

Participatory planning and management of wetlands along the Gulf of Finland migratory flyway - FI

1. Policy Objective & Theme

- SUSTAINABLE USE OF RESOURCES: Preserving coastal environment (its functioning and integrity) to share space
- SUSTAINABLE USE OF RESOURCES: Sound use of resources and promotion of less resource intensive processes/products
- SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC GROWTH: Balancing economic, social, cultural development whilst enhancing environment

2. Key Approaches

- Integration
- Participation
- Ecosystems based approach
- Socio-economic
- Technical

3. Experiences that can be exchanged

Improving habitats by working with local communities and farmers during planning and implementation to benefit wildlife and improve conditions for visitor recreation and farming.

4. Overview of the case

Twelve degraded areas, otherwise important for Birds and Habitats Directive species were restored. The conservation measures were conducted with the input and help of the local community to mutual benefit.

5. Context and Objectives

a) Context

Along the flyway of the northern coastal Gulf of Finland, waterfowl and waders wintering in the southern part of the Baltic Sea and the coasts of the North Sea migrate in the spring to their breeding regions and in the autumn back to their wintering regions. 12 areas along the flyway are internationally valuable bird-rich wetlands in which 35 species mentioned in Annex I of the Birds Directive either rest or breed. Important species such as the Whooper and Bewick's swans (*Cygnus Cygnus* and, *C. Columbianus*) and Smew (*Mergus albellus*) use them for resting. Among the breeding species are the corncrake (*Crex crex*) and Bittern (*Botaurus stellaris*). These areas are also important habitats for many plant and insect species mentioned in the Habitats directive. A major part of the rare yellow-spotted whiteface dragonfly (*Leucorrhinia pectoralis*) population in Finland and of the entire Natura 2000 network lives in the these areas. Overgrowth of meadows, lack of open water areas, small predators, uncontrolled visitor access and low public awareness in some places are threats to these sites.

b) Objectives

The main objective was to establish a functional network of Natura 2000 wetland areas along the northern coast of the Gulf of Finland flyway and to secure favourable conservation status for wetland species mentioned in the Birds and Habitats

Directives by restoration and participatory management of 12 wetlands in southern Finland.

6. Implementation of the ICZM Approach (i.e. management, tools, resources)

a) Management

Uusimaa Regional Environment Centre is part of the Finnish environment administration; it is a regional state administration body in the capital metropolitan area, acting as an active agent in developing the environment and in environmental issues.

b) ICZM tools

The areas involved were mainly shallow overgrown bays with seven of the areas located in the Uusimaa region and five in southeast Finland. The overall area of these sites is ca. 3,630 hectares. Management plans were made for, altogether, ten areas. Participatory planning was used to settle the conflicts between conservation and other land use.

The plans were based on collected data on the nature and current use of the areas. The opinions and views of landowners and local residents were heard in public events. The plans defined the needs and goals for management, as well as the procedures to attain them. The plans contained an estimate of the effects of these procedures on the state of the species and habitat types to be conserved. In the planning stage, further funding was also determined, as well as the parties responsible for management after the project.

During the restoration, flood meadows were cleared of trees and bushes and by reaping, crushing and cutting of cane-grass. Altogether 161 ha. of open area with low growth was created for waders and water birds. This procedure was carried out with an exterior contractor and special machinery. After the basic restoration, the flood meadows were taken into pasture use. Landowners have used the appropriate pasture strain of cows and sheep to keep the vegetation of the meadows at a low level. The water-line still needs to be regularly cleared with machines as the animals will not go to the wettest areas. The moisture conditions in flood meadows were restored by de-centralising ditches and making them flow through flood meadows. In addition, new open water areas were dug in the flood meadows invaded by plants. Open water bog lakes were dug in the shore areas to provide a suitable living environment for insects which depend on such wetland, such as the yellow-spotted whiteface. Mowing, grazing and clearing of trees and bushes increased the open meadows by more than 200 ha. Removal of aquatic plants increased the open water area by 70 ha, thus extending the area of mosaic habitats by almost 190 ha. Improving hydrological conditions of coastal meadows (70 ha) further enhanced the quality and naturalness of coastal habitats. The risk of power lines for birds was reduced by cabling a power line to the bank and placing visible balls on the power lines. Hunting of small predators (chiefly American mink and common raccoons) with the help of the regional game management districts and volunteers from local hunting clubs improved the breeding success of wetland birds and thereby the diversity of bird communities. Controlling recreational use also reduced visitor damage and secured undisturbed breeding and resting areas for many bird species.

The accessibility and recreational facilities were improved through the addition of information boards, nature paths, bird towers and the removal of eyesores. Dissemination and awareness activities were conducted to increase interest in, and appreciation of, the areas among the local population. Furthermore, the long-term management of the pastures has been secured through agri-environmental support agreements made with local farmers. The effect of the restoration work on birdlife was followed up with extensive counts and on vegetation and habitat type by aerial photographs.

7. Cost and resources

The total budget was €3,290,718 of which there was a Life contribution of €1,645,359.

8. Effectiveness (i.e. were the foreseen goals/objectives of the work reached?)

Management plans were drafted and approved for 3,353 ha. in total and these plans were largely implemented during the restoration period. Altogether, some 87 ha. of land was cleared of trees and bushes, while reed beds were removed from approximately 185 ha. of coastal meadows by crushing, mowing and grinding. A total of 176 ha. of new pastures were established and grazing started. In all, 40 small ponds were created as foreseen to benefit wetland insects, mainly dragonflies.

An old dumpsite was restored and landscaped to benefit insects preferring dry sandy slopes. Numbers of both nesting and staging birds have increased considerably in the areas.

9. Success and Fail factors

The activities actively developed nature education about wetlands and organised excursions for pupils and the public and education material for schools (including wetland cards, a book and a video on wetland excursions). To enhance the recreational use of the project areas, 14 bird watching sites were added, as well as car parks, nature trails and general information boards.

10. Unforeseen outcomes

None so far.

11. Prepared by

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12. Verified by

It has not been possible to verify this case.

13. Sources

- Management of Wetlands along the Gulf of Finland Migratory Flyway 2003-2007 Final report Uusimaa Regional Environment Centre & Southeast Finland Regional Environment Centre



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