the impact of visitors' spending on the local economy. These objectives have been growing. The prerequisite is that the preservation of the natural values for which nature reserves are established is ensured. This is also required by the Nature Conservation Act.

Nature recreation in its various forms increases people's well-being and appreciation of nature. The preservation of the values of protected areas is supported by good guidance of recreational use, services that meet demand and active communication. Tourism that relies on protected areas brings benefits to health, the local economy and employment. In addition, national parks and other protected areas play an important role in attracting people to tourist areas and promoting the country image of Finnish tourism.

12.1 Promoting and monitoring sustainability of nature recreation and tourism

A prerequisite for nature recreation in protected areas is that the activities do not conflict with the conservation objectives of the area. Promoting the (ecological) sustainability of use is a cross-cutting task at Metsähallitus. The means of ensuring sustainability are discussed extensively in section 7.4. Tourism-related policies and methods include, for example:

- The Principles of sustainable tourism
- Management plans and sustainable tourism plans
- Cooperation agreements with tourism businesses
- Cooperation with regional tourism organisations and national operators
- Sustainable tourism brands, such as Charter for Sustainable Tourism (EUROPARC) and Sustainable Travel Finland (Visit Finland)
- Monitoring the sustainability of tourism and recreational use.

The Principles of sustainable tourism drawn up by Parks & Wildlife Finland (Metsähallitus 2024c) structure aspects of sustainability and create a framework for promoting and monitoring sustainability. These principles apply to all recreational use of nature, and both Parks & Wildlife Finland and tourism companies covered by the cooperation agreement are committed to them. The Principles of sustainable tourism have also been adopted in Finland's World Heritage Sites.

To promote sustainable tourism, Parks & Wildlife Finland is committed to:

1. Support the preservation of valuable features at the sites and promote their protection

- Natural and cultural values are important factors in terms of attracting tourists.
- We inform visitors of the values of the site and their protection and encourage visitors to act responsibly.
- We develop services and direct the use of the sites, considering demand and the site characteristics.
- We mainly use existing routes and service structures.
- In construction, we also take account of local natural and cultural values.
- We ensure that tourism does not compromise natural or cultural values, and we prevent any harmful impacts proactively.

2. Minimise the load on the environment

- We promote opportunities to travel to the destination on public transport with low emissions.
- We increase the duration of visitors' stay in the area.
- We operate with energy and material efficiency.
- We set a good example in environmental issues.
- We enable and encourage visitors to act in an environmentally friendly manner.

3. Strengthen local aspects

- Local knowledge, research information, experience and culture provide a starting point for delivering experiences.
- The guidance provided is of high quality, and operators know the area and local conditions well.
- We increase the appreciation of the site by means of high-quality tourist services.

- We cooperate and offer local residents and visitors the opportunity to take part in the management and development of the site.

4. Promote use of the sites to increase health and well-being

- We encourage visitors to engage in versatile natural and cultural experiences on their own and in guided groups.
- We ensure the safety of all sites and services.
- Our services promote equality.
- We enhance visitors' opportunities to increase their social, psychological and physical well-being.
- We promote local residents' recreation and improve living conditions in the area.

5. Promote growth and job creation in the local economy

- We offer visitors high-quality services based on the attraction of the site.
- We cooperate actively with other operators in the management of sites and the provision of services, with clearly defined roles and responsibilities.
- We provide easily accessible and interesting information on the sites and services in advance using various channels.
- We encourage visitors to stay longer in the area.

6. Communicate together the values and services of the site

- We are committed to the values and basic messages of the site.
- We communicate consistently and responsibly with different target groups both in Finland and abroad.
- We collect feedback from stakeholders to improve customer satisfaction and our activities.
- We organise training and cooperation events for operators in the area.

- We encourage operators to commit themselves to these principles of sustainable tourism.

Parks & Wildlife Finland monitors the effects of recreational use on the ecological, economic, social and cultural sustainability of an individual protected area in many ways. The methods typically used in state protected areas produce sufficient monitoring data on a general level. In areas with high visitor pressure, it is necessary to carry out more accurate and targeted monitoring of sustainability, particularly at sensitive sites. This has been carried out using the Limits of Acceptable Change (LAC) method (see Figure 18). The purpose of monitoring is to promote the multidimensional realisation of sustainability and to detect and react to possible shortcomings.

The need to monitor the sustainability of tourism and recreational use using the LAC (or some other) method is typically assessed in connection with management planning e.g. of the most popular national parks. Special attention is paid to the entries made of pressures caused by recreation in the threat assessment of the area. Sustainability monitoring is also considered in connection with tourism planning in the area. There may be situations where monitoring is carried out as a separate process. For example, if it is necessary to respond to threats to the site and it is not possible to carry out any broader planning process. Monitoring sustainability is part of the broader monitoring scheme of the state of protected areas (see section 8.4).

Suitable indicators for monitoring sustainability of nature recreation and tourism are selected for each area. The indicators used can be obtained, for example, through visitor monitoring (number of visits, customer satisfaction, local economic impacts), PAVE data (firewood consumption, condition of structures) or separate species and habitat monitoring. The guidelines maintained in the Protected Area Planning and Monitor-

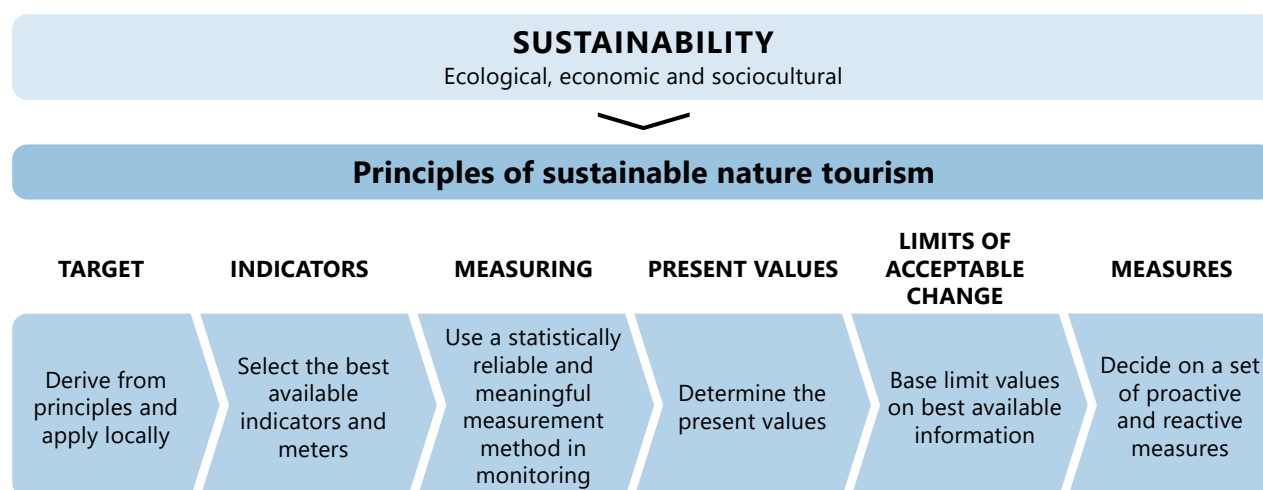


Figure 18. Limits of Acceptable Change (LAC) procedure to monitor and ensure sustainable tourism. Alternative text of the figure. Ecological, economic and socio-cultural sustainability is written at the top. From there is an arrow down to a text that says Principles of Sustainable Tourism. Below them is a six-point procedure. 1) Target: Derive from principles and apply locally. 2) Indicators: Select the best available indicators and meters. 3) Measuring: Use a statistically reliable and meaningful measurement method in monitoring. 4) Present values: Determine the present values. 5) Limits of acceptable change: Base limit values are on the best available information. 6) Measures: Decide on a set of proactive and reactive measures.

ing (SASS) information system describe the characteristics of a good indicator.

12.2 Guiding recreational use

Steering recreation in protected areas is based on consideration of the conservation values, demand (number of visits), attraction factors and other use of the areas. The aim is to concentrate nature recreation on sites best suited for it and at the same time reduce visitor pressure in other areas. Values and different forms of use are reconciled in management plans, and if necessary, with more detailed tourism plans. Good solutions for guiding use are planned and implemented in cooperation with hobbyists, organisations, tourism companies and local communities.

The means of steering recreational use to safeguard conservation values include zoning of the protected area, planning and implementation of service infrastructure and guidance, communication, cooperation, and permit and agreement practices (see also section 7.4).

In the management plans, protected areas are divided into zones: 1) hiking and nature tourism zone, 2) remote zone and 3) restricted and nature value zone. In addition, significant zones for Sámi culture can be designated in the Sámi homeland. Visitors are directed by the placement of service equipment, field guidance and communication primarily to the hiking and nature tourism zone and marked routes. Restricted zones are established if this is required for the preservation of the fauna, vegetation or habitats in the area (section 56 of the Nature Conservation Act). The restricted zones of management plans are enforced by means of regulation orders (NCA section 58). The management plan may designate zones of special natural values where it is recommended to avoid movement to safeguard species susceptible to disturbances or habitats susceptible to erosion, for example.

Forms of use that heavily impact nature and cultural heritage or disturb species are not suitable for protected areas. The aim of recreational use guidance is to minimise the disturbance caused by different activities to



On a nature trail in a traditional landscape of the Archipelago National Park. Well-designed service structures facilitate movement and direct access to routes, helping to safeguard vulnerable habitats and species. Photo: Martti Komulainen.

each other. Different kinds of activities can be directed on the same routes, if customer safety and the desired customer experience are not compromised. The dimensions of routes and service equipment are designed based on demand, environmental impact, desired customer experience and safety.

Service infrastructure for nature recreation is a social service and thus equally available to all visitors. The service provided of Parks & Wildlife Finland supports independent recreation but also creates preconditions for nature tourism business (see section 12.6). The most diverse services are provided in those protected areas where demand and tourism business are most notable. These are usually entities formed by several protected areas and often significant visitor attractions in a larger tourism area. For national parks and other areas of great importance for tour-

ism, a more extensive tourism plan may be drawn up to support the management plan, if necessary. In areas where demand for recreational use is lower, the supply of services is correspondingly smaller. Most protected areas do not provide visitor services and visitors are not actively directed to the areas.

Equality is always considered when providing services for the recreational use of nature, according to the opportunities offered by the site. Accessible services are concentrated especially in areas where demand is high and where the terrain provides natural conditions for constructing accessible services. The aim is to be comprehensive in these sites so that accessibility is considered both in the service equipment and guidance communication of Parks and Wildlife Finland and in the services provided by other operators.

12.3 Acting with everyone's right

Everyone's rights in Finland (and the other Nordic countries) provide, by international standards, exceptionally equal and diverse opportunities for hiking and operating in nature.

Everyone's right is the traditional right to move on your own, to stay, to camp temporarily and to collect natural products on someone else's land without the landowner's consent. In a broad sense, everyone's right applies to activities that do not require the landowner's consent, permission from a public authority or are not otherwise prohibited. Everyone's right is not defined in detail in the legislation. However, it is referred to in the Criminal Code and the Nature Conservation Act, and the Water Act contains entries on the corresponding right of general use of water areas. The Ministry of the Environment has published a guide entitled *Everyman's rights and operating in someone else's territory – legislation and good practices* (Tuunanen et al. 2012), in which everyone's rights are discussed extensively and diversely.

Acting with everyone's right must not cause more than minor harm to nature or the landowner. Hiking and observing nature on your own do not usually adversely affect the conservation objectives of a protected area. Therefore, hiking is generally allowed in nature reserves, to a limited extent even in some strictly protected nature reserves (IUCN protected area category Ia, see Appendix 1).

However, in some situations it may be necessary to restrict everyone's rights in nature reserves, to achieve conservation objectives. The conservation orders stipulated in the Nature Conservation Act and the statutes establishing each area, and the restrictions based on the regulation orders vary according to the type of protected area, the conservation objectives and the pressures on the use of the area. Everyone's rights can only be restricted for justified reasons, and with the

powers and restrictions provided for by the relevant law.

The Nature Conservation Act contains general conservation provisions for national parks and strict nature reserves as well as general exceptions to them that require a permit (NCA sections 49–51, see section 6.2 of these guidelines). These provisions also apply mostly to other state nature reserves (NCA section 52). Provisions on the protection of nature reserves established before 1996 have also been laid down in area-specific statutes. In wilderness reserves, there are generally no specific restrictions on everyone's rights. Moreover, the fact that a site is part of the Natura 2000 network does not in itself restrict everyone's rights. However, many Natura sites consist partly or fully of nature reserves, where everyone's rights may be restricted.

Tourism business may be based on activities (e.g. hunting, fishing and off-road traffic) which, based on specific legislation, require the permission or consent of the landowner. Other types of tourism business can often be carried out in nature reserves under everyone's right, unless this is expressly prohibited or restricted by the area's conservation regulations. However, not everyone can exercise a permanent activity on another's land. Organised events and tourism business activities may involve special features affecting the conservation values of the area or other uses of the area that require the landowner's permission or consent (see sections 12.5 and 12.6). According to the Criminal Code, "a person who takes possession of land or a building or part of another person's possession, may be convicted of violation of possession".

The use of maintained routes and structures, such as rest areas, is not everyone's right, but their use is decided by the owner of the structures. This is the case even when the structures are intended for public use. No permit is required for the use of the routes in protected areas and maintained open rest areas (unlocked huts, campfire sites, huts and

lean-tos) and no fee is charged for the use – except for business activities, in which case the use requires a permit from or agreement with Metsähallitus and a fee is charged for the use (see sections 12.5 and 12.6). Booking and rental properties are subject to a fee for everyone.

12.3.1 Access and camping

The use of nature with everyone's rights does not require permission from the landowner, and no fee can be charged. Everyone's rights include, for example, "muscular mobility" (or, subject to certain reservations, electrically assisted movement, see section 12.4.5), temporary camping and picking (edible) berries and mushrooms.

Moving around nature reserves on your own is usually allowed, except for strict nature reserves and restricted parts of other nature reserves. According to section 56 of the Nature Conservation Act, movement may be prohibited or restricted in national parks and other nature reserves either by a statute establishing the area or by a site-specific regulation order. The restriction of movement requires that the preservation of the fauna or flora in the area requires it. Such restrictions may apply to the whole year, the summer season or the breeding season of the animals, or movement may be restricted to certain routes. In some situations, movement in protected areas may also be restricted for safety reasons – e.g. cycling on busy hiking trails (based on the Consumer Safety Act 920/2011). When moving with a dog, the dog should be kept on a leash. See also in Appendix 9: Rescue, service and search dog activities.

Moving on the water and taking water for one's own needs are part of the so-called public rights, including in protected areas. Boaters can navigate open waters and anchor temporarily, if this does not cause unnecessary disturbance to nature or the landowner. For nature conservation reasons, regulation

orders can be used to define landing bans for nature reserves, which are usually only valid for part of the year. Swimming and diving in water bodies are allowed in nature reserves everywhere access is allowed. Regarding diving, it should be noted that shipwrecks that are more than a hundred years old are protected under the Antiquities Act. Motorised waterborne transport is discussed in Section 14.2.

Temporary camping based on everyone's right (which does not include the right to make open fires and must not cause disturbance to other users of the area) does not require permission or consent from the landowner. In nature reserves, however, camping with everyone's right is often prohibited or restricted based on the founding regulations or regulation order of the area. Camping in strict nature reserves and small nature reserves is usually completely prohibited by conservation regulations. In most national parks and some other larger nature reserves, camping is allowed in designated maintained camping areas. In remote areas of the largest national parks, mire reserves and wilderness reserves, temporary camping is usually allowed.

Long-term camping in the terrain easily causes adverse effects. For this reason, Metsähallitus urges hikers to notify Metsähallitus in advance of long-term camping (more than 3 days) in the same location using the notification form available in the Metsa.fi online service. In this way, Metsähallitus can assess in advance, whether the notified camping may cause harm to e.g. endangered species or habitats susceptible to disturbance. If necessary, Metsähallitus will then contact the notifier and negotiate on the possibilities to reduce the harm caused.

Metsähallitus interprets use of tent saunas, which have become more common in recent years, as camping, so camping rules and restrictions also apply to them. Tent saunas can therefore be used without separate consent in places/areas where camping is pos-

sible. However, firewood brought to camping sites by Metsähallitus is not intended for heating tent saunas, so its use for this purpose is prohibited. In designated places, it is possible to use a tent sauna with your own wood. In remote areas of large national parks, wilderness reserves and other areas where temporary camping is free, it is generally possible to use a tent sauna with your own wood. In many parts of Northern and Eastern Finland, this is possible by using dry branches, twigs and small tree stumps/roots (but not, for example, near maintained fireplaces, see section 12.3.3 for more details). Tents with stoves are comparable to tent saunas. The firewood from the fireplaces is intended for the use of the fireplace in question.

The tent sauna heater stones must be brought by the bather, i.e. they may not be collected on site.

Some of the stoves in tent saunas are comparable in structure to open flames, in which case they are subject to regulations and instructions concerning open fires (see section 12.3.3). The user of the tent sauna must also take care of the ash and its fire-safe handling.

The need for use of half-platoon tents and other larger fireplace accommodations are often related to events that require an event notification. In such cases, decisions concerning these are usually made on a case-by-case basis, in connection with the processing of the notification (see section 12.5).

A temporary rest in a hammock or on the ground does not wear or strain the terrain much. It can be done under everyone's right. However, if such an overnight stay lasts longer in the same place, it may be interpreted as camping, in which case any camping regulations applicable to the area also apply to it.

If the regulations of the nature reserve state that camping is allowed only at designated (camping) sites, this also applies to tree tents (e.g. tensile) and an overnight stay in the same place in a hammock or just a sleeping bag on the ground. Temporary resting in a

hammock or sleeping bag on the ground is allowed in nature reserves where access is allowed.

The parking of caravans and mobile homes in a protected area for overnight stays is discussed in Annex 9.

12.3.2 Saunas and shelters on water need permission

In Lapland, especially in the Käsivarsi area (northwestern "arm"), mobile bases that are floating in the summer (referred to as "arks") or placed on ice in wintertime, are used as saunas and/or for resting and overnight stays. These constructions and their uses are very diverse, which is why their permit requirement is usually decided on a case-by-case basis, depending on factors such as their structure and the nature and duration of their use.

These shelters are interpreted as fixed bases, if they are held in place and used all year round or even for years in the same place. Metsähallitus interprets the shelters as temporary bases if they are not fixed in place and are kept in place for a few months at most.

The use of such shelters must always be agreed in writing with Metsähallitus. No agreement is needed if the shelter is always used by a private person and transported away and not stored in the terrain or on the ice. However, even then, an off-road traffic permit is needed. In business operations, the use of these kind of shelters or other temporary programme service bases must always be agreed upon with Metsähallitus.

The builder/user of a shelter must also obtain any construction or other permit required by the municipality. The municipality cannot grant a permit if the maintenance of the shelter has not been agreed upon with Metsähallitus.

The Building Act defines the situations in which construction of a structure requires a permit. Even if a floating shelter does not

necessarily require a construction permit, according to the regulations, it is at least a structure that requires an action permit as a rule.

In wilderness reserves, Metsähallitus can only agree on the use of these mobile bases in business operations if this has been made possible in the management plan for the area.

The above-mentioned Building Act provisions are also applicable when assessing various ferry saunas and floating accommodations used in water bodies during the summer. These regulations explicitly mention, inter alia, houseboats and the like. Normal boating involves anchoring, but in the case of permanent anchoring, the "device" to be anchored requires an action permit.

Matters concerning buildings and structures fall within the competence of the municipal building supervision authority, which must supervise compliance with the Building Act. However, the problem is often that structures can be moved after they have been ordered to be removed and then brought back again. In this case, the supervisory authorities will have to impose coercive measures again and again by the decision of the Board. When a violation of the law is found to be intentional, repeated and continuous, such conduct can already be considered to fall within the scope of criminal law.

In the case of an object left in the terrain that cannot be regarded as a building or structure (which would fall within the competence of building supervision), it may constitute a violation of the prohibition on littering laid down in section 72 of the Waste Act. This falls within the competence of the municipal environmental authority. If the owner of an unauthorised object (building, structure or movable object) is known, it is always advisable to start with a removal request issued by Metsähallitus, which includes a deadline. After this, depending on the case, it is advisable to turn to either the municipal building supervision or the environmental authority to

initiate the enforcement process, primarily by sending a written request for action to the relevant authority.

12.3.3 Making fire requires landowner's consent

Making an open fire is not part of everyone's right, but as a rule, requires permission from the landowner (Rescue Act 379/2011, section 6).

In many of the old statutes establishing nature reserves, open fires are prohibited or restricted, so that they are only allowed in places defined in the regulations. Such provisions will probably be removed when the statutes are renewed in accordance with the new (2023) Nature Conservation Act (see section 2.3.2).

The regulation orders of nature reserves often contain entries concerning campfires. However, making fires is not actually one of the matters prescribed by the regulation orders, except for some older nature reserves, whose statutes contain provisions related to making fires. Thus, most of the fire-making entries in the regulation orders are issued by Metsähallitus in its role as a landowner. If a management plan has been drawn up for the area, the fire-making entries in the regulation orders are often based on it. It should be noted that both in the statutes and management plans and in the old founding statutes concerning open fires, open fires are referred to as campfires (cf. what is stated below about hobo stoves).

If the statutes, regulation orders and/or management plan of the area contain entries concerning making fires, they shall be followed (cf., however, what is stated below about hobo stoves). In most such nature reserves, making fire is allowed only at designated campfire sites, only using wood brought to the site reserved for this purpose. However, in the extensive nature reserves and wilderness reserves of Northern Finland,

the right to make fires is often defined more freely. In wilderness reserves, campfires are mainly allowed using dry branches, twigs and small roots from the ground.

In nature reserves whose founding statutes, regulation orders or management plans do not include entries for making fires, fire-making sites built and designated for this purpose shall primarily be used, using wood brought to the site for this purpose. In Lapland, North Ostrobothnia, Kainuu and North Karelia, campfires are allowed with branches, twigs and small roots in the ground also elsewhere, but not less than half a kilometre from designated campfire sites or in areas that may have been excluded from the right to make fires by a separate decision of Metsähallitus. In southern Finland, consent may be granted for campfires outside designated campfire sites, free of charge.

Open fires are prohibited during wildfire warnings issued by rescue authorities (Rescue Act 379/2011, section 6). Open fire refers to campfires, to uncovered and flueless built fireplaces, and according to the current interpretation of the rescue authorities, also to so-called hobo stoves. Lightweight camping grills that can be placed on the ground also fall within the definition of open fire.

The so-called hobo stoves (camping stoves that are fuelled by twigs) are a relatively new “innovation” and have not been considered in the old fire-making provisions in the founding statutes, regulation orders and management plans. Until recent years, their use has been

comparable to the use of other camping stoves, i.e. has been allowed – even during wildfire warnings – in areas where open fires are prohibited. However, according to the current interpretation by the rescue authorities, the use of hobo stoves during wildfire warnings is prohibited. However, outside the period covered by wildfire warnings, their use is allowed outside designated campfire sites and in areas where making fire is not allowed, as before. In the future, the use of hobo stoves should also be clearly mentioned in the fire-making provisions of the regulation orders. For special reasons, Metsähallitus may restrict the use of hobo stoves (outside wildfire warnings), in which case these restrictions that specifically concern these cookers must be included in the regulation orders drawn up for the area.

Metsähallitus welcomes the use of hobo stoves because they are a good alternative to campfires and save wood. However, only twigs and branches on the ground may be used in these cookers, i.e. folding branches from upright trees for them is not allowed (e.g. applies to dead lower branches of spruce and mountain birch). In practice, this means that the use of hobo stoves during snow-covered periods is only possible if the users have the necessary branches/twigs with them.

A summary of fire making situations, rules and restrictions in Metsähallitus areas is presented in Table 7.

The use of fireworks in nature reserves is dealt with separately in Appendix 9.

Table 7. Making fire in state-owned areas governed by Metsähallitus.

Form of making fire	Open flame	Use and restrictions
Covered campfire site, with flue	No	As a rule, use is also allowed during a wildfire warning, but the use of campfire sites in poor condition can be prohibited with a site-specific marking. The use may be prohibited for a limited period, even more extensively, based on a regional decision by the rescue authority.
Other kind of built campfire site	Yes	Making an open fire is prohibited during a wildfire warning and in principle requires the landowner's consent (in practice applies to campfires). In addition to campfires, open fires refer to some of the built campfire sites (open, flueless fireplaces) and hobo stoves.
Campfire	Yes	Making an open fire is prohibited during a wildfire warning and requires the landowner's consent (in practice, it applies to campfires). In addition to campfires, open fires refer to some of the built campfire sites (open, flueless fireplaces) and hobo stoves.
Hobo stove	Yes	Making an open fire is prohibited during a wildfire warning and in principle requires the landowner's consent (in practice applies to campfires). In addition to campfires, open fires refer to some of the built campfire sites (open, flueless fireplaces) and hobo stoves.
Other camping stove	No	Not equated with open flames, so the restrictions on it do not apply to the use of (other) camping stoves. Such a camping stove can therefore be used wherever access is allowed, and during a wildfire warning.

Geographical area and type of area	Permissibility of making a fire, permits and restrictions
Lapland, North Ostrobothnia, Kainuu and North Karelia: Nature reserves (and wilderness reserves) whose founding act, management plan and/or regulation order contain entries related to making fires.	In addition to what is stated below, it must be observed that open fires are prohibited during a wildfire warning (see above for more details) These entries are followed when making a fire. Making a fire may be prohibited or it may be restricted, e.g. permitted only at designated campfire sites or more widely (extensive nature and wilderness reserves, where the practice may be close to that in other areas, see next section). The use of hobo stoves utilising dead branches and twigs on the ground is also allowed outside designated campfire sites and in areas where fires are prohibited (unless the regulation orders specifically contain restrictions on hobo stoves).
Lapland, North Ostrobothnia, Kainuu and North Karelia: Other state nature reserves and all areas outside nature reserves (including business areas)	It is recommended to use designated campfire sites when making a fire. However, campfires are also allowed outside them with a general permit issued by Metsähallitus, which gives the right to make a fire using dry branches, twigs and roots on the ground (except less than half a kilometre from a built campfire site or in an area where campfires are specifically prohibited). This general permit also allows the use of hobo stoves.
Southern and Western Finland: Nature reserves whose founding statutes, management plans or regulation orders contain entries related to making fires	These entries are followed when making a fire. Making a fire may be prohibited or restricted, in which case making a fire is usually only allowed at designated campfire sites. The use of hobo stoves utilising dead branches and twigs on the ground is also allowed outside designated campfire sites and in areas where fires are prohibited (unless the regulation orders specifically contain restrictions on hobo stoves).
Southern and Western Finland: Other nature reserves and all areas outside nature reserves (including business areas)	It is recommended to use built campfire sites. However, it is also possible to make a fire outside of them with the consent of Metsähallitus. However, the use of a hobo stove does not require such separate consent (only dead branches and twigs on the ground may be used in hobo stoves).

12.3.4 Gathering and general fishing rights

Picking berries and edible mushrooms, as well as collecting fallen branches and cones, is generally allowed where access is allowed. In nature reserves, taking or damaging mushrooms, trees, shrubs and other plants or parts thereof is prohibited, as is the capture or collection of invertebrate animals (NCA section 49), but exceptions may be granted for research or other scientific purposes or teaching purposes (NCA section 51). However, picking berries and 'useful' mushrooms is also permitted in nature reserves (NCA section 50). Useful mushrooms include, in addition to edible species, mushrooms used e.g. for dyeing, but they do not include shelf fungi (polypores).

According to the Ministry of the Environment's guide on everyone's rights (Tuunanen et al. 2012), permitted berry picking generally refers to picking (edible) wild berries, which also includes berries growing on trees, such as rowanberry. What matters is whether berries can be obtained without harming the plant/tree. According to the guide, "juniper berries are biologically defined as cones, but in practice they are considered berries, and it has been considered that their collection under everyman's right would be permitted as other such natural products in accordance with Chapter 28, Section 14 of the Criminal Code".

Certified areas related to commercial picking of organic berries can be established in protected areas. However, this requires an agreement with the landowner, i.e. Metsähallitus. In some situations, such certification areas may cause conflicts with so-called everyman pickers. To prevent this, areas favoured by private pickers can be excluded from organic certification areas. It should be noted that the certificate does not in any way affect the rights of all other users and the free picking of berries.

In recent years, the collection of chaga mushrooms from forests has increased for both domestic and commercial use due to its supposed health effects. Polypores are wild fungi, and the collection of mushrooms, as a rule, is allowed by everyone's right. However, the chaga is not just a fungus, but a growth on the tree caused by a fungus (*Inonotus obliquus*), which cannot be removed without damaging the tree. Thus, the collection of chaga is not allowed by everyone's right. In established nature reserves, the collection of chaga as well as other polypores is only possible for research purposes, with a special permit granted by Metsähallitus. In other areas, its collection requires the consent of the landowner. Metsähallitus does not grant consents to (other) protected areas for domestic or commercial collection of chaga.

In recent years, the popularity of wild herb hobby has grown strongly. Many nature tourism entrepreneurs organise, for example, excursions to nature reserves where wild herbs are studied. Entrepreneurs have asked whether herbs could be picked and tasted from the nature reserve in connection with such excursions. Metsähallitus does not grant permits for such purposes, because these activities cannot be compared to education referred to in section 51 of the Nature Conservation Act, which, according to Metsähallitus' interpretation, refers to teaching organised by a party (e.g. educational institution) that has an official right to organise teaching, or the instruction is part of a larger curriculum.

Today, the commercial collection of sundews is extensive. In established nature reserves, the taking of plants or parts thereof is prohibited (NCA Section 49), so even the collection of individual sundew plants is not possible in these areas. In other protected areas and outside them, the collection of individual sundews is permitted by everyone's right, but their more extensive collection for commercial purposes requires the landowner's consent, which Metsähallitus does not grant to any protected areas. In commercial

collection, the plant is picked with rosettes and roots. If this is done on a larger scale without the landowner's consent, it can be interpreted as an infringement of possession as referred to in section 11 of the Criminal Code. In areas other than nature reserves, collecting flowers from someone else's land is everyone's right and does not fall within the scope of the Criminal Code (section 14). However, this refers only to the collection of flowers or flower shoots, not to the uprooting of the entire plant, which destroys the plant and, if done on a larger scale, may destroy the entire occurrence of the plant species.

Angling and ice fishing are general rights comparable to everyone's rights. In some nature reserves, angling and ice fishing are restricted in the founding act, and in some cases the founding act allows them to be restricted throughout the nature reserve by means of regulation orders. Ordinarily, however, the regulation orders can restrict these rights only by establishing access restricted areas, the establishment of which must then have clear grounds on nature conservation (NCA section 56). In addition to angling and ice fishing, lure fishing with one rod, reel and lure is included in general fishing rights (Fisheries Act 379/2015, section 7) but subject to certain restrictions.

12.4 Nature sports and activities in protected areas

Protected areas are often attractive nature sites and interesting places to engage in outdoor sports and in nature observation and photography, for instance. Spending time in nature has significant health effects – both physical and mental – and promoting it is in line with Metsähallitus' objectives. Enthusiasts of various activities also form new visitor groups in the protected areas and, through their hobby, get acquainted with national parks, for example.

Moving in the terrain on foot, snowshoes, tour skates or skiing, kick sleds and bicycles,

horseback riding, reindeer or dog sledding or in other similar ways is permitted by everyone's right where access is otherwise allowed.

In some situations, it is necessary to restrict sports or leisure activities for nature conservation reasons. Each activity is assessed according to its nature and quantity, as well as the harm and disturbance it causes to natural values. The suitability of such activities for protected areas may be questionable, for example, for events where the number of participants can be very high (see section 12.5).

Protected areas are subject to a wide range of recreational needs, which requires the coordination of these needs, the shared use of trails and tolerance between different groups of hobbyists. Through careful and participatory protected area planning, the aim is to find and indicate the most suitable places and routes for various hobbies from the perspective of nature conservation and all visitors. Through positive communication, hobbyists and nature lovers are encouraged to take other user groups and safety factors related to their activities into account (see section 12.8).

The following illustrates some of the forms of exercise and hobbies in nature that are common even in protected areas. Some of these activities are also discussed in Section 12.5 Organized activities and events.

12.4.1 Photographing nature

Photography is permitted in nature reserves within the limits of access restrictions, if it does not cause harm or disturbance to the fauna and flora of the area. Deliberate disturbance of specimens of protected animal species, especially during their breeding period, is prohibited (NCA section 70), which is why, for example, photographing them at the nest is prohibited. Deviations from this prohibition of harassment require permission from the ELY Centre (NCA section 83). Permits for access to a strict nature reserve or restricted

area in other nature reserves are not granted for recreational or commercial nature photography activities.

In established nature reserves, permits for nature photography using hidden photo booths or other structures are not granted, and consent can be granted to other protected areas with careful consideration. The use of lightweight, tent-like booths in nature photography is equated to everyman camping, so they do not require permission or the landowner's consent. However, if such nature photographing, comparable to camping, lasts for a longer period at the same location, it should be based on the consent given by Metsähallitus in accordance with its recommendation. If camping is prohibited in a nature reserve, it also applies to photography from a booth.

No consent is granted to nature reserves or other protected areas for keeping a carcass for nature photography or tourism purposes. If keeping a carcass is based on nature conservation or research (see section 9.3.2), the person who has received consent may photograph at the carcass himself. If it is necessary to regulate the visits of other nature photographers at the carcass, the restrictions concerning it must be included in the same consent or agreement. To the extent permitted by consent or agreement, the visit of other nature photographers to the carcass is decided by the keeper.

According to the agreement made in 2021 by Metsähallitus and the Reindeer Herding Association on the coordination of livelihoods, no carcass permits will be granted for tourism and nature photography purposes in any sites in the Reindeer husbandry area. For research, survey and conservation purposes, fixed-term permits (up to 3 years) may be granted, which Metsähallitus negotiates in advance with the reindeer herders of the reindeer herders' cooperative concerned. See also the keeping of carrion in the area covered by section 8 of the Hunting Act, section 13.1.4.

Off-road traffic permits for snowmobiles required for professional nature photography can be granted to protected areas on a case-by-case basis in accordance with the Off-Road Traffic Act and Metsähallitus' off-road traffic principles. Such an off-road traffic permit only applies to limited maintenance transport during the winter, i.e. the permit is not granted for off-road traffic or customer transport during the summer. Regional off-road traffic permits are not granted for maintenance transports of nature photography, but permits are always targeted at specific routes.

Installing a camera in the field always requires the landowner's consent. In general, Metsähallitus takes a very strict approach to installing cameras in its areas. External parties may have needs, for example, for monitoring research or non-profit nature sites with the help of a camera installed in the field. In some situations, Parks & Wildlife Finland may also have its own need for camera monitoring (e.g. nest monitoring).

In established nature reserves, consent to installing a camera can only be granted for research and non-profit purposes. In this case, the grounds for granting permission must be clearly recorded in the consent. In other protected areas, the criteria may be less stringent. Even then, consent can mainly only be granted in the case of a clearly defined nature or game site, the monitoring of which does not entail the risk that people moving in the area will also be subject to monitoring. If there is even the slightest chance that visitors to the area will be photographed, visitors to the terrain must be informed of the monitoring in a sufficiently visible manner.

Metsähallitus can only grant consent to camera surveillance of persons in very exceptional cases.

The consents required for film production follow the instructions on Metsähallitus' Metsa.fi website.

12.4.2 Geocaching and letterboxing

Geocaching is a hobby where caches hidden in the terrain are searched for with the help of coordinates available through an online service and a GPS device. Letterboxing involves searching for caches based on cache descriptions. Typically, the size of caches varies from a film jar to a freezer box. Each cache has an owner who is responsible for the cache and the harm caused by searching for it.

Geocaching and letterboxing draw people to move in nature, which is why Metsähallitus welcomes them. However, caches must be established without causing harm or disturbance to nature or other users of the areas. If the caches are connected to any structures in the terrain, the structures must not be damaged.

The establishment of a geocache in an established nature reserve must be notified to Parks & Wildlife Finland. In this case, Metsähallitus may ask the cacher to remove the cache if it is located, for example, in a site that is sensitive to erosion. Caches may not be established in restricted areas of nature reserves.

Geocaches can be established in other Metsähallitus areas considering the above-mentioned restrictions, and Metsähallitus does not need to be notified.

More detailed information on the notification practices applied in nature reserves can be found in the Luontoon.fi online service.

12.4.3 Metal exploration

On state-owned land managed by Metsähallitus, metal exploration to indicate the location of metal objects may be done by everyone's right, but the landowner's consent must be sought in advance for excavating the soil. In nature reserves, permits are granted only for scientific purposes.

The objects referred to in the Antiquities Act and the Lost Property Act are not the property of the finder or landowner. A lost property that is less than a hundred years old and whose owner is unknown is just lost property. Its ownership is determined in accordance with the Lost Property Act and the matter is handled by the police authority. A lost object that is over a hundred years old and whose owner is unknown is a movable relic. Its ownership is determined in accordance with the Antiquities Act, and the matter is handled by the Finnish Heritage Agency.

Goods found in the aftermath of hostilities, the so-called war debris, is the property of the Defence Forces. Only objects that pose danger to people and animals (barbed wire, broken glass, etc.) may be removed from state-owned land. Explosives found in the terrain must not be touched but must be reported to the police. The rest of the war debris must be left where it is.

Instructions on the use of metal detectors in Metsähallitus areas are available at Metsä.fi. See also the search for war dead discussed in section 15.5 and magnetic fishing in nature reserves discussed in Appendix 9.

12.4.4 Climbing

Today, climbing is a popular recreational activity and a fast-growing form of exercise. Only certain rock types that can be gripped are usually suitable for climbing purposes, and only a small part of Finnish rocks is suitable for climbing. However, there are several well-known and attractive climbing destinations in nature reserves.

Rock and ice climbing, rope descent and bouldering can be practised in protected areas wherever it is possible to operate with everyone's rights. The removal of minor movable weathered rock is possible with everyone's right, but moss, lichen or other vegetation may not be removed from the rock or damage to shrubs or trees be done without the landowner's consent. To protect

valuable species, local climbing restrictions may be imposed in nature reserves by means of regulation orders (NCA sections 56 and 58).

The landowner's consent is required if climbing requires the installation of permanent bolts, etc. The anchors installed on the rock surface are usually small and often almost invisible to nature enthusiasts unaware of them and do not pose a risk of entanglement to the fauna.

The Finnish Climbing Association acts as an umbrella organisation for climbing clubs and aims to promote climbing as a hobby in Finland. The best way to engage climbing enthusiasts is to contact a local climbing club or the Finnish Climbing Association directly. Several climbing clubs maintain the climbing cliffs in their area as volunteer work. The Finnish Climbing Association manages the database of climbing destinations and has, among other things, developed good practices related to climbing.

The starting point in climbing is that safety and responsibility always lie with the climbing enthusiast. The same principle applies to safety anchors permanently installed in the rock, i.e. the user takes responsibility when using them.

There has been interest in tuning cables for tighrope walking in protected areas. Wire rope structures are temporary structures that always require the landowner's consent. As a rule, there is a negative attitude towards such structures in established or pending nature reserves. The landowner's consent can only be granted exceptionally and on special grounds, e.g. if the activity is part of an organised event. The responsibility for the safety of such activity is always taken by the hobbyist, which must be clearly recorded in possible consents.

12.4.5 Mountain biking and electric mobility equipment

Mountain biking is allowed by everyone's right, so in principle it is also possible in nature reserves and other protected areas. It is usually practiced on existing trails, routes and road tracks. In Finnish conditions, cycling off-road outside the trail network is usually difficult and therefore relatively limited.

In some places, mountain biking can cause erosion, for example in fell areas and on both barren (e.g. sandy heaths and rocky areas) and damp habitats (e.g. peatlands). Steep slopes are particularly susceptible to erosion. The adverse effects of mountain biking on the conservation values of the area can be prevented, for example, by prohibitions or restrictions issued by the regulation orders, the grounds for which must then be carefully recorded in a memorandum drawn up in the preparation of the orders. The most common solution is to restrict mountain biking to routes and trails built and maintained by Metsähallitus or to forest truck/cart roads.

Most often, mountain bikers and hikers on foot can use the same routes and trails. When mountain biking on a forest trail, a slow speed improves the safety of encounters. On the other hand, in some situations, the difference in pace between a mountain biker and a person moving on foot can be large. For this reason, at the most congested points of the route, it may be worth instructing cyclists to lead the bike or reduce speed, and those on foot to be considerate of other users on the routes. Coordination can be promoted through positive advice, "instructions for attentive mountain bikers": in encounters, the cyclist should slow down, give way and act thoughtfully (Metsähallitus 2022b).

If necessary, mountain biking can be directed or restricted to certain routes from the busiest routes for safety reasons based on the Consumer Safety Act (920/2011). Cycling can also be steered away from the busiest or poorly sustainable routes by means of com-

munication and guidance by pointing out (and building) routes suitable for cycling. This can improve the social sustainability of land use, as some pedestrians find cycling on the routes of protected areas a distracting factor.

If a management plan is drawn up for the protected area, mountain biking and its needs must be considered in the planning of the route and trail network included in it. In the preparation of the plan, e.g. mountain biking clubs and enthusiasts should be involved. For example, routes suitable for mountain biking and possible restrictions on mountain biking can be discussed with them. Mountain biking opportunities should be highlighted in the guidance material of the protected area and, if necessary, marked on the terrain and maps. With the help of guidance, cyclists can be directed to the most suitable routes.

Nowadays, mountain biking is also practiced in winter, which has been particularly affected by the increase in wide tire (so-called fat) bikes. With a few exceptions, cycling is not allowed on maintained skiing tracks in protected areas. Cycling on snowmobile tracks should also be avoided during snow cover due to the risk of accidents. Above all, this recommendation applies to congested and wooded snowmobile tracks, where traffic volumes and poor visibility increase the risk of accidents. According to the Road Traffic Act (729/2018), cycling on a snowmobile route is prohibited during snow cover, unless specifically enabled by the route operator.

Electric mobility devices

In addition to traditional cycling based on the use of muscle power, various forms of transport based on electric mobility devices have been developed. Such electric mobility devices include electrically assisted or motorised bicycles, as well as light electric vehicles and mobility devices that assist or replace pedestrians (e.g. electric scooters and various passenger transporters), usually with

a maximum power of 1 kW (or 250 W) and a maximum speed of 25 km/h (or 15 km/h). Movement with such equipment is everyone's right, since the equipment is not a motor vehicle within the meaning of the legislation. The users of these devices are therefore comparable to mountain bikers with muscle power. This means that it is not possible to treat these user groups differently in solutions concerning nature reserves.

In nature reserves, the growing use of electrically assisted or motorised bicycles may increase mountain biking outside built routes and trails in the future, and thus also erosion hazards. This may increase the need to limit mountain biking. On routes and paths in protected areas, the growth of electric mobility devices may pose safety risks. For cyclists and pedestrians, the safety situation of shared routes should be monitored and, if necessary, measures should be taken, for example, to direct these user groups to their own routes. Some of those walking on the trails and paths of nature reserves find the use of electric mobility devices particularly disturbing, which may increase the need to separate cycling and walking at least partly to their own routes.

When discussing with bike rental companies, it is emphasised that Metsähallitus favours muscular mobility in nature reserves.

12.4.6 Orienteering

In areas where everyone has access, orienteering is also allowed. Orienteering is practiced in many ways, from a single person moving with a map to large mass events. Most of the joint practices or fitness exercises organised by orienteering clubs are one-off and have a small number of participants, and they do not cause more than minor harm or disturbance to the objectives of nature reserves, in which case they can be considered as everyone's rights. On the outskirts of large cities, the number of participants in fitness races can become so large that the

event requires the landowner's consent. The organisation of orienteering events in protected areas is discussed in section 12.5.

In orienteering sports, activities and competitions are organised by local orienteering clubs. Orienteering clubs need to use some areas near population centres for continuous fitness orienteering activities. For such areas, longer-term agreements can be made with clubs on the frequency, targeting and other principles of use.

Orienteering clubs are also mainly responsible for drawing up orienteering maps. During the mapping phase, clubs are often in contact with landowners. At the same time, it is also possible to discuss the terms and conditions for the use of the terrain.

Fixed marks refer to tick points that are more permanently marked in the terrain. They are often located close to urban areas and potential users. Fixed tracks are usually intended for independent orienteering trial or basic education, and they are often maintained by municipalities or educational institutions. The placement of fixed checkpoints requires the landowner's consent. The placement of checkpoints can be agreed with their maintainer and thus direct use and erosion beyond sensitive sites.

12.4.7 Horse riding

As a rule, horseback riding is allowed by everyone's right, but it can be erosive on the terrain. Horseback riding often requires its own separate routes. Hiking trails intended for hiking are practically not suitable for riding, since the hooves of horses break the surface of such routes. Horse riding is largely an organised activity, but not all enthusiasts belong to organised clubs.

Equestrian trails are developed in Finland by both the Finnish Equestrian Federation and the Trail Riding Union of Finland. However, most hiking and cross-country riding

takes place outside the official riding trails, e.g. on forest roads and trails relatively close to the stables. Riders may also have an interest in using protected areas and wishes regarding the planning and marking of routes. Depending on the need and the possibilities offered by the protected area, riding routes can be planned either as part of the area's route network in connection with the planning of management and use, or as separate projects. Local enthusiasts can be reached, for example, through the Equestrian Federation's club and stable searches or by directly approaching local stables and private horse owners.

Damage caused by horseback riding in nature reserves may include wear and tear on terrain, paths and routes. Horse faeces can have a eutrophication effect, and seeds spread through faeces and possible feeding hay poses a risk of invasive alien species spreading to the area.

Individual riders do not usually require separate routes or an agreement with the landowner. When equestrian activities are extensive or continuous and thus erode the ground, horseback riding and the routes used for it must be agreed upon with the landowner. In protected areas, such activities require the landowner's consent or a right of use or cooperation agreement with Parks & Wildlife Finland, in which the use of routes etc. are agreed. If necessary, horseback riding in protected areas can be restricted and guided by regulation orders.

A horse-drawn sleigh or wagon is defined as a horse vehicle, in which case it must comply with the regulations for vehicles on the road. However, the Off-Road Traffic Act does not apply to horse vehicles. A horse may not be taken to graze on someone else's land without the landowner's consent. Horses may be bathed in water bodies without the consent of the owner of the water area.

12.5 Organised activities and events

Activities organised under the Assembly Act (530/1999) can be divided into private events, public events and public meetings. Private events include many excursions (e.g. bird tours led by bird organisations), recreational days and guided hikes.

Events open to the public are either public meetings or public events. Public meetings are events to which the public has free access and which involve the formation, dissemination or expression of information or opinions (e.g. demonstrations and related processions). Protected areas have not been used to organise such meetings. Public events refer to amusement events (e.g. Midsummer celebrations), shows (e.g. rafting events) or competitions (e.g. orienteering competitions) that are open to the public.

An event refers to any occasion where a group of people gather in a specific place at a certain point in time. The nature, duration and number of participants of events may vary considerably. Metsähallitus' objective is for event organisers to notify Metsähallitus of events in advance using the notification form available in the Metsa.fi online service. For the smallest events (fewer than 10 participants) that are clearly within everyone's right, notification is not required.

Under the Assembly Act, public events and meetings held outside public areas (e.g. market areas and squares) require the landowner's consent. Such consent is required for other events (including private events) which, by their scale and/or nature, cannot be regarded as part of everyone's right. Based on the event notification received, Metsähallitus assesses whether the nature of the event would require the landowner's written consent. Metsähallitus processes all event notifications. For some events, an event notification is sufficient, but for others, a written consent from Metsähallitus is also required.

Metsähallitus will contact the organiser once the event notification has been processed.

The landowner's written consent to the event is subject to a fee. If the event organiser collects a participation or entrance fee from the participants of the event and utilises the hiking service equipment maintained by Metsähallitus in the protected area, the organiser must also pay a daily reimbursement for use of service infrastructure based on the number of participants. In this case, hiking service equipment refers to the routes and structures of the area, but not the road network or parking lots. The compensation for use does not apply to education groups. The obligation to pay compensation for use is recorded in the landowner's consent.

With the notification form, the event organiser is instructed to assess in advance the suitability of the event for the protected area in question, to consider the conservation values and other users of the area, and to plan and implement the event responsibly in other ways, minimising the environmental impact. More detailed instructions and tips for event organisers can be found in the guide Party in nature – Guide to organising events in a nature reserve (Metsähallitus 2021a).

The suitability of an event for a protected area is interpreted on a case-by-case basis, especially from the perspective of the Nature Conservation Act, the conservation regulations of the protected area and the values to be protected (see Figure 19). If the event does not endanger the natural and cultural values of the area, consent is usually given. However, events for which the area brings added value as an event environment are best suited to protected areas, for example through appreciation of nature or well-being effects. The sustainability of organising events can be ensured in the most popular areas, such as national parks, for example by utilising the zoning of the area in the planning of event venues. It must also be possible to coordinate the event with other recreational uses of the area.

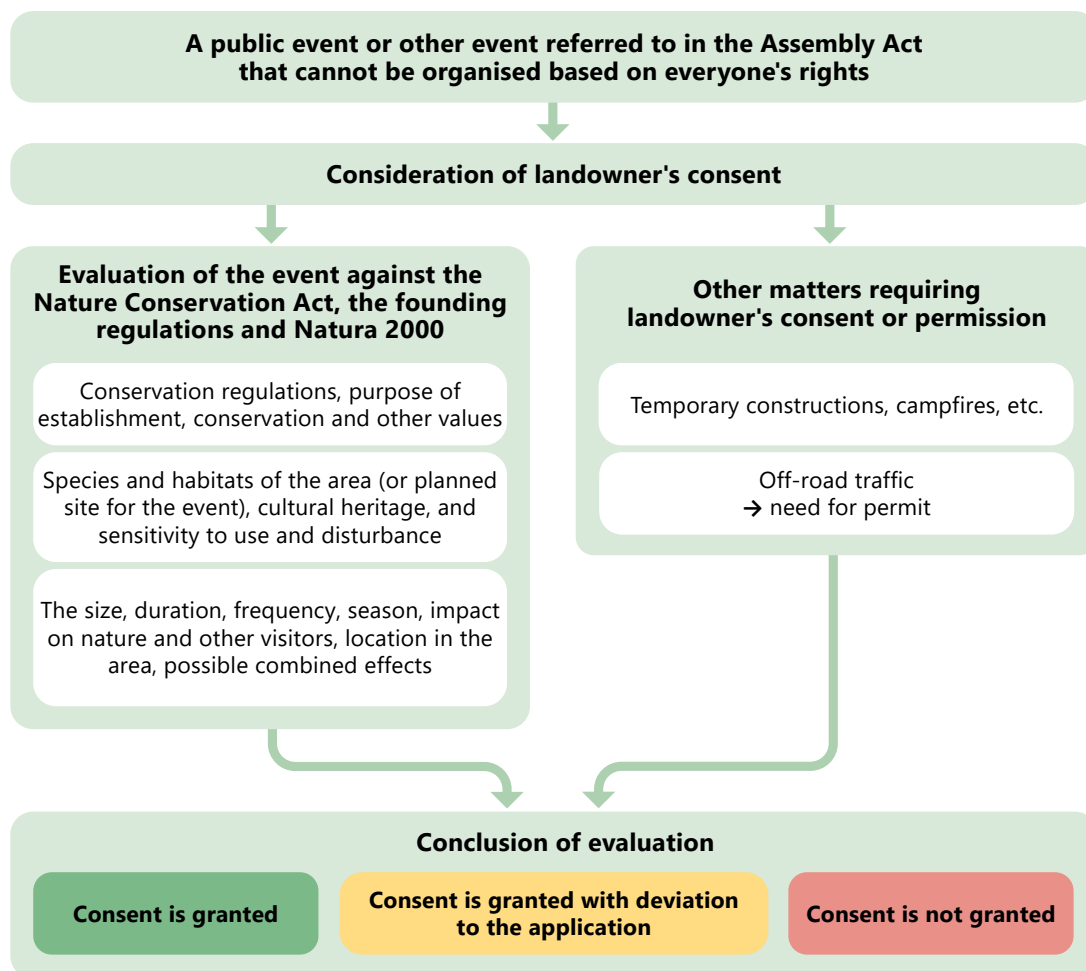


Figure 19. Consideration of issuing consents for organised events. (Chart presentation Metsähallitus). Alternative text: At the top is a box that says A public event or other event referred to in the Assembly Act that cannot be organised based on everyone's rights. From there, the arrow goes down to the box that says Consideration of landowner's consent. Two arrows come out of this box. The first one reads Evaluation of the event, against the Nature Conservation Act, the founding regulations and Natura 2000. It has three subsections: 1) Conservation regulations, purpose of establishment, conservation and other values, 2) Species and habitats of the area (or planned site for the event), cultural heritage, and sensitivity to use and disturbance, and 3) The size, duration, frequency, season, impact on nature and other visitors, location in the area, possible combined effects. The second box reads Other matters requiring landowner's consent or permission. There are two points here: 1) Temporary constructions, campfires, etc. and 2) Off-road traffic, need for permit. From both boxes, the arrows go down to the following: Conclusion of evaluation, which is one of three 1) Consent is granted, 2) Consent is granted with deviation to the application, or 3) Consent is not granted.

When assessing the impact of events, the combined effect of different events must also be considered. The most popular destinations may have reasons to limit the number of events and/or control their placement.

Recreational use based on the use of motor vehicles is only possible in protected areas in exceptional cases. However, it is possible to obtain off-road traffic permits for

the maintenance of organised activities and events. In some protected areas, snowmobiling is also possible on marked routes or snowmobile tracks that require a Metsähallitus off-road traffic permit (see section 14.1 for more details). The repeated or permanent organisation of a competition or exercise by a motorised watercraft in the same water area

is not covered by the right of general use (cf. section 12.3.1).

Camp organisers can reserve camping areas from Metsähallitus for scout camps and nature schools, where even large groups can camp. The camping areas are equipped, for example, with a campfire site and dry toilets. There are five such camping areas in southern and eastern Finland.

Metsähallitus' nature sites can be locally important places for performing arts. The natural environment brings artistic added value to the performances. There are no actual structures for performing arts in nature reserves. Usually, choral or drama performances make use of existing structures in the terrain or those designed for teaching.

Most events in protected areas are one-off (or repeated only a few times) and are organised by someone other than a company doing business in the area. Everything stated above in this chapter applies mainly to such events. However, some of the events organised in protected areas are related to tourism business activities in the area, in which case the events are a product marketed and sold by companies (see section 12.6). If a company utilises service equipment maintained by Metsähallitus in organising events and an entrance fee is charged for the event, the event organiser must pay a customer and daily reimbursement for use of service infrastructure based on the number of participants in the events. Right of use or communicational cooperation agreements with tourist companies do not include events; these require consents or separate right of use contracts (see section 12.6).

Derogations from the founding acts concerning the organisation of exercises and training activities of the Defence Forces in certain nature reserves are discussed in Appendix 9.

12.5.1 Cross-country competition events

Protected areas are also attractive environments from the perspective of organising various off-road competition events. Such events include, for example: orienteering and trail running competitions, mountain biking and adventure competitions, reservists' cross-country competitions, scouting and wilderness hiking competitions, and various cross-country skiing trials in winter. The suitability of events for protected areas is decided on a case-by-case basis, and it must consider the nature and conservation objectives of the protected area, the time and size of the event, and the role of the protected area in the event (see Figure 19). Competition events must have a responsible organiser, and they must first be notified to Metsähallitus via the Metsa.fi website.

Off-road racing events can cause vegetation to be trampled, soil erosion and animal disturbance. There are many types of protected areas, and some are more resistant to wear and disturbance than others. The speed of recovery also varies. Within a protected area, the impact varies by habitat type. E.g. lush swamps and rocky areas can be particularly sensitive. During the bird nesting season (mid-April to mid-July), no field competitions or other disturbing events should be organised in significant bird nesting and resting areas.

By far the largest off-road competition event organised in Finland is the Jukola Relay orienteering competition, with approximately 15,000 participants. Due to the large number of participants and the resulting wear and disturbance of the terrain, it is usually not possible to organise it, even partially, in protected areas. Other off-road competitions, fitness events and exercises are substantially smaller, and their suitability must be decided on a case-by-case basis. Off-road racing events are usually one-off and the disturbance they cause in nature is usually temporary.

The notification submitted to Metsähallitus must indicate, among other things, the nature of the event and the role the protected area plays in the event. Wear and disturbance in the protected area are significantly affected by the location of the protected area in relation to the competition centre. The greatest impact is concentrated in the vicinity of the centre, and only competitors on the longest routes or tracks usually move on the periphery of the competition ground. The movement of competitors in the terrain is often very manoeuvrable with route or track planning, and it can possibly be used to circumvent easily worn or disturbance-prone terrain areas or mark them as prohibited areas, in agreement with the course master. If necessary, the location of the competition centre, start, finish and possible maintenance and overnight accommodation points outside the protected area may be required.

In trail running and mountain biking events, the impact on the ground is directed at the existing trail network and the disturbance mainly at other users of the area. In the most popular hiking destinations, it may be advisable to schedule the event outside the hiking season and bird nesting season, and possibly on quieter trails. The most wear-sensitive sites on the routes can also be reinforced with various structures. Special attention must be paid to informing other users in the area about the event. The number of participants can be limited by setting a maximum number of participants for the event.

12.6 Tourist business activities

Tourism based on protected areas plays an important role in many regions. Responsible tourism promotes the local economy and employment, produces a positive image of nature conservation and has a positive impact on, for example, the health and well-being of visitors. Parks & Wildlife Finland creates preconditions for the sustainable use of

protected areas for tourism. In addition, the hiking services maintained by Parks & Wildlife Finland are part of the tourism service package for visitors to protected areas, most of which is produced by tourism companies.

Tourism cooperation aims to ensure the sustainability of tourism and promote its responsibility in national parks and other protected areas. In addition, the cooperation aims to increase public awareness and attractiveness of partner companies, Parks & Wildlife Finland and protected areas. The cooperation promotes responsible product development and communications and serves common customers with the highest possible quality.

The aim of Parks & Wildlife Finland is to conclude a cooperation agreement with tourism companies that rely on protected areas and serve their customers, defining the purpose, objectives and commitments of cooperation. In the cooperation agreement, the parties undertake, for example, to comply with the Principles of sustainable nature tourism in protected areas (see section 12.1), to ensure the responsibility of their own products, and to communicate and market consistently. In addition, the partner companies will benefit from the agreement, for example, through the right to use the material bank and the identifiers of protected areas.

There are two types of cooperation agreements:

- A cooperation agreement without transfer of rights of use i.e. communicational cooperation agreement.
- A cooperation agreement with transfer of rights of use.

The services provided by Parks and Wildlife Finland that support the recreational use of nature are mainly free of charge for customers. Provisions on charges for Parks & Wildlife Finland's products and services are laid down in the Act on Criteria for Charges Payable to the State (150/1992) and in the Decrees on Charges issued by the Ministry of

the Environment (92/2024) and the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (1072/2023). If a chargeable product of a company, self-employed person or other business organisation includes the utilisation of hiking routes or structures, such use requires the transfer of the right of use by Metsähallitus, which usually takes place under a paid cooperation agreement. However, one-off use of service equipment is possible without an agreement using Metsähallitus' Eraluvat.fi service.

The various situations related to ownership, maintenance and purpose of use of service equipment located in protected areas are summarised in Appendix 8. The aim is to direct tourism business activities through tourism cooperation to bookable sites maintained by Parks & Wildlife Finland, such as rental huts and maintained fireplaces. For example, it is possible to use open rest areas maintained by Parks & Wildlife Finland for business purposes, if it does not restrict the general use of areas and service equipment. Due to their nature of use, unlocked and reserved huts are not suitable as bases for tourism business. Parks & Wildlife Finland may rent out premises for business that serves nature tourism, such as café services.

Land and water areas are not leased from protected areas for tourism purposes, and it is not possible for companies to build routes or structures in protected areas for their own use (see section 14.4.1). An exception to the latter may be the immediate yard of a base owned by Parks & Wildlife Services and leased for business use, where construction of a fireplace or hut by the entrepreneur may be allowed. This exception applies only to such abovementioned individual and light service structures, and not, for example, buildings of any kind (e.g. even light accommodation buildings or saunas). The possibility of such structures must be considered already when tendering and leasing the site, and entries must be made in the rental contract concerning, for example, the removal of structures after the lease period. The yard

area of the rental site should not be deliberately expanded due to such structures. Such service structures can only be made possible in situations where the "appropriate management and use" of the area can be considered to require them (NCA section 50).

The construction ban on structures owned by entrepreneurs does not apply to temporary structures (in the terrain only for a few days at most) or to various tent solutions, such as tentsiles or other tree tents. For the latter, places can be defined for use by entrepreneurs, which are offered to companies according to the same principles as reservation fire pits. Tent solutions may also be possible in the yard of bases already leased to entrepreneurs. In many nature reserves, especially in southern Finland, camping is prohibited or only possible in designated areas. Especially in such nature reserves, careful consideration should also be given to camping as a business activity. Decisions concerning camping are usually made in the management plan of the area. In connection with the preparation of the plan, consideration must be given to whether it is appropriate to allocate certain camping sites for business use.

Dog sledding has been examined below as an example of an activity that can be carried out on a small scale under everyone's right, but which, as a programme service organised as a large-scale and continuous business activity, may cause harm to nature and other users of the area and therefore require an agreement and/or permit.

12.6.1 Dog sledding as a programme service

Dog sledding, especially as a programme service, has increased strongly throughout the last two decades. In principle, dog sledding can be exercised with everyone's right. Individual hobby dog sleds and one-off sledding by entrepreneurs can be regarded as such an exercise under everyone's right. However, dog

sledding offered by entrepreneurs usually takes place on routes. Such routes are practically always maintained and serviced by snowmobiles, which require permission from or agreement with the landowner. Frequent and regular dog sledding on the routes may cause harm to reindeer husbandry and thus make it more difficult to practice Sámi culture in the Sámi homeland. For this reason, too, entrepreneurs are required to obtain a permit for such dog sledding activities or to sign an agreement with Metsähallitus.

The purpose of the agreement or permit procedure is to prevent possible conflicts caused by dog sledding activities with other user groups in the area. Conflicts may arise, for example, if public rest areas are utilised in sledding activities. In this case, dog droppings, for example, can extensively contaminate the surroundings of cabins and rest areas. In some locations, dog parks have been designated at a sufficient distance from the rest areas.

If a company opens dog sledding trails in the terrain without prior agreement with Metsähallitus, this may cause many kinds of conflicts with other forms of use, and at the same time, the company may in some situations also act in a way that is detrimental to nature conservation. Metsähallitus has information on natural sites and nesting sites that require protection, and these can only be considered by negotiating and agreeing on routes. Metsähallitus requests statements from reindeer herders on the planned routes, to avoid major conflicts with reindeer husbandry. The opinion of the reindeer herders is always asked before agreements are made on the proposed routes and rest areas.

The agreement practice serves different parties well and has proven to be a functional way of promoting the Principles of sustainable nature tourism. Good planning and cooperation can also improve the achievement of the conservation objectives of protected areas and avoid disturbance of sensitive species and damage to habitats.

In some national parks, dog sledding activities are restricted, and the activities are carried out in accordance with the management plan and the regulation orders. As a rule, dog sledding is prohibited in the national parks of the Sámi homeland. In wilderness reserves, the principles of all dog sledding activities that exceed everyone's rights are outlined in the management plans. In areas for which no management plan is drawn up or where the matter is not outlined in the plan, the principles and more detailed routes of dog sledding activities exceeding everyone's rights may be defined in permits or agreements.

As far as possible, dog sledding activities should be directed outside nature reserves and to areas where they cause as little harm as possible to other users of the area.

12.7 Visitor facilities and services

The built property of protected areas as a whole and its administration and management are discussed in section 15.3. This section discusses in more detail the most extensive complex of built assets, i.e. service structures built and maintained for visitors in protected areas.

The aim of the service infrastructure in protected areas, i.e. hiking and guidance structures, buildings and routes, is to improve the conditions for nature recreation and tourism, to ensure the sustainability and safety of use, and to guide the use of areas in accordance with conservation objectives. The solutions and dimensioning of the service equipment are based on the nature and location of the areas, the customer composition and the focus of use in the area. In areas with heavy recreational use, service facilities will be concentrated in the hiking and nature tourism zone. In addition, the provision of visitor services is affected by the purpose of establishing the protected area, regulations and the profile determined by the demand, supply and natural characteristics of the area.

A protected area can be profiled, for example, as an attraction, as a target for nature activities and hobbies, exploring and observing nature, or as a site for environmental education.

Especially near tourist centres and cities, there is usually a great demand for accessible, versatile services for day trip customers. These include routes that are as accessible as possible and services that support observation and learning. The services provided by tourism partner companies are also often located in nearby recreational destinations. Day trip destinations are mainly suitable for inexperienced hikers and can be used all year round.

Most national parks and some other protected areas are equipped so that basic hiking skills are sufficient for exploring them. They offer short-stay destinations with marked routes, also rest areas suitable for overnight stays, and may have services that support learning. Not all routes are as easy as busy day destinations.

Moving around large wilderness areas requires good hiking skills. There are few or no marked routes. However, they may have overnight rest areas, such as unlocked and reservation huts.

Describing the suitability of routes and places to visit provides important advance information to customers and promotes equality. On the busiest hiking trails, a difficulty rating can be used, the purpose of which is to help visitors choose the route that best suits their condition and skills. Any classification information is exported to the site's website and other digital services. In addition, difficulty classes are included in field signs when new trails are built, or signs are renewed.

Most of the service equipment in protected areas is owned and managed by Parks & Wildlife Finland. There is also quite a lot of service facilities whose maintenance has been contractually transferred by Parks & Wildlife Finland to a non-commercial opera-

tor (municipality, association or similar) or company. In addition, protected areas also have some service equipment owned by external non-commercial operators. These different situations are presented in greater detail in Appendix 8.

12.7.1 Constructing service facilities and structures

Building service infrastructure in protected areas requires thorough coordination of needs and impact assessment. Ensuring customer safety and changing needs for services is considered when renewing and extending services. Renovation and construction aim for high quality, practicality of use and maintenance, and a long lifecycle of materials. In addition, maintenance and renovation processes should consider and ensure the preservation of the old built heritage and cultural heritage values.

Renewable energy solutions are favoured in buildings. Large new construction projects require high-quality architectural, structural and technical design. A responsible person and property manager are defined for each construction property. The condition of the building stock is assessed through condition inspections, it is systematically monitored with condition assessments, and maintenance books are drawn up for the most important buildings. Condition inspections of larger buildings and special structures can be purchased as expert services, but the level and information content of the inspections must correspond to the goals set by Parks & Wildlife Finland (Metsähallitus 2015a).

Routes are planned and constructed considering the natural and cultural values, customer experience and the functionality of maintenance. As a rule, long-life and customer-safe building materials are used as materials for routes and structures, favouring natural materials where possible. To prevent erosion, some of the busiest routes and wear-prone sites may need to be withstood with

crushed stone or stone ash, for example, or steel stairs may need to be used. When moving soil materials, the risk of spreading invasive alien species must be considered.

In the construction of duckboards, material that is resistant to decay is used. The use of wood that is rot-protected with harmful substances increases impact on the environment, so unimpregnated wood, or wood material that is rot-protected only by methods that do not cause harmful emissions to nature, is favoured in hiking structures. Design solutions (e.g. location of routes) aim to minimise the need for rot-resistant wood.

Decay-proof wood must be approved by the authorities (the Finnish Safety and Chemicals Agency Tukes, Ministry of the Environment) for the appropriate use. Pressure-impregnated timber can be used judiciously in structures in contact with land and water, as well as in structures requiring load-bearing capacity and special safety (e.g. nature towers, stairs, bridges, load-bearing structures of quays, duckboards). Impregnated wood is hazardous waste that must be collected from the terrain when the structures cease to be used or when they are replaced.

When selecting new construction methods and materials, their environmental impacts are always considered. Risks are minimised. In valuable natural environments, construction is also required to maintain a good aesthetic level. Considering customer safety, the costs of the investment phase, the life cycle perspective and maintenance requirements, it is also possible to use metal structures for some sites. The cultural heritage of the area is considered in the selection of materials and working methods for new buildings and structures. Parks & Wildlife Finland aims to improve knowledge of best construction practices and harmonise the appearance of the services produced.

The effects caused by climate change, such as increased rainfall and a reduction in snow and ice cover, will be considered in the construction of service equipment. For exam-

ple, because of global warming in Southern Finland, the use of summer routes is likely to be longer than at present.

Changes in the service infrastructure of protected areas is updated in the PAVE information system, websites and other digital services, as well as on maps and information boards in the area.

12.7.2 Maintaining visitor services

The maintenance of protected areas is organised in a way that minimises its impact on nature and disturbs the customer experience as little as possible.

Waste management is carried out according to the principles of environmentally friendly litter-free hiking, i.e. customers bring their own waste away to sorting points. Companies operating in protected areas are responsible for the waste management of their customers. The generation of mixed waste is prevented in advance with the guidance of visitors.

Parks & Wildlife Finland follows a summarised interpretation of the Ministry of the Environment's 2016 guidelines on the organisation of waste management:

- As the holder of the area, we carry out waste management ourselves or in cooperation with other operators in the area, adapting it to the use of the area.
- As the manager of the site, we consider the adequate level and method of waste management (e.g. whether a waste collection point is needed, where the collection points are located, whether and where sorting facilities are needed). The number of visits and activities in the area are decisive in the consideration.
- Each recreational area where the agreed number of visits criterion is exceeded has at least one waste disposal point (within the site or at the

point of departure) with a responsible manager.

- We keep waste management construction and maintenance work cost-effective. We do not equip all visitor sites with waste containers.
- Cleaning littered areas is ultimately our duty as the holder of the site.
- We provide sufficient information on waste management, following site- and area-specific consideration.
- We instruct the customers, e.g. by informing them of the location of organised waste disposal points and avoiding incineration of waste at fireplaces for health and environmental reasons.

The construction, maintenance and final disposal policies guiding the toilet waste management in protected and hiking areas

are outlined together with the Ministry of the Environment and the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry. Toilet and biowaste can be composted and intermediate storage points can be built in the field.

The built rest areas mainly provide firewood and some also gas supply. The related environmental impacts will be reduced by influencing customers' activities, assessing the actual need for services and developing energy management methods. Visitors are advised to primarily use their own camping stoves and are advised to save firewood and gas. A good way to reduce firewood consumption is to allow customers to prepare their own firewood at the campfire site independently, for example by sawing and chopping dry wood brought to the site. Customers are informed about the environmental impacts of energy use and maintenance.



Firewood supply in Hossa National Park. Winter transports aim to reduce the wear and tear of the terrain, and the disturbance caused to visitors. Photo: Katri Lehtola.

Firewood is brought to protected areas from outside the site. However, wood removed from protected areas for nature or landscape management reasons may also be used as firewood.

Site accommodation, maintenance bases and surveillance huts are built for the maintenance and monitoring of the areas. In their maintenance, too, the aim is to minimise the burden on nature and the environment and to avoid unnecessary construction within protected areas.

Parks & Wildlife Finland oversees the maintenance of service infrastructure in protected areas, which is regulated by e.g. the Consumer Safety Act (920/2011). Services provided for customers must be safe and not pose a danger to a person's health or property. Customers must be provided with sufficient and correct information about the services and the requirements and risks related to their use.

The condition of buildings, structures and routes is monitored in the field and updated in the PAVE information system. The condition data on buildings, structures and routes, as well as the proposed measures, are utilised in ensuring the quality of services and customer safety, as well as in estimating the number of future repair needs.

12.8 Ensuring customer safety

Parks & Wildlife Finland uses the Customer Safety Guidelines (see Metsähallitus 2019b), the timeliness of which is reviewed annually. The guidelines deal with the customer safety of protected areas, hiking areas and cultural heritage sites managed by Parks & Wildlife Finland. Focus is on visitors hiking independently, but safety is also examined more broadly from the perspective of tourism. The aim is to find the best operating models for risk management and ensuring customer safety.

In a nutshell, the key areas of customer safety are: 1) identifying risks and taking measures to prevent them, 2) the obligation

to ensure the operability of routes and structures, and 3) informing customers sufficiently at different stages of the visit.

The focus areas of customer safety at Parks & Wildlife Finland are:

- **Risk mapping and seeking safe operating models.** Accidents and near-misses are reported. In the most important visitor sites, the risks to customer safety are identified and ways to reduce them are presented.
- **Communication about services and situations.** Advance information on site-specific and generally safe hiking is produced through multiple channels so that it is easy for customers to find a suitable excursion destination for their own needs. Potential hazards are clearly communicated in the terrain and other guidance communication material, and emergency instructions are visible in online communications and in the field. Separate crisis communication guidelines have been drawn up for crisis situations, based on the guidelines issued by the Finnish Safety and Chemicals Agency.
- **Use of the Geographic Information System of structures, routes and archaeological sites (PAVE).** The condition and safety of structures are monitored in the field and the information is updated in PAVE. If safety-related restoration needs are detected, an action proposal in the urgent category is made so that the site can be repaired quickly. The up-to-date and accurate data is ensured so that the information also serves reliably in communications and rescue operations. A site/structure where a serious customer safety risk has been identified may be temporarily or permanently decommissioned. Bridges, bird and nature towers and dams are subject to an obligation to carry out periodic inspections.

- **Cooperation with emergency services in emergency situations.** The location and characteristics of protected and hiking areas, cultural heritage sites and routes can be utilised in accident situations. Communication with rescue authorities is important: e.g. drawing on local knowledge and emergency training.
- **Active, vigilant and pragmatic safety culture.** A key role in ensuring customer safety is played by the active assessment and development of Parks & Wildlife Finland's own practices.

Risk management is an important part of promoting and anticipating customer safety. Parks & Wildlife Finland's tools for risk management are:

- 1) Customer safety risk mapping and management plan
- 2) Safety document
- 3) Customer safety audit.

In the **customer safety risk mapping and management plan**, potential risks are divided into risks caused by natural conditions, caused by the customer's own choices, terrain structures/signs/buildings, communications/guidance and other risks. Of the risks classified, their impact and probability, Parks & Wildlife's ability to influence the development of the risks and measures to manage them are assessed.

Safety documents are drawn up for the required sites based on a risk assessment. The documents define, for example, detailed operating instructions, operating methods, orientation procedures and responsible people. In addition, rescue plans have been drawn up for the most important buildings, including all nature centres.

Customer safety audits report on accidents, near misses and the status of risk mapping, and define the practical implementation and further development of safety work. Based on reviews, a national summary is prepared annually. In addition, accidents and near-misses are compiled in a summary table, where events are classified in detail and management measures and monitoring are defined for them.

For accidents, Parks & Wildlife Finland has a separate, condensed guideline: the "crisis communication room board". In addition to accidents, the guidance is used, for example, during exceptional weather conditions.

It is important that the emergency call number 112 appears on information boards and other communications. The names of the sites must also be clearly visible, for example at rest areas, and they must be the same in online services, the PAVE information system and in the field. In the field, rescue service codes can be used for positioning, mainly in accommodation sites or information boards.

Parks & Wildlife Finland has liability insurance, which concerns the management of nature reserves and hiking areas, wilderness supervision and the promotion of nature conservation and recreational use on state-owned land and waters.

Shooting with an air pistol, e.g. in a national park can pose a safety risk to visitors to the area, and it can cause harm and disturbance to both visitors to the area and nature. As the authority and landowner of national parks, Metsähallitus has a negative attitude towards such activities in national parks. This is dealt with as a separate issue in Appendix 9.

13 Fishing, Hunting and Subsistence Livelihoods

13.1 Fishing and hunting

Fishing and hunting remain widely practiced by all social groups in Finland. They are generally regarded as a permanent and straightforward part of the Finnish lifestyle. In Northern Finland the fish and game catch have economic significance for the local population and even form subsistence livelihoods for some groups in Lapland.

Finland provides countless opportunities for fishing in varying environments. Each year, some 1.8 million people (i.e. a third of the population) fish in Finnish waters. Recreational fishing is one of the most important nature activities for Finns. The catch of recreational fishing accounts for almost a third of the total fish catch in Finland. In inland waters its share is over 80%. Under the common fishing right angling, jigging and ice fishing is allowed without a fishing permit, even in most protected areas. The use of simple hook and line is still the most common type of fishing gear. Three quarters of the catches in recreational fishing end up for human consumption.

Over 300,000 Finns are registered hunters, but only 60% are active and the number of hunters is decreasing. Most hunters operate on private lands, but many are dependent on opportunities offered by state-owned land and water areas. Hunting is one of the recreational services that Metsähallitus provides in state-owned areas, including some protected areas. Hunting areas are generally located in sparsely populated districts and their special natural values, such as their wilderness-like character, are an important attractive factor.

Everyone who goes fishing or hunting in Finland pays the state annual tax in the form of fishing and hunting licence fees, the pro-

ceeds of which are used to fund related management activities. Access and rights to fish and hunt in state-owned lands and waters are generally regulated under the Fishing Act (379/2015) and Hunting Act (615/1993). In protected areas, regulation is based primarily on the Nature Conservation Act (NCA 9/2023) and site-specific founding statutes.

13.1.1 General principles in protected areas

The key objective of nature reserves is to safeguard biodiversity and the favourable conservation status of natural habitats and wild species. This is a common objective of both nature conservation and of hunting and fishing that is based on the sustainable use of the natural yield of game and fish stocks.

Another important objective of the protected areas network is to preserve areas that are in as natural a state as possible. In such areas, human influence on nature should be as low as possible, and the relationships between species and the abundance of species populations primarily be regulated only by nature's own processes. In practice, however, the surrounding land use and human activities also affect the above-mentioned processes in protected areas, with the exception of the largest wilderness areas, which is why it is appropriate from the perspective of protected area management to recognise the connection between game and fish stocks and their regulation in protected areas and the broader ecosystem-level management of habitats and species.

Hunting and fishing are uses of nature that, if well planned and implemented, do not necessarily conflict with the conservation objectives of the protected area. When assessing hunting and fishing in protected

areas, the conservation (and other) objectives of each site must be considered. For example, preserving the conditions for traditional wilderness livelihoods is one of the goals of establishing wilderness reserves. Hunting and fishing also include much of the living cultural heritage of many nature reserves. In some situations, hunting and fishing can also be used to achieve nature conservation objectives (see section 9.2.6 Controlling invasive alien species).

When the conservation objective of a nature reserve is to protect the entire biological community and its natural state – such as in a strict nature reserve or a national park – the general policy of the Nature Conservation Act and the statutes establishing nature reserves is the prohibition of catching, killing and harassing vertebrate animals. Nevertheless, fishing based on general fishing rights (e.g. angling and ice fishing) is usually allowed even in such areas, in accordance with the Fisheries Act. In addition, as a rule, invasive alien species mink and raccoon dogs can be reduced in nature reserves and elk and white-tailed deer can be driven in connection to hunting. With the permission of the management authority of the area, the number of individuals of other alien species and animal species that have become too abundant or otherwise harmful can be reduced in nature reserves, if necessary. Often also fishing is possible with other than general fishing rights.

Simultaneously with the new Nature Conservation Act, the protection provisions of most nature reserves established by law before 1996 were reformed (excluding mire reserves). The updated founding regulations include references to the protection provisions of the new NCA and exceptions to them (see section 6.2). Thus, for example, the conservation provisions of all national parks and strict nature reserves are currently in accordance with the new NCA, also regarding hunting and fishing. However, the conservation provisions for nature reserves established by decree before 1996 and mire reserves estab-

lished by law are in force in accordance with the original founding acts, until they are also renewed in due course to comply with the new NCA.

If hunting is allowed in nature reserves, it can be restricted, if necessary, e.g. spatially, temporally or species-specifically. Protected areas or parts thereof can function, for example, as sanctuaries for game animals, often as part of a larger area. Hunting practices must be planned in such a way that the conservation objectives of the area or other recreational use are not jeopardised. At the same time, the objectives of management and regulation of game animal populations and the importance of hunting for local communities are considered.

Hunting and fishing and their special regulations are examined, for example, as part of the management planning of nature reserves and Natura 2000 areas and, in certain mire reserves, on a statutory basis in connection with the drafting of site regulation orders. Game management planning utilises, among other things, geographic information and catch feedback data as well as a game management planning and monitoring system to ensure the ecological and social sustainability of hunting.

13.1.2 Regulating fishing

Under the Fishing Act, fishermen aged 18 to 69 years engaged in fishing, other than angling, jigging or ice fishing must pay a fisheries management fee. With the fee, one has the right to engage in lure fishing with one rod and lure in the whole country, except in rapids and currents in waters containing migratory fish or waters where fishing is prohibited under another provision. All fishermen using traps and those catching crayfish must always have a permit granted by the fishing right holder. On state-owned lands, permits for specific fishing areas are granted by Metsähallitus.

According to the present Nature Conservation Act, angling and ice fishing are allowed in nature reserves, and with the permission of Metsähallitus, other fishing activities – e.g. lure and trap fishing – can be practiced. However, fishing is not possible in strict nature reserves or other areas where access is prohibited. Fishing in protected areas must not directly or indirectly endanger the existence or future of any species, except for non-native fish species.

In connection to demarcation of Metsähallitus fishing permit areas and of water areas within them, and in the management of fishing waters, the conservation needs of nature reserves and the decisions made in their management plans are considered. The necessary areal, temporal or species-specific restrictions related to fishing and the management of fishing waters are recorded in permit conditions or lease agreements (which, however, in principle, are no longer made for statutory nature reserves).

As a rule, fish stocking is prohibited in established protected areas as it weakens the natural state of the area. The primary aim is to safeguard the state of fish stocks through fishing arrangements and restrictions. However, the management of fish stocks by restocking can be carried out in the following cases:

- Restocking is specifically mentioned and permitted in the regulations establishing the area (e.g. some lakes in the Salamajärvi and Pallas–Yllästunturi National Parks).
- Restocking is carried out to maintain endangered fish species and to protect fish or European crayfish populations.

- On a case-by-case basis, restocking may be carried out with domestic fish species or crayfish and their stocks in waters which have already been actively managed by restocking and where these stockings have resulted in locally valuable stocks. Such restocking can be continued if the protected area is part of a larger continuous body of water (e.g. waterways) or if the restocking is important for commercial fishing.

Only native fish or crayfish populations approved by the fisheries authorities are always used in restocking, and no alien species (e.g. signal crayfish *Pacifastacus leniusculus*) are introduced into protected areas. Restocking is not directed to new waters unless this is necessary for the conservation of a particular fish or crayfish stock. For this reason, leases of fishing rights can only apply to waters that have already been leased and been managed by stocking, and not to completely new natural sites. Efforts are made to eliminate stocking and leases that do not comply with the above principles within reasonable transition periods. The above principles are also applied to conservation programme sites that have not yet been established as nature reserves.

Electrofishing in established nature reserves is discussed as a separate policy in Appendix 9. The authority to grant such permits is delegated to National Parks Finland personnel by Director of Parks & Wildlife Finland. However, the preparation of derogations related to electrofishing also requires the expertise of Wilderness Service Finland. Outside established nature reserves, permits for electrofishing are granted by Wilderness Service Finland.

13.1.3 Regulating hunting by nature conservation law

The regulations governing hunting in established nature reserves vary considerably. In strict nature reserves, hunting is prohibited. As a rule, hunting is also prohibited in national parks, although there are quite a few exceptions to this:

- In Northern Finland and some national parks in Southern Finland (Eastern Gulf of Finland, Ekenäs Archipelago, Archipelago Sea), hunting is generally allowed for local residents.
- In the Bothnian Sea National Park, grey seal hunting is allowed and, with the permission of Metsähallitus, autumn hunting of waterfowl is allowed in part of the park. In addition, measures can be taken to regulate cormorant populations with the permission of Metsähallitus.
- In a large part of Kolovesi National Park, elk hunting is possible for residents with the permission of Metsähallitus.

In other types of nature reserves, the permissibility of hunting has been decided on a case-by-case basis in the founding acts. In the nature reserves of Northern Finland, the founding regulations are quite permissive regarding hunting, unlike in similar areas in Southern Finland. For example, hunting is prohibited in old-growth forests and herb-rich forest reserves in Southern Finland. In the mire reserves of Southern Finland, hunting is permitted if this is stipulated in the regulation orders.

In other state nature reserves (meaning other than national parks and strict nature reserves), hunting is generally permitted by section 8 of the Hunting Act (see map, Figure 20) and prohibited south of it. In both areas, however, exceptions to these main rules may have been laid down in the government founding decree, i.e. hunting has

been decided on a decree-by-decree basis, considering, among other things, everyone's rights and the recreational and nature values of the area. Justified area-specific derogations allowing hunting may be laid down by means of a founding act for other state nature reserves, regardless of their size.

In strict nature reserves, the driving of elk and white-tailed deer is not allowed. It is allowed without a special permit granted by the owner of the area in national parks and other nature reserves, with certain exceptions (NCA section 50). The provision can be applied both in a situation where an elk or white-tailed deer is hunted within a nature reserve and in connection with hunting outside a nature reserve. Driving elk and white-tailed deer includes hunting without a dog and the use of a dog permitted in accordance with the provisions of the Hunting Act.

The capture and killing of mink and raccoon dogs is permitted in accordance with Chapter 7 of the Hunting Act (Capture and killing of unprotected animals). Therefore, trapping these species only requires permission from the landowner or holder of hunting rights, but not a separate permit from the authorities. These small carnivores can cause significant damage to protected birds, especially in wetlands and archipelago areas. Especially in nature reserves with valuable bird life, hunting should be systematic, efficient and long-term. The reduction of specimens of alien species must be carried out in such a way that there are no deviations from the provisions on the protection of animal species laid down in the Nature Conservation Act (section 73).

Section 51 of the Nature Conservation Act provides for exemptions from the general provisions of nature reserves that are subject to a permit. These refer to measures that may be authorised by the nature conservation authority responsible for managing the site, provided that the measures do not jeopardise the purpose of establishing the nature

reserve. Exceptional provisions include, inter alia, the possibility to:

- 2) reduce the number of specimens of plant and animal species other than those referred to in section 50, sub-section 3, if they are too numerous or otherwise harmful
- 3) remove specimens of game species that pose an obvious threat to human safety or threaten to cause significant economic damage to property.

The latter paragraph of the NCA is applied mainly to prevent damage caused by elk and deer to traffic, and damage caused by grey seals to professional fishing, to limit damage caused by large carnivores to livestock or reindeer husbandry, and to remove dangerous individuals of brown bear and wolf.

The species referred to in paragraph 3) and some of the animal species referred to

in paragraph 2) are species subject to hunting. Hunting such species in a nature reserve requires both a derogation under section 51 (an appealable permit from the authorities) and a right to hunt granted by the holder of the hunting right (granted by permit or agreement). The driving of elk and white-tailed deer and the capture and killing of mink and raccoon dogs only require the right granted by the holder of the hunting right. In national parks and other areas for which a management plan is drawn up, the needs for driving elk and white-tailed deer and catching invasive species should be investigated when drawing up the plan.

Under section 50 of the NCA, it is permitted to euthanize a wounded animal in a nature reserve and to take possession of a dead game animal in a situation related to hunting outside the reserve area in accordance with the Hunting Act or more detailed



In the Puurijärvi and Isosuo National Park, there is a long tradition of hunting non-native predators.
Photo: Tuija Muronen.

provisions thereunder. Tracing a wounded animal in a nature reserve, the need to euthanize such an animal and taking possession of a dead game animal in the area must be notified to Metsähallitus without delay.

The ongoing legislative drafting work to establish new nature reserves has been organised into regional projects, and the resulting Government decree usually includes several dozen areas to be established (see section 2.3.4). This makes it possible to examine possible deviation needs related to hunting, for example, simultaneously for a larger geographical entity. Although the main rule is a hunting ban, the Government decrees concerning southern Finland may contain carefully considered exceptions that allow to varying degrees hunting by area and species/species group, especially for elk and the small game species that are most important for hunting in each area, such as hares and game fowl.

The inclusion of areas on the balance sheet of Parks & Wildlife Finland to an established nature reserve is possible at the request of Metsähallitus in a real estate cadastral procedure or by a decision to combine properties. However, such a procedure cannot concern a public water area and, according to the explanatory memorandum of the Act, it may not substantially alter the hunting practices of the area to be annexed. The latter means that annexation on application seldom can be used in situations where hunting is prohibited in the area to be expanded. For this reason, technical cadastral annexation can be utilised mainly in the area covered by section 8 of the Hunting Act, where hunting is generally allowed in nature reserves for local residents. However, even in that area, technical cadastral annexation cannot be used, for example, in national parks, where hunting is restricted compared to the surrounding areas.

13.1.4 Regulating hunting by hunting law

Under the Hunting Act, all those who practice hunting must have a hunting card. The card can be acquired by paying a game management fee to the State. To be allowed to acquire a hunting card, all hunters must complete a hunting examination. The purpose of the examination is to ensure that hunters are familiar with the principles of hunting and game management and hunting provisions. Hunting licences and permits for specified game species, hunting times and hunting areas on state-owned grounds are sold by Metsähallitus. Licence fees are confirmed by the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry.

When hunting is permitted by the statutes establishing a nature reserve, it is regulated by the hunting law. Under the Hunting Act, hunting may, for example, be restricted for reasons of public safety by decision of the Regional State Administrative Agency in a certain area. Such restrictions have been proposed and implemented by decisions of the Agency on certain day-trip destinations in protected and hiking areas in Northern Finland, which are in the immediate vicinity of tourist centres, urban areas and their neighbouring areas. The needs for the above-mentioned restrictions have been examined nationally as part of the Metsähallitus hunting safety report (Metsähallitus 2021c) prepared in cooperation between National Parks and Wilderness Service. The report also presents many other recommendations and measures related to e.g. communication and sharing of spatial data to improve hunting safety.

If the population of a game animal is endangered, the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry may restrict its hunting for a maximum period of three years in the area where the species occurs or in part of it. When issuing the decree, the Ministry must consult the Finnish Wildlife Agency and the game management association of the area affected by the prohibition. This decree shall apply, where

appropriate, inter alia, to the annual regulation of forest game fowl hunting.

In protected areas where hunting is permitted, Metsähallitus has the right to order about hunting, with the exceptions of public water areas and the northern area of free hunting rights of municipal residents under section 8 of the Hunting Act. Regulation is steered by the authority granted by the Director of Game and Fisheries.

Metsähallitus regulates hunting in its areas through quota decisions and permit area-specific planning that considers the annual variation in forest game fowl populations, which guarantee the ecological and social sustainability of hunting and, on the other hand, safeguard the rights of local residents. If there are not enough hunting permits for everyone, priority must be given to citizens who do not otherwise have reasonable opportunities to hunt. However, these opportunities must be divided so that the right under section 8 of the Hunting Act (municipal residents' right to hunt freely on state-owned land, see Figure 20) is considered as a precondition.

State-owned areas can be formed into permit hunting areas, and Metsähallitus regulates hunting by granting hunting licences and by licence terms. The right to hunt may also be granted by means of a hunting lease; In this case, the right to hunt can be granted either without restrictions or Metsähallitus as a landowner may impose temporal, regional or species-specific restrictions (e.g. locally reduced or rare species) in the agreement. The terms of the agreements and permits are negotiated between Metsähallitus National Parks and Wilderness Service as necessary. Hunting leases aim to harmonise hunting arrangements in similar protected areas. Hunting lease agreements drawn up for nature reserves and conservation programme sites do not grant rights to game management work carried out in these areas (e.g. feeding game). As a rule, protected areas are not granted the right to build constructions or structures related to hunting. However,

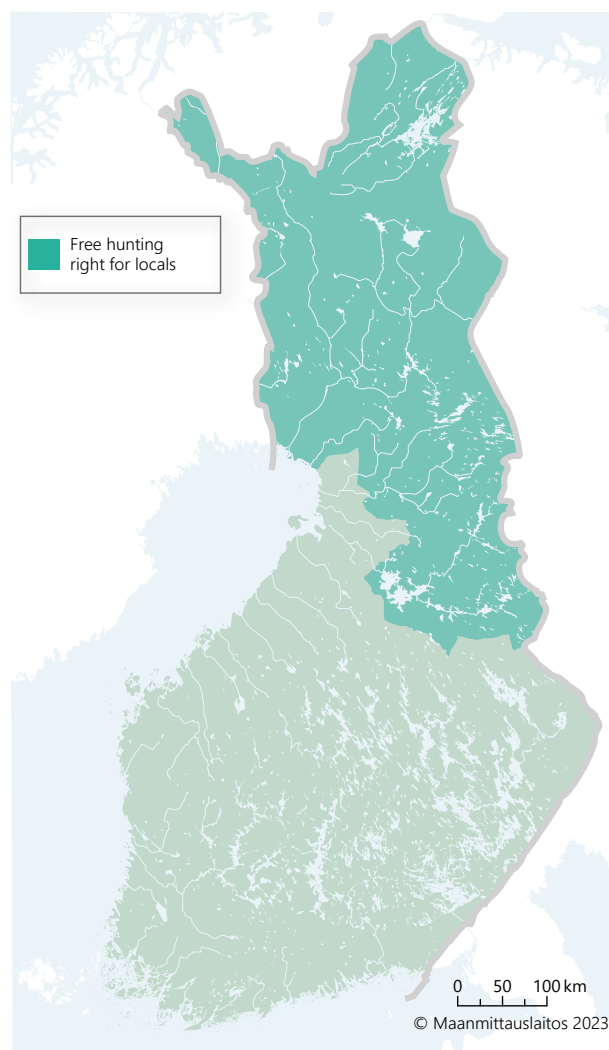


Figure 20. The area of hunting rights for locals specified in the Hunting Act (Section 8). Residents of the municipalities of Northern Finland have the right to hunt game in their home municipality without a specific hunting permit. Some 50,000 citizens have this right.

Metsähallitus may give consent to structures necessary for the management and use of protected areas. For example, in protected areas where elk hunting would be permitted in the decree establishing the area, the construction of shooting towers or platforms can be permitted in a manner agreed in more detail with Metsähallitus, as their use can increase the customer safety of the protected area.

Prohibiting or restricting hunting enabled by the act establishing a protected area (or lack thereof) is sometimes necessary, for

example in small, protected areas in Southern Finland that are in active recreational use or valuable bird conservation areas. In these cases, prohibitions and restrictions are decided on a case-by-case basis. In valuable bird protection sites, temporal or regional waterfowl hunting restrictions may be sufficient, but e.g. hunting of deer and small carnivores may be permitted. In bird protection sites, the hunting of alien predators and foxes can play an important role in conservation. Such hunting is usually allowed to local hunting clubs, or they are even obliged to do so in exchange for the right to hunt. If such hunting does not cause costs to the state and it revives the waterfowl population in the area, those participating in small carnivore hunting may be allowed to catch cervids, game fowl and/or lagomorphs, with a permit or on basis of an agreement. Such decisions, made by the holder of the hunting right within the framework of the protection regulations, are always considered on a case-by-case basis.

In the future, planning of hunting, as well as other planning of the management and use of areas, will increasingly focus on larger land use areas instead of individual protected areas. It is often advantageous to choose an entity consisting of several protected areas as the planning area. The aim of the planning is to seek mutually acceptable solutions related to hunting in both established and not yet established protected areas in cooperation with the local population and key stakeholders.

South of the area covered by section 8 of the Hunting Act, where hunting is generally prohibited in nature reserves, areas acquired by the State for conservation purposes may – in accordance with the policy made by the Ministry of the Environment – continue to be leased for hunting in areas necessary for locally established hunting practices. As a rule, the following principles are observed in renting and, where applicable, in hunting arrangements in licensed hunting areas:

- The necessary amendments to agreements already concluded by Metsähallitus and those in force will only be made after the entry into force of the founding acts and within the transitional periods laid down therein.
- Previous hunting lease agreements concerning the acquired areas are terminated in writing by the ELY Centre immediately after the acquisition or at the latest after the area has been transferred to Metsähallitus.
- Metsähallitus concludes any new hunting lease agreements valid until further notice and with references to the upcoming need to amend or terminate the agreement related to the establishment of a nature reserve. The dismissal is made under section 13 of the Hunting Act, if required by the founding act.
- New premises related to previously acquired areas will follow the leasing practice already adopted by Metsähallitus in the area in question. If the acquired property is connected to an area from which Metsähallitus has already leased areas for hunting, the property can be attached to the previous lease agreement if hunting has taken place in the property before. In areas where hunting has not been carried out before, areas are not rented.
- Correspondingly, if there is an agreement in principle on the reconciliation of hunting and conservation needs in a certain special protected area complex (such as in the case of Hailuoto, in connection with establishment of private nature reserves), areas can be leased within the framework of the reserve/hunting areas agreed therein.
- If it is an entirely new independent area, it can be leased to a local club for hunting elk, roe deer, white-tailed deer, hares and brown hares and allow

them to catch alien species (such as raccoon dogs and mink).

- In new independent areas, contracts may also be concluded for other hunting and catching, if necessary, when it is appropriate considering the nature conservation purpose of the leased area and past practices in the leased area and surrounding areas.
- In addition, when drawing up hunting leases and issuing hunting licences in the newly independent areas, the following principles concerning the authorisation of hunting and catching must be considered in connection with the establishment of state protected areas:
 - In principle, birding is not allowed in Special Protection Areas (SPAs of the Natura 2000 network), but hunting/catching mink and raccoon dog are allowed. If other hunting is justifiably permitted, it can only take place after September 20th.
 - Hunting of deer, hare and brown hare may be permitted if they have previously been hunted.
 - Wild boar hunting may be permitted to control swine fever, especially in south-eastern Finland.
 - Hunting large carnivores is not permitted.

The cooperation agreement signed by Metsähallitus and the Reindeer Herders' Association in January 2021 discusses, among other things, the organisation of hunting. When hunting in the Reindeer husbandry area, the needs of reindeer husbandry must be considered, and efforts must be made to prevent damage to the economy.

Reindeer husbandry is considered in the planning of permit hunting. If necessary, Metsähallitus and the reindeer herding cooperative will negotiate restrictions on the use of dogs in the cooperative's areas. The agreed restrictions are marked on hunting

permit maps. In permits and agreements for dog testing, the event organiser is obliged to investigate ongoing reindeer husbandry work in the permit areas.

The actively used reindeer round-up sites known to Metsähallitus are marked on the hunting permit maps. The reindeer herding cooperative will inform about round-up times on forest roads near the separation fences or in another agreed manner. During the winter season, permits may be issued for keeping small-scale carrion for hunting small carnivores.

13.1.5 Large carnivores

Large carnivores are defined as game species in Finland, and thus their hunting is controlled by the hunting legislation. The four species – brown bear (*Ursus arctos*), lynx (*Lynx lynx*), wolf (*Canis lupus*), and wolverine (*Gulo gulo*) – are protected. They are red-listed and are also listed in Annex IV of the Habitats Directive (within the Reindeer husbandry area, Finland has an exception: the wolf is listed in Annex V and the wolverine in Annex II).

Populations of large carnivores have strengthened in recent years. The population management of large carnivores is based on population management plans drawn up under the leadership of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry.

The presence of large carnivores is particularly desirable in protected areas where natural biological communities are to be protected. Large carnivores in Finland are not solely dependent on the habitats provided by protected areas. However, especially for wolverine reproduction in Lapland, wilderness reserves and extensive nature reserves are important.

In established nature reserves, their founding acts determine the possible hunting of large carnivores. Under section 51 of the Nature Conservation Act, the authority managing the area may grant a permit of

exception (derogation), for example, for the removal of large carnivores that pose an obvious threat to human safety or property due to significant economic damage. The section can be applied, for example, to limiting the damage caused by large carnivores to cattle or reindeer husbandry and to removing dangerous brown bear and wolf individuals. In the removal of an animal, methods other than killing it would also be possible in the permit consideration.

If hunting large carnivores is possible in a nature reserve, it is usually arranged with permits or agreements issued by Metsähallitus. In protected areas south of the Reindeer husbandry area, the aim is to favour the existence of a population of large carnivores when it does not pose a threat to human safety or property outside the nature reserve. Wolf and lynx especially effectively regulate both small carnivore populations and deer populations, and their presence has a beneficial effect on biodiversity in this way as well.

Focusing hunting on a specific place or individual, subject to a derogation permit, has become a form of population management in the management of wolf, brown bear and lynx populations. In such cases, hunting may be based on damage prevention, public safety or, in areas of density, population regulation (see sections 41 and 41a of the Hunting Act). The Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry is responsible for the quota allocation related to this, but the Finnish Wildlife Agency grants derogations for both state-owned and private lands.

If hunting is prohibited by the regulations of a protected area, a derogation permit granted by the Finnish Wildlife Agency cannot apply to such an area, unless Metsähallitus has separately granted a permit for it in accordance with section 51 (subsection 1, paragraph 3) of the Nature Conservation Act. The Finnish Wildlife Agency may, upon separate application, grant the holder of such a hunting permit also the right to use hunting methods prohibited by the Hunting Act – for

example, the exploitation of snowmobiles in hunting. This has been applied especially in the Reindeer husbandry area, where efforts have been made to effectively and quickly remove a harmful animal to prevent reindeer damage. However, the use of snowmobiles on state-owned land also requires a Metsähallitus off-road traffic permit from the holder of the hunting permit.

In addition to a derogation permit granted by the Finnish Wildlife Agency, hunting large carnivores in Metsähallitus areas requires a permit granted by Metsähallitus (see also Metsähallitus 2008). However, in section 8 of the Hunting Act, local residents do not need a permit from Metsähallitus for hunting in their municipality of residence. If the permit area covers several municipalities and the person participating in the hunt is also hunting in a neighbouring municipality, he or she must redeem the hunting permit for the large carnivore (mainly lynx and wolf) required for Metsähallitus land. For example, the boundaries of reindeer herders' cooperatives do not follow municipal boundaries, so when a reindeer herding cooperative is a permit area, those participating in hunting usually also need a permit from Metsähallitus. In addition to the permit procedure, Metsähallitus may grant the right to hunt for an agreed period in the required area with a lease agreement.

The use of a derogation granted under section 51 of the Nature Conservation Act is only applicable to situations where quick decisions are not required. In some situations – for example, in the case of large carnivores injured in a crash or hunting – the predator can be removed from the nature reserve by the police authority, regardless of the area's conservation regulations. According to the Police Act (872/2011), "A police officer has the right to apprehend and, as a last resort, euthanize an animal that poses a danger to human life or health, significant damage to property or seriously endangers traffic. An animal may also be killed if keeping it alive would constitute manifest cruelty to it". If

necessary, the police may also authorise auxiliary forces, such as hunters, to carry out such a task. In such situations, Metsähallitus personnel shall, to the extent possible, assist the police or their authorised persons in the practical arrangements of hunting.

13.2 Reindeer husbandry

According to the Reindeer Husbandry Act (848/1990), the Reindeer husbandry area in Finland includes the province of Lapland (excluding Kemi, Keminmaa and Tornio), as well as some municipalities in the regions of North Ostrobothnia and Kainuu. The area covered by the Reindeer husbandry area is approximately 123,000 square kilometres (i.e. covers one third of Finland's land area). The area is shown in Figure 17 (see section 10.7).

The Finnish Reindeer husbandry area is divided into 54 reindeer herding cooperatives. Reindeer herding cooperatives are reindeer herding units of different sizes and number of reindeer. Each reindeer herding cooperative is a community formed by its shareholders and is responsible for reindeer herding in its area. The Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry sets the maximum permitted number of live reindeer for ten years at a time, considering, for example, the sustainable productivity of winter grazing areas. The total number of live reindeer allowed has been about 200,000.

In the Reindeer husbandry area in Northern Finland, reindeer grazing is allowed in wilderness reserves and nature reserves. However, in strict nature reserves, Metsähallitus may restrict the grazing of reindeer for reasons related to nature research or other special reasons (NCA section 50). In the Malla Strict Nature Reserve, reindeer husbandry may be restricted to safeguard the natural values of the area and reindeer fences may be built for this purpose.

Wilderness and nature reserves are often very important grazing and calving areas for reindeer. When preparing management plans

for nature and wilderness reserves, Parks & Wildlife Finland discusses the guidelines of the plans with reindeer herding cooperatives. Management plans and regulation orders are negotiated in accordance with the Reindeer Husbandry Act (section 53) and statements are requested from the reindeer herding cooperatives of the planning area when plans are finalised. If later updates or changes are made to the policies of the management plans, the reindeer herders' statements will also be requested and negotiations in accordance with the Reindeer Husbandry Act will be arranged. As a rule, statements from reindeer herding cooperatives are also requested on routes related to nature tourism.

Under the right of use agreements concluded by Metsähallitus with reindeer herding cooperatives, reindeer husbandry operators can also build structures (e.g. reindeer fences) and buildings (e.g. herding huts) necessary for reindeer husbandry in wilderness and nature reserves. These should be designed and constructed so that minimal harm is caused to nature. The terms and conditions of the new reindeer fences include the principles of placing gates and other necessary special terms. No agreements are drawn up for sites where endangered plant or animal species occur.

Off-road vehicles can be used in reindeer husbandry work (Off-Road Traffic Act, section 4). During snow-free periods, off-road traffic requires a written certificate from the reindeer herder of necessary reindeer husbandry work (Off-Road Traffic Decree, section 13).

Reindeer herders have the right to take wood for kota-huts (i.e. traditional Sámi dwelling) and for making campfires in the terrain (Reindeer Husbandry Act, section 40).

Reindeer affect the nature of protected areas in many ways. Together with climate change, their summer grazing is the most significant factor affecting the state of fell habitats. Strong grazing pressure is one of the reasons for the endangerment of almost all fell habitats classified as threatened or nearly threatened. Intensive summer graz-



Reindeer on a fell slope in Pyhä-Luosto National Park. Photo: Tiina Hakkarainen.

ing of reindeer prevents the regeneration of mountain birch after autumn moth (*Epirrita autumnata*) damage, reduces the number of lichens on fell heaths and increases their erosion. One of the reasons for the endangerment of dry heath forests in Northern Finland is the decrease in lichen cover and deciduous trees due to intensive reindeer grazing. On the other hand, grazing can also mitigate the negative effects of climate change in protected areas, for example by preventing scrubbing and the spread of mountain birch on open fell heaths.

There are no provisions on outdoor feeding of reindeer in the Reindeer Husbandry Act, so it is dealt with in accordance with the Nature Conservation Act, the littering ban of the Waste Act and Natura 2000 regulations. Alien species must not be released into the ground with feed, and terrain or waterways

must not be littered or eutrophicated with feed left over from the residue and faeces accumulated at feeding points. It is not allowed to feed reindeer on the ice of water bodies. When assembling and transporting reindeer, hay can be spread on ice only slightly and temporarily. Exceptions are agreed separately between Metsähallitus and the reindeer herding cooperative. Metsähallitus and reindeer herders agree together on the sites in nature reserves and, if necessary, in wilderness reserves where reindeer should not be fed. Feeding places should be cleaned, and waste should be transported out from the terrain annually.

Tourist use of protected areas, off-road traffic and hiking may disturb the grazing, transport or calving of reindeer. For this reason, efforts are being made to identify the most important areas for reindeer husbandry

so that hiking and tourism activities as well as off-road traffic can be steered in such a way that the peace of the reindeer is safeguarded, especially during the calving season. The needs of reindeer husbandry are considered in nature management and restoration work. In the Special reindeer husbandry area (see demarcation in Figure 17), when considering the implementation of projects or the conditions for concluding an agreement or granting a permit, the reindeer herding cooperative in the area is consulted, to consider the prerequisites for practicing reindeer husbandry.

13.3 Rights of local residents and subsistence livelihoods

The rights of local inhabitants are incorporated in numerous statutes – including the Hunting Act and the Fisheries Act, but also in the statutes establishing many nature reserves. In protected areas, the aim is usually to safeguard the traditional uses of the area for the local population. Especially in Lapland, but also in the coastal archipelago, the local population has retained special rights that safeguard the traditional use of the area, mainly related to fishing, hunting, off-road traffic and taking firewood (e.g. the extraction of firewood and other wood permitted by the Skolt Act and Reindeer Husbandry Act). The conditions of each protected area are different, so the privileges enjoyed by residents and their rights to use nature are usually defined separately for each area in the founding acts, and these rights may have been further specified in a possible management plan. The preservation of the traditional rights of local residents has contributed to the establishment of extensive wilderness reserves and nature reserves in Northern Finland and the archipelago areas.

Although the statutes establishing many nature reserves contain provisions on the rights of local residents, they do not take a position on how the “local resident” should be interpreted and defined. The determination is left to the discretion of the area’s management authority, i.e. Parks & Wildlife Finland. In Northern Finland, the definition is mainly based on the definition laid down in section 8 of the Hunting Act (residents of their home municipality on state-owned land), but in Southern Finland, the definition of a local resident has been defined at both the municipal and village level. In addition, for example, a model like that of Lemmenjoki National Park may be considered in national parks, where special rights to the national park have been defined in the regulation orders concerning the area. These rights do not apply to all municipal residents.

Natural subsistence livelihoods refer to reindeer husbandry, fishing, hunting, berry and mushroom gathering carried out for income purposes. Engaging in subsistence livelihoods may also include other small-scale exploitation and further processing of natural resources as well as, for example, small-scale tourism activities and agriculture. In Lapland and the archipelago, many rights have been reserved for the local population to engage in traditional natural livelihoods also in protected areas. The starting point is that the closer a person lives to a protected area and the more important the protected area is for a person’s natural livelihoods, the more extensive the natural use rights. In wilderness reserves, one of the purposes of the founding act is to safeguard natural subsistence livelihoods.

Securing the preconditions for Sámi and archipelago culture is discussed in more detail in sections 7.5.1, 8.1.1 and 10.7.

14 Other Use of Protected Areas

14.1 Off-road traffic

14.1.1 Regulating and controlling off-road traffic

The Nature Conservation Act, the Wilderness Act and the statutes establishing protected areas do not specifically refer to off-road traffic, so its regulation is primarily based on the Off-Road Traffic Act (1710/1995), which applies to the use of motorised vehicles in the terrain and on snowmobile routes, even in nature reserves and wilderness reserves. According to the Off-Road Traffic Act, off-road traffic on land mainly requires permission from the landowner. As an exception, the Act (section 4) defines special situations in which a landowner's permit is not required. These include the transport of severely disabled persons and their escorts in the terrain, official duties of the police, Customs or Border Guard, and fire and rescue services. In addition, an off-road traffic permit is not required for moving on snowmobile routes or ice-covered water. The objective of the Off-Road Traffic Act is to minimise the harm caused by off-road traffic to nature and other environments, natural livelihoods and general recreational use. The importance of these objectives is emphasised in nature and wilderness reserves.

Management plans for nature and wilderness reserves and the regulation orders of nature reserves may include prohibitions and restrictions on off-road traffic on land, issued by Metsähallitus based on the Off-Road Traffic Act. Restricting off-road traffic in ice-covered areas under the Off-Road Traffic Act is only possible by decision of the ELY Centre. In nature reserves, off-road traffic as well as other traffic may be restricted in the regulation orders under the Nature Conservation Act (section 56) if the preservation of the fauna or vegetation in the area so requires.

In the management plans and regulation orders, off-road traffic must be restricted judiciously, because the regulation through them is rigid and can cause problems if conditions or needs change rapidly. It is often sufficient to state in the management plan that the regulation of off-road traffic follows the Metsähallitus off-road traffic principles and guidelines (Metsähallitus 2022d) confirmed by the Director of Parks & Wildlife Finland. The dimensioning of off-road traffic in Metsähallitus areas is regulated on a general level by decisions made by Metsähallitus on regional quotas for snowmobile track permits and off-road traffic permits.

14.1.2 Snowmobile routes and tracks

Due to the disadvantages of off-road traffic, the aim in all state-owned areas is to direct it to snowmobile routes and snowmobile tracks maintained by Metsähallitus or municipalities. When granting permits for off-road traffic, consideration should always be given to whether access can primarily be directed to routes or tracks.

As a rule, recreational snowmobiling will not be directed to nature reserves already established or to be established later, and snowmobile routes or tracks will not be built in them. An exception to this is some extensive nature reserves and wilderness reserves in Northern Finland, where it has been necessary to build snowmobile routes or tracks due to their vastness and remoteness. New routes or tracks are seldom established in these areas. However, if this is necessary, existing established access routes, transmission lines and suitable open terrain shall be utilised as far as possible in the alignment of routes and tracks. In nature and wilderness reserves, the construction of new routes or tracks and the

conversion of tracks into routes should, as a rule, be based on a management plan. If no management plan has been drawn up for the area, the regulations establishing the area must be followed. According to the Off-Road Traffic Act (section 13), Metsähallitus decides on the establishment and closure of a snowmobile route in a state-owned protected area referred to in the Nature Conservation Act.

14.1.3 Off-road traffic outside snowmobile routes and tracks

Metsähallitus grants off-road traffic permits outside snowmobile routes and tracks only for justified reasons. The damage caused by off-road traffic during snow-free periods is often long-lasting, so off-road traffic permits are only granted for particularly weighty reasons for activities suitable for the principles of use of the areas.

When considering off-road traffic permits, the first thing to check is whether the regulations of the nature reserve allow the activity in question for the needs for which the off-road traffic permit is being applied for. The permit consideration complies with the Off-Road Traffic Act, the confirmed and valid Metsähallitus off-road traffic principles and permit guidelines with any additional regional instructions related to it, as well as any off-road traffic and access restrictions in the management plan and regulation order (e.g. restricted parts of strict nature reserves or areas restricted by regulation orders).

14.2 Roads, civil engineering, water transport and aviation

Roads

Protected areas may include public roads and private roads, various structures maintained by other authorities and parties, as well as shipping lanes and other waterways. The harm caused by these to nature conservation and landscape values is reduced in

cooperation with the authorities, institutions and road municipalities responsible for them.

According to the Nature Conservation Act (section 49), the construction of roads in nature reserves is prohibited. An exception to this rule is roads that are necessary for guiding activities in the area (NCA section 50). In nature reserves, it is permitted to use and repair roads in the area (maintenance also includes the clearing of road ditches). No permanent roads may be built in wilderness reserves, but the Government may authorise the construction of a permanent road that is of considerable significance for the public interest or the pursuit of natural livelihoods.

Many national parks and other protected areas are served by public roads. Under the guidance of the Finnish Transport Infrastructure Agency, ELY Centres are responsible for road maintenance and safety. However, most of the protected areas can be reached by car, entirely or at least in part, only by private roads.

The maintenance and repair of private roads is the responsibility of road cooperatives, in which Parks & Wildlife Finland has not participated, even when most of the private road traffic is caused by visitors to protected areas. Parks & Wildlife Finland is a shareholder in more than a thousand private roads, which makes participation in road cooperatives practically impossible.

The costs of the maintenance and repair of private roads (not only maintenance but also renovation costs) are charged to the shareholders of the road cooperative based on the road units defined for them. In road unitisations, the units belonging to Parks & Wildlife Finland must be determined according to the actual use ('special use') of protected areas and not, for example, based on surface area of forestry use (see National Land Survey of Finland 2023). This applies to both established and future nature reserves and other sites acquired for conservation purposes. As protected areas and the number of visits to

them have grown, the dues to Parks & Wildlife Finland have also increased significantly.

In some heavily used national parks in southern Finland, park visitors account for as much as 60–90% of the use of private roads. In Metsähallitus' view, it would be appropriate to convert such private roads into public roads under the responsibility of the Finnish Transport Infrastructure Agency, but this has not progressed. If this is not possible in the future, it would be appropriate for road cooperatives in such situations to increasingly switch to outsourced services (road managers) in the performance of their duties.

Metsähallitus also carries out tasks in private protected areas, where the landowner is responsible for road fees. Metsähallitus may pay a separate fee for the use of private nature reserves managed by it (e.g. nature management sites), charged by the road cooperative in accordance with the Private Roads Act. The fee is paid for the wear caused by the management measures on the road. Any damage to the road must be compensated by repairing the road.

Metsähallitus' own roads that are unnecessary for the management of protected areas can be closed and, if necessary, restored.

Owners of properties neighbouring protected areas may have the right of way to pass through the protected area. Such rights must be clarified and, if possible, removed in connection with the formation of real estate in the protected area (see section 15.1 for more details).

Trees falling on roads are discussed in section 15.4.

Civil engineering structures

With some exceptions, construction is prohibited in nature reserves, and this applies, for example, to electricity and telephone lines and other similar structures. If the founding act of the area does not contain a provision made for construction by means of an exception to the general provision,

the construction of such a line requires an amendment to the founding act. The construction of new lines should also be avoided at sites to be established later as nature reserves, i.e. the routes of the lines should be directed outside of these. The prohibition on the construction of lines in established nature reserves also means that in these areas it is only possible to change the route of an existing line by amending the founding act (in areas not yet established, this can be allowed on a case-by-case basis).

The use and maintenance of existing infrastructure and related equipment is permitted in nature reserves (NCA section 50). In addition to electricity and telephone lines, such structures include various cables, structures and equipment related to telecommunications, energy or wastewater management. This entry only allows for the renovation of an existing main right-of-way (this may not be widened), e.g. the replacement of an overhead line with an underground cable running along the former right-of-way. Therefore, such measures do not require a permit from the authority managing the area, i.e. Metsähallitus, but they can follow the normal right of use procedure. Nature reserves are mainly part of the Natura 2000 network, and in such areas the operator may need to submit a notification to the ELY Centre in accordance with the NCA (section 37).

For example, the transfer of land required for electricity and telephone lines takes place under a right of use contract. Parks & Wildlife Finland has about 500 such line agreements. Cooperation with the line companies reduces the detrimental landscape effects and other drawbacks caused by the line, by e.g. favouring underground cabling instead of overhead lines or immersing cables in water.

In restoration operations of electricity and other lines, trees often must be cut from the line areas. In protected areas, trunks can be left as decaying wood in the line area or near it. When trees are left in the terrain uncut and unpruned, such a procedure is in no way con-

trary to the Forest Act or the Forest Damage Act. For more information, see Metsähallitus 2020a.

The entries in the Nature Conservation Act or the statutes establishing areas issued under it do not prohibit the laying of a cable or a completed pipe at the bottom of a water body belonging to a nature reserve, provided that the cable does not cause harmful effects on the nature of the area. This refers specifically to cables/pipes being laid on the bottom, which does not require digging the bottom or attaching a cable/pipe to the bottom. Such cables/pipes are not interpreted as structures referred to in NCA section 49, the construction of which is prohibited in nature reserves. This means, that such sub-laying cables/pipes that do not affect the natural conditions of the area, do not require that an exemption concerning them is included in the founding statute.

Waterway transport

Motorboating and other motorised water traffic may cause noise nuisance or other disturbance in protected areas. In waters belonging to established nature reserves (waters are not always part of a protected area), movement on the waters may be restricted by means of regulation orders if there are clear grounds for nature conservation (NCA section 56). Such restrictions may also be imposed on movement during the ice-covered period.

The Finnish Transport and Communications Agency may impose prohibitions and restrictions concerning areas or watercraft types on grounds such as nature conservation, recreational use of nature or other public interest (Water Transport Act, Section 101). A proposal concerning this can be made, for example, by an ELY Centre or an authority, corporation or owner of a water area concerned (section 102). Therefore, the proposal can be made, for example, by Metsähallitus. The prohibition/restriction proposal may

apply to both established nature reserves and other protected areas. In established nature reserves, such prohibitions/restrictions may also be possible in situations where there are no prerequisites for issuing prohibitions or restrictions by means of regulation orders. If there is a need for such prohibitions or restrictions in relation to a nature reserve, the need and grounds for them should be mentioned in a possible management plan for the area.

In nature reserves, it is permitted (by NCA section 50) to restore maritime safety equipment and waterways (public and private) without a separate permit from Metsähallitus, as well as to carry out minor clearances required by safety equipment (excluding dredging). The Finnish Transport Infrastructure Agency, which is responsible for maritime safety equipment, in its guidelines states that non-urgent measures will not be taken on bird nesting islands until after the nesting season. Before taking any action, however, the Agency should contact Metsähallitus. In seal reserves and other islets frequented by seals, activities should be carried out after the hair change, calving and lactation periods.

In access restricted areas, the measures mentioned above require an access permit (NCA section 56). However, if the measure in question is urgent and necessary for maritime safety, a written access permit is not required, but even then, the measures should be negotiated and agreed with Metsähallitus, for example by phone/email.

Although such measures do not require an exceptional permit from Metsähallitus, they may require an exemption granted by the ELY Centre (NCA Section 83). If the measures are carried out in a Natura 2000 area, it may be necessary for the operating party to notify the ELY Centre (NCA section 37).

For the sake of clarity, it would be useful to highlight and allow the urgent and necessary restoration measures referred to above in the provisions of the regulation orders concerning access restrictions.

According to the Nature Conservation Act (section 50), necessary and urgent measures required by rescue operations may be taken in a nature reserve, if the situation so requires. This means, for example, oil spill response measures to reduce or prevent oil spills. In certain coastal nature reserves, it may be necessary to install fasteners on coastal cliffs in advance to facilitate the attachment of oil spill response booms in the event of damage (fasteners are interpreted as structures necessary for management within the meaning of section 50).

The measures referred to above do not require separate permits in nature reserves. However, the rescue authorities must contact Metsähallitus, which manages the areas, before taking any action. At other protected sites, the installation of oil spill response fasteners is permitted with the permission of the landowner.

Trees falling on waterways and water areas are discussed in section 15.4.

Aviation

The Aviation Act lays down provisions on, among other things, aviation, restrictions and prohibitions on the use of airspace, and where aircraft may land. Aircraft in the Aviation Act refers to all aircraft, both unmanned and manned, both motorised and non-motorised. In addition to conventional aircraft (including gliders) and helicopters, aircraft include paragliders, hang gliders and hot air balloons, as well as unmanned multi-copters and model aircraft.

According to section 76 of the Aviation Act, only an aerodrome referred to in the Act, a temporarily open water area or, with the consent of the owner or occupant of the area, other land and water areas may be used for the take-off and landing of an aircraft. In other areas, however, the landowner's consent is not required in the case of unmanned aircraft or, for example, emergency or rescue related flying (with manned aircraft).

According to the Nature Conservation Act (section 51), landing by aircraft in a nature reserve is not possible without a permit granted by the authority managing the area (cf. consent referred to in the Aviation Act). The relevant entry in the Act dates from 1996, and neither the Act nor its explanatory memorandum define in more detail what is meant by aircraft in the Act. According to Metsähallitus' interpretation, an official licence is only required for flying a manned aircraft. This interpretation is probably in line with what was thought on this issue in 1996, when drones were still rare.

The nature conservation regulations do not contain any provisions on the use of the airspace of nature reserves for aviation. Under the Aviation Act, the use of airspace can be restricted by official decisions. The Finnish Transport and Communications Agency may impose prohibitions or restrictions on unmanned aircraft (UAS airspace zones) on environmental grounds, for example. However, due to their fixed-term nature (1 or 3 years), these prohibitions and restrictions are likely to be poorly suited to nature reserves where any prohibition/restriction needs are permanent in nature.

So far, there has been little paragliding and hang gliding in nature reserves, except for some northern fells. Most paragliders and hang gliders are motorless, but some are motorised. When using the former, take-off takes place either from a slope or top of a hill under one's own power or from flat ground (ice, large fields, etc.) with the assistance/pull of a vehicle (car, snowmobile). With a motorised glider, take-off is also possible from flat ground without traction assistance.

Take-off and landing with paraglider and hang glider require everywhere (except for open waters) the consent of the landowner (at least). However, in established nature reserves, descending with a glider requires a permit from the authorities governing the area.

Non-motorised gliders are silent, motorised ones make some noise. Especially for the latter, soaring in the airspace of a nature reserve may cause at least occasional disturbance or harm to both visitors to the area and nature, especially in bird colonies or important resting places during migration, but possibly sometimes also to individual nesters (e.g. Golden eagle).

In practice, gliding in the airspace of protected areas cannot be stopped by prohibitions or restrictions, but can mainly only be influenced by communication and information (e.g. contact with hobby clubs).

In kite skiing/kiteboarding, it is possible to temporarily rise a few meters from the ground. However, such equipment is not aircraft within the meaning of the Aviation Act, so e.g. the provisions of the Aviation Act do not apply to the use of these vehicles.

A drone refers to all unmanned controlled aircraft, and there are very different types of them. Some of them work like helicopters, but fixed-wing ones are like airplanes. The uses of drones are also quite varied. Most of the use is for hobby, but professional use is also common. The number and use of drones has increased sharply over the past ten years. This also applies to protected areas, where drones can cause harm and disturbance to both nature and visitors of the area.

According to observations made by Metsähallitus, birds tolerate drones quite well on average, but their sensitivity to disturbances varies greatly from species to species, and partly also depending on whether they are individual birds or flocks. Particularly vulnerable to disturbances are, for example, tern colonies and flocks of waders resting on migration. The size and sound of the drone, as well as the altitude, speed and method of flight, also have a significant impact on the sensitivity to interference. At least deer seem sensitive to disturbances. In protected areas, grazing cows and horses are easily frightened by drones. In the north, drones can also cause disturbances to reindeer.

It has already been pointed out above that, according to Metsähallitus' interpretation, the prohibition on landing aircraft referred to in the Nature Conservation Act (section 51) does not apply to drones.

It is prohibited to "deliberately disturb individuals of protected animal species, especially during the breeding season, in important resting areas during migration or in other places important for their life cycle" (NCA Section 70). This ban applies to all areas, not just protected areas. In established nature reserves, it is prohibited to disturb wild vertebrate animals or engage in other activities that have an adverse effect on the conservation of species in the area or the purpose of establishing the area (NCA Section 49). In some situations, flying a drone can cause such effects prohibited by the NCA. If flying a drone in the terrain is found to cause such harm or disturbance, the flying must be interfered with based on the above-mentioned legal provisions.

Nature conservation regulations do not contain any entries specifically related to drones, so they offer only limited opportunities to influence the flying of drones in advance. Movement in nature reserves may (only) be restricted on strictly defined grounds (NCA section 56) by regulation orders. Although these criteria do not contain any aeronautical references, the entries can be interpreted as allowing prohibitions or restrictions on flying drones in certain limited situations. If necessary, the regulation orders may also include informational entries on the situations or areas in which flying a drone may cause effects in accordance with the NCA (sections 49 and 70).

As the regulation orders and other nature conservation regulations do not allow the authority managing the nature reserve to impose more extensive prohibitions and restrictions on flying drones (in advance), Metsähallitus aims to reduce the nuisances and disturbances caused by flying drones by means of recommendations and informa-

tion and communications (e.g. Luontoon.fi, droneinfo.fi), in cooperation with the Finnish Transport and Communications Agency with the Finnish Communications Regulatory Authority (Traficom).

Metsähallitus recommends that drones be avoided in all nature reserves and other important conservation sites, at least between March 1st and October 30th. Flying should be avoided:

- Near bird colonies and other important bird nesting areas (often islands, islets, bays) and important resting places for birds during migration.
- Grazing areas (some grazing animals are susceptible to disturbances).
- In strict nature reserves and other restricted areas, where retrieving a drone that has fallen to the ground often requires an access permit.
- In national parks and other busy visitor sites (many visitors seek natural peace in the areas, for example, so drones are perceived as disturbing and unsuitable for these areas).

Information and communication will also highlight the following, among others:

- If flying a drone in the terrain is found to cause harm or disturbance to e.g. birds, it will be addressed.
- If the drone is used for photography or professional activities, there are regulations that the pilot must follow.

In addition to the general recommendations mentioned above, the information / communications can highlight area-specific features/sites that are particularly sensitive to drone flying, where in Metsähallitus' view, flying causes effects prohibited by the Nature Conservation Act.

14.3 Regulating mining operations

Exploration

Under the Mining Act (621/2011, amendment 505/2023), ore exploration refers to geological, geophysical and geochemical surveys used to locate and study deposits containing mining minerals, as well as sampling to determine the size and quality of the deposit.

According to the Mining Act, everyone has the right to make geological measurements and observations and to take minor samples to find mining minerals in another area, provided that the measures do not cause any damage or cause more than minor harm or disturbance. The exploration work must comply with, for example, the restrictions on ore exploration and access in nature reserves. Before starting minor sampling, a written notification must be made to the owner of the property. Based on the notification of exploration work, Metsähallitus can assess the permissibility of sampling. If exploration may cause deterioration of landscape or nature conservation values, it always requires an exploration permit granted by the mining authority.

Ore exploration can also be carried out with the consent of the landowner. However, Metsähallitus has decided not to grant landowner consents for exploration in nature reserves, areas reserved for protection, Natura 2000 areas, wilderness reserves or the Sámi homeland.

An exploration permit granted by the mining authority is required for exploration, unless the exploration can be carried out as exploration work in accordance with the Mining Act or unless the property owner has given consent. If exploration concerns a nature reserve that has not yet been statutorily established, the exploration is based on the exploration permit and the regulations issued therein. Metsähallitus must ensure through lobbying (by issuing a statement)

that ore exploration does not cause consequences prohibited by the Nature Conservation Act or the Mining Act. An exploration permit gives the right to off-road traffic necessary for operations in the exploration area. It is important that Metsähallitus also presents its justified views on the need for restrictions on off-road traffic in its statement on the exploration permit application. This allows the mining authority to include regulations concerning off-road traffic in the exploration permit. A separate off-road traffic permit may be required to enter the exploration area.

In nature reserves, ore exploration must also comply with the Nature Conservation Act and the statutes establishing protected areas, which are special legislation in relation to the Mining Act, which is a general act. It is not possible to grant exploration permits for national parks and strict nature reserves. Metsähallitus may grant such a permit to other state-owned nature reserves, provided that the activities do not jeopardise the purpose of establishing the area or cause more than minor harm to the natural values on which protection is based, to water management, the landscape or the rights of the Sámi as an indigenous people (NCA section 52).

Most nature reserves are also included in the Natura 2000 network. Metsähallitus, as the permit authority, must ensure that the operations do not cause a significant deterioration in the natural values on which the protection of the Natura site is based. Metsähallitus assesses the possible violation of the prohibition on deterioration based on the Natura assessment and the ELY Centre's statement on it. Exemptions are appealable official permits. The duration of the derogation should be limited to correspond to the validity of the exploration permit under the Mining Act.

Ore exploration requires an exemption permit under the Nature Conservation Act only when it involves tampering with soil or bedrock. For example, geophysical measure-

ments where such tampering does not occur do not require it. If geophysical measurements are carried out as exploration work in accordance with the Mining Act, the measurements may require moving in the terrain, for example, when moving to the measuring area. The off-road transport required for the measurements always requires a separate off-road traffic permit. When considering off-road traffic, Metsähallitus complies with the off-road traffic principles it has confirmed.

Mining

As a rule, mining is not possible in nature reserves. If, for reasons of important public interest, a nature reserve should be closed or its conservation regulations amended, this would require the repeal or amendment of the founding laws, decrees or decisions. The closure of a state-owned nature reserve and the relaxation of conservation regulations are possible only if the conservation of the area would prevent the implementation of a project or plan of overriding public interest and there is no technically and economically feasible alternative for this project or plan (NCA section 62). In most areas, such changes also require the fulfilment of conditions for derogation concerning deterioration of the Natura 2000 network.

A mining permit under the Mining Act may not be granted for a wilderness reserve unless the Government has granted permission to do so. There are some exceptions to mining activities in the statutes establishing nature reserves. The activities may also be based on the use of rights granted before the establishment of the nature reserve. In connection with the establishment of Torronsuo National Park, the possibility of exploiting a small mineral deposit has been reserved. In Syöte National Park, jewellery stones can be collected in small quantities from the area designated in the regulation orders, and with the permission of Metsähallitus, jewellery stones can also be collected and transported from

the entire park area for jewellery production. Under the founding act, amethysts and other jewellery stones can be economically utilised in Pyhä–Luosto National Park outside the Luosto Natura site.

Gold panning

For gold panning in state-administered areas, there must be a gold panning permit issued by the mining authority, which entitles the holder to flush gold either by shovel digging or mechanically. The maximum size of the gold panning permit area is 7 ha. The gold panning licence is valid for a maximum of four years at a time. Metsähallitus issues a statement on gold panning permit applications.

Gold panning permits are targeted at the Lemmenjoki and Urho Kekkonen National Parks in Lapland, where gold can be leached using traditional methods without machine power. The Hammastunturi Wilderness Reserve is also subject to several gold panning permits. In wilderness reserves, the permissibility of mechanical and shovel digging is assessed on a case-by-case basis, mainly based on the provisions of the Nature Conservation Act concerning Natura 2000 areas.

Off-road maintenance transports in gold panning areas require an off-road traffic permit granted by Metsähallitus. When considering permits, Metsähallitus complies with the off-road traffic principles it has confirmed (Metsähallitus 2022d).

A notification of sampling related to exploration work in accordance with the Mining Act must be submitted to the landowner no later than 2 weeks before the start of sampling (Decree 391/2012: Section 1). In the case of gold panning, the notification must be accompanied by a map on which the area is indicated (it cannot be very extensive), and the date and duration of the investigation (short, 1–2 weeks), the sampling plan and the contact details of the person responsible for the exploration work. The plan shall include

information on the instruments and methods to be used. In practice, it is allowed to use a shovel and gold pan in place, and traces of digging must be covered. Gutters must not be used. Metsähallitus has agreed with the mining authority to send them such exploration notices for information. It is not possible to exploit gold in connection with exploration work, but the gold remains in the soil pending a valid gold panning permit.

In established nature reserves, the above-mentioned sampling is not possible. In addition, the Mining Act contains possible other obstacles to exploration work.

14.4 Leasing and granting rights of use

A lease or right of use contract is used when the need for the right of use is long-term (more than one year), recurring or regular. Otherwise, access rights (e.g. short-term) are mainly granted with consent.

The lease agreement gives the tenant exclusive rights to use the leased area. In the case of a more limited rights of use, a right of use contract is made.

The drafting of lease and right of use agreements is guided by, among others, the following statutes and norms:

- Tenancy Act (258/1966)
- Act on the Right to Transfer State Real Estate Assets (973/2002, "Transfer Act")
- Government Decree on the Acquisition, Management and Management of State Real Estate Assets (242/2015, "Transfer Decree")
- Act on Criteria for Charges Payable to the State (150/1992)
- Ministry of the Environment Decree on Fees (96/2024)
- Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry Decree on Fees (1072/2023)
- Act on Metsähallitus (234/2016)

- Land and water management policy (Metsähallitus Board of Directors, MH 1077/2017)
- Policies and principles concerning the acquisition, disposal and lease of real estate assets and the assignment of special rights related thereto (Metsähallitus Director-General, MH 1077/2017)
- Jurisdiction rule (Metsähallitus Board of Directors, MH 1355/2022).

Regarding areas used by the Finnish Defence Forces and the Border Guard, statements on leases must always be requested (see framework agreements: Defence Command MH 10018/2022 and Border Guard MH 601/2019).

According to the Transfer Act, renting must comply with the principle of fair rent, from which exceptions can only be made for particularly weighty reasons. Although the leases of protected areas also follow this principle and even though these leases are included in the commercially priced services under the fee decrees, the nature of rental activities in protected areas differs from what they are in business areas. The special nature of protected areas and regulations often set strict conditions for rental activities (and other transfers of use rights).

In wilderness reserves, it is prohibited to transfer or lease land or the right to use it without permission from the Government (Ministry of the Environment). However, the assignment of rights of use for subsistence livelihood purposes in accordance with the management plan or for projects necessary for defence preparedness or the operation of the Border Guard does not require such a permit, nor does e.g. the transfer of rights of use contracts for the use of service equipment.

Metsähallitus' land lease and right of use contracts are concluded and maintained using the Luoto system. At the end of 2024, approximately 600 lease agreements based

on the Land Tenancy Act and more than 1,300 different right of use contracts were in force for protected areas. The leasing of hunting and fishing areas (see section 13.1) and leases of commercial and residential premises are also managed with the Luoto system.

Most Parks & Wildlife Finland's contracts concerning buildings are leases for business premises, and few residential leases are made. In national parks and other nature reserves, Metsähallitus buildings are not, as a rule, rented out for residential purposes. In some protected areas, residential use may still exist for historical reasons, i.e. residential use may have continued in a site leased for residential use during the establishment phase. New properties can only be taken into residential use in situations where the lease has clear grounds related to the management of the areas. An example is heritage farms, where the rented site and the tenant are closely linked to the management and presentation of the site to the public. In such cases, the potential residential use of the site should also be considered in a possible management plan drawn up for the area.

The agreements are drawn up using Metsähallitus' internal guidelines on the transfer of real estate assets and related rights of use (Metsähallitus 2020b).

Three key themes for the management and use of protected areas are discussed in more detail below:

- leasing plots (section 14.4.1), of which there are few in nature reserves established but which are quite numerous in nature reserves and other protected areas to be established later
- leasing fishing bases (section 14.4.2) included above, which has its own specific characteristics, and
- leasing pastureland, which is important for the management of protected areas (section 14.4.3).

14.4.1 Leasing plots

With some exceptions, construction is prohibited in nature reserves. In addition, nature reserves are intended for public use (cf. leasing, which gives exclusive rights to the leased area). Based on the above, areas in nature reserves and areas to be established as such are not leased for (new) construction (this also applies, for example, to wind power). However, there are quite a lot of rental plots on sites that have not yet been established as nature reserves (especially in the coastal/sea area) that have a building or group of buildings owned and built by the lessee, and often also other structures. These are also found to a small extent in established nature reserves.

The starting point of nature conservation regulations is that plot leasing and related buildings owned by third parties are not possible in established nature reserves without special grounds. In some cases, the existence of leased plots may be based on the specific entries in the founding acts. However, it may also be possible to rent a building (referred to in section 50 of the Nature Conservation Act) that is necessary for the management, supervision, research, guidance of the public, hiking or exploring the area. For example, bird stations and scout huts can be interpreted as such buildings.

Most of the rental properties in areas not yet established as nature reserves are still in private holiday use. Some properties have also been rented out for the use of various communities (associations, clubs, etc.). To some extent, the sites are also still used for fishing, including professional fishing (see 14.4.2 for details). The final decisions concerning leased plots and their buildings in these areas will be made in connection with the legislative drafting of nature reserves. If the lease expires before enactment, a fixed-term agreement (lasting up to 5 years) can be made with the lessee, which must clearly state that the final decisions concerning the lease will be made later in connection with the legisla-

tive drafting. These agreements do not grant tenants any additional rights compared to the previous ones. When renewing contracts, the following shall apply, inter alia:

- The lease must not have an impact on an area larger than the leased area, so the construction of roads and power lines, for example, is not allowed in the area.
- The new contract does not provide for the possibility of additional construction, extension of buildings, electrification, laying of water pipes, dredging, etc.
- The use of the site must not disturb protected habitats or species.
- The necessary environmental matters, such as the organisation of waste management, must be included in the agreements.
- Lease conditions may limit or prevent the transfer and sublease of leasehold rights.

Any permanent continuation of rental activities in a nature reserve must usually be based on its purpose of establishment. If, for example, the building stock on leased plots has cultural-historical or building conservation value or significance for professional fishing, this must be recorded in the legislative drafting process for the purpose of establishing the area, which in this case makes it possible to continue the lease agreements even after the establishment of the nature reserve.

One solution in legislative drafting can be to consider excluding significant groups of buildings from the nature reserve to be established, especially in maritime areas. If the legislative drafting concludes that there are no prerequisites for the permanent preservation of leased plots in the area to be established, it can also be considered whether the tenant will be offered the opportunity to make one more longer-term fixed-term lease agreement on the site (before the nature reserve

is established), after which the agreement will no longer be extended.

14.4.2 Leasing fishing bases

When drawing up lease agreements/rental contracts for fishing bases, account shall be taken of Section 17 of the Fisheries Act (379/2015), according to which “A commercial fisherman belonging to Group I of commercial fishermen referred to in section 88 shall have the right to lease land on seashores, islands and islets belonging to the State which have not been put to other use, as indicated by the managing authority and on reasonable terms and conditions laid down by the authority, to lease land for storage facilities necessary for fishing, and for the drying of fishing gear and temporary accommodation necessary for commercial fishing”. There is no definition of “reasonable terms” or “reasonable compensation” in the Fisheries Act or its explanatory memorandum. The level of compensation used by Metsähallitus is based on the recommendation of an earlier report on the sea area. When concluding a contract, the fisherman must prove his or her right to a reasonable contract price by presenting a certificate of belonging to the register of commercial fishermen maintained by the ELY Centre.

The fisherman's right to a reasonable rent is valid for a maximum of three years at a time. In order to prevent tenancies from continuing for long periods after the tenant no longer fulfils the requirements of the law, leases must either be agreed to be valid until further notice (in which case they can be terminated in compliance with the notice period of the Land Tenancy Act) or for sufficiently short fixed-term periods (e.g. 1–3 years).

If a professional fisherman has dropped from Category I to Category II or ceased professional fishing, the right to a lease agreement and reasonable rent referred to in the Act ends. In this situation, the options include:

- transfer of the lease to another Group I fisherman
- maintaining the contract but raising the price to the current price level, or
- termination of the contract.

In the latter scenario, the fisherman must demolish his base and its structures (excluding sites whose demolition is not possible due to their conservation values) in accordance with the terms of the lease. When such a plot/premises has been released from a professional fisherman, it will not be changed into a site of e.g. a holiday home. If necessary, the vacant place may subsequently be offered to other commercial Group I fishermen. When choosing a course of action, the tenant must be informed, and a sufficient transition period must be considered. It should be noted that a fixed-term lease cannot be terminated in the middle of the lease period.

When leasing fishing bases, in addition to moderation of price, the purpose of use for the area and the terms of the agreement specified in the contract, their relationship to the zoning marking of the area, as well as the conservation status and values of the area should be considered. The land use marking of the area may affect, among other things, the type of lease agreement to be drawn up.

The obligation imposed on Metsähallitus by section 17 of the Fisheries Act to designate leased areas may also apply to areas later established as nature reserves. Such areas cannot automatically be interpreted as “areas reserved for other use” within the meaning of this section.

Fishing bases do not necessarily include a construction permit. Although it is, as a rule, justified to require such a permit from the lessee when concluding a contract, this procedure is not necessary in areas to be established as nature reserves later, since the permit or lack thereof is of little significance when assessing the possibilities of preserving

the bases during the legislative drafting of the area.

If the tenant of a fishing base considerably violates the Land Tenancy Act or the terms of the rental agreement, the contract can be terminated and the tenant evicted in accordance with the Land Tenancy Act. However, if the fisherman later applies for a new fishing base and fulfils the requirements of Section 17 of the Fisheries Act (belongs to Group I of commercial fishermen), Metsähallitus is still obliged to lease the area. For this reason, when drawing up lease agreements for fishing bases, one must be absolute and strict regarding the fulfilment of the requirement of the section. In the situations described above, the new base may be assigned to a different location from the previous base. In this case, the tenant may lose interest in renting if it also means that the building would have to be demolished in the old location and rebuilt in the new location.

14.4.3 Leasing pasture areas

Protected areas include sites whose management through grazing promotes the preservation of threatened habitat types and species. Grazing is particularly suitable for semi-natural grasslands, such as various meadows, wooded pastures and forest pastures. The most extensive grazing areas are seaside meadows, where grazing is also part of wetland management. Site management with the help of third parties is encouraged, and nature management through pastureland agreements plays a very important role in preserving the biodiversity and landscape values of protected areas.

A pasture area lease agreement is drawn up for a nature management area managed by grazing, which gives the contractor the right to use the area for grazing and pasture maintenance activities. A lump sum is charged for the contract. The basis for the lump sum payment is that the purpose of the pasture area agreement is to safeguard

biodiversity in accordance with the management plan drawn up for the area. The aim of the management is to maintain and improve the nature conservation values of the area. Without grazing livestock, areas cannot be managed or their species and habitats safeguarded. The areas are scarce in terms of feeding value and maintenance costs are usually high. In the case of normal productive arable pasture or an area not managed as a traditional biotope or nature management site, the pricing practice is the same as in any other leased area and the amount of compensation is based on hectares.

Grazing under a pasture area agreement requires the management of the area in accordance with the conditions set for the management of semi-natural grasslands. This involves, among other things, not tilling or fertilising areas and not giving livestock additional feed. The area must be grazed with sufficient pasture pressure. If the pasture pressure is not sufficient, the area must be mowed to achieve the nature management objectives of semi-natural grasslands.

In most cases, the beneficiary of the right to use pastureland is an eligible farmer covered by the agri-environment payment scheme, who has the possibility to apply for agri-environment payments for the management of semi-natural grasslands and the enhancement of biodiversity in nature and landscape, which requires the applicant to conclude a 5-year environmental agreement. In this case, the pasture area agreement is usually concluded for 5 years, and it must be valid for the entire environmental agreement period applied for.

A pasture area agreement may also be concluded for a longer or shorter period. An agri-environmental payment can also be obtained by a registered association. Pastureland contracts may also be concluded with non-members of the agri-environment payment scheme, and the contract period may vary. A similar agreement may also be concluded on the management of an area

by mowing, clearing or other forms of semi-natural grassland or nature management.

Pasture area agreements are drawn up in Metsähallitus' Luoto application, where the contract can be drawn up in either Finnish or Swedish. The contract specifies the agreement area and any structures belonging to it and their ownership, as well as the responsibilities of each contracting party and the management activities to be carried out in the area. A breakdown of management measures and their implementers is important, for example, due to a possible application for an environmental agreement.

Other management measures usually included in a pasture area agreement include maintenance clearing, supplementary mowing and maintenance of fences. The responsibility for animals and their health and the organization of control always lies with the grazer. Special conditions and instructions concerning the management of the area may also be included in the agreement. The contract records the responsibilities and operating principles related to the possible electricity connection and contract during and at the end of the lease.

Pastures in protected areas suitable for leasing are notified in the laidunpankki.fi ('pasture bank') service, for which Metsähallitus has community user IDs. In addition, sites

available for pasture can be reported directly to livestock owners in a particular area. Often, livestock owners themselves also contact and ask about possible pasture areas. If the management of the area defined in the contract has been in accordance with the objectives, Metsähallitus encourages the grazer to renew the agreement at the end of the agreement to ensure continuity of management.

In areas ceded for pasture use, hunting leases overlapping with them are avoided. However, if the leasing areas overlap, it must be ensured that both parties are aware of the agreements concerning the area and the activities related to them, and that potentially dangerous situations – such as frightening the animals – are prevented either by moving the animals out of pasture at the start of the hunting season or by other means agreed with the grazer. The transfer of information between different parties is ensured by recording information on the existing hunting lease agreement in the pasture area contract. In addition, information about the use of new pastureland with a valid hunting lease agreement is forwarded to the hunting specialist of Metsähallitus Wilderness Service, who takes care of the hunting lease agreements for the area in question. The specialist in question transmits information about the new pasture to the hunting lease partner.

15 Tenure and Supervision of Protected Areas

15.1 Forming real estate units and marking boundaries

According to the Nature Conservation Act (Section 59), the formation of a state nature reserve into real estate is governed by the Real Estate Formation Act. According to the Land Register Act (392/1985), state-owned nature reserves are formed into separate properties by municipality, so the number of properties corresponding to the number of municipalities are formed from nature reserves that are located in several municipalities.

Real estate formation is largely guided by the guideline Forming nature reserves into protected area properties (National Land Survey 2020), which defines the technical criteria that a completed protected area property must meet, and describes the necessary cadastral procedures, mapping and marking of areas, as well as the processing of various rights of use (easements, rights of way and access, etc.). A protected area property is often formed through a cadastral procedure (project division, parcelling), but it can also be formed by consolidation or a register operation.

The formation of protected area properties takes place only after the establishment of the nature reserve, by the National Land Survey of Finland and upon application by Metsähallitus. The National Land Survey often determines the rights of use of protected sites even before the real estate formation of the area is carried out (this is done as a cadastral registry operation, at the Land Surveys' own expense). At some large sites in Lapland, Metsähallitus' own measurement groups have already defined the site boundary on-ground before applying for a cadastral procedure.

With the formation of real estate, the final delimitation of the nature reserve is determined. The boundary previously only defined on the map, is defined with so-called breaking lines (if this has not already been done when the nature reserve was established), its corner points are measured and marked on the ground and, if necessary, a boundary line is opened (in sites whose outer boundary must be marked in the terrain, see below).

However, before a nature reserve is established, the area in question may, if necessary, be turned into a preliminary protected area real estate unit. If the area has previously been formed into a preliminary property, the formation of a protected area property occurs after the establishment of the nature reserve through a 'quality change' of the property, which is a simple registration procedure.

If it is probable that the formation of real estate in an established nature reserve will not take place until years after the establishment of the area, the National Land Survey may, upon application by Metsähallitus, establish a "Protected area, State" type cadastral unit for the area in question. In that context, it is also appropriate to combine properties in the area to the extent possible. The formation of this kind of right of use unit is a temporary solution that makes the established nature reserve visible on the National Land Survey's register maps even before it has been formed into a protected area property. When a protected area property is eventually established in the area, the previously created temporary right of use unit will be removed.

In state nature reserves established by decree in accordance with section 52 of the Nature Conservation Act, the right to fish

freely in public waters pursuant to section 8 of the Fisheries Act is intended to remain. This requires that the nature of public water areas is preserved and not altered in the property formation ordinance. For this reason, the National Land Survey of Finland, the Ministry of the Environment and Metsähallitus have agreed that in these state-owned nature reserves, public water areas will be formed into permanent right of use units and these areas will not be included in the protected area properties to be established.

Most of the established nature reserves have already been formed into protected area properties, of which there were a total of 1,300 at the end of 2024. However, some of these still require expansion and/or improvement of quality. This applies especially to protected area properties formed decades ago.

The cost of forming protected area properties is sometimes substantial. The cost of a single project can be tens or sometimes even more than 100,000 euros. Costs are high, especially for sites that require marking/opening of the boundary on the ground (national parks, strict nature reserves and certain other nature reserves). The costs are also usually higher, the more the site includes a boundary to be defined against other state land. Separating state-owned land included in nature reserves from the rest of the state-owned land in the cadastral procedures facilitates and clarifies the conservation related lobbying.

Property formation is important for the management of protected areas for many reasons. The large number of separate properties due to incomplete property formation complicates their governance and management. At the end of 2024, in addition to established protected area properties, Parks & Wildlife Finland managed approximately 6,400 other properties. Fragmented real estate assets hinder the efficient management of protected areas. Most of these other properties will be assembled and formed into protected area properties. Before this,

a nature reserve may consist of more than a hundred separate real estate units. The property structure may be fragmented even in sites where protected area properties have already been established in the past (see Figure 21).

Many protected sites involve problematic use rights (access rights, easements) that make it difficult to maintain the area. These are usually only investigated and, when necessary, removed when the property is formed. The simplest way to investigate and process such rights is through private road surveys. Separate instructions have been drawn up on the processing of rights of way and access in connection with the formation of real estate (Metsähallitus 2022a).

At the end of 2024, the property formation situation was good for national parks and strict nature reserves, but still incomplete for other nature reserves. The shortcomings associated with the latter concern old nature reserves established decades ago. It should be noted, however, that an estimated 2,000 new state nature reserves (a total of 558,000 ha) will be established in the next few years, and these areas will also require the formation of dedicated protected area properties.

Very often, an established nature reserve continues to expand even after it has been established, or a property has been formed to include new areas. In direct procurements by the ELY Centres, the area is already incorporated into an established nature reserve by means of a title deed. Even though the area will then already become part of a nature reserve, its inclusion in the protected area property requires a cadastral procedure. A protected property transferred to Metsähallitus' possession can often be incorporated into a nature reserve and possibly into a previously established protected area property by means of a procedure applied for by Metsähallitus. Such annexations must be communicated by public notice (NCA Section 121). However, the technical extension of a nature reserve is not possible in all situations

Property structure of the Lauhanvuori National Park

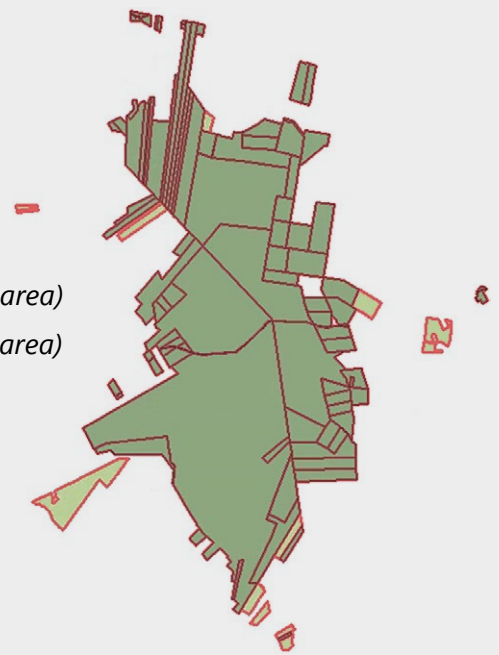


Prior to the cadastral procedure

2 protected area properties	3,102 ha	(66% of the area)
56 other properties	2,450 ha	(34% of the area)
58 properties in total	5,552 ha	

After the cadastral procedure

2 protected area properties	5,635 ha
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Map of the area prior to the cadastral procedure.

Figure 21. The property structure of Lauhanvuori National Park before the formation of protected area properties.

Alternative text: The map shows the area of Lauhanvuori National Park, which consists of numerous separate properties. Prior to the cadastral procedure, 66% of the area (3,102 hectares) consisted of two protected area properties and 56 other properties, covering 34% (2,450 hectares). In total, there were 58 properties covering 5,552 hectares in the national park. After the procedure, there were two protected area properties forming the national park and covering 5,635 hectares.

(usually limited by hunting issues) and in such cases the extension of the nature reserve is only possible by amending the founding statute.

According to the Nature Conservation Act (section 59), the external boundaries of national parks and strict nature reserves, as well as restrictions on movement and other restrictions, must be marked on the terrain. The obligation to mark the latter also applies to other state nature reserves, where external borders are otherwise marked only when necessary.

The Ministry of the Environment has issued a decree on the marking nature reserve boundaries (261/2016), according to which the boundaries must be marked with identification signs or paint marks. The terrain

of the external borders should be marked either during the formation of the property (in which case the boundaries are measured and marked on the ground) or as soon as possible thereafter. Marking in accordance with the "Marking Decree" is carried out either by Metsähallitus itself or, increasingly, by third parties as an outsourced service. In recent years, plastic and aluminum poles have been used for marking. In the future, the goal is to use aluminium poles more extensively. Boundary plates in accordance with the Marking Decree have been attached to the poles (in bilingual areas, the texts of the border plates are in both Finnish and Swedish). Visible marking of boundaries in the terrain is necessary, especially from the point of view of monitoring the area, because

without boundaries marked on ground, it is difficult to intervene in possible violations by visitors to the area.

At the end of 2024, the marking situation at the external borders of strict nature reserves is good, except for a few sites, but marking deficiencies in national parks and other nature reserves remain. There are still a wide range of shortcomings in the labelling of access restricted and other restricted areas.

15.2 Taking possession of transferred sites

A considerable number of new sites are still transferred to the balance sheet of Public Administration Services (Parks & Wildlife Finland) every year. Most often these involve land and water areas but sometimes also built property within them. Already at the

time of transfer, a small part of the transferred sites will be directly incorporated into an established nature reserve by means of a title deed. However, most of the sites to be transferred will wait until they are included in a nature reserve later.

Land and water areas and the built property located on them have been/will be transferred to Parks & Wildlife Finland primarily through the following processes (see Figure 22):

- Direct site acquisitions from ELY Centres for protected area purposes and transfers of possession from the Ministry of the Environment
- Transfers of from other government authorities and institutions
- Metsähallitus' internal (balance sheet) transfers from business operations.

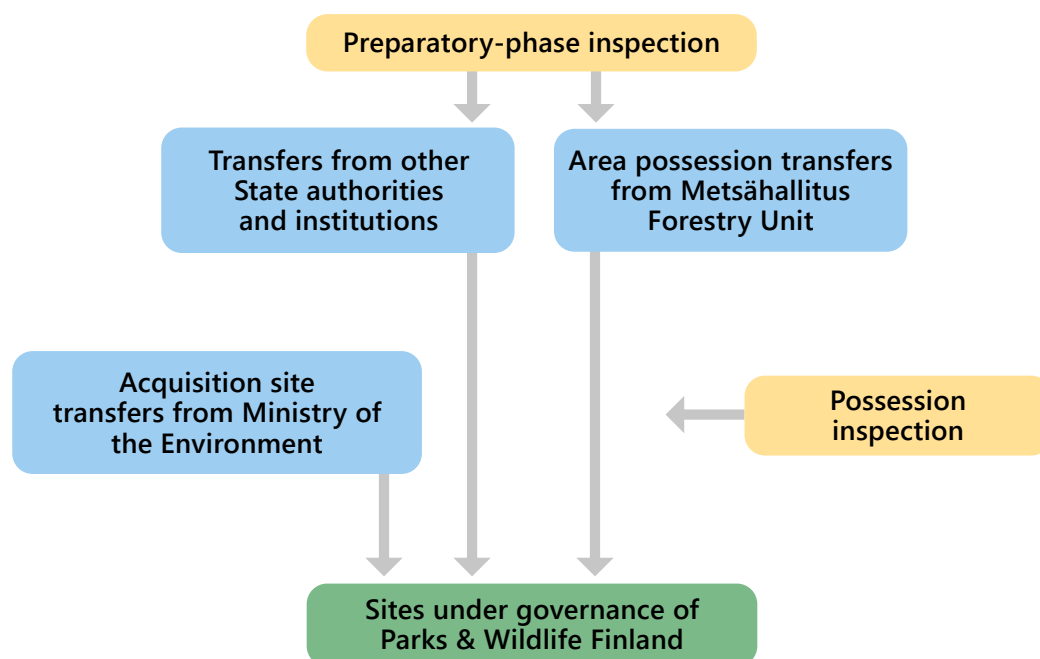


Figure 22. Transfer of possession of conservation sites to Parks & Wildlife Finland. Alternative text: Acquisition site transfers are made directly from the Ministry of the Environment to Parks & Wildlife Finland. A preparatory-phase inspection is carried out first for site transfers from other authorities or institutions, or for area possession transfers from Metsähallitus business units. A possession inspection is carried out before sites are taken under governance of Parks & Wildlife Finland.

15.2.1 Transfer of conservation sites from the Ministry of the Environment

The acquisition of areas for nature conservation purposes is one of the tasks of the ELY Centres. In the past, Metsähallitus has also participated in these procurements, but nowadays Metsähallitus makes only a few such acquisitions on an annual level (these usually concern parcels bordering or located within nature reserves). Procurement is implemented by Metsähallitus Property Development based on the assignments of Parks & Wildlife Finland. An annual agreement on the performance of these tasks is concluded between the units.

Over the past decade, nature conservation area acquisitions have largely focused on implementing the METSO Programme. In recent years, acquisitions have also been made in connection with the Helmi Programme (see 2.3.3).

If the use of the acquired area as an extension of a nature reserve is mentioned in the deed of sale or other title document, the acquired area becomes part of the nature reserve in question from the moment of acquisition (Section 60 of the Nature Conservation Act) In such so-called direct titles, control of the area is transferred to Metsähallitus as soon as the acquisition takes place. With progress of enactment, and new nature reserves supplementing the protected area network, an increasing share of procurements may be carried out as such direct titles in the future.

Most of the nature conservation sites acquired by ELY Centres for the state will initially be administered by the Ministry of the Environment. The Ministry will transfer these areas to Metsähallitus by means of decisions on the transfer of possession. With a single decision, the Ministry can transfer several dozen areas at the same time. It may take years from land acquisition to the deci-

sion to transfer possession, during which time the ELY Centre is responsible for the management and lobbying of the area in accordance with the guidelines issued by the Ministry of the Environment (Properties managed by the Ministry of the Environment, VN/10388/2022).

In the acquisition phase of sites, ELY Centres rarely contact Parks & Wildlife Finland. In connection with field visits, ELY Centres also aim to map out the potential environmental risks related to the sites. Usually, the seller must eliminate any problems before the ownership of the site is transferred to the state. The templates for sale contracts used by ELY Centres include the entry "The seller is responsible for ensuring that no activities have been carried out in the area that could have caused soil contamination".

The so-called follow-up work related to nature conservation area procurements is the responsibility of the ELY Centre that made the procurement. These tasks include, for example, applying for registration of title, parcelling, possible exemptions from mortgages and termination of hunting lease agreements (for more information, see Ministry of the Environment 2021b).

Metsähallitus Property Development is largely responsible for the practical tasks related to nature reserve acquisitions and transfers of possession. Information on transferred areas into systems (PropertyGis, and in the case of built assets PAVE) and Parks & Wildlife Finland informed about the areas. Property Development maintains a municipality-specific list of National Parks Finland's persons responsible for land use tasks who are informed of acquisitions/titles that have taken place in the municipality in question. If hunting or fishing leases are valid in the areas to be transferred, they must also inform Wildlife Service Finland, which is responsible for terminating the contracts (if the ELY Centre has not taken care of this) and possibly drawing up new lease agreements.

In recent years, 100–400 properties (of which about 10% are direct titles) have been transferred to Parks & Wildlife Finland annually through transfers of possession by the Ministry of the Environment and the direct titles of the ELY Centres. Due to the large number of sites, Parks & Wildlife Finland does not have the opportunity to look very closely at individual relocated areas and the related deeds of sale/exchange. However, the aim is to check whether the title documents and decisions on transfer of possession contain entries about buildings and/or potential environmental or safety risks. If such entries exist, a field survey is carried out, if necessary, in which the risks are mapped.

15.2.2 Transfers from other government authorities and institutions

The central government has aimed to centralise land and water assets under the management of Metsähallitus. According to the State Real Estate Strategy (see section 5.3), the aim is to further concentrate government real estate assets in the hands of real estate experts, i.e. Metsähallitus (land and water areas) and Senate Properties (built property) when this centralisation is “appropriate and realises the overall interest of the state”.

In the 2000s, significant amounts land and water areas from the Finnish Forest Research Institute, the Finnish Defence Forces and the Agricultural Research and Development Centre have been transferred to Parks & Wildlife Finland (these have also included quite a lot of built property). The most recent more extensive transfers of possession were carried out in 2014, when areas from the Finnish Heritage Agency and Senate Properties were transferred to Parks & Wildlife Finland.

Metsähallitus Property Development is largely responsible for the preparation of possession transfers from other government agencies and institutions, but Parks & Wildlife Finland is involved. The largest transfers

have already been made, and in the future only a small number of smaller sites will be transferred. Metsähallitus has concluded various framework agreements with those organisations that have ceded their areas, and with other agencies and institutions, in which cooperation and matters related to management or use of these areas by the agency/institution have been agreed upon (in some cases, a separate transfer agreement has also been made during the transfer phase). Such agreements include:

- Framework agreement on cooperation between Metsähallitus and the Finnish Defence Forces (MH 10018/2022)
- Framework agreement on cooperation with the Finnish Border Guard (Metsähallitus 2019c)
- Cooperation agreement with the Finnish Transport Infrastructure Agency (the Finnish Transport Agency from 2017) in real estate and land use matters (MH 3111/2017).

The practical tasks related to these transfers of possession are largely the responsibility of Property Development, which registers information on transferred areas into systems and informs about the areas in the same way as in the transfers by the Ministry of the Environment.

The report of the Working group investigating the organisation of the ownership and management of the state's culturally and historically valuable real estate assets (so called VaKuKi working group, see Ministry of Finance 2012) states that “When culturally and historically valuable state property is transferred to Metsähallitus, quality objectives are set for its management and costs of the site are estimated. The funds required for the use and maintenance of the site will be transferred to Metsähallitus.” This means that the quality objectives for the management of the sites to be transferred to Metsähallitus, that are considered strategic to the state, must be set even before the transfer of possession. This

is because these quality objectives affect the cost of care and maintenance, which must be assessed before the transfer. When deciding on the transfer, a decision must also be made on the funding required by Metsähallitus, which cannot be assessed before quality objectives are set. To set quality objectives, Metsähallitus has defined quality criteria for management. The setting of quality objectives for management should be carried out in cooperation between the transferring agency, the Finnish Heritage Agency and Metsähallitus.

Sites transferred from other state organisations may include, for example: environmental and safety risks (e.g. areas used by the Finnish Defence Forces), which is why Parks & Wildlife Finland must be closely involved in the preparation of transfers and the necessary inspections etc. must be carried out in connection with the seizure of sites. This means, among other things:

- Before the transfer of possession, a preparatory inspection is carried out at the sites, in which, among other things, possible environmental risks are checked and the suitability of the site for the use of Parks & Wildlife Finland is assessed. A memorandum of this review is drawn up. The environmental risk assessment form included in the Building Management Handbook should be used in the environmental risk assessment (see Metsähallitus 2015a).
- Based on the review of the preparatory phase and other available information, Parks & Wildlife Finland will form its position on the transfer of possession. As a rule, it is not ready to receive sites containing potential environmental risks. In such situations, it is essential to exert sufficient influence even before the transfer decision has been made.
- When preparing transfer agreements and other agreements related to the

areas to be transferred, they include the necessary entries related to environmental risks, e.g. liabilities.

- Environmental risks are also considered in reception reviews carried out after the transfer of possession decisions, on which memoranda are drawn up. The review is carried out and the memorandum is drawn up using the model of the Building Management Handbook.
- In the case of transfers of possession of culturally and historically valuable sites, the quality objectives for the management of the sites to be transferred are defined in cooperation between the transferring agency, the Finnish Heritage Agency and Metsähallitus before the transfer, and the costs of the management and maintenance of the sites are estimated based on them. This is because, in connection with the decision to transfer possession, a decision should be made simultaneously on the funding allocated to Metsähallitus for the management of the sites to be transferred.

15.2.3 Transfers from Metsähallitus' business operations

New areas may also be transferred to Parks & Wildlife Finland because of land use changes affecting Metsähallitus' business areas. Such changes may be caused by, for example:

- legislative changes (in particular, the creation and extension of nature reserves)
- formation of protected area properties (changes are usually minor, based on cadastral procedure documents)
- land use decisions made outside Metsähallitus (e.g. in land use planning)
- Metsähallitus' own land use decisions made in natural resource plans or another context.

Except for changes in regulations and the formation of protected area properties, land use changes are usually proposed by regional management groups and further prepared by Property Development. Changes in land use are then approved by Metsähallitus' management team, after which the related balance sheet changes are submitted to the state budget. The procedures related to land use changes are described in the guideline Procedure for making land use changes related to area management at Metsähallitus (Metsähallitus 2018a).

When preparing land use change proposals concerning Metsähallitus areas, it must be ensured that the areas transferred to Parks & Wildlife Finland do not involve environmental or other risks. Parks & Wildlife Finland will not accept transfers from Metsähallitus' business units that include buildings of cultural and historical value (or archaeological sites) in poor condition but requires the sites to be renovated with business funds before the transfer. If necessary, a preparatory review is carried out on the sites to be moved, in which possible environmental risks are checked and the suitability of the site for use by Parks & Wildlife Finland is assessed. A memorandum of the review is drawn up. It is important to exert influence even before a decision on the land use change proposal has possibly been made by the regional management group.

15.3 Managing built assets

Protected areas contain a lot of built property: buildings, structures and routes. Managing this entity, which is diverse in terms of its history, purpose of use and condition, is a challenging task. The most extensive complex of built assets consists of service infrastructure built and maintained for visitors to protected areas. The protected areas also contain a lot of other built property related to the area's previous land use, some of which are significant as protected sites of the built heritage. In addition, the protected

areas have many buildings and structures required for the monitoring and maintenance of the area as well as other uses (e.g. research, reindeer husbandry, fishing and gold mining). There are many archaeological sites in protected areas (see section 10.5), but these are not included in the built property discussed in this section.

According to the Geographic Information System of Structures, Routes and Archaeological Sites (PAVE), at the end of 2022, there were almost 3,000 buildings and over 20,000 structures in protected areas (Table 8), in addition to which there are numerous routes. 87% of the buildings and structures are owned by Parks & Wildlife Finland and 13% by other parties (such parties include Metsähallitus Property Development, other state institutions, municipalities, associations and private citizens). It should be noted, however, that many buildings and structures, especially those owned by others, are still missing from PAVE.

The majority (approximately 19,000) of the built property still owned by Parks & Wildlife Finland is necessary for its own use. A large part of this serves nature recreation and tourism (see section 12.8). The extensive repair backlog related to these built assets has largely been dismantled with the help of separate financing formerly allocated to it.

Part of the built property of Parks & Wildlife Finland has been leased (see section 14.4.2). In addition, stewardship of some service equipment and routes have been handed over to external parties under contracts. Approximately 15% of the buildings needed for Parks & Wildlife Finland' own operations have been rented and otherwise handed over to others.

A large part of the built assets of Parks & Wildlife Finland are its own constructions, but part of it has been received with transfers of land and water areas. Large building stocks were included, for example, in Senate Properties' Helsinki (Vallisaari, Kuninkaansaari and Pirttisaari) and Pargas (Utö Ormskär) sites,

Table 8. Built property in protected areas (Metsähallitus, Parks & Wildlife Finland, 31.12.2022). Protected areas include wilderness reserves and certain other protected sites, managed by Metsähallitus. The table does not include routes or archaeological sites.

Built property in protected areas 31.12.2022	Buildings	Constructions	Total
Properties owned by Parks & Wildlife Finland	2,085	18,275	20,360
Items needed in own operations	1,636	17,673	19,309
Objects left to rot	34	26	60
Other unnecessary items	105	168	273
Items whose necessity is not specified or usage data is missing	310	408	718
Objects owned by others	752	2,183	2,935
Total number of items	2,837	20,458	23,295

which were transferred in 2014, and in the Finnish Transport Agency's Tankar site in Kokkola, and in the fortress island of Örö, which was transferred from the Finnish Defence Forces in 2015.

The transfer of sites to Parks & Wildlife Finland is discussed in section 15.2. Built property located in land and water areas transferred to Metsähallitus is usually in poor condition and may involve environmental and/or safety risks. For this reason, special attention should be paid to built assets in the preparation of transfers of possession and related inspections. Metsähallitus' aim is that in any future transfer of possession, Parks & Wildlife Finland would also be allocated the funding required for the management of the areas to be transferred and their building stock. Metsähallitus' premise has been that built property located outside state-owned land will not be transferred to it.

The key tools for the governance and management of built assets of Parks & Wildlife Finland are the Geographic Information System for Structures, Routes and Archaeological Sites (PAVE) and the Building Management Handbook (Metsähallitus 2015a). The comprehensiveness and quality of the PAVE data are essential prerequisites for the efficient administration and management of built assets. For example, the assessment of the maintenance needs and repair backlog of sites requires information as up to date

as possible on condition and proposals for measures. Up-to-date information on service structures is also important because it is utilised in online services produced for customers, such as Excursionmap.fi.

The Building Management Handbook discusses matters extensively and thoroughly, such as energy and eco-efficiency and environmental management, various permits related to operations, the competence and professionalism of personnel dealing with construction matters, and the use of the necessary experts in construction and other fields. Especially in more demanding construction and maintenance projects, the use of external experts is usually necessary.

In the future, the management of built assets must increasingly consider the prevention of climate change impacts and adaptation to them. Obligations related to this are included, for example, in the State Real Estate Strategy (see 5.3). Increases in humidity and temperature fluctuations, for example, may cause increasing problems for buildings in the future. Due to the impact of climate change, the condition of sites must be monitored more closely, and the necessary maintenance measures must be taken in good time and may also require new kinds of technical solutions.

The aim is to determine the necessity and purpose of use of each built site owned by Parks & Wildlife Finland in accordance with

the principles defined in the Building Management Handbook. The starting point is that only genuinely necessary building stock will be maintained, and other sites will be abandoned. The systematic review of the national building stock of approximately 2,400 buildings began in spring 2023. The objective of the building stock development is to reduce the costs of ownership.

Some of Parks & Wildlife Finland's built property has architectural or cultural-historical value and significance (see section 10.4). In a report on the state's cultural assets under its stewardship and management, Parks & Wildlife Finland has prioritised the cultural-historical sites that are managed in a goal-oriented manner (Palviainen 2024). These prioritised assets now include 219 sites, half of which are built heritage sites. This built property is still associated with a significant amount of repair debt. A report and proposal were prepared in a cooperation project by the Ministry of Finance (the so-called STRAVA Working Group, Ministry of Finance, 2023) on the classification, ownership and financing of sites considered strategic for the state. Based on this report, financing resolutions should be made to dismantle the repair backlog related to this property.

"Strategic sites" and "operational properties" referred to in the State Real Estate Strategy (see section 5.3) are always classified as necessary in the PAVE system, as are other sites that have an official conservation status or otherwise have clear conservation values.

To abandon these buildings, a permission to sell (or transfer) is always needed from the Ministry of the Environment. Many of Parks & Wildlife Finland's buildings are subject to the building protection described above, which means that several requests for statements must be prepared for the Finnish Heritage Agency. Some of the sites may require a statement from the Ministry of Defence or the Ministry of the Interior. In addition to the participation defined by law, there are a few

other parties that can be involved inside and outside Metsähallitus.

Redundant built property

There is also quite a lot of built property in protected areas that is unnecessary for Parks & Wildlife Finland, only a very small part of which can be disposed of in the manner recommended by the State Real Estate Strategy. Of all the built assets in protected areas, some 60 buildings have been left to decompose in place. According to PAVE's current information, there are approximately 270 other sites deemed unnecessary (see Table 8). Most of this property has come to Metsähallitus through land acquisitions and areas transferred from other government agencies and institutions. Metsähallitus has never had any use for this built property. In addition, Parks & Wildlife Finland has some service equipment previously built, especially with funding from the Ministry of Labour, the maintenance of which has since been found to be inappropriate, and transfer to an external party has not been possible.

Most of the items classified as unnecessary should be demolished. Only in exceptional cases can the buildings be burned or sold (sales to be dismantled and removed, on the other hand, may well be possible). Sites that require demolition most urgently involve customer safety or environmental risks (e.g. asbestos or various waste and landfill issues) that hinder the public use of the protected area, or that significantly reduce the natural state or landscape values of the sites. In some cases, however, dismantling may be prevented, e.g. due to bats living on the site (see section 10.2).

The demolition of the sites follows the procedures laid down in the Building Management Handbook. Currently, demolitions are mainly carried out as external services. When ordering demolition services, the following must be considered:

- It must be decided whether Metsähallitus or the demolition contractor is responsible for applying for a demolition permit or submitting a demolition notification.
- Disposal of demolition waste must be carried out in accordance with municipal waste management regulations and guidelines.
- Tendering documents and/or contracts must include entries stating that there must be the necessary documentation of the demolition waste at the waste station. Other demolition goods must have records of how they have been recycled or used.
- Careful documentation of dismantling. This is particularly necessary if the object of demolition is an unauthorised building/structure and if demolition and environmental cleaning costs must be charged to the owner of the building. Information on dismantling and demolition waste management is stored in PAVE.

In recent years, Parks & Wildlife Finland has done a lot of work to supplement the information on built assets that are important for its own operations and to eliminate the repair backlog related to service equipment. At the same time, the seizure of built property that is secondary to Parks & Wildlife Finland's own operations, and the related demolition or other measures have been quite limited.

15.4 Attending to fallen trees and storm damage

Protected areas may have old or damaged large trees that may fall and pose a danger to people or property. Such situations may arise, for example, along roads or routes or at the borders of protected areas close to residential properties. If Metsähallitus notices or becomes aware of a hazardous situation caused by a tree located in a protected area,

the situation must be reacted to by removing the tree or taking other necessary measures to eliminate the risk of damage. Failure to take the necessary measures may result in liability for damages. If possible, fallen trees are left in the protected area as decaying wood.

Especially in southern Finland, nature reserves are almost always bordered by private land, and often there are also buildings on these private lands right next to the border. A tree that poses an obvious danger to a neighbouring property may be cut down under the Nature Conservation Act (section 50).

It is the road operator's responsibility to keep the road passable, and the road operator can remove trees that are dangerous to traffic from the road area. Trees outside the road area that endanger traffic safety must be taken down also in nature reserves. The road operator may oblige Metsähallitus to cut down such trees at its own expense. When Metsähallitus detects such trees, it must also cut them down on its own initiative. Metsähallitus may, at its discretion, grant a third-party permission to cut down such trees. In this case, it must be ensured that the person has the necessary competence, safety equipment and tools. In a protected area, trees harvested from the road area and outside the road area should, where possible, be left in the protected area as decaying wood.

In connection with storms, trees in protected areas and along their edges can be fallen and extensively damaged. In such situations, measures must be taken immediately to resolve the dangerous situations as soon as possible. If necessary, an external outsourced service can be used for clearing and harvesting trees. In this case, the trails, routes and service equipment of protected areas are cleared following the customer safety guidelines drawn up by Parks & Wildlife Finland (Metsähallitus 2019b). Access routes blocked by storm damage will be opened on a case-

by-case basis. In the case of a route that only serves the access needs of a property outside the protected area, the person entitled to access the route is responsible for opening the route and for the costs.

In the Water Act (587/2011), waterways are divided into public and private fairways. Public fairways are established by the decision of the Environmental Permit Agency, and they are marked on the terrain and nautical chart. The maintenance of a public fairway is usually the responsibility of the applicant for the decision (e.g. Finnish Transport Agency or municipality). However, any damage caused by objects (e.g. tree trunks) that have drifted onto a public fairway or fallen on the fairway is primarily the responsibility of the owner of the object, from whom removal costs may be charged.

Regarding private fairways, the legislation does not impose a maintenance obligation on any party. Loose objects drifting or being on such a fairway – such as e.g. tree trunks – however, should be removed if it is seen that they may pose a hazard. If objects cause damage, their owner may be held liable for the damage caused under the general principles of damage compensation.

There are many private fairways in areas managed by Parks & Wildlife Finland, including those where trees have fallen or trees drift. There is no way to intervene comprehensively in such situations. However, action should be taken if a party has specifically contacted Parks & Wildlife Finland about such a matter or if the fairway in question is particularly busy and where the possibility of damage is obvious. In the case of a tree that has fallen on a private fairway and is still attached to the shore, Parks & Wildlife Finland may, at its discretion, also grant verbal permission to the contacting person to cut down and remove the tree from the fairway.

Fallen and detached trees can also drift in water areas outside fairways. It should be noted that in quite a few nature reserves, water areas are not included in the reserve,

but are owned by water cooperatives. As a rule, Metsähallitus is also obliged to harvest trees originating from Metsähallitus' properties. The same procedures and principles are followed as on private waterways.

15.5 Scattering ashes of the deceased and searching for war casualties

Placing ashes of the deceased

The Funeral Services Act (457/2003) regulates, among other things, the processing of the ashes of the deceased. The placement of ashes outside the cemetery is the responsibility of the person responsible for funeral arrangements and requires the consent of the landowner or landholder. Before handing over the ashes from the crematorium, the transferee must notify the crematorium administrator in writing, among other things, of where the ashes of the deceased will be permanently placed. The placement of ash shall be without prejudice to the rights of the owner or occupant of the area to decide on the future use of the area. Consent does not entitle the erection of grave monuments or other structures at the site where the ashes are deposited, nor does it entitle the holder to modify the soil where the ashes are deposited. Sprinkling on the ground should be carried out in such a way that the site cannot be externally perceived as a grave afterwards.

As a rule, Metsähallitus welcomes the placement of ash in land and water areas under its control, including public water areas. Consent can also be given to nature and wilderness reserves, but not to strict nature reserves. On land, consents are given only for scattering ashes, in water areas ashes can also be placed in a biodegradable urn, provided that the urn quickly decomposes completely. The suitability of the location is assessed on a case-by-case basis. Consent to scattering ash is not given, for example, in the vicinity of routes and structures, and not near

landscapes, ancient monuments, cultural sites or other popular places to visit.

Applications for the disposal of ash should be submitted to the registry of Metsähallitus. Consents are free of charge and given in writing. Information about the places where ash is deposited is given only to parties involved.

According to Metsähallitus' policy, the disposal of ash in the public water area of the sea area under its control is permitted without Metsähallitus' separate consent. On the other hand, there must be separate consent in public water areas included in marine nature reserves and in inland public water areas.

Where applicable, the same principles and procedures are followed in the disposal of animal ashes as in the placement of the ashes of the deceased, i.e. it also requires the landowner's consent.

Searching fallen soldiers

The search for fallen soldiers (of WWII) takes place in areas administered by Metsähallitus, for example in Lapland. There has also been interest in national parks, strict nature reserves and other state-owned nature reserves. Metal detectors, earth spikes and small exploration excavations are usually used in searches.

The use of metal detectors in Metsähallitus areas and nature reserves is possible (except for restricted areas) in accordance with the instructions on Metsähallitus' metsä.fi website. Metal detectors may only be used for searching/locating targets. According to Metsähallitus' interpretation, the use of a ground spike in connection with such exploration is possible (and does not require separate consent).

As a rule, tampering with soil in nature reserves is prohibited. This can be deviated from with the permission of the holder of the area, but only for scientific or educational purposes. It is therefore not possible to grant such a permit for the search for soldiers.

Small exploratory excavations carried out outside established nature reserves in connection with the search for the deceased may be granted the landowner's consent (in addition, the applicant may need permission from the Finnish Heritage Agency). Even then, applications should be clearly limited and targeted regionally. Questions related to the possible transfer of found deceased persons do not fall within the competence of Metsähallitus.

Metsähallitus only processes applications related to the search for war dead that have been sent to it through the Association for Cherishing the Memory of War Dead. Applications are sent to the registry of Metsähallitus, and before giving consent, Metsähallitus must have access to a statement from the Provincial Museum related to the application. Applications must be submitted by municipality. Consent is given for one year at a time. More information on the search for soldiers can be found on the website of the Association for Cherishing the Memory of War Dead (2024).

15.6 Supervising protected areas

According to the Nature Conservation Act (section 122), Metsähallitus supervises compliance with this Act in state-owned nature reserves.

The task of Metsähallitus' wilderness surveillance is to prevent illegality and unauthorised use on state-owned land and to coordinate and train volunteer supervisors in game control. Metsähallitus has full-time, police-trained game and fisheries wardens who are responsible for implementing wilderness surveillance in cooperation with the police, Border Guard and Customs. The duties and powers of game and fisheries wardens are defined in the Act on Metsähallitus Wilderness Surveillance (1157/2005).

Regular collaboration with the police and the Border Guard is essential in law enforcement and supervision. This means, for exam-

ple, planning supervisory work together, and arranging common patrols or exchanging information. Other Metsähallitus staff, as well as game management associations and fisheries inspectors, are also involved in supervision tasks. Policemen, border guards, and customs officers or Metsähallitus staff may also work as volunteer guards in their spare time.

The activities subject to surveillance are hunting, fishing, nature conservation, off-road terrain and water traffic, forestry, waste management, and compliance with land use and public access rights on state lands. Game and fisheries wardens check that the relevant licences and permits are in order. Law enforcement focuses on making sure that visitors comply with statutory provisions concerning the use of natural areas and resources. In protected areas, particular supervision is carried out to ensure compliance with the access restrictions that have been prescribed to protect species. The

restrictions apply, for example, to movement at nesting time. The wardens are also involved in nature conservation measures in Northern and Eastern Finland, by monitoring birds of prey and large carnivores, for example.

Parks & Wildlife Finland's employees carry out nature monitoring in protected areas and, if necessary, participate in wilderness surveillance under the guidance of game and fisheries wardens. If illegal activities occur in the area, the wardens or the police are always contacted.

One of the important tasks of wilderness surveillance in recent years has been to monitor the fishing restrictions imposed on water areas and gear types to protect the Saimaa ringed seal. Surveillance is also targeted at sea areas, where it focuses on e.g. seal protection areas and the monitoring of boating, waterfowl hunting and keeping dogs on a leash in the archipelago.



Metsähallitus' game and fisheries wardens inspecting fishing gear in the Eastern Gulf of Finland National Park. Photo: Aku Ahlholm.

16 Protected Areas as Part of Broad-scale Land-use Planning

The share of protected areas in different provincial regions varies considerably. In southern Finland, the share of protected areas is quite small and in northern Finland very large. In the south, there are numerous protected areas, but they are mostly small. The majority of Finland's network of protected areas is located on state-owned land. In Eastern and Northern Finland, protected areas are often surrounded by large state areas. There is less state-owned land in Southern and Western Finland, and the operating environment of protected areas is characterised by small-scale private land ownership. Based on the above, the significance and role of protected areas and their management planning as part of broader land-use planning processes also varies in different parts of the country.

In this chapter, broader land use planning processes primarily refer to natural resource planning of state-owned land managed by Metsähallitus and broad-scale strategic planning related to nature tourism, National Land Use Guidelines based on the Land Use and Building Act (132/1999) and regional land use planning, water and marine management planning, and maritime spatial planning. These broader land use planning processes integrate protected areas into land use planning in the surrounding areas.

The management and use of protected areas and their planning must consider the entries and statements concerning protected areas made in these broader planning processes. The first stage of drafting a strategic management plan therefore includes an analysis of the operating environment and existing land use and development plans. Based on this, the future solutions of the management plan are examined in relation

to the projected development prospects and the wider ecological network and socio-economic environment, in cooperation with stakeholders (see section 7.5.1).

16.1 Strategic planning of state-owned lands and waters

Metsähallitus uses a multi-tiered planning system in which land use decisions progress from large area complexes all the way to detailed planning of site measures. Natural resource plans concerning state-owned land are drawn up for major areas, and an ecological landscape review of forestry areas is carried out by sub-area. In addition to nature and wilderness reserves and state-owned hiking areas, management plans can also be drawn up for other special areas, such as areas reserved for recreational use. More detailed operational plans for forestry, habitat management and construction guide practical measures.

16.1.1 Natural resource planning and landscape ecological analysis

Natural resource planning is multi-objective long-term planning of natural resources on state-owned land and waters. Natural resource plans include, among other things, future priorities for the use of natural resources and the dimensioning of key functions, as well as the development of the ecological network (see section 2.8). These plans take a stand and measure issues related to the management and use of protected areas: defining the focus areas of nature tourism, assessing the need for habitat restoration and management, and anticipating planning targets for management and use. Natural

resource planning examines protected areas and their surrounding state-owned lands as one broad-based entity.

Natural resource planning began at Metsähallitus in the late 1990s. In 2002, the planning system was reformed by adding landscape ecological analysis to the plan (this was carried out between 1996 and 2000 in separate planning projects) and by placing greater emphasis on cooperation with stakeholders. The second round of natural resource planning took place 2002–2008 and the third 2014–2021.

Natural resource plans are currently renewed every five years. The plans presently in force are:

- Natural Resource Plan for Southern Finland 2017–2022
- Natural Resource Plan for Kainuu, Central and North Ostrobothnia 2023–2028
- Natural Resource Plan for Lapland 2019–2024 (excluding the Sámi Homeland)
- Natural Resource Plan for the Sámi Homeland 2022–2027
- Marine Natural Resource Plan 2024–2028.

The Natural Resource Plan for Southern Finland 2025–2030 will be completed and updating of the Natural Resource Plan for Lapland will commence in spring 2025.

The methodological description of **landscape ecological planning** was renewed in 2015 (Metsähallitus 2015b) and the updating of the reviews began in Lapland 2017–2018. Since then, the projects have also been implemented in Ostrobothnia and Southern Finland. The ecological network has been expanded in accordance with the updated Metsähallitus Environmental Guide for Forestry (Kaukonen et al. 2024), with the aim of preserving the natural diversity of the area in the long term. Landscape ecological planning also aims to safeguard the possibilities for migration of species. The ecological network

includes core areas formed by protected areas as well as natural sites, ecological connections and support areas in commercial forests, that are excluded completely or partially from forestry use. Game habitats and cultural heritage sites demarcated as special areas, as well as recreational and landscape sites, also support the ecological network.

Parks & Wildlife Finland actively participates in Metsähallitus' natural resource planning. The interconnectedness of protected areas and the quality of the surrounding habitats have a significant impact on how practical progress can be made on the conservation objectives of the sites. Metsähallitus' joint strategic guidelines in the natural resource plans concerning recreational use and nature tourism also guide decisions made in the management plans of national parks and cooperation with tourism entrepreneurs, for example.

16.1.2 Large-scale planning of nature tourism and recreation

National parks and state hiking areas are the most attractive destinations for nature tourism and produce significant economic and health benefits. To develop these and other most popular focus areas of nature tourism and recreation, tourism plans are drawn up in cooperation with local stakeholders.

A key objective of the **tourism plan** is to ensure the sustainability of tourism in protected areas and to promote tourism-related cooperation. The starting point is the establishment objectives of the areas, the management plan drawn up for the national park, the visitor survey of the national park and other area-based studies. The tourism plan assesses the current state of nature tourism, identifies tourism customers and attraction factors, defines development needs and proposes the necessary measures to achieve the objectives. A vision for tourism is set and measures are planned for a five-year period.

The development of tourism in national parks and other protected areas always requires that the conservation values of the area are preserved despite its use. Tourism plans define what kind of nature- and culture-based tourism and other recreational and tourism activities are pursued in a certain protected area within the limits allowed by conservation values. For example, in the popular Pallas-Yllästunturi National Park (with almost 600,00 visits in 2024), the strong and growing tourist centres in the area are putting increasing pressure on use of the national park, so planning tourism and ensuring sustainability is particularly important.

In connection with the preparation of the tourism plan, indicators are set for monitoring the sustainability of tourism and the limits of the acceptable change (LAC procedure, see section 12.1). The indicators are monitored annually, and the impacts are assessed, for example, in connection with the mid-term review of the management plan for the area.

General plans for land use and tourism are also drawn up for the state hiking areas. These plans complement the management plans for hiking areas specifically from the perspective of tourism and land use. The purpose of the tourism master plans is to look for ways to develop hiking areas so that they attract more tourists and tourists stay longer. The aim is for sustainable tourism to bring more jobs and income to the regional economy. Once the tourism master plans have been completed, a local plan will be prepared for the areas. All construction in hiking areas still requires detailed planning.

Metsähallitus (2024d) has drawn up a national plan for the development of the state's network of hiking areas and the recreational use potential of multiple-use forests.

16.2 The National Land Use Guidelines and regional plans

The National Land Use Guidelines are based on the Land Use and Building Act (132/1999) and steer all land use planning on a general level. The guidelines were revised and entered into force in 2018. According to the Act, the guidelines must be considered, and their implementation must be promoted in regional and local planning and the activities of state authorities (content requirements of regional and local plans are stated in the Land Use Act).

The National Land Use Guidelines aim to:

- Safeguard nationally valuable cultural environments and the values of natural heritage.
- Promote the maintenance of high biodiversity value areas and ecological links.
- Ensure the sufficiency of areas suitable for recreational use and the continuity of the network of green areas.
- Create conditions for the bioeconomy and circular economy and promoting the sustainable use of natural resources.
- Ensure the preservation of homogeneous farming and forest areas important for agriculture and forestry, as well as areas important for Sami culture and livelihoods.
- Prepare for extreme weather phenomena and floods as well as the effects of climate change.

At the regional level, strategic planning includes a regional plan, a regional land use plan that guides smaller-scale local land use planning, and a regional development programme. In practice, regional plans drawn up by regional councils and general local plans drawn up by municipalities define the main characteristics of land use in areas. The plans usually take a stand on, for example, the land use of both protected areas and areas out-

side them. In accordance with the National Land Use Guidelines, regional plans can also include e.g. designate areas important for biodiversity or recreational use, or areas significant for green connections and the ecological network in the immediate vicinity of protected areas.

As the authority referred to in the Land Use and Building Act, Metsähallitus must consider the provisions of plans with legal effect. For the preservation of the nature and, for example, landscape values of protected areas, it is important for Parks & Wildlife Finland to participate in planning and other lobbying processes (see Chapter 17 for more details).

From the point of view of planning the management and use of protected areas, it is important to review the area reservations for the planning area that have already been recorded in the approved plans and the activities planned for the surrounding areas. Regional plans can designate, for example, nationally valuable landscape areas or locations for energy production (wind power) and aquaculture development. Regional programmes may include measures to develop transport solutions that have an impact on local recreation destinations and tourism focus areas. Similar guidelines can also be found in the maritime spatial plans (see section 16.3.1).

Provincial master planning related to the Natura 2000 (and national) network is examined in section 8.3.1. In contrast to the processes mentioned above, the overall planning approach is largely limited to the Natura and national protected area network or individual protected areas rather than the surrounding areas. However, network reviews of these master plans can help to target regional protection and development activities in an effective way.

16.3 Water management and marine spatial planning

16.3.1 River basin management and Marine management plans

In the EU, the aim is to achieve good surface and groundwater status by 2027 at the latest. Water and marine management are based on the EU Water Framework Directive (WFD), Marine Strategy Directive and Groundwater Directive. Provisions on water and marine management are transposed in the Act on the Organisation of Water Management and Marine Management (1299/2004). Through the basic water management measures, water management planning also has a close link to other water-related EU directives, such as the Habitats, Birds and Urban Wastewater, Drinking Water and Nitrates Directives.

For the planning and implementation of river basin management, mainland Finland is divided into five national river basin management areas, each of which produces its own River basin management plan. In addition, Finland has two international river basin management areas, which consist of transboundary waters in the north (see section 16.4). The independent Province of Åland is responsible for water management in its own area. The boundaries of river basin management areas follow river basin entities, not the boundaries of administrative regions, so the ELY Centres that coordinate water management, work in cooperation. River basin management plans provide information on the status of waters demarcated as bodies of water (e.g. lakes, ponds, rivers) and the factors affecting them. Programmes of measures are defined to achieve and maintain good water status. River basin management plans are drawn up every six years. The third round of River basin management plans (2022–2027) was approved in 2021 (Finnish Environment Institute 2022).

Marine management plans are required by the EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive and aims to achieve a good status of the

Baltic Sea. A single marine management plan is drawn up for Finland's sea area. It is prepared by the Ministry of the Environment in cooperation with the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry and the Ministry of Transport and Communications. The coastal ELY Centres and Parks & Wildlife Finland participate actively in the work. Finland's Marine management plan includes an assessment of the current state of the sea, a marine management monitoring programme and an action plan. The Marine management action plan has been drawn up for 2022–2027.

The total area of state-owned waters managed by Metsähallitus is 3.4 million hectares. The majority of this, i.e. nearly 2.7 million hectares (78%) are public water areas, most of which are in the sea area. Statutory protected areas cover 238,000 ha (7%) of state-owned waters and 518,000 hectares (15%) are other water areas. As holder of extensive land areas, Metsähallitus plays a significant role in achieving and maintaining the good status of streams, large water bodies and especially many small waters. Most small waters have not been formed into separate demarcated water bodies and are therefore not always included in River basin management plans.

Metsähallitus also operates in all sea areas along the entire coast of Finland. Parks & Wildlife Finland oversees management and use of state-owned marine protected areas and the planning and development of the network of marine protected areas. Metsähallitus is also a significant producer of nature information on Finland's sea area. The data collected by Parks & Wildlife Finland on underwater nature is widely utilised in tasks related to the protection and promotion of natural values and the planning of marine area activities.

Some national protected areas include large water areas, but especially the demarcation of Natura 2000 sites also includes a great many waters whose protection is primarily based on legal and administrative procedures under the Water Act or the Land

Use and Building Act. Therefore, the protection values based on the waters of Natura sites are also safeguarded through River basin management plans.

16.3.2 Reconciling conservation and water management objectives

For the purposes of river basin management planning, a register of special areas under the Habitats and Birds Directives, i.e. Natura 2000 sites, located in a body of water with water-related nature conservation values, has been compiled as required by the WFD. Such Natura 2000 sites were first listed by the Finnish Environment Institute in 2009. The list of special areas was revised for the second planning round in 2015. It includes c. 450 Natura sites during the current intervention period (2022–2027).

For each Natura site in the Register of Special Areas for Water Management, key water-dependent species and habitat types under the Habitats Directive and water-dependent species under the Birds Directive are identified. In addition, the aim is to collect information on the significance of the area for nationally endangered fish species and other endangered, and national responsibility species dependent on water. It is also necessary to determine, on a region-by-site basis, the relationship between the waters in a specific area and the classified bodies of water and vice versa.

For the conservation and management objectives of Natura sites to be considered and reported in river basin management planning work, the conservation objectives of the site and the conditions for achieving them must be defined for each specific site. Anthropogenic pressures or threats to water-related species or habitats due to current or projected changes in the ecological or chemical status of surface waters or in the quantitative status of groundwater are identified on a Natura site-by-site basis. The measures needed to maintain or restore the natural

values on which protection is based will be defined. This is where data from Natura site condition assessments (NATA) can help (see section 8.3.2 for details). In Natura sites where the management and/or operational plan(s) are in force, the measures planned for aquatic nature should be added to River basin management plans and Programmes of measures.

In connection with river basin management planning, it is assessed whether the nature conservation values (habitat types and species) related to water require objectives that deviate from the objectives set out by the WFD. In most cases, the objectives of water management and the Habitats or Birds Directives are concordant, but in some cases, they may conflict with each other. Guidelines on the principles of coordination between the Water Framework Directive and the Habitats and Birds Directives have been drawn up for interpreting different situations.

If the WFD objective of at least good water status is not compatible with the status objective of a species or habitat type dependent on water, the Nature Conservation Act is followed in the planning of measures. Specific objectives may relate to, for example: habitat requirements of species or securing the migration of endangered fish species. Conflicts may also arise between the Habitats Directive and the Birds Directive. e.g. in lush wetlands, where water management objectives or habitat conservation objectives may conflict with the conservation of bird species under the Birds Directive. Many wetlands are not necessarily significant sites for water management. Often, however, excessive eutrophication is detrimental to the objectives of all the directives. In wetlands, too, the emphasis should primarily be on the management and maintenance of an ecologically functional habitat.

The Freshabit LIFE IP project, coordinated by Metsähallitus, has drawn up an operating model and guidelines for river basin and catchment area restoration of Natura 2000 areas (Härkönen et al. 2022).

16.3.3 Maritime spatial plans

Maritime spatial planning is an important tool for the development of the European Integrated Maritime Policy. This is based on the 2014 Maritime Spatial Planning Framework Directive (2014/89/EU), which has been transposed in Finland through an amendment to the Land Use and Building Act (482/2016).

Extensive maritime spatial planning is based on the ecosystem approach and on knowledge of the spatial location and temporal variation of underwater biodiversity, ecosystem services and human induced pressures. Planning the use of marine areas must be seamlessly intertwined with land use planning. The direct, indirect and cumulative effects of land use on marine areas throughout their catchment area must be considered in various land use planning processes. In addition, broader planning ensures that marine protected areas form a network that safeguards the natural distribution of organisms and valuable biological communities and ecosystems, thereby ensuring an adequate level of protection of underwater marine nature.

In Finland, maritime spatial plans are drawn up for internal water (starting from the shoreline), the territorial sea and the exclusive economic zone (EEZ) in cooperation between the coastal regional councils as follows:

- Eastern and western Gulf of Finland: Regional Council of Kymenlaakso and Helsinki-Uusimaa Regional Council
- Archipelago Sea and Bothnian Sea: Regional Councils of Southwest Finland and Satakunta (Åland draws up a plan for its own region independently but in cooperation with the regional councils)
- Kvarken and Bothnian Bay: Regional Councils of Ostrobothnia, and Central Ostrobothnia, Council of Oulu Region and Regional Council of Lapland.

Maritime spatial plans are general plans that coordinate the use of the sea by different sectors, in particular: energy production, maritime transport, fisheries and aquaculture, tourism and recreation, and the conservation, protection and improvement of the environment and nature. The needs of cultural heritage, extractives, blue biotechnology and the maritime industry will also be examined.

Regional maritime planning projects were led by the Regional Councils in 2017–2021, and a wide range of stakeholders participated in the work. Finland's Maritime Spatial Plan 2030 was compiled and approved in spring

2021 (Regional Council of Southwest Finland et al. 2021). Hereafter, the plans are updated every 6–10 years. Maritime spatial plans do not have legal effect, but guide regional land use planning, for example. The extent of land use plans, river basin and marine management plans and maritime spatial plans along the coast is shown in Figure 23.

An update of Finland's Coastal Strategy was completed in 2024. The ten measures in the strategy extend to 2030, but the strategy has its vision set in 2050. The measures concern, among other things, the well-being of nature and people, the sufficiency of energy

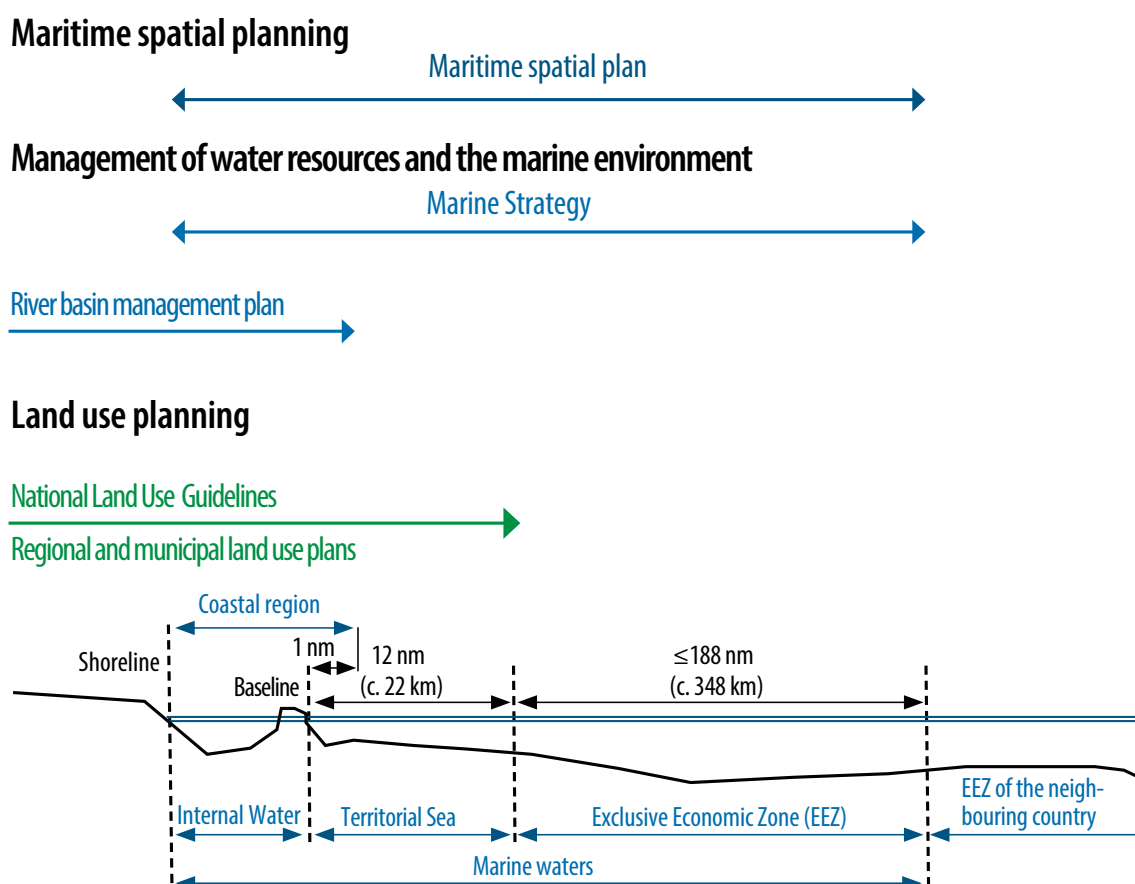


Figure 23. The horizontal dimension of coastal waters and their planning. Source: Kaituri et al. 2017. Alternative text: Maritime spatial plans and the Marine Strategy focus on marine waters. Marine waters are divided into Internal Water (that extends from the shoreline as far as the baseline), Territorial Sea (extending further up to 12 nautical miles, equalling circa 22 km), and the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ, extending to 188 nautical miles, equalling circa 348 km). River basin management plans focus on the coastal region, which extends 1 nautical mile beyond the baseline. Land use planning, including the National Land Use Guidelines and regional and municipal land use plans, focus on the terrestrial shore, Internal Water and Territorial Sea. Beyond the Finnish marine waters is the Exclusive Economic Zone of the neighbouring country.

and food, the sustainability of land use and construction, improving accessibility, preparing for exceptional situations and managing an up-to-date situational picture. The aim is to link the monitoring of the implementation of the coastal strategy to the updating of the maritime spatial plan every six years. (Ministry of the Environment 2024b)

State-owned marine areas are subject to a wide range of needs, such as the protection of nature and cultural heritage, recreational use and nature tourism, fishing and hunting, as well as business, real estate processing and land extraction. In accordance with the state's ownership policy, Metsähallitus aims to use maritime spatial planning to find and utilise the new opportunities offered by land and water areas and, on the other hand, to coordinate various activities. Suitable areas for locating some businesses have also been sought in separate projects (especially wind power, seabed rock extraction and aquaculture).

In 2019, Parks & Wildlife Finland drew up a recommendation concerning the consideration of protected areas in maritime spatial plans. The document (Arnkil et al. 2019) describes the types and networks of protected areas in the marine area, their conservation values and the restrictions on the use of the areas based on regulations. The so-called EMMA project, coordinated by the Finnish Environment Institute, has defined the boundaries of ecologically significant sea areas based on material collected in the Underwater Nature Inventory Programme (VELMU) and other data (Lappalainen et al. 2020). This analysed material has also been made available to maritime spatial planners.

In all subbases of the Finnish sea area – the Gulf of Finland, the Archipelago Sea, the Bothnian Sea, the Kvarken Strait and the Bay of Bothnia – there is a national park or other significant, multi-objective protected area managed by Metsähallitus, for which a management plan involving a wide range of stakeholders is drawn up. Many marine

Natura areas are also large entities that require participatory planning. Almost without exception, activities are located within or near protected areas in the sea area, on which the plans for each sea area take a stand.

The preservation of local culture and the archipelago community are the founding goals of many national parks. Many of the valuable habitats in coastal and marine environments have been shaped over a long period of time by human activity and require maintenance of traditional land use and culture. Together with local actors, the aim is to find solutions in the planning of protected areas that enable both the preservation of the natural and cultural environment and maintaining local livelihoods. Mosaic land ownership and many actors make cooperation very challenging. By taking a broader (provincial) view in planning, it is possible to examine, for example, the possibilities of developing nature recreation and tourism in a way that is sustainable from the point of view of the natural and cultural environment.

16.4 Protecting and planning management of transboundary areas

Finland has active transboundary nature conservation cooperation with its neighbours. There has been long-term cooperation with Estonia and (previously) Russia in state-to-state nature conservation working groups. Cooperation between Finland, Sweden, Norway and Russia on nature conservation has developed, among other things, networks of protected areas. Several cooperation projects have promoted the development of protected areas in north-west Russia. There have also been many forms of cooperation between individual protected areas to develop e.g. management planning. Some examples are given below (see also Figure 24).

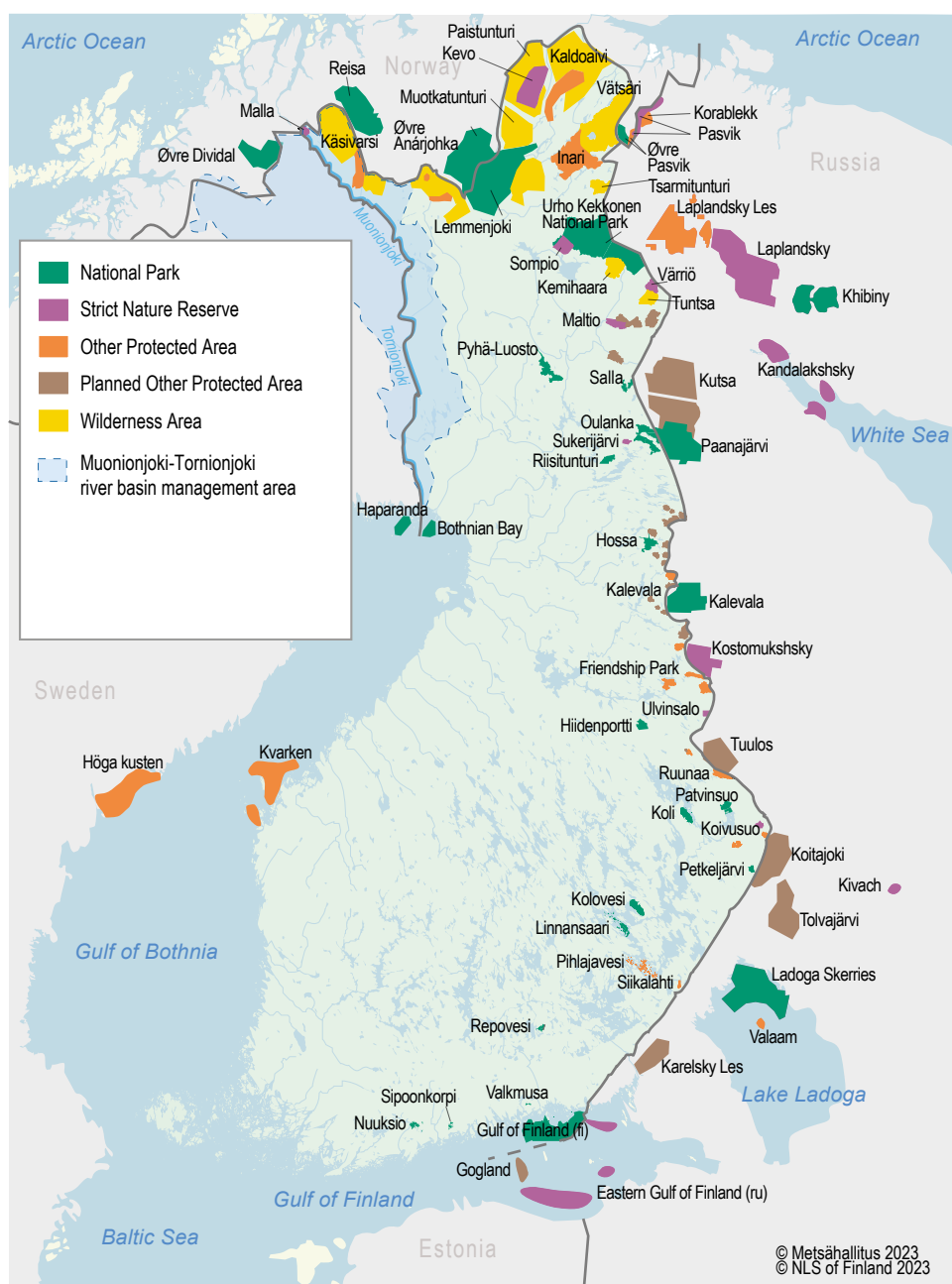


Figure 24. Transboundary cooperation of Finnish protected areas (Metsähallitus Parks & Wildlife Finland, 2022).

Alternative text: The map shows the national parks, strict nature reserves, other protected areas, planned protected areas and wilderness reserves, where there is or has been transboundary cooperation. On the Finnish side, these include Kvarken on the western coast, and from south to north: Nuuksio, Sipoonkorpi, Eastern Gulf of Finland, Repovesi, Siikalaitti, Pihlajavesi, Linnansaari, Kolovesi, Petkeljärvi, Koivusuo, Koli, Patvinsuo, Ruunaa, Hiidenportti, Ulvinsalo, Friendship Park, Kalevala, Hossa, Bay of Bothnia, Riisitunturi, Suikerijärvi, Oulanka, Salla, Pyhä-Luosto, Maltio, Kemihaara, Tuntsa, Värriö, Sompio, Urho Kekkonen National Park, Tsarmitunturi, Lemmenjoki, Inari, Vätsäri, Kaldoaivi, Paistunturi, Kevo, Muotkatunturi, Käsivarsi, Malla. On the Swedish side, these are the High Coast and Haparanda, and on the Norwegian side, Øvre Dividal, Reisa, Øvre Anarjohka and Øvre Pasvik. On the Russian side, these include from south to north: Suursaari, the Eastern Gulf of Finland, the Karelian Forest, Valamo, the Ladoga Islands, Tolvajärvi, Kivatsu, Koitajoki, Tuulos, Kotamuksha, Kalevala, Paanajärvi, Kutsa, Kantalahti, Hiipinä, Lapland, Lapland Forest, Pasvik and Korablekk. In addition, the map shows the extensive river basin management area of Muoniojoki-Tornio River on the Finnish Swedish border.

The joint World Heritage Site of the Kvarken in Finland and the High Coast in Sweden functions as a pair of transboundary pair of parks. The Bothnian Bay National Park is also connected to the Haparanda Archipelago National Park on the Swedish side. Together these play an important part in protecting marine nature and uplift coast of the Bay of Bothnia and the Gulf of Bothnia. Parks & Wildlife Finland has used the model of park pair cooperation in the vicinity of national borders, previously extensively between national parks located near the long Russian border (Fennoscandia's Green Belt cooperation has been at a standstill since 2022).

Oulanka National Park and Paanajärvi National Park on the Russian side together form an entity with significant nature values. For a long time, experiences have been exchanged between the parks and good practices have been promoted together in planning of the management of protected areas, guidance and the development of nature tourism. The long-term goal was to combine these national parks into a single conservation and hiking destination with harmonised management plans, integrated spatial data management and monitoring, and similar management objectives and principles. (This is unlikely to happen anymore.)

The Tornio-Muonio River basin is an international river basin that extends to Finland, Sweden and partly also Norway. In Finland and Sweden, the site is also a Natura 2000 network site. The watercourse is the most important breeding river for the Baltic salmon and the longest unbuilt river in Europe. There are several nationally valuable landscape areas and built cultural heritage sites along the river, and the area is an internationally significant fishing and excursion destination.

The protection of the Tornio-Muonio River is implemented by means of the Agreement between Finland and Sweden Concerning

Transboundary Rivers (Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry 2024), the Water Act and the Rapids Protection Act. A new agreement was signed between Finland and Sweden in 2024 (the first agreement was signed already in 1971 and continued in 2010). The Agreement has established the International River Basin Management Area between Finland and Sweden and the Finnish Swedish Transboundary River Commission. One of the tasks of the Commission is to promote coordination of the work of the authorities of the contracting parties and municipalities on nature conservation plans for the transboundary rivers.

The state of the Natura site is mainly affected by measures affecting water bodies carried out in the catchment area in Finland, especially forestry. The state of the main channel is also affected by the measures taken on the Swedish side. There is a need for catchment area restoration in many of the tributaries of the Torne River. The River basin management plan for the Torne River Basin Management Area for 2022–2027 covers the entire Torne River Natura area.

In addition to the Tornio-Muonio River, Finland has another international river basin management area established based on the Water Framework Directive: the waters flowing into the Arctic Ocean (rivers Tenojoki, Näätämöjoki and Pasvik) together with Norway. The cooperation is handled by the Finnish Norwegian Transboundary Water Commission. The transboundary water agreement between Finland and Russia has previously covered all water areas crossing Finland's eastern border. The Finnish Russian Transboundary Water Commission has been responsible for the cooperation. In matters related to nature conservation, authorities have cooperated with ELY Centres, for example. (Since 2022, there has been practically no transboundary cooperation with Russia).

17 Influencing Land Use Outside Protected Areas

17.1 Advocating protected areas

Land use outside protected areas and its changes may affect the natural state of protected areas. External influences are often possible, for example, in peatland drainage, peat production and mining projects (causing impacts on waterways) and in wind power projects that have become more common in recent years (e.g. impacts on birds and landscapes). The protection orders of nature reserves are only valid in these areas and have no impact on measures taken outside the boundaries of the area. The situation is different in Natura 2000 sites (most of the established and not yet established nature reserves are also designated in Natura 2000), as the prohibition on degradation of the conservation values of these areas also extends to projects carried out outside the areas.

Effective advocacy is an important means of intervening in projects that may have a negative impact on protected areas. The aim of lobbying is to influence projects taking place in the vicinity of protected areas so that their impact on protected areas remains as minimal as possible. Advocacy is carried out, for example, through statements and reminders, and by participating as a representative of Metsähallitus in negotiations with the authorities, land survey procedures, and meetings of land/water shareholders and road associations.

Protected areas are mainly surrounded by areas either privately owned or managed by Metsähallitus business units, predominantly used for forestry. In Northern Lapland, protected areas are also bordered by subsistence economy areas managed by Metsähallitus Property Development, which total 361,000

hectares (at the end of 2023). The subsistence economy areas are part of the Sámi homeland and the Special reindeer husbandry area, and their use value in terms of natural subsistence livelihoods and nature recreation is significant. The subsistence economy areas are mainly located adjacent to wilderness reserves, and in certain situations, the objectives of the Wilderness Act must also be considered in the land use decisions concerning them. This mainly concerns projects that are in both subsistence economy areas and wilderness reserves.

17.2 Influencing land use planning

The outlines of land use in areas adjacent to protected areas are defined in regional and local land use plans. Metsähallitus is the authority referred to in the Land Use and Building Act in matters related to regional land use plans, so it has an obligation as an authority to promote the implementation of the regional land use plan. Metsähallitus strives to consider and safeguard the diverse objectives set for it. All the Metsähallitus business units take planning into account in their own operations and provide their own expertise for the supervision of the interests in land use planning. Metsähallitus' lobbying of land use planning is guided by the Director General's decision (Metsähallitus 2017) and separate internal guidelines (Metsähallitus 2022c).

Participating in planning processes and making statements on preliminary plans are key means of influencing land use outside protected areas. Plans should be influenced as early as possible in the drafting phase, as it is often more difficult to make changes to

a plan that has progressed to the plan proposal stage. The aim is also to incorporate Metsähallitus' own goals and policies into the plans, which may be related to, for example, the development of tourism business activities in protected areas.

When evaluating draft plans, the zoning regulations concerning nature reserve areas must be reviewed and their appropriateness checked. It is also advisable to check the boundaries of conservation reservations in the plan and, if necessary, provide the responsible planner with up-to-date digital boundaries of protected sites.

As a rule, the lobbying of Parks & Wildlife Finland in land use planning focuses on state-owned land and water areas intended for public administration duties. Lobbying may also be directed at areas on the balance sheet of business operations, e.g. concerning species under special responsibility of Parks & Wildlife. Parks & Wildlife brings its expertise to lobbying when assessing the plan overall, the adequacy of the studies and the impact assessments carried out, considering the content requirements at the plan level. Together with other business units, the aim is to ensure that Metsähallitus' general social obligations – especially biodiversity and recreational use – are fulfilled in land use planning.

Nature reserves and Natura 2000 sites

As an authority referred to in the Land Use and Building Act, it is important for Parks & Wildlife to ensure that areas reserved for protection are marked in the plans with appropriate plan markings and that the planning regulations used are appropriate. It is necessary to ensure that areas reserved for protection but not covered by national conservation programmes or the Natura 2000 network are considered in land use plans. These include, for example, areas protected by Metsähallitus' own decisions and areas reserved or acquired for protection as part

of the implementation of the METSO and Helmi Programmes.

A significant number of national protected areas are also Natura 2000 sites. If land use reservations are allocated in the land use plan for activities that may have a negative impact on the conservation criteria features of an area belonging to the Natura network, Parks & Wildlife Finland, as holder of the site, issues a statement on the Natura assessment.

In addition to state-owned areas, Parks & Wildlife Finland is responsible for the management and use of private protected areas, in cooperation with their owners and ELY Centres. Metsähallitus ensures that the species and habitat type information and cultural heritage information in its possession are available to the authorities in planning processes.

Biodiversity and cultural heritage

Parks & Wildlife Finland is responsible for ensuring that the protection regulations set in land use plans for the protection of landscapes, natural values, the built environment, cultural and historical values or other special environmental values, as well as the area and site markings, are appropriate and correctly dimensioned for the areas and buildings under its management.

In addition to the general responsibility for species conservation, Parks & Wildlife has national special responsibility for the protection of certain species, independent of the ownership and conservation status of land and water areas. This task is based on legislation, special expertise, national species-specific protection strategies or international responsibilities. These special responsibility species include the Golden eagle, Peregrine falcon, Gyrfalcon, Lesser white-fronted goose, Arctic fox and Saimaa ringed seal. Parks & Wildlife Finland acts as an expert authority and has the right to speak in matters concerning the special responsibility species,

such as land use planning, also outside protected areas and state-owned lands.

Hiking and nature tourism

In addition to existing recreational use, lobbying considers the goal set for Parks & Wildlife Finland to create preconditions for business activities based on nature recreation and tourism. In addition to the areas under its control, the lobbying of Parks & Wildlife Finland also targets state hiking areas, recreational forests and other areas on the business balance sheet that are important for public use. This is done in cooperation with the business units Forestry Ltd and Property Development.

17.3 Environmental impact assessment (EIA) procedure for (wind power) projects

Projects that may cause significant adverse environmental impacts require an environmental impact assessment procedure (EIA, Act on Environmental Impact Assessment Procedure 468/1994). For example, wind power projects always require an EIA procedure if the wind farm consists of at least 10 wind turbines, or the total output of the wind turbines is at least 45 megawatts. Even smaller projects may, by decision of the ELY Centre, require an EIA procedure if the project's impacts are estimated to be significant. As with land use planning processes, the EIA procedure involves consultation in the area affected by the project. The interests of protected areas are safeguarded by providing a statement on the environmental impact assessment programme and assessment report of projects affecting them. Essential aspects related to protected areas should be brought up, when possible, already in advance negotiations related to projects.

Metsähallitus Property Development develops wind power projects in state-owned

areas on the balance sheet of business operations, and the aim is to agree on their placement in cooperation between Metsähallitus operational units. Wind power construction is not possible in statutory nature reserves or on conservation programme or Natura 2000 sites to be established as nature reserves, nor in practice in wilderness reserves. In areas managed by Parks & Wildlife Finland where regulations do not prevent wind power construction can be found, for example, in public water areas, elsewhere on the seacoast and archipelago, and in some places on land.

Metsähallitus welcomes wind power and aims to promote its increase if wind turbines can be placed so that they do not cause significant harm, for example, to nature and landscape values. An exception to this is the Sámi homeland, where Metsähallitus will not launch wind power projects during the planning period of the current natural resource plan for 2022–2027. In advocacy of protected areas, special attention is paid to wind power projects located close to areas of high bird value (e.g. Natura areas under the Birds Directive (SPA), territories of endangered birds of prey) or areas important for tourism and recreational use (e.g. national parks, focus areas of tourism).

The aim is to steer the placement of industrial-scale wind farms through regional land use planning. Based on the Land Use and Building Act, a local land use plan can also be drawn up that directly guides wind power construction. The implementation of a wind power project always requires a construction permit, which is granted based on the land use plans' specifications on construction. In exceptional cases, a construction permit for individual power plants may be granted based on a planning needs decision or a deviation decision.

Parks & Wildlife Finland is critical of the construction of small wind power units and assumes that the implementation of such sites should also be based on land use planning and appropriate impact assessment.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 IUCN Protected area management categories: Definitions

Source: Guidelines for Applying IUCN Protected Area Management Categories (Dudley 2008).

Protected area is a clearly defined geographical space, recognised, dedicated and managed, through legal or other effective means, to achieve the long-term conservation of nature with associated ecosystem services and cultural values.

Protected area management categories

Category	Name	Definition
Ia	Strict nature reserve	Category Ia sites are strictly protected areas set aside to protect biodiversity and possibly geological/ geomorphological features, where human visitation, use and impacts are strictly controlled and limited to ensure protection of the conservation values. Such protected areas can serve as indispensable reference areas for scientific research and monitoring.
Ib	Wilderness area	Category Ib protected areas are usually large unmodified or slightly modified areas, retaining their natural character and influence, without permanent or significant human habitation, which are protected and managed to preserve their natural condition.
II	National Park	Category II protected areas are large natural or near natural areas set aside to protect large-scale ecological processes, along with the complement of species and ecosystems characteristic of the area, which also provide a foundation for environmentally and culturally compatible spiritual, scientific, educational, recreational and visitor opportunities.
III	Natural monument or feature	Category III protected areas are set aside to protect a specific natural monument, which can be a landform, sea mount, submarine cavern, geological feature such as a cave or even a living feature such as an ancient grove. They are generally quite small, protected areas and often have high visitor value.
IV	Habitat/species protection and management area	Category IV protected areas aim to protect designated species or habitats, and management reflects this priority. Many of category IV protected areas will need regular, active interventions to address the requirements of particular species or to maintain habitats, but this is not a requirement of the category.
V	Protected landscape/ seascape	Category V sites are protected areas where the interaction of people and nature over time has produced an area of distinct character with significant ecological, biological, cultural and scenic value, and where safeguarding the integrity of this interaction is vital to protecting and sustaining the area and its associated nature conservation and other values.
VI	Protected area with sustainable use of natural resources	Category VI protected areas conserve ecosystems and habitats, together with associated cultural values and traditional natural resource management systems. They are generally large, with most of the area in a natural condition, where a proportion is under sustainable natural resource management and where low-level non-industrial use of natural resources compatible with nature conservation is seen as one of the main aims of the area.

Category VI Natural Resources Management and Conservation Area is not used in Finland.

Appendix 2 IUCN Protected area categories: Objectives of management and use

The objectives of management and use are based on the IUCN definitions of the protected area categories and their interpretation guidelines. Category VI is not used in Finland.

Source: Applying the IUCN protected area categories in Finland (Heinonen & Juvonen 2013)

Codes: 1 = primary objective, 2 = secondary objective, 3 = possible objective, – = not applicable.

A number inside parentheses means that the priorities of objectives set out in site regulations may differ from IUCN's general category definitions.

Management and use objective	Protected area management category Ia Strictly protected area*	Protected area management category Ib Wilderness area*	Protected area management category II National park*	Protected area management category III Natural monument or feature	Protected area management category IV Habitat or species protection and management area	Protected area management category V Protected landscape	Protected area management category VI Protected area with sustainable use of natural resources
Scientific research	(1)	3	2	3	2	3	3 (2)
Wilderness protection	2	1	2	–	–	–	2 (1)
Preservation of habitats, species and genetic diversity	1	2 (1)	1	2 (1)	1	2	2 (1)
Maintenance of ecosystems and their services	2 (1)	1	1	–	2 (1)	2	1
Protection of specific natural/cultural features	(2)	–	2	1	2 (3)	1	1
Recreation and tourism	–	3	1 (2)	2 (1)	3	1	3 (2)
Education	–	–	2	2	3	3	3
Sustainable (traditional) use of natural resources	–	3	3	–	(2)	2	1
Maintenance of cultural /traditional landscape features	–	(2)	(2)	(2)	(2)	1	2

*) Previously, before (re)assignment of categories in 2014 according to revised IUCN guidelines (2008) and national principles (2013), wilderness reserves and certain other large, protected areas in Northern Finland were assigned to category VI, because of statutory hunting rights and reindeer herding. Presently, category VI is not used in Finland, and there are no protected areas assigned to this category.

Appendix 3 Indicative IUCN management categories for state-owned protected area types

Source: Metsähallitus (MH) 2013. Land use type codes updated.

Sites reserved for conservation (land use code 211) are assigned an IUCN management category in the process of site enactment.

Areas reserved for recreational purposes (301, 312 and 313) are not assigned IUCN categories, although many are designated in the Natura 2000 network.

Land use type code	Protected area type	Protected area category size usually > 1,000 ha	Protected area category size usually < 1,000 ha	Comment
201	Strict nature reserves	Ia	IV Karkali	Access may be allowed only by permit or strictly on marked trails
202	National parks	II (Lemmenjoki Ib)	-	Lemmenjoki NP is a very large wilderness-like area, recreational zone is only ca. 5%
203	Other state nature reserves	Ib (certain sites Ia)	IV (certain sites III)	Category III sites are established for a natural or nature-based cultural feature
204	Old-growth forest reserves	Ib	IV	
205	Mire reserves	Ib	IV	Adjacent smaller sites forming larger wilderness-like complex may be assigned category Ib
206	Herb-rich forest reserves	-	IV (certain sites Ia)	Sites with extensive access restrictions may be assigned category Ia
207	Nature reserves (Metsähallitus decision)	-	IV	After 2005, Metsähallitus no longer has the right to designate statutory nature reserves; established sites are to be re-enacted
208	Private nature reserves acquired by Metsähallitus	-	IV	Established sites that are to be re-enacted as state nature reserves
211	Nature Conservation Programme sites (Government decision)	Ib (certain sites Ia)	IV	To be established as Nature Reserves, management category approved with site statute/regulation. Sites with extensive access restrictions assigned category Ia
212	METSO Programme sites	-	IV	To be established as Nature Reserves, management category approved with site statute/regulation.
221	Protected areas designated in land use plans (Regional Council decision)	-	IV	Established as Nature Reserves, category approved with site statute/regulation (mire, shore, island sites)
231	Other protected areas on State lands	-	IV	Habitat/ species protection sites, Natura 2000 sites with no other national designation
232	Protected forests (Metsähallitus)	Ib	IV	Considered PAs when managed by P&WF
301	Recreational sites (Metsähallitus)	-	IV	Protected area, if designated in the Natura 2000 network (mainly shore sites)
302	Wilderness reserves	Ib	-	Protected area, also designated in the Natura 2000 network
312	National hiking areas	II tai V	-	Protected area, because designated in the Natura 2000 network
313	Recreational forests (MH)	V (Inari Hiking Area)	IV	Protected area, if designated in the Natura 2000 network (Inari Hiking Area covers 89 % of total area in the land use type class)

Appendix 4 KISS2030: Target and measures to adapt to impacts of climate change and to halt biodiversity loss

Source: National Climate Change Adaptation Plan KISS2030 (VNS 2022).

SDG 12: The impacts of climate change are known and adapted to halt the loss of biodiversity.

Action 12.1: Develop the network of protected areas and its management based on scientific data.

Description: Develop a representative network of protected areas in adaptation to climate change by fully implementing the voluntary METSO Programme until 2025 and plan and implement the continuation of the METSO Programme in 2026–2030. We will ensure the resources required by the Helmi Habitat Programme. Systematic conservation planning also considers new sites in the Natura 2000 network and other effective site-based conservation measures (OECM). The results of the Planning the network of protected areas in a changing climate (SUMI) project will be considered and the SUMI2 follow-up project will be funded.

Action 12.2: Restoration and management of degraded habitats to improve the adaptive capacity of nature.

Description: Strengthening biodiversity and safeguarding vital ecosystem services provided by nature, as well as mitigating and adapting to climate change through restoration, management and protection measures (e.g. the Helmi and METSO Programmes). The objectives of the EU Biodiversity Strategy (incl. the Restoration Regulation) will also be considered in the measures and their scope.

Action 12.3: Consider the impacts of climate change in the planning and implementation of the conservation of species and habitats and in the scope of actions.

Description: Target conservation measures as effectively as possible based on scientific data, considering the different characteristics of species and habitats and their sensitivity to the effects of climate change. Based on monitoring data, the range of conservation tools will be adjusted and the favourable conservation status of species and habitat types under the EU Habitats and Birds Directive will be maintained or achieved, considering the effects of climate change. Changes in the timing of bird migration and possible changes in the location of resting areas during migration will be considered in the development of legislation and the network of protected areas.

Action 12.4: Monitor the impacts of climate change on species and habitats in a systematic and long-term manner.

Description: The state of long-term monitoring of biodiversity in Finland will be investigated and the coordination, planning and implementation of long-term monitoring will be developed. We will integrate suitable indicators describing the state of biodiversity into Finland's official statistics and establish the activities of the Finnish Ecosystem Observatory (FEO) from 2024 onwards. We will participate fully in the implementation of the Arctic Flora and Fauna Conservation Programme (CAFF).

Action 12.5: Improve policy coherence between biodiversity adaptation measures across administrative sectors.

Description: The links between biodiversity and adaptation to climate change are examined as part of the development of a legislative package to safeguard biodiversity.

Appendix 5 Legislation pertaining to governance, management and use of protected areas

Legislation (finlex.fi/fi/laki/ajantasa) (some statutes are available in English)

Metsähallitus

Lain tai asetuksen nimi	Name of Act or Decree	No/Nr
Laki Metsähallituksesta	Act on Metsähallitus	234/2016
Valtioneuvoston asetus Metsähallituksesta	Decree on Metsähallitus	247/2016
Laki valtion liikelaitoksista	State Enterprise Act	1062/2010

Hallinto, tiedonhallinta ja talous / Governance, information management and finance

Lain tai asetuksen nimi	Name of Act or Decree	No/Nr
Hallintolaki	Administrative Procedure Act	434/2003
Laki oikeudenkäynnistä hallintoasioissa	Administrative Judicial Procedure Act	808/2019
Kuluttajaturvallisuuslaki	Consumer Safety Act	920/2011
Kielilaki	Language Act	423/2003
Laki viranomaisten toiminnan julkisuudesta	Act on the Openness of Government Activities	621/1999
Asetus viranomaisten toiminnan julkisuudesta ja hyvästä tiedonhallintatavasta	Decree on the Openness of Government Activities and on Good Practice in Information Management	1030/1999
Laki sähköisestä asioinnista viranomais-toiminnassa	Act on Electronic Services in Public Authority Activities	13/2003
Laki julkisen hallinnon tiedonhallinnasta	Act on Information Management in Public Administration	906/2019
Laki sähköisen viestinnän palveluista	Act on Electronic Communications Services	917/2014
Laki digitaalisten palvelujen tarjoamisesta	Act on the Provision of Digital Services	309/2019
Tietosuoja laki	Data Protection Act	1050/2018
Tietosuoja-asetus	Data Protection Decree	679/2016
Arkistolaki	Archives Act	831/1994
Laki julkisista hankinnoista ja käyttöoikeus-sopimuksista	Act on Public Procurement and Right of Use Contracts	1397/2016
Valtion maksuperustelaki	Act on Criteria for Charges Payable to the State	150/1992
Ympäristöministeriön asetus Metsähallituksen eräiden julkisten hallintotehtävien suoritteiden maksuista	Ministry of the Environment Decree on Fees of Certain Metsähallitus Public Administration Duties	96/2024
Maa- ja metsätalousministeriön asetus Metsähallituksen eräiden julkisten hallintotehtävien suoritteiden maksuista	Ministry of Forestry and Agriculture Decree on Fees of Certain Metsähallitus Public Administration Duties	1072/2023

Luonnonsuojelu ja suojelualueet / Nature conservation and protected areas

Lain tai asetuksen nimi	Name of Act or Decree	No/Nr
Luonnonsuojelulaki	Nature Conservation Act	9/2023
Luonnonsuojeluasetus	Nature Conservation Decree	1066/2023
Erämaalaki	Wilderness Act	62/1991
Ulkoilulaki	Outdoor Recreation Act	606/1973
Ympäristöministeriön asetus Natura 2000 -verkostoon kuuluvien alueiden luettelosta	Ministry of the Environment Decree on Areas Designated in the Natura 2000 Network	354/2015
Euroopan unionin luontodirektiivi	EU Habitats Directive	92/43/ETY
Euroopan unionin lintudirektiivi	EU Birds Directive	79/409/ETY
Laki vieraslajeista aiheutuvien riskien hallinnasta	Act on the Management of Risks Arising from Invasive Alien Species	1709/2015
Ilmastolaki	Climate Act	423/2022

Saamelais- ja saaristoalueet / Sámi and archipelago areas

Lain tai asetuksen nimi	Name of Act or Decree	No/Nr
Laki saamelaiskäräjistä	Act on the Sámi Parliament	974/1995
Asetus saamelaiskäräjistä	Decree on the Sámi Parliament	1727/1995
Asetus saamelaisvaltuuskunnasta	Decree on the Sámi Delegation	988/1990
Kolttalaki	Skolt Act	253/1995
Saamen kielilaki	Sámi Language Act	1086/2003
Euroopan ihmisoikeussopimus	European Convention on Human Rights	63/1999
Sopimus liittymisestä Euroopan unioniin (alkuperäinen nimi pitempi)	Treaty on Accession to the European Union	103/1994
Laki saariston kehityksen edistämisestä	Archipelago Act	494/1981

Kulttuuriarvot / Cultural values

Lain tai asetuksen nimi	Name of Act or Decree	No/Nr
Laki rakennusperinnön suojelemisesta	Act on the Protection of Built Heritage	498/2010
Muinaismuistolaki (uusi Laki arkeologisesta kulttuuriperinnöstä hyväksyttäneen 2025)	Antiquities Act (new law to be enacted in 2025: Act on the Archaeological Cultural Heritage)	295/1963
Laki rakennetun ympäristön tietojärjestelmästä	Act on the Information System for the Built Environment	431/2023

Maankäyttö ja suunnittelu / Land use and planning

Lain tai asetuksen nimi	Name of Act or Decree	No/Nr
Rakentamislaki	Building Act	751/2023
Maankäyttö- ja rakennuslaki (uusi Alueidenkäyttölaki hyväksyttäneen 2025)	Land Use Act (new law to be enacted in 2025)	132/1999
Maankäyttö- ja rakennusasetus	Land Use (and Building) Decree	895/1999
Laki vesienhoidon ja merenhoidon järjestämisestä	Act on the Organisation of River Basin Management and the Marine Strategy	1299/2004
Laki ympäristövaikutusten arviointimenettelystä	Act on Environmental Impact Assessment Procedure	252/2017
Laki viranomaisten suunnitelmien ja ohjelmien ympäristövaikutusten arvioinnista	Act on the Assessment of the Environmental Impact of Government Plans and Programmes	200/2005
Kiinteistönmuodostamislaki	Real Estate Formation Act	554/1995
Ympäristöministeriön asetus luonnonsuojelualueen merkitsemisestä maastoon	Ministry of the Environment Decree on Marking Nature Reserve Boundaries	261/ 2016
Yhteisaluelaki	Act on Joint Property	758/1989
Laki oikeudesta yleisiin vesialueisiin	Act on the Right to Public Water Areas	204/1966
Valtioneuvoston asetus valtion kiinteistövarallisuuden hankinnasta, hallinnasta ja hoitamisesta	Government Decree on the Acquisition, Possession and Management of State Real Estate Assets	242/2015
Laki oikeudesta luovuttaa valtion kiinteistövarallisuutta	Act on the Right to Transfer State Real Estate Assets	973/2002
Laki eräistä naapuruussuhteista	Act on Neighbour Relations	26/1920
Maa-aineslaki	Land Extraction Act	555/1981
Maa-ainesasetus	Land Extraction Decree	91/1982
Kaivoslaki	Mining Act; Amendment to the Act	621/2011, muutos / amendment 505/2023
Metsälaki	Forest Act	1093/1996
Vesilaki	Water Act	587/2011
Kalastuslaki	Fishing Act	379/2015
Valtioneuvoston asetus kalastuksesta	Government Decree on Fishing	1360/2015
Metsästyslaki	Hunting Act	615/1993
Metsästysasetus	Hunting Decree	666/1993
Poronhoitolaki	Reindeer Husbandry Act	848/1990
Valtioneuvoston asetus metsästyslaissa säädetyistä poikkeusluvista	Government Decree on Derogations Laid Down in the Hunting Act	452/2013
Laki porotalouden ja luontaiselinkeinojen rakennetuista	Act on Financing of Reindeer Husbandry and Indigenous Livelihoods	986/2011
Maastoliikennelaki	Off-road Traffic Act	1710/1995
Maastoliikenneasetus	Off-road Traffic Decree	10/1996
Vesiliikennelaki	Water Traffic Act	782/2019
Laki liikennejärjestelmästä ja maanteistä	Act on the Transport System and Highways	503/2005
Yksityistielaki	Private Roads Act	560/2018
Ilmailulaki	Aviation Act	1242/2005
Hautaustoimilaki	Cemetery Act	457/2003
Maanvuokralaki	Tenancy Act	258/1966

Lain tai asetuksen nimi	Name of Act or Decree	No/Nr
Kuluttajaturvallisuuslaki	Consumer Security Act	920/2011
Kokoontumislaki	Assembly Act	530/1999
Patoturvallisuuslaki	Dam Safety Act	494/2009
Ympäristöministeriön asetus Natura 2000 -verkostoon kuuluvien alueiden luettelosta	Ministry of the Environment Decree on Areas Designated in the Natura 2000 Network	354/2015
Euroopan unionin vesipuitedirektiivi	EU Water Framework Directive	2000/60/EC
Euroopan unionin meristrategia-puitedirektiivi	EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive	2008/56/EC
Euroopan unionin direktiivi merten aluesuunnittelun puitteista	EU Directive for Maritime Spatial Planning	2014/89/EC

Huolto ja valvonta / Maintenance and surveillance

Lain tai asetuksen nimi	Name of Act or Decree	No/Nr
Jätelaki	Waste Act	646/2011
Laki metsätuhojen torjunnasta	Forest Damages Prevention Act	1087/2013
Ympäristönsuojelulaki	Environmental Protection Act	527/2014
Ympäristönsuojeluasetus	Environmental Protection Decree	713/2014
Aluevalvontalaki	Territorial Surveillance Act	755/2000
Valtioneuvoston asetus aluevalvonnasta	Territorial Surveillance Decree	971/2000
Rajavartiolaki	Border Guard Act	578/2005
Laki Metsähallituksen erävalvonnasta	Act on Surveillance of Hunting and Fishing	1157/2005
Valtioneuvoston asetus Metsähallituksen erävalvonnasta	Government Decree on Surveillance of Hunting and Fishing	1273/2005
Maa- ja metsätalousministeriön asetus Metsähallituksen erätarkastajan virkamerkistä	Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry Decree on the Badge of the Metsähallitus Game and Fisheries Warden	1275/2005
Pelastuslaki	Rescue Act	379/2011
Poliisilaki	Police Act	872/2011
Rikoslaki	Finnish Penal Code	39/1889
Ympäristöministeriön asetus rakennusten paloturvallisuudesta	Ministry of the Environment Decree on the Fire Safety of Buildings	848/2017

Appendix 6 Menu of protected area values

The value menu is used by Parks & Wildlife Finland for protected area management planning and Natura 2000 site assessments.

PA = Protected area in the national network, NA = Natura 2000 site.

Value class: Natural values

Value type	Criteria and indicators (examples)
Habitats and species listed by Habitats Directive	distribution and representativeness in area and conservation status within PA/ NA networks population within area and conservation status within PA/NA networks
Species listed by Birds Directive	population within area and conservation status within PA/NA networks
Red-listed habitat types	distribution and representativeness in area and conservation status within PA/ NA networks
Red-listed species	population within area and conservation status within PA/NA networks
Other protected species	population and conservation status
Biotope community/ species assemblage	status of indicator habitat, amount and management situation within area and PA/ NA-networks status of indicator species (birds, butterflies, fish, other key species, e.g. marine blue mussel)
Ecosystem (structure, function)	structure of forest (dead wood, tree species and age distribution) hydrological state of peatland ecological state of surface / groundwater
Geological feature	value class of feature extent within area and conservation status within PA/ NA-networks
Wilderness-quality (remoteness)	proportion of remote zone

Value class: Cultural values

Value type	Criteria and indicators (examples)
Natural or cultural landscape	proportion/extent of nationally valuable landscape
Built cultural environment	number/extent of nationally valuable cultural environment
Valuable buildings	number/condition of protected or valuable buildings
Archaeological sites	number/condition of ancient remains
Local cultural features	Sámi homeland / archipelago area (site situated within) significance of area for local cultural heritage

Value class: Appreciation and awareness

Value type	Criteria and indicators (examples)
Nature interpretation	customer service points, number of visits number of people in guided groups
Environmental education	nature trails (km) proportion of students in guided groups

Value class: Research and monitoring

Value type	Criteria and indicators (examples)
Significance for research	number of research projects/sites
Significance for monitoring	number of monitoring sites

Value class: Outdoor recreation and tourism

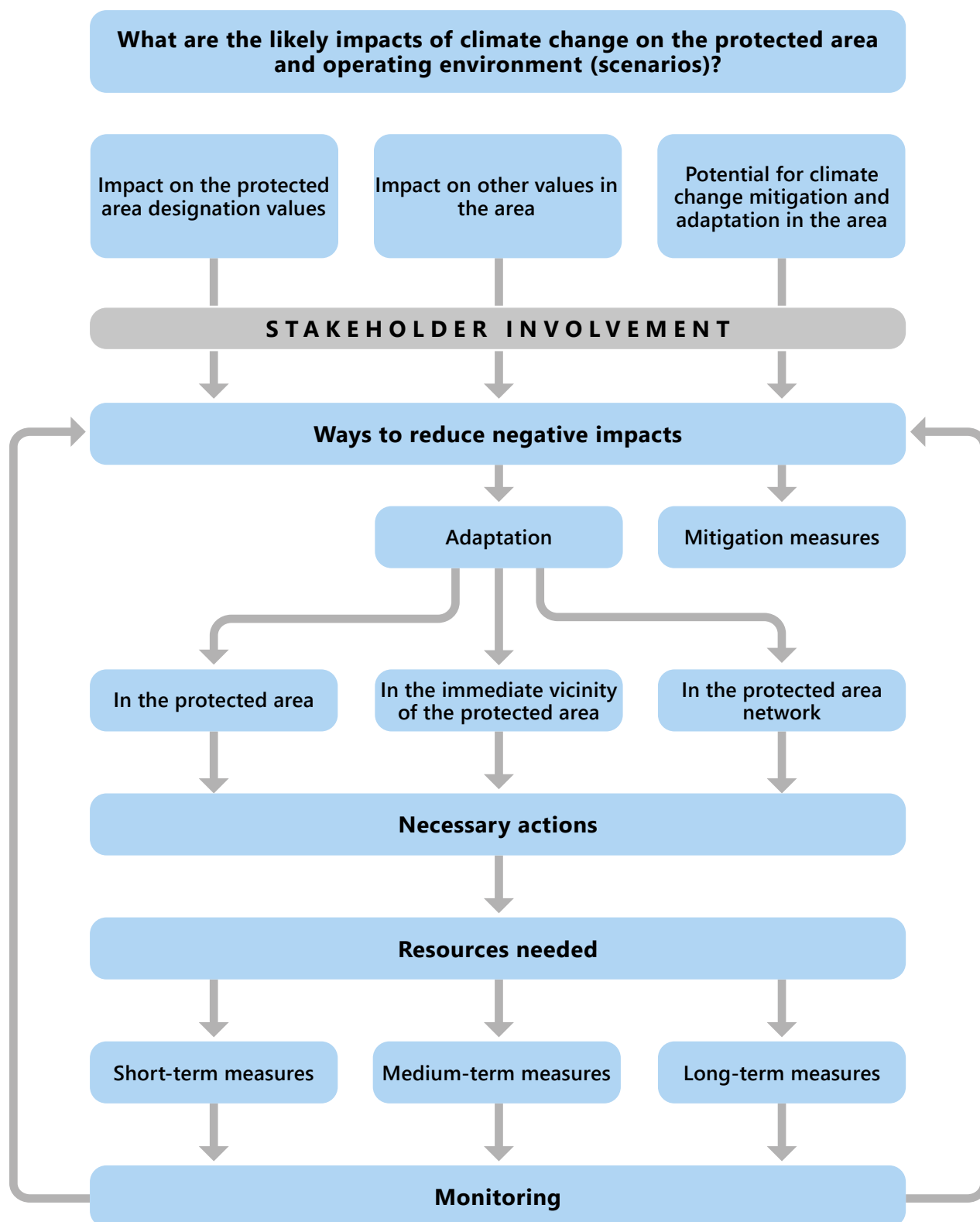
Value type	Criteria and indicators (examples)
Recreation in natural/ cultural sites	PA type, amount and condition of infrastructure number and type of visits, satisfaction, benefit value
Nature tourism entrepreneurship	number of entrepreneur agreements satisfaction (cooperation)

Value class: Natural resource use

Value type	Criteria and indicators (examples)
Hunting and fishing	proportion and significance of area for use
Reindeer herding and subsistence economy	proportion and significance of area for use
Other use (e.g. wood, water, berries/fungi)	proportion and significance of area for use

Appendix 7 Climate-smart planning of Natura 2000 sites

Adapted from: European Commission 2013: Guidelines on Climate Change and Natura 2000



Alternative text: At the top of the flowchart, it reads: What are the likely impacts of climate change on the protected area and operating environment (scenarios)? Below it, there are three text boxes that read: 1) Impact on the protected area designation values, 2) Impact on other values in the area, and 3) Potential for climate change mitigation and adaptation in the area. Below it, is one box, reading Stakeholder involvement, through which the arrows go from the upper boxes to the box that reads: Ways to reduce negative impacts. Two arrows shoot from it. The other goes to a text box that says Mitigation measures. The other goes to a text box that says Adaptation. The arrows on adaptation measures are sent to three text boxes, which read 1) In the protected area, 2) In the immediate vicinity of the protected area and 3) In the protected area network. These will send an arrow to the text box that says Necessary actions. From there, an arrow goes to the box that says Resources needed. From there, arrows will go into three text boxes that read 1) Short-term measures, 2) Medium-term measures and 3) Long-term measures. From these, the arrows go to the bottom box of the chart, where it says Monitoring. From this box, two arrows will go to the box where it says Ways to reduce negative impacts.

Appendix 8 Service infrastructure in protected areas

Service infrastructure here refers to routes, buildings and structures (excluding very temporary structures), but not tents (see section 12.6 for more details).

Item	Ownership	Maintenance	Use	Focus
1	National Parks Finland	National Parks Finland	Mainly general free use. This includes Parks & Wildlife Finland's chargeable rental and reservation properties. As a rule, business use is also possible (except, for example, unlocked huts).	The main use of service infrastructure in protected areas. Rental / reservation objects designated for business use are usually also in public use, but in special cases the object can also be designated for the exclusive use of companies. The use of service infrastructure in business use is subject to a charge, and the aim is to draw up a cooperation agreement for continuous operations.
2	National Parks Finland	A municipality, association or similar operator maintains or participates in the maintenance	Mainly general and free use. Agreeing on possible business use takes place between the administrator and the company (requires that this has been made possible in the agreement with Parks & Wildlife Finland).	The maintenance of the service equipment has been contractually transferred from Parks & Wildlife Finland to a party that does not do business with it. Typically, these are service equipment and services that Parks & Wildlife Finland would otherwise give up. In terms of the principles of use, they are comparable to the service infrastructure maintained entirely by Parks & Wildlife Finland (item 1).
3	National Parks Finland	The company is responsible for all or part of the maintenance	Services based on such infrastructure are typically aimed at the company's customers, who are also visitors to the protected area. These services may also include services for public use, such as customer service at a protected area or nature centre.	Services that are appropriate to provide by a company. Requires a lease agreement, etc.
4	Municipality, association or similar actor	Municipality, association or similar actor	General use. Possible business use is agreed between the owner and the company.	Typically implemented with project funding and often before the establishment of a nature reserve. Requires a license agreement between Parks & Wildlife Finland and the owner. Sites comparable in purpose of use, the maintenance of which has been transferred by Parks & Wildlife Finland to such an operator by agreement (item 2).
5	Enterprise	Enterprise	Such infrastructure serves the company's customers.	It is NOT possible to build such service equipment in protected areas by companies, even though some services based on these can also be considered to partly support the objectives of the general use of the protected area. An example of the services referred to here is the so-called glamping- i.e. luxury camping services. An exception to the above may be the immediate yard of a base leased for business use owned by Parks & Wildlife Services, where the construction of a fireplace, hut or similar light service equipment by the entrepreneur may be permitted (the entrepreneur must remove these after the lease period has ended).

Appendix 9 Specific issues related to the use of protected areas

Updated 22 February 2023, reviewed 31 December 2024

Use of insect repellents and insecticides in protected areas

If necessary, the use of conventional insect repellents to be applied or sprayed onto the skin is also permitted in protected areas.

The use of devices approved by Finnish Safety and Chemicals Agency (Tukes) for spreading vaporising insecticides is permitted only in accordance with their instructions for use. According to Tukes' guidelines, the use of such devices is allowed only in the yards of buildings, such as terraces and porches, but prohibited indoors and outside the yard, when walking in nature or hiking. Metsähallitus interprets these guidelines as meaning that the use of such devices is prohibited, for example, at campfire sites and lean-tos in protected areas. In protected areas, the use of such devices is also not recommended in the yards of unlocked huts, reservation huts and other buildings, because the buildings are usually located in the middle of nature and the possible exposure of other hikers must also be considered in connection with them. The active substances of vaporising insecticides are very harmful and dangerous, especially for aquatic organisms and pollinating insects. Unused insecticides should be disposed of as hazardous waste, empty packages can be sorted into mixed waste.

Shooting with an air pistol in a national park

The regulations of national parks and other nature reserves contain entries on hunting. As a rule, hunting is prohibited in national parks, although there are quite a few exceptions to this general rule. The statutes do not contain any entries on shooting with an air pistol or other recreational use of firearms.

Shooting at targets with an air pistol cannot be regarded as an entitlement to everyone but requires the consent of the landowner (even when boards are used to collect bullets fired at them). As the authority and landowner of national parks, Metsähallitus has a negative attitude towards such activities in national parks. One important reason for this is the nature of national parks as attractions open to all, offering visitors opportunities for recreation and relaxation in nature and for experiencing nature. Firing with an air pistol may pose a safety risk to visitors to the area and may cause harm and disturbance to both visitors to the area and nature. National parks generally do not allow uses that clearly exclude certain areas from other users. Shooting with an air pistol can therefore be contrary to the purpose of establishing national parks.

What has been said above about national parks largely applies to other nature reserves as well.

Fireworks in nature reserves

The use of fireworks usually requires a permit granted by the rescue authorities. The use of fireworks without such a permit is allowed only at the turn of the year, and in the area of some rescue departments, even at the end of the summer cottage season at the end of August ("Venetians").

The landowner's consent is required as a mandatory attachment to the notification to the rescue authorities. Due to the harm caused using fireworks (e.g. littering), Metsähallitus does not grant such a consent to established nature reserves, and consent can only be granted to other protected areas exceptionally and on special grounds. Metsähallitus' negative attitude towards fire-

works also applies to firework situations that do not require permission from the rescue authorities (see above).

Magnet fishing in the waters of nature reserves

Magnetic fishing involves collecting and lifting metal objects from the bottom of the water with a super magnet. Further south in Europe, magnetic fishing is already a common hobby, but it is only just gaining momentum in Finland. Further south in Europe, it is often associated with the collection of war debris from the World Wars.

As a rule, magnet fishing is prohibited in the waters of nature reserves, on the following grounds:

- According to the Nature Conservation Act (section 49), damaging the soil and vegetation is prohibited in nature reserves. In magnet fishing, the bottom of the water may break, grooves may form in the bottom sludge, bottom vegetation may be damaged, etc.
- Magnet fishing can break underwater cultural heritage sites or move from one place to another. Underwater cultural heritage sites are poorly known and inadequately entered in registers, which means that such damage may be difficult to avoid even if a magnet fisherman has checked the registers of the Finnish Heritage Agency for their location.
- As a rule, the collection of war objects and war debris throughout Metsähallitus areas requires the landowner's consent.

In some situations, magnet fishing may, with the consent of Metsähallitus, be permitted on sites known to contain underwater metal scrap that would be desirable to remove from the water based on conservation considerations. In such cases, the con-

sent also specifies how the scrap is collected and properly transported for recycling, etc.

Caravans and motor homes in nature reserves

Caravans and motor homes have become much more common, which has also been reflected in nature reserves. In addition to the increase in the number of people using these vehicles, the "profile" of those travelling has also changed considerably. In addition to traditional caravans that have reached middle age and prefer camping sites, there are more and more young people and families with children on the move.

Caravans and motor homes are also parked and overnight in protected areas. As caravans are large and take up space, this has led to congestion of parking spaces in some places. In many locations, the scarcity of parking spaces is a problem in other ways as well. Parking problems caused by caravans are accentuated if caravans stay in such places for a longer period (several days). So far, these problems have been relatively minor and local. For this reason, prohibitions and restrictions on the use of caravans and motor homes have so far been imposed only exceptionally.

In nature reserves, parking should primarily be provided in designated parking spaces. However, some caravans/ motor homes are also parked outside them, sometimes even off-road outside the road area. Longer-term motorhome/caravan camping has also been observed in a few places.

In principle, the increase in caravan and motor home users is seen more as an opportunity than a problem. In the future, the needs of this user group will be better considered in management plans and the planning of service infrastructure. Possible problems are addressed by directing guidance and communication to designated locations. The situations vary from site to site depending on, for example, the degree of their use, parking

areas and other services, and in addition, the situation can vary considerably over time. For this reason, solutions to problems must be flexible and consider specific local conditions.

The supervision intervenes in situations concerning parking in unsuitable spaces, long-term (day-long) parking/overnight stay in the same place, and possibly equipment spread out in the parking space (picnic equipment, parasols, etc.).

If necessary, prohibitions and restrictions can also be used. A time limit may be set for parking/overnight stay in the car park. It is usually assumed that caravan(s) are allowed to stay one night in a parking lot in a protected area or other place intended for this purpose. In some situations, overnight accommodation in a parking space may be prohibited altogether.

Beekeeping in nature reserves and other protected areas

In established state nature reserves, conventional beekeeping is not possible. Nature reserves are intended to protect native nature, and according to the Nature Conservation Act (section 49), activities that alter nature and thus, for example, the breeding of processed honeybees are prohibited there. It has been agreed with Metsähallitus' business operations that business areas located near nature reserves will not be allocated for conventional beekeeping (protection zone at least 2 km from the area border).

- In nature reserves established, landowner's consent is also not granted for hives of dark bees (subspecies of honeybee *Apis mellifera mellifera*) intended for honey production. However, consent for mating hives of dark bees may be granted on a case-by-case basis. In this case, the following must also be considered:

- Conventional beekeeping is not practised in the vicinity of the sites (precautionary area preferably at least 10 km).
- On heritage farms, hives must be placed so that they do not cause harm or danger to visitors to the sites.
- Bees are effective pollinators and may also contribute to the spread of alien species (e.g. lupine). If alien plants are a problem at the site, then beekeeping is not possible.

Nature reserves to be established later will follow the same guidelines as existing nature reserves. In other types of protected areas (e.g. protected forests), consent may be granted for the cultivation of dark bees on a case-by-case basis, if the site meets the requirements for the activity.

The above guidelines are based, inter alia, on the following:

The dark bee is not included in our native nature, even though it may have been present in Finland at some point during the warm seasons. However, the dark bee is an endangered indigenous breed whose genome is important to preserve. The rearing of dark bee mothers (mating hives) requires that conventional bees are not farmed near the apiary (at least 10–15 km away, because of crossbreeding risk), which is why there are few suitable areas for their breeding in Finland.

Heritage farms in nature reserves can be used as gene banks for old crop varieties and livestock breeds. Dark bee farming is a similar activity in nature. Based on this, it can be thought that nature conservation regulations categorically do not prevent the (mother) breeding of dark bees in nature reserves. However, compliance with the precautionary principle and the appropriateness for nature conservation must also be considered.

Rescue, service and animal search dog activities

The occasional practice of rescue and service dogs in protected areas does not require the landowner's consent if the dogs are kept on a leash and at most a few people and dogs are involved. Nature reserves must comply with their conservation regulations and possible restrictions on movement. If, on the other hand, such activities are repeated, the landowner's consent is required.

If the training of dogs requires them to be kept loose, or if it is a question of organising an examination, competition or similar event, the landowner's consent is required. In Metsähallitus areas, the aim is to direct such training and events to areas used for business purposes and, in Lapland, also to wilderness reserves. Consents are granted exceptionally for nature reserves (not at all for strict nature reserves), because in them such activities may cause harm/disturbance to nature or other use of the area. In the Reindeer husbandry area, the applicant for consent must always contact the reindeer herding cooperative in the area beforehand. In areas leased for hunting, activities must also be agreed with the tenant. Dogs and their handlers must wear an identification vest or other clearly distinguishable identifier. The consent granted may give the right to make temporary caches or terrain markings, e.g. with fibre tape (to be removed as soon as they become redundant). The recipient of the consent is responsible for all harm and damage that such events may cause to Metsähallitus or a third party.

The regulations on nature reserves enable the necessary measures required by rescue services, which includes, for example, the use of rescue dogs in a situation where a person missing in a nature reserve is being searched.

Organisation of exercises of the Finnish Defence Forces in nature reserves

The founding statutes of certain national parks (at least the Eastern Gulf of Finland, the Archipelago Sea and Ekenäs) specifically permit the activities of the Defence Forces. This means, on the other hand, that such activities are not permitted in principle in other national parks. The statutes establishing other nature reserves may also provide exceptions concerning the exercise and training activities of the Defence Forces (see section 52 of the Nature Conservation Act).

Metsähallitus and the Defence Forces have concluded an agreement on the temporary use of Metsähallitus areas for training by the Defence Forces. It states that nature reserves and sites may not be used without the express consent of the holder.

Based on the above, the Finnish Defence Forces' exercise activities in nature reserves require the consent of Parks & Wildlife Finland, except for areas specifically defined in statutes. As a rule, such activities are viewed with reservations, at least at sites with mentionable recreational use. In some areas, there may be special criteria (e.g. warehouses or caverns used by the armed forces) that should be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Electrofishing in established nature reserves

Electrofishing is used especially in mandatory monitoring of stream waters (mainly salmonids and often long-term) in standardised test areas, but also in monitoring the ecological status of waters, for example. Usually, the fish are simply stunned and hand netted and then returned alive to the rapids (the need to kill fish is rare). In some situations, electric fishing may also be justified in an established nature reserve.

Electrofishing means, on the one hand, the capture or killing of animals for research or other scientific purposes in accordance with the Nature Conservation Act (section 51) and, on the other hand, fishing other than that referred to in section 7 of the Fisheries Act. Electrofishing therefore requires an exemption under both abovementioned provisions. Those National Parks Finland's experts to whom the Director of Parks & Wildlife Finland has delegated the authority, have the right to grant such permits. However, the preparation of exemptions related to electrofishing also requires the expertise of Wildlife Service Finland.

With a derogation granted under NCA section 51, the permit required by the Fisheries Act can often also be granted, because the Director of Wilderness Service has given certain officials of National Parks the right to make fishing permit decisions that are made as holder of the water area (Metsähallitus 2018b). Outside established nature reserves, permits for electrofishing are granted by Wildlife Service Finland.

Statutory rights to move within a strict nature reserve or restricted part of a nature reserve

At least in Lapland, statutory rights (especially those related to fishing) also apply to strict nature reserves and restricted areas of nature reserves. If certain activities are permitted on a statutory basis in a strict nature reserve or restricted area, the access related to these activities (movement by one's own power) is also permitted for those entitled to do so, regardless of any access restrictions in the founding act or regulation orders of the area. According to Metsähallitus' interpretation, this right of movement then also applies to members of the family entitled to the access.

Because the legislation does not define a family, Metsähallitus complies with Statistics Finland's definition for it. According to that provision, a family consists of people who are married or cohabiting together or who have registered their partnership and their children, one of the parents and their children, married or cohabiting couples and registered partnerships without children. Siblings or cousins living together are not a family and do not belong to the family concept.

There can be no more than two consecutive generations in a family. If there are several generations in the household-dwelling unit, the family is formed starting from the youngest generation. This is how e.g. a mother-in-law or father-in-law living with the child's family remains outside the family, unless the spouse also lives together, in which case the old couple forms their own separate family.

Joint area shares and their possible sale

Protected properties may include shares of common areas, which are usually associated with shared water areas. In the property formation ordinances of nature reserves, such shares of common areas are transferred to a property in the municipality called a "conservation ghost". If this does not exist before, it will be established upon delivery. Such a cooperative property has only shares in common areas.

From time to time, there have been cases where there has been a desire to buy shares in common areas. As a rule, the joint area shares of protected properties on the balance sheet of National Parks Finland are not sold. This main principle applies to other Metsähallitus properties, especially river and rapids areas (because of migratory fish issues) and larger lakes. However, in exceptional cases, sales may be possible and even expedient. Usually these are small ponds or lakes, especially if they are located on private land.

Before a possible sale, it is always discussed with Wildlife Services Finland.

The negative attitude towards the sale of shares in joint areas is based, inter alia, on the following:

- Part of the joint area shares of National Parks Finland are related to properties acquired by ELY Centres for nature conservation purposes, in which case they have been included in the compensation paid to the seller. In such situations, it is not possible to sell shares without particularly compelling reasons.
- Shared areas may have significance for the operations of National Parks Finland, for example, when building piers or managing water waste. In addition, the shares enable National Parks Finland to influence decision-making in joint property management associations in water areas that are of conservation significance (e.g. Saimaa ringed seal waters).

The shared areas are important for the operation of Wildlife Services Finland (e.g. in securing the operating conditions for commercial fishing).

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