

# Hossa National Park

## Management Plan

### Executive Summary

#### The name, location, and surface area of the planning area

Hossa National Park; located in the municipalities of Suomussalmi and Taivalkoski, and the city of Kuusamo in Kainuu and North Ostrobothnia; 11,091 ha of which 12 % is covered by water.

#### I Description of the current situation

##### General description of the planning area

The Hossa planning area consists of the Hossa National Park. The National Park was established in honour of Finland's centennial celebrations with the Hossa National Park Act (296/2017). The Hossa planning area includes 87 % of the Hossa Natura 2000 site and the whole Moilasenvaara Natura site. The other site included is Romeikonvaara, an area of former commercial forest that is a part of the National Park. Most of the planning area is located in the Kainuu region, in the northern part of the municipality of Suomussalmi. A part of the area is in Kuusamo and Taivalkoski, in North Ostrobothnia. The Hossa Natura site includes an area belonging to the shore conservation programme (the lakes at Hossa), which are mainly in Suomussalmi. The planning area is owned by the state.

The landscape of Hossa is characterised by coniferous forests dominated by pines, eskers, and rugged, clear waters. The Moilasenvaara Natura site has more spruce forests and mires than the Hossa Natura site. The past uses of the area included hunting, fishing, and reindeer husbandry. This history is exemplified by old remains in the area. One of the most famous sites at Hossa are the rock paintings at Värrikallio. Surface waters cover 12 % of the planning area. The area has an abundance of lakes, ponds, small rivers, brooks, springs, and spring fens. As is typical to an esker area, the lakes in the hiking area are mostly rugged and the lakes are clear, whereas the lakes at Moilasenvaara are humic lakes.

##### The founding purpose

The Natura sites in the planning area have been established through the Outdoor Recreation Act and the Water Act. On the Kuusamo and Taivalkoski side of the area the establishing laws are the Nature Conservation Act and the Water Act. Most Natura sites (93 %) have been established as parts of National Parks. The main purpose of the area is to protect and maintain the species of the eskers, fells and small waters, the geological and cultural features and landscape of the area, and the general recreational and hiking use of the area. All of these tell of the long and continuing history of human coexistence with nature in the area.

##### Geology

The bedrock in Hossa is very old, formed in the Archean era approximately 2,500 to 3,100 million years ago. The Hossa bedrock has fissure valleys and fault zones that were born before the ice age. In the northern part of the National Park lie Somerjärvi and the canyon lake of Julma-Ölkky. The two lakes were formed in the same fault zone. Most of the National Park is 215 to 250 metres above sea level. The highest point, Mieskallionvaara, is 299 metres above sea level. The eskers form a significant portion of the National Park. The soil material of the eskers is sorted sand and gravel. The largest and highest ridgeline begins from the southern end of Ala-Ölkky, and continues to south east past Laukkujärvi, Hakoharju, and Huosiharju.

##### Natura 2000 habitats

The area is nationally significant in the Natura network especially for the protection of its rugged, pine-dominated forests and inland water habitats. There is a significant amount of esker forests, aapa mires, and wooded mires as well as springs and spring fens on the site. Of all the siliceous rocks in the area, the rocky gorge of Julma-Ölkky has been classified as a nationally significant rock area in terms of nature and landscape conservation.

##### Species

The extensive reports done on the aphylophorales of the planning area have shown that Hossa National Park is highly significant for the protection of the decay fungi species of old-growth pine and spruce forests (12). A total of twelve threatened and 23 near-threatened species of aphylophorales have been observed in the planning area.

There is one known flying squirrel territory in the National Park.

In bird population censuses, 61 bird species have been observed in the planning area. Of these eight are vulnerable and seven are near-threatened species. Over 90 % of the bird species observed in the censuses were forest birds. The planning area is significant for the protection of old-growth forest bird species and for birds of prey.

The species in the planning area include several species of special concern: three polypores, one lichen species, and two bird species.

There are also poorly-known species groups in the area. Hossa National Park could be significant for their protection, as the species included are old-growth forest insect species and invertebrate species.

### Cultural heritage

Hossa area has a rich cultural heritage. There's been inhabitation in the area for 6,000 years. Hossa has been an important right of use and hunting area. The area has plenty of surface waters that have been actively used for travelling between east and west, Russia and Finland. The rich history has produced internationally significant cultural heritage: Its flagship site is the Hossa Värrikallio, which was created in the Stone Age, approximately 4,500 to 4,000 years ago. The most valuable building is the Lounatkoski log-driving cabin built in 1950. The underwater cultural heritage has also been inventoried in Hossa National Park. Among the finds are fishing structures and the remains of a punt from the early 19th century. Inventories show the importance of waterways in the area.

### Hiking, nature tourism, and guidance communications

Hossa National Park has become the most popular destination for nature tourism and recreational use in Kainuu, based on the number of visitors. The Hossa recreational area was established in 1979 based on the Outdoor Recreation Act. After that the area has been developed with long-term plans that take nature enthusiasts into account. In 2017 Hossa became the celebratory Finland 100 National Park. The National Park status has brought plenty of attention to the area, which has led the visitor count to rise above 100,000. In essence, the visitor numbers doubled in the inaugural year compared to the previous year. The attractiveness of the area is exemplified by its beautiful landscape, its natural peace, wide-ranging possibilities for outdoor activities, excellent off-road and other services, and interesting history. Hossa received a grade of 4.22 on the general visitor satisfaction index (scale 1-5) in the 2018 visitor survey.

The visitor services are produced by Metsähallitus Natural Heritage Services, the entrepreneurs at the visitor centre, and the entrepreneurs in the area. About 35 companies (varies yearly) use the National Park in their businesses, thanks to a co-operative agreement. Their satisfaction with the services received a grade of 3.77 (scale 1-5).

The visitor centre is run by entrepreneurs, and guidance services are also bought. The marketing is done together with the local entrepreneurs and their association. The National Park has good visibility in the communications of the co-operative partners.

In the last few years Hossa has received significant acknowledgements both locally and nationally: It won the Recreation Destination of the Year vote in 2011, the Made in Kainuu award in 2014, and the Most Beautiful Nature Site of the Year public vote in 2014 (organised on the web by Yle). Hossa National Park received plenty of national and international media attention when it was established in 2017.

### Hunting

The inhabitants of Suomussalmi, Taivalkoski, and Kuusamo have a right to hunt in Hossa National Park in the areas that are in their home municipality. The National Park area is not a part of the small game permit areas managed by Metsähallitus. The members of the Hossa-Irni reindeer herding co-operative and the people specifically assigned for this purpose by the Finnish Wildlife Agency have the permit-based right, not dependant on their home municipality, to hunt individual game animals, as described in the Nature Conservation Act Section 15(1)(3). The Kuusamo common land participant's association have the right to hunt elk in those areas of the National Park that are a part of the city of Kuusamo. In addition, the members of those hunting associations that have their hunting grounds bordering the National Park and that had been registered by the time the law took effect, can hunt in elk in the area.

The waters of Hossa offer exceptionally good living and growing conditions for several fish species. The most significant factor in weakening their natural state has been the logging dredging of the running waters of the area. Of all the interesting fish species in the area, the perch, vendace, pike, and whitefish populations are naturally increasing and have vital populations. Angling, ice fishing, and other fishing covered either by general fishing rights and/or by the lure fishing right included in the fishery management fee is mostly allowed in the lake and pond waters of the park. The Metsähallitus' "5502 Hossa" rod license is required when lure fishing in Kirkasvetinen, Pitkähöilua-Kokalmus, Iso-Valkeainen, Keski-Valkeainen, Ala-Valkeainen, and Umpi-Valkeainen, and in the running waters of the National Park. Recreational trap fishing with standing fishing gear can be practised with the "Suomussalmi 5001" Metsähallitus fishing license. The Hossa National Park Act has named Iso- and Pikkukukkurri, Iso Syrjäjärvi, Aittojärvi, Talasjärvi, Puukkojärvi, Syvä Suottajärvi, Matala Suottajärvi, and Saari Höilua as trap fishing waters.

Seine fishing is allowed by law in Aittojärvi for the purpose of fishery management and for demonstrating the

method to an audience. Seine fishing requires a permit from Metsähallitus.

Hossa is the most popular recreational fishing area in Kainuu, and also a nationally significant fishing destination. Trap fishing is significant only to the local population.

#### Other use

There are no significant easements on the planning area. The area has several right of use and rental contracts. Foraging berries and mushrooms is allowed under everyman's rights. Collecting firewood and soil, as well as collecting lichen and dwarf-shrubs is forbidden.

The National Park is located in the reindeer herding area and is located within the Hossa-Irni reindeer herding co-operative.

## II Core values and threats

The core values of Hossa National Park are:

**Habitats and species of the Habitats and Birds Directive:** Hossa is a nationally significant, and remarkably vast *Western Taiga (9010)\** area in the Kainuu region. *Inland water habitat types* form a regionally and nationally significant whole in the Natura network. *Coniferous forests on glaciofluvial eskers (9060)*: the planning area is divided by a large interlobate complex, which includes esker ridges and delta-like sandy heathland. Of all the *mire habitats* in the National Park, about a fifth are *Aapa mires (7310)\** and *Bog woodland (91D0)*, which in their natural state complement the Kainuu mire protection network. The portion of *Fennoscandian springs and spring fens (7160)* and *spring-fed mires* is significant, and the planning area forms a nationally significant area in the Natura network in terms of protecting the springs and spring fens of the area.

**Endangered animal and plant species:** The extensive reports done on the aphylophorales of the planning area have shown that Hossa National Park is highly significant for the protection of the decay fungi species of old-growth pine and spruce forests. A total of twelve threatened and 23 near-threatened species of aphylophorales have been observed in the planning area. There is one known flying squirrel territory in the National Park. In bird population censuses, 61 bird species were observed in the planning area. Of these eight are vulnerable and seven are near-threatened species. The planning area is significant for the protection of old-growth forest bird species and for birds of prey. The species in the planning area include several species of special concern: three polypores, one lichen species, and two bird species.

There are also poorly-known species groups in the area. Hossa National Park could be significant for their protection, as the species included are old-growth forest insect species and invertebrate species.

**Natural and cultural landscapers:** The landscape of Hossa is intrinsically connected to hiking and recreational functions of all types. The effect of past forest fires can be seen in the variation of the ages of the forests on both the forest and landscape level at Hossa. The landscape history of Hossa shows the age-old interaction of humans with nature, which is exemplified by the hollow trees, tar pits, and remnants of reindeer herding. The rocky gorge of Julma-Ölkky is a popular natural site which has been classified as a nationally significant rock area in terms of nature and landscape conservation.

**Built cultural environment:** There has been inhabitation in the Hossa area from the Stone Age. The oldest signs of human activities in the area is the Stone Age settlement in Mykräniemi. It has been dated to 6,000 BCE. The most famous sign of human settlement might be Väräkallio (appr. 2,500-2,000 BCE). There are a lot more remains from later land use, such as tar pits, reindeer herding structures, and forestry and logging related buildings and structures. In the underwater inventory of Hossa, early 19th century fishing structures were found.

**Tourism business:** Both national and international tourism companies operate year-round in Hossa. The summer visitors are mainly Finnish, but in the winter international clients form a significant portion. The companies offer accommodation, restaurant, and programme services as well as equipment rental. The routes, cabins, and the service level all have an impact on the year-round business.

**The recreational use of nature and cultural sites:** The National Park is an important recreational and nature tourism destination for local inhabitants as well as for domestic and international tourists. Visits by hikers and mountain bikers grew significantly after the establishment of the National Park. Accessibility is an important part of the recreational services of Hossa. The National Park revitalises the whole local community.

**Hunting:** The area of Hossa National Park has a long history of hunting. Nowadays hunting is governed by the rules written in the establishing act of the park. Hossa is a popular fishing destination that has wide-ranging lure fishing possibilities, considering the size of the area. Trap fishing is also allowed in some of the waters in the National Park.

**Reindeer husbandry:** The area is an important part of the grazing fields of the Hossa-Irni reindeer herding co-operative.

The most significant threats to core values were recognised. Previous forestry actions have undermined nature values. Forest felling and drainage have impaired the representation of natural habitats (natural forests, old-growth forest species, mires) and species, and lowered their number. Previous work on the forests can also be detected in the landscape. Logging dredging has impaired the natural status of small waters and running waters. The lack of resources can be seen in the lack of site maintenance, in the neatness of surroundings, in the wear and tear, and in insufficient marketing. With careful planning and implementation of fish transplanting, the propagation fish disease and the mixing of hereditary material can be prevented.

### **III Setting objectives**

#### **The objectives of the plan**

##### **Securing a favourable level of habitat and species protection**

The surface area and representation of natural forests is improved. The surface area of the natural forests suitable for species is retained. The quality of habitats is improved in the long run (through the continuing decaying of wood material). Inventories help gain knowledge about the invertebrate species in the surface waters, and of the insect species of the old-growth forests.

##### **Maintaining valuable cultural heritage sites:**

Sites will be maintained in a way that helps retaining cultural and landscape values.

##### **The tourist and recreational use of Hossa National Park is sustainable:**

The new nature activities in the area, as well as other tourism-based businesses, are guided through agreements based on the principles of sustainable nature tourism. The co-operation between entrepreneurs and their associations remains strong. For our part, we take care of the attractiveness of the Hossa area and of the development of tourism services there. The fish populations must remain vital and interesting from a fishing perspective.

##### **The attractiveness of Hossa as a tourist destination is developing, and the local economic effect from recreational use as well as the health benefits for the visitors to the National Park are growing:**

The main attraction — the beautiful landscapes and the possibility to experience nature — will last. We will make sure that the beautiful esker and water landscapes will be there for the visitors to enjoy in the future as well. We will also take care that there are enough resources for service and maintenance needs. The number and quality of service structures will be adjusted based on demand. Accessible nature tourism will be promoted. The needs of domestic and international clients will be met. The profile of Hossa will be supported with marketing and communications, and its attractiveness as a destination for recreational activities will be strengthened.

#### **The central solutions of zoning**

Two zones have been established in the Hossa planning area for directing public use: the hiking and recreational zone, and the peripheral zone. The hiking and recreational zone is 4,624 hectares, which is 42 % of the surface area of the planning area. The zone consists of the eastern part of the National Park. Almost all of the service structures in the planning area are in this zone. New activities will be directed to this zone. New routes can be designed. Use will be guided through park regulations.

The peripheral zone is 6,467 hectares, which is 58 % of the planning area. The zone consists of the western part of the National Park. The zone will be kept peaceful and in a wildstate. New service structures will not be built in the zone, but connecting routes are a possibility. Existing structures will be maintained. Programme service activities can be directed to the peripheral zone. Use will be guided through park regulations.

### **IV Measures and implementation**

The set objectives and development areas will be achieved through the actions described in the plan.

The natural state of mire habitats will be improved by restoring the drained mires. The structural diversity of natural forests will be advanced through restorative controlled burnings. Flowing waters will be restored based on a needs assessment plan. Restorative actions will help to improve the habitats of the species living in natural forests and flowing waters. Inventories help to improve knowledge of the invertebrate species in the surface waters, and of the insect species of the old-growth forests.

Nationally selected cultural heritage, archaeological, and ancient monument sites (ROTI) will be maintained and observed regularly. This will possibly be extended to other significant sites on the routes. Repair methods will be informed by traditional methods and building techniques.

The quality of service structures will be well-maintained and match demand. If necessary, routes will be reconstructed and realigned to avoid wearing, for example. The quantity of service structures can be adjusted based on use. As the number of visitors rises at the more popular sites, new toilets and larger parking places are needed,

amongst other needs. A new resting place will be built on the Ölökyntä ylitys day route. A new parking place will be built at Julma-Ölkky. The rental cabins located in the National Park will be renovated as necessary. The routes in the national park will be developed in the future based on the needs of the visitors and taking into account protection needs. Both guided and independent multi-use routes (e.g. in the Värrikallio and Julma-Ölkky area) will be maintained for winter activities. The aim is to combine several activities on the same route. Also skiing and other winter routes maintained by machine by other parties can be located in the National Park, based on agreement. The attractiveness of the mountain biking route will be developed as necessary. Canoeists will be accommodated by developing e.g. piers, landfall sites, and other necessary structures. Accessibility will be handled together with stakeholders, so that it becomes a functional part of the attractiveness of the National Park as an accessible destination.

Co-operation with tourism business, associations, and other stakeholders is active.

Guidance material (maps, brochures, nationalparks.fi, eräluvat.fi) will be kept up-to-date and available to clients. The Hossa Visitor Centre will be maintained as an attractive visiting destination and as a Metsähallitus service centre that will offer information about the routes and services at Hossa.

Hunting practices will remain as is decreed in the rules set forth in the establishing act. Game management will not be done in the area. Fishing arrangements will be done as set in the establishing act. General fishing rights will be restricted on Umpi-Valkeainen and Iso-Valkeainen. Trout and grayling will be transplanted in Umpi-Valkeainen and Iso-Valkeainen. The fishing rules on permit waters can be changed if necessary for the fish population or for developing fishing needs. The fish barrier in Lipposensalmi will be removed. Hunting, fishing, and off-road traffic will be monitored as a part of the wilderness monitoring performed in the area.

The fencing relating to reindeer herding will be agreed on with the reindeer herding co-operative. Winter feeding sites will be agreed on with the reindeer herding co-operative. The feeding sites must be cleaned annually in the spring. New route plans and functions will be negotiated with the reindeer herding co-operative before taking action on them.

The snow mobile route in the National Park will be audited. Off-road traffic without a permit from Metsähallitus is forbidden. The maintenance traffic for nature tourism will be separately agreed on with businesses. Permission for traffic outside the routes can be given based on the principles and guidelines of off-road traffic.

Roads unnecessary to managing and using the National Park will no longer be repaired; some of them will be cut off, and some will be used only by Metsähallitus for their own maintenance traffic. The number of parking areas will be reviewed based on use and need. Parking of camper vans and caravans will be allowed only in the areas designated for them.

Mountain biking is allowed only on designated routes, and the same applies to riding. Dog and reindeer sledding will be directed to their own routes. Rock climbing is allowed in the National Park, based on everyman's rights. If rock climbing requires installing permanent hangers or similar bolts, then a permit is required. Rock climbing under the terms of everyman's rights does not allow removing or damaging the moss, lichen, or flora growing on rocks. Camping is allowed only on designated, maintained resting places. Different events can be organised in the National Park, under discretionary permits. Campfires are allowed only on maintained campfire sites. A permit is needed for boat storage. Boats with internal combustion engines are forbidden in the National Park, with the exception of Iso- and Pikku-Kukkuri along the Peranka waterway. The use of electric motors will be allowed. The use of boats with internal combustion engines will be permitted for maintenance work and for seine fishing on Aittojärvi.

#### **Environmental impact assessment and monitoring**

Mire restoration has beneficial effects on the natural state of aapa mires and wooded mires, as well as for rich fens, springs and spring mires, and for transitional mires and marshlands, especially when the water economy of drained mires is restored. The restoration of flowing waters is beneficial for small rivers and brooks, and for the natural state and species of Fennoscandian riverways. The restoration of mires and flowing waters can have detrimental effect as well, mostly for the natural state of flowing waters, but also for rugged clear-watered lakes, if the actions taken cause dilution of nutrients, sediments, or chemicals. Restoration activities are planned in accordance with restoration guidelines and the environmental quality manual. This helps minimise the possible detrimental effects to a brief and minimal level.

Restorative controlled burnings will have a beneficial effect on the representativity and the species of the natural forests. Burning sites can be esker forests, where the action can help the structural representativity of the esker forests. The forests chosen for restoration burnings have been used for forestry or have weakened representativity. Before the burnings, species surveys will be conducted to ensure that specifically protected species will not be weakened or destroyed, for example.

In terms of the actions related to recreation and tourism, the increased visitor numbers and activities in the National Park can have detrimental effects on the nature values, e.g. for the nesting of great raptors, or for the environment around erosion-sensitive springs, or rugged rock and esker habitats. The natural peace of the peripheral zone will be guaranteed through the careful planning of the locations of the routes and services. The effect of the

recreational and tourism use on the natural values of the planning area will be monitored with the LAC monitoring system. The current visitor numbers are not foreseen to have a significant effect on the habitats or living conditions of the species living in the protected area.

Indicators approved by Metsähallitus will be used in monitoring the implementation and the effects of the plan. The sustainability of the recreational use of nature and of tourism will be evaluated with the LAC monitoring method (Limits of Acceptable Change).

#### **Confirmation of the plan**

The Ministry of the Environment will confirm the management plan of Hossa National Park.

#### **Information about the planning**

The management plan is a long-term strategic plan for the land use of the target location. It is used to implement the objectives set for the management of the location, in addition to the establishing objectives set in legislation. The objectives regarding conservation, recreational use, and other use are aligned together through the plan. The planning period is 10 to 15 years.

The management planning is inclusive activity following the principles of both Metsähallitus and the environmental administration. Participation and feedback opportunities have been arranged throughout the planning process. The aim is to get as much information and opinions as possible for the benefit of management solutions. The aim is to gain a general acceptance for the objectives and actions through discussions, and to create a permanent co-operation and interaction between the different actors.

The Hossa National Park management plan is a part of the ASCENT project financed by Interreg (Northern Periphery and Arctic programme).

