

DEVELOPING THE FENNOSKANDIAN GREEN BELT IN SOUTH-EAST FINLAND

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Target area for developing the Green Belt of Fennoskandia (GBF) in South-East Finland is geographically defined as a 50 km wide zone from the state border, extending from the Gulf of Finland up to Ilomantsi. The provinces are South Karelia, South Savo, Kymenlaakso as well as a part of North Karelia.

South-East Finland lacks protected forests - only some 0,35% of the productive forest land is protected by law, and the area of contiguous forests is relatively small. To develop the GBF forests, mires and small water bodies (the mosaic) are chosen, as well as catchment and riparian areas of the streams inhabited by migratory fish. Transboundary GBF areas form ecological corridors across the border, and these are fostered by restoration.

A marketing program is targeted to the Finnish GBF area landowners, to market the possibility to sell valuable forest for conservation instead of wood cutting by the funding of METSO (Forest Biodiversity Programme for Southern Finland). The implementation of METSO continues surely up to year 2016 and probably up to year 2020. In the Finnish side of the GBF area there are a plenty of private landowners, also big forest owners such as pulp and paper companies and Vapo. Valuable state-owned areas e.g. in Lohikoski are protected in the spirit of the Memorandum of understanding on the development of the GBF between Norway, Russia and Finland.

An information campaign will be targeted to the Finnish GBF area landowners, to market the possibility to get paid for conserving valuable forest stands instead of logging, by the funding of METSO (Forest Biodiversity Programme for Southern Finland). The implementation of METSO continues surely up to year 2016 and probably up to year 2020. In the Finnish side of the GBF area there are plenty of private landowners, also big companies such as pulp and paper companies and Vapo. Valuable state-owned areas e.g. in Lohikoski are protected in the spirit of the Memorandum of understanding on the development of the GBF between Norway, Russia and Finland.

Suitable pairs for the protected/valuable areas in the Leningrad Region in Finland are the wetlands South from Salpausselkä and the Konnunsuo area. Also rivers inhabited by sea-migrating trout such as Mustajoki, Urpalanjoki and Vilajoki are suitable.

As pairs for the GBF areas in the Republic of Karelia the "Siberian jay zone" constitutes East-West corridors formed by the rivers Hiitolanjoki and Helisevänjoki with freshwater salmon of Lake Ladoga; forest areas with small water bodies in Haarikko, Tyrmä and

Saarijärvi (Savonlinna town); Eräjärvi-Kemppilä mire areas, Lohikoski, Viitalamminsalu and Paajasensalo (Ruokolahti municipality).

Similarly, farther North important objects are transboundary lakes such as Immolanjärvi (Imatra town) and Karjalan Pyhäjärvi (municipalities of Parikkala and Kesälahti). The upper reaches of river Koitajoki (Ilomantsi municipality) deserve attention as well. The Northern Ladoga centre of herb-rich lush forests extends to Finnish side, giving rise to high natural diversity for forests and wetlands (municipalities of Parikkala, Kitee and Tohmajärvi).

Finnish-Russian co-operation is necessary to identify the valuable natural entities parallelly in both sides of the border, and to define exact ecological connections and their development needs. The analysis of the representativeness of the protected areas network and high-conservation value areas (GAP-analysis), implemented in the Russian side, is to be considered. Additional information is gained from a Zonation-type analysis accross the border. A transboundary map presenting relevant natural and cultural objects serves tourism as well. Existing transboundary reports on endangered species (flying squirrel, white-backed woodpecker) is utilized in the Finnish conservation planning.

It will be also important to identify apparently uninteresting areas that in the larger context have significance as future restoration areas e.g. with Finnish KEMERA funding or as separate projects.

Implementators of pilot projects on restoration, wider protected zones along waterways and continuous cover forestry are University of East Finland and other research institutes (Forest Research Institute, Finnish Environment Centre, Allergy and Environment Institute of South Karelia and regional ELY-centres). Local actors such as regional units of FANC, fishery units and municipalities, including South Karelia Recreation Foundation are invited to participate.