



METSÄHALLITUS
FORSTSTYRELSEN
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Freshabit LIFE IP

After LIFE Plan

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Freshabit LIFE IP (LIFE 14 IPE/FI/023)

Duration: 2016–2022

Budget: EUR 20 million

Target areas: (1) Naamijoki, (2) Ostrobothnia rivers (Lapväärtin-Isojoki, Ähtävänjoki Rivers), (3) Southwest Finland (Kiskonjoki and Karvianjoki Rivers), (4) Karjaanjoki, (5) Vanajavesi, (6) Central Finland (Saarijärvi route, Lakes Etelä-Konnevesi and Päijänne), (7) Puruvesi, (8) Koitajoki

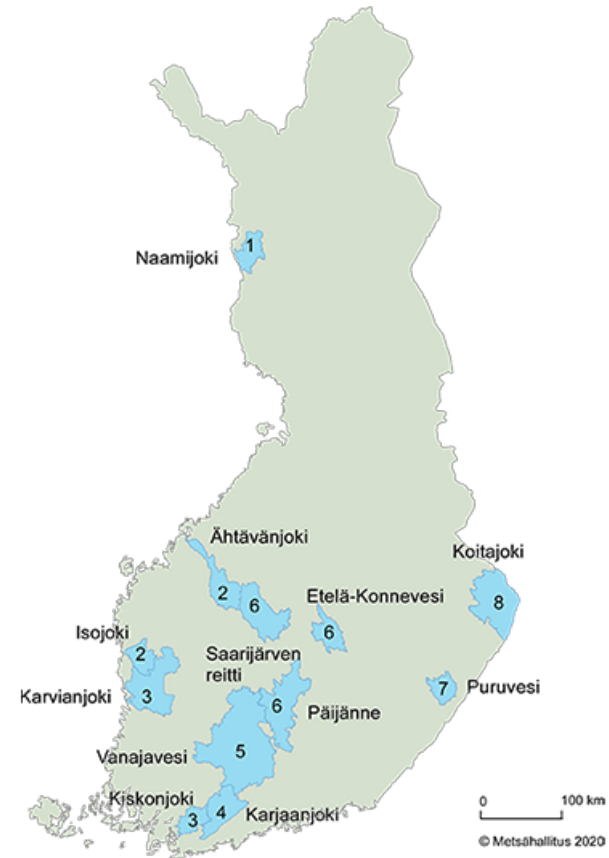
Project coordinator: Metsähallitus, Parks & Wildlife Finland

Partners: Association for Water and Environment of Western Uusimaa; Centres for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment in Central Finland, Lapland, North Karelia, North Savo, South Ostrobothnia, South Savo and Southwest Finland; City of Raseborg; City of Saarijärvi; DocArt Productions; Finnish Association for Nature Conservation (FANC) and its district organisations in Central Finland, Ostrobothnia and South Häme; Finnish Environment Institute; Finnish Forest Centre (SMK); Finnish Society for Nature and Environment (Natur och Miljö); Geological Survey of Finland; Metsähallitus Forestry Ltd; Ministry of the Environment; Natural Resources Institute Finland; Pro Puruvesi; University of Helsinki, Lammi Biological Station; University of Jyväskylä; JAMK University of Applied Sciences (Jyväskylä); University of Oulu; Vanajavesi Foundation; Vattenfall; World Wildlife Fund Finland.

Project background

Freshabit LIFE IP was a large-scale nature conservation project that focused on restoring freshwater bodies, including lakes, rivers and streams, as well as their catchment areas. This seven-year project had a large number of different partner organisations, including research institutes, government agencies, companies as well as national and local NGOs.

Water bodies and catchment areas were restored in eight target areas in different parts of Finland. These measures varied from restoring an individual stream or lake to implementing extensive water protection solutions that reduce loading in the catchment area. While the specific goals of the project included improving the living conditions of Habitats Directive and Birds Directive species on Natura 2000 sites, a significant part of the measures targeted areas outside these Natura 2000 sites, and their impacts also extend to other water bodies.

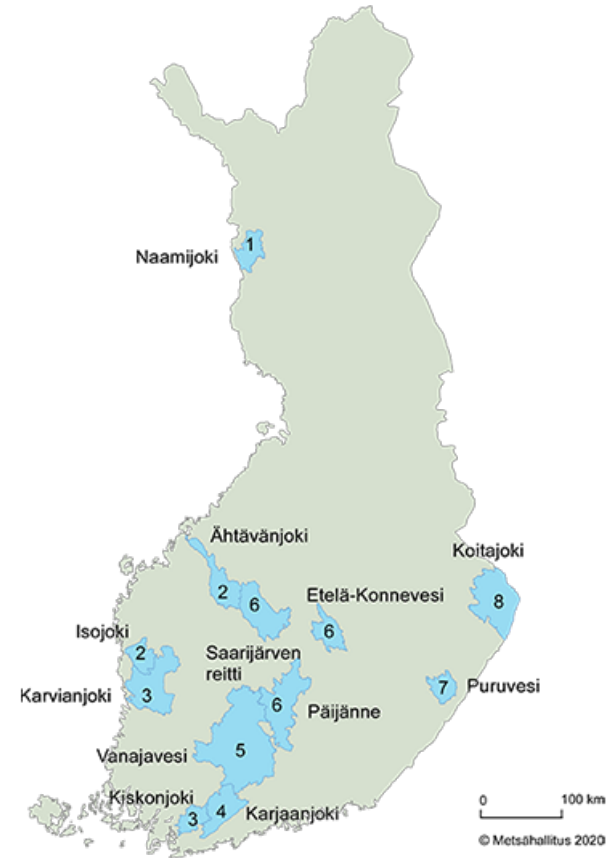


Prioritized Action Framework for Natura 2000

The Prioritized Action Framework for Natura 2000 (PAF)

covers key actions and EU financing needs for the Natura 2000 network and other areas that improve its connectivity in 2021–2027. The prioritised measures include restoration, acquisition of areas, surveys, monitoring and governance. The estimated cost of implementing the prioritised measures in the period 2021–2027 is over EUR 860 million per year.

The objectives of the Freshabit LIFE IP project are in line with the PAF. The project implemented the objectives of the PAF framework directly in aquatic environments and developed networks and approaches that help carry out the programme as a whole.



Examples of project results



500
water protection
structures



40 ha
of constructed
wetlands



7
fish
passes



700 km
of re-opened migration
routes for salmonid fish



25 km
of restored
streams

1. **Habitats** for aquatic birds, the freshwater pearl mussel, fish and other aquatic and wetland fauna **were improved on 32 Natura sites** by means of water body restoration measures.
2. **Environmental loading was reduced** in the targeted water bodies by building sedimentation basins, wetlands and bottom weirs in different parts of their catchments and by restoring drained peatlands, in total across more than **25,000 hectares**.
3. **Diversity was improved** in modified stream habitats by adding stones, gravel for spawning beds, wood and aquatic mosses, in total in more than **25 kilometres of streams**.
4. **Bird wetlands were restored** by raising water levels, removing aquatic vegetation encouraged by eutrophication, excavating open water channels and increasing grazing on shores, in total covering more than **1,000 hectares**.
5. Restoration measures also **promoted recreational use** in target areas, increased their attraction and fostered ecological and landscape values.



13 300
restocked juvenile
freshwater pearl mussels



12 ha
of restored spawning
grounds for whitefish
and land-locked salmon



185 ha
new conservation
areas



140
school days
2500
participants

After LIFE Plan and its objectives

The objective of the After LIFE Plan is to describe how continuity of project activities, dissemination of lessons learned and maintenance of the outcomes will be ensured after project conclusion. The project's partner organisations and key stakeholders will promote continuity, each in their own sector.

The After LIFE Plan has two parts. [Part 1](#) describes seven identified key challenges or development areas that remain to be resolved after the project's conclusion, or that should be given special attention in order to improve the status of water bodies.

[Part 2](#) of the plan lists the project measures and describes how they will be continued after the project has ended, which party is responsible for them, and what the plan for financing them is.



Part 1.

Key development areas after project conclusion



Overview of themes

The findings of Part 1 were put together in an After LIFE workshop organised for key actors in March 2022. The development areas were grouped under three themes: **monitoring, cooperation networks and operating models** as well as **status of habitats**.

The key development areas are issues requiring broad-based cooperation on a broader level than project activities. While work on these issues can be carried out under programmes (including Helmi habitat programme and Veden vuoro water protection programme) and in strategic projects, political steering will also be required.

On the following pages, the development areas are described and proposals for resolving the issues are identified. Responsibility for the proposed measures has been assigned to actors who can promote them by means of financing and political steering or national implementation.

The partners and key stakeholders of the FRESHABIT LIFE IP project are committed to promoting development in the target areas within the framework of valid Government Programmes and the central government's budget.

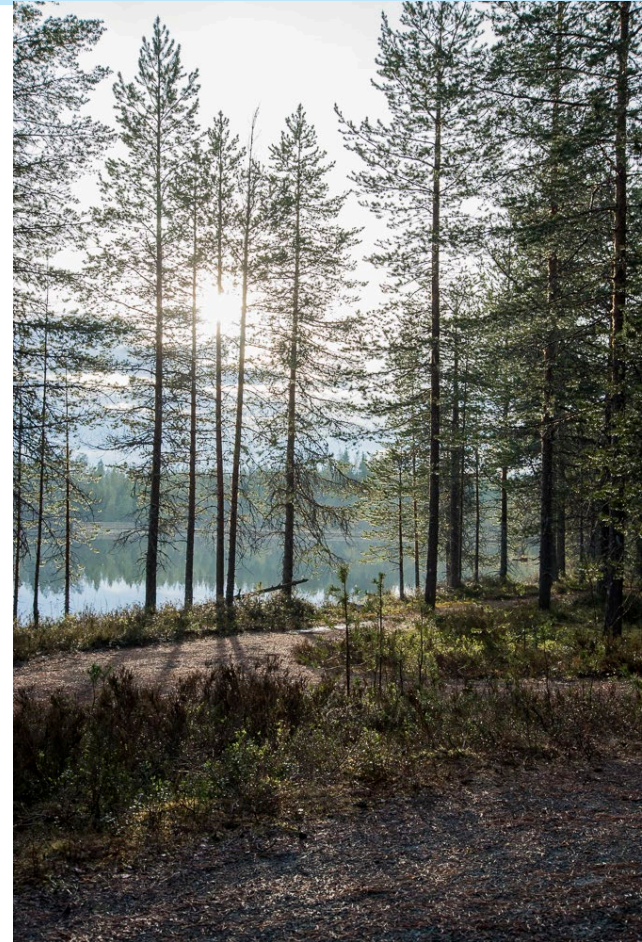


Monitoring 1/3

Development area 1. A dedicated financing channel for monitoring.

More resources are needed for monitoring. One step towards improvement would be a separate funding channel that would focus on developing and carrying out long-term impact monitoring, for example by developing permanent networks of monitored sites.

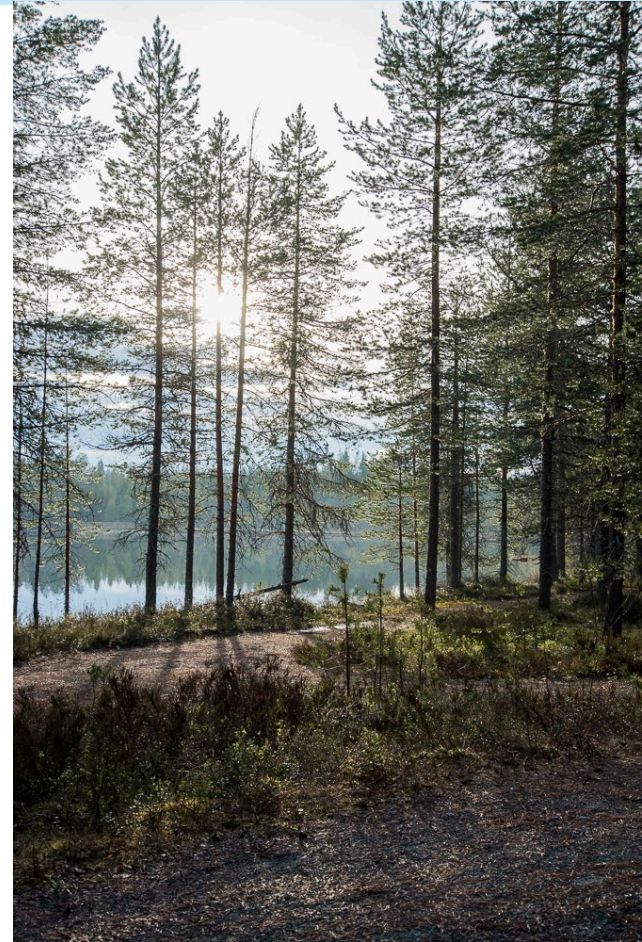
In addition to a dedicated funding channel, projects need sufficient resources for monitoring carried out while the project is in progress. For example, grants could include an obligation to ensure sufficient monitoring, at least in publicly funded projects. The funding for monitoring should extend beyond the project period.



Monitoring 1/3

Development area 1. Proposals for measures

1. Safeguarding the continuation of current monitoring actions (including the ecological status of waters, monitoring of species) and expanding them if necessary to ensure the availability of long-term background monitoring data. **Responsibility: Ministry of the Environment, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry**
2. Setting up more monitoring networks similar to those focusing on peatland restoration and monitoring of forest water pollution to verify the long-term impacts of restoration and ecological management. **Responsibility: Ministry of the Environment, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry**
3. Obliging and instructing publicly funded projects to carry out monitoring during the project on the basis of which, combined with long-term monitoring, the impacts of restoration can be assessed (including indicators compatible with long-term monitoring). **Responsibility: Ministry of the Environment, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry**
4. Creating a national funding source that can be used for ex-post monitoring. **Responsibility: Ministry of the Environment, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry**



Monitoring 2/3

Development area 2. Providing clear objectives, guidelines and operating methods for monitoring.

The guidelines and operating methods related to monitoring need to be clarified and harmonised further, making monitoring as simple as possible. Uniform monitoring guidelines should be available for all types of restoration projects.

The lack of a uniform system for managing monitoring data is one of the greatest obstacles to achieving a big picture. The Map Service for Water Restoration is a system in which metadata on restoration measures and monitoring could potentially be saved. It is not yet in wide-spread use, however. For other systems in use (including SAKTI habitat batch information system and VESTY system for water bodies restoration), the transfer of data to the Map Service for Water Restoration or other similar common system must be resolved.

Attention should be paid to advance planning of monitoring. Monitoring should be addressed already when planning the restoration project and applying for funding.

In the future, information on impacts of restoration measures could be obtained by combining the results of project monitoring with long-term trends identified in monitoring networks. A precondition for this is developing long-term impact monitoring at national level and providing clear instructions for monitoring in projects.



Monitoring 2/3

Development area 2. Proposals for measures

1. Developing a common platform for storing and managing restoration and monitoring data and ensuring that data will be transferred between different systems. **Responsibility: Ministry of the Environment, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Finnish Environment Institute, Metsähallitus**
2. Creating clear guidelines for planning and carrying out monitoring in publicly funded projects. **Responsibility: Ministry of the Environment, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Finnish Environment Institute, Natural Resources Institute Finland**
3. Complementing the existing guidelines for monitoring by adding to them any restoration measures/habitats that are currently missing. **Responsibility: Ministry of the Environment, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Finnish Environment Institute, Natural Resources Institute Finland**
4. To support the impact of restoration, tapping the data collected on sites where the impacts of agriculture and forestry on water systems is monitored to detect long-term changes. **Responsibility: Finnish Environment Institute, Natural Resources Institute Finland**
5. Analysing the impact of restoration measures and adding detail to guidelines at regular intervals on the basis of information produced by projects and long-term monitoring exercises. **Responsibility: Finnish Environment Institute, Natural Resources Institute Finland**



Monitoring 3/3

Development area 3. Using and developing complementary monitoring methods.

Modern monitoring methods should increasingly be used. For example, the results of conventional field monitoring can be used to develop satellite surveillance in order to obtain a more comprehensive picture.

Developing simple volunteer monitoring and its variables could add valuable new information to official monitoring data. Volunteer monitoring by citizens can provide extensive information on simple variables that describe changes in nature to complement official environmental monitoring.



Monitoring 3/3

Development area 3. Proposals for measures

1. Developing monitoring based on remote sensing to assess the status of water bodies and catchments. **Responsibility: Finnish Environment Institute, Natural Resources Institute Finland**
2. Developing indicators for volunteer monitoring to support long-term monitoring exercises and marketing the monitoring methods. **Responsibility: Finnish Environment Institute, Natural Resources Institute Finland, NGOs**
3. Ensuring that citizens' observations can be recorded and used to support other monitoring data. Developing data platforms based on existing examples (including Oma Riista, Tiira). **Responsibility: Ministry of the Environment, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Finnish Environment Institute, Natural Resources Institute Finland**



Cooperation networks and operating models

Development area 1. Developing national and regional cooperation networks.

National networks are important in sharing information and developing cooperation, whereas regional networks are crucial for carrying out restoration projects. More efficient maintenance of regional networks should be ensured, for example by designating organisations to take responsibility for this and providing sufficient resources for keeping the activities going.

The involvement of all key actors in the networks should also be ensured. For example, not only sectoral lobbying organisations but also key actors in agriculture and forestry should be closely involved at the national level, and companies, municipalities, educational institutions and associations as well as landowners should additionally participate in regional networks.

Collaboration works best when it revolves around a joint project, which is why applying funding for and carrying out joint projects could enhance collaboration and the work of cooperation networks.



Cooperation networks and operating models

Development area 1. Proposals for measures

1. The monitoring group of the national Strategy on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biodiversity coordinates and shapes policies on reconciling the objectives of the land use and environmental sectors and various administrative branches at the national level. **Responsibility: Ministry of the Environment**
2. Assigning the task of and allocating the resources for coordinating the objectives of the land use and environmental sectors and different administrative branches at the regional level with the help of a regional cooperation group for river basin management or similar (such as Vyyhti project, regional visions for water). The ELY Centres, Regional Councils, municipalities, water protection associations, environmental and interest groups, fishery areas and similar should be involved in this. **Responsibility: Ministry of the Environment, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, ELY Centres**
3. Forming local and regional cooperation networks based on project applications. **Responsibility: ELY Centres, Regional Council, water protection associations.**
4. Piloting the building and work of cooperation networks at different levels in Biodiversity LIFE project. **Responsibility: Metsähallitus.**



Status of habitats 1/2

Development area 1. To improve the preconditions for catchment level planning, sufficient and open information on habitats and pressure factors in catchment areas is required.

Large-scale and comprehensive planning and action are often required to improve the status of habitats. For this, much more comprehensive and openly available information would be needed, for example on the status of habitats and completed habitat restoration projects. Especially for water bodies, understanding the situation of the entire catchment area is important.

While larger water bodies are well covered by river basin management plans, there is no comprehensive and open information on small water bodies. For example, data on the status of small waterbodies could be incorporated in river basin management as assessments of the status and need for restoration at the level of small catchment areas. To improve cost-efficiency, information on completed restoration projects should be collected to a single common platform.



Status of habitats 1/2

Development area 1. Proposals for measures

1. Adding a link to Power BI, a tool for analysing the ecological status of aquatic habitats based on water bodies and Purohelmi data to the environmental administration's habitats pages (<https://www.ymparisto.fi/fi-FI/Luonto/Luontotyytit>) and river basin management pages. **Responsibility: Ministry of the Environment, Finnish Environment Institute**
2. Taking existing information on small waterbodies (Purohelmi, regional studies) into account as a factor affecting the status of water bodies defined in the RBMPs. **Responsibility: ELY Centres**
3. Developing the assessment model for the natural state of streams (Purohelmi) for use in agricultural environments. **Responsibility: Ministry of the Environment, Finnish Environment Institute**
4. Developing methods for assessing the status of other types of small water bodies. **Responsibility: Ministry of the Environment, Finnish Environment Institute**
5. Developing a common platform for storing and managing restoration and monitoring data and ensuring data transfers between different systems (such as the Map Service for Water Restoration). **Responsibility: Ministry of the Environment, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Finnish Environment Institute, Metsähallitus** [Monitoring 2/3]

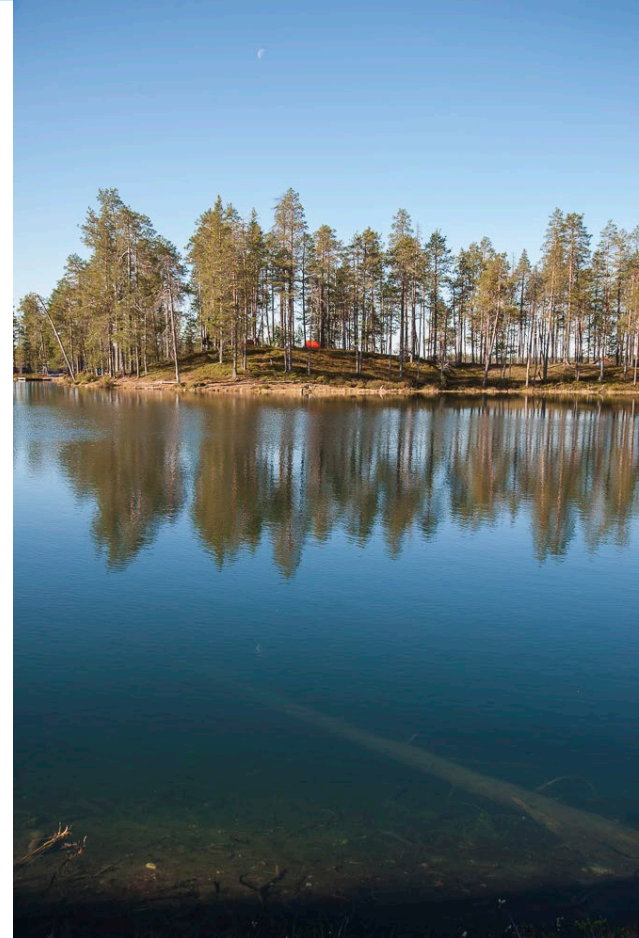


Status of habitats 2/2

Development area 2. Justifying the benefits of conservation and management measures to different stakeholders

Being able to justify why conservation and management measures are worthwhile and to convince different stakeholders is increasingly important. For example, a forest owner will not protect the banks of a stream on their land if they do not get, or feel they get, some benefit out of it.

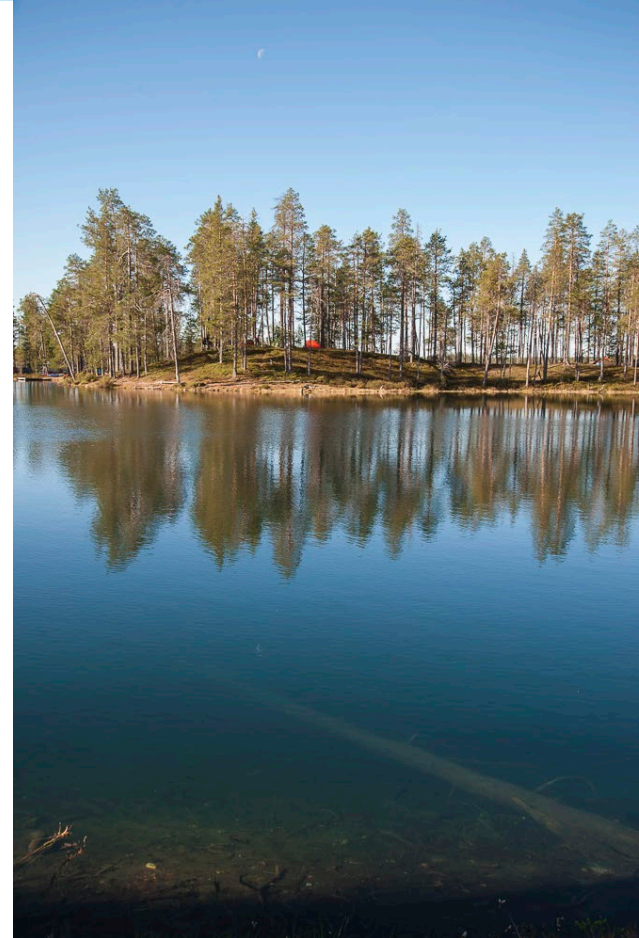
To promote the acceptability of measures, active communication is needed, not only by the parties promoting conservation but also by actors who exploit natural resources and lobbying organisations.



Status of habitats 2/2

Development area 2. Proposals for measures

1. Communicating dispassionately about the need for conservation in order to halt biodiversity loss and ensure humankind's well-being at the national level.
Responsibility: Ministry of the Environment, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry
2. Regional actors inform landowners about the necessity and benefits of conservation, as well as funding opportunities. **Responsibility: ELY Centres, Finnish Forest Centre, municipalities, environmental and lobbying organisations**



Part 2.

Project continuity by action

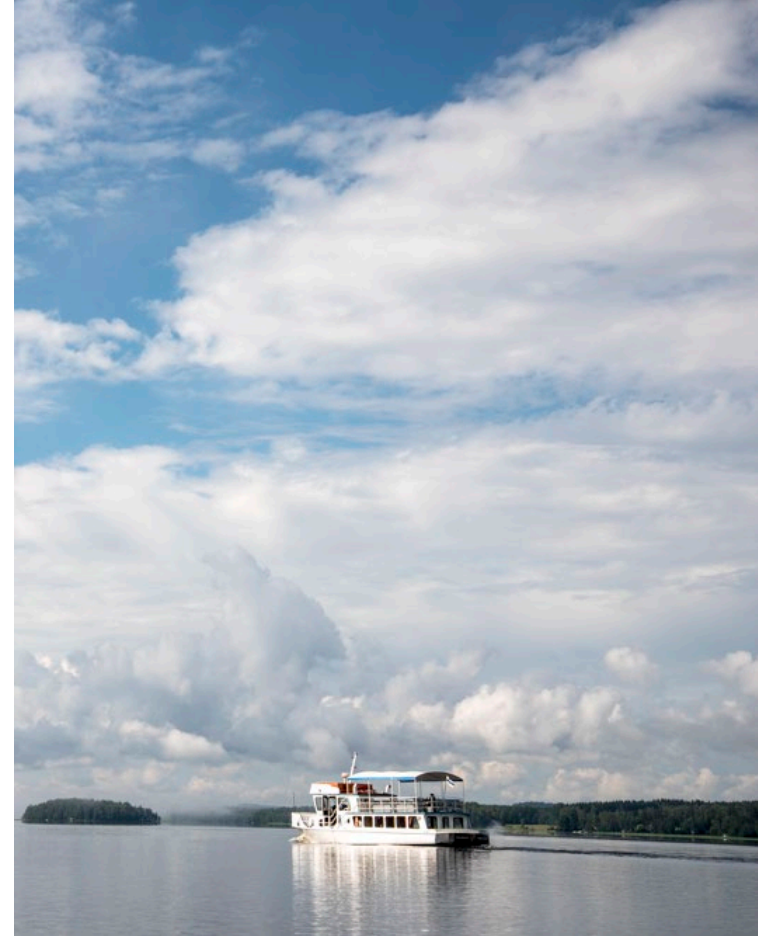


Introduction

Part 2 of the plan examines the project's continuity in each action. The tables on the following pages show how the measures are to be continued, which parties are responsible for them, and how much they are expected to cost in 2022–2027.

The € symbols describe the measure's funding requirements:

- € = less than EUR 10,000
- €€ = EUR 10,000 – EUR 99,999
- €€€ = EUR 100,000 – EUR 499,999
- €€€€ = EUR 500,000 – EUR 999,999
- €€€€€ = more than EUR 1,000,000



Preparatory measures 1/2

Measure	Description of measure	Continuity	Organisations responsible for continuation	Funding and budget
A1/D3	Integrated catchment area planning	Application and practical implementation of models developed in the project (including training for actors) will continue after the project.	Finnish Forest Centre, Finnish Environment Institute, Natural Resources Institute Finland	€€€
A2/D3	Indicators for and modelling of ecosystem services	The work will continue in FEO project, which is funded by the Finnish Environment Institute and the Ministry of the Environment and which aims to produce results at the national level and put the developed models into practice.	Finnish Environment Institute, Natural Resources Institute Finland	€€€€€
A4	Management plans for water bodies and regional river basin management plans	Implementation of plans produced during the project will continue after the project, and the lessons learned during it will support the making of new plans. Plan implementation will be promoted through cooperation networks, training and new projects (including TRIWA LIFE, river basin management projects).	Finnish Forest Centre, ELY Centres, municipalities, water protection associations, environmental organisations	€€€€€

€ = less than EUR 10,000

€€ = EUR 10,000 – EUR 99,999

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Preparatory measures 2/2

Measure	Description of measure	Continuity	Organisations responsible for continuation	Funding and budget
A5	Assessing the status of streams	Efforts to improve the usability of Purohelmi model will be continued and the model will be validated in further projects. Assessment of the status of streams in agricultural environments will be developed in new projects. Results of the Purohelmi model will be utilised in River Basin Management Plans.	Finnish Environment Institute	€€€
A6	Lake surveys	The method developed in the project will be marketed as a complementary and more detailed method than the main zone method, especially for Natura site lakes.	Finnish Environment Institute, Metsähallitus Parks & Wildlife Finland, ELY Centres	€€
A7	Commodities from inland waters	Blue Care service design, operating environments and offer of services will be developed further in different projects around Finland.	Natural Resources Institute Finland	€€
A9	Reconciling the Habitats Directive and the Water Framework Directive	The ecological status classification data for river basin management will be used directly to collect data for the next Habitats Directive report.	Finnish Environment Institute	€
A10	Practical recommendations and national guidelines	The cooperation models will be used directly in future projects (including Biodiversity LIFE). The monitoring guidelines will serve water protection projects and programme activities (including Helmi).	Ministry of the Environment, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Finnish Environment Institute, Natural Resources Institute Finland, Metsähallitus Parks & Wildlife, ELY Centres	€€€

€ = less than EUR 10,000

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Practical restoration and management measures 1/3

Measure	Description of measure	Continuity	Organisations responsible for continuation	Funding and budget
C1-C2	Catchment area management implemented to the targeted degree to reduce environmental loading and metals ending up in N2000 water bodies.	On some of the project sites, Kemera catchment area restoration projects will continue until 2026. Efforts to improve water protection in forestry will continue under the new forestry incentive system (Metka). Water protection will be improved further in central government's and companies' forestry operations.	Finnish Forest Centre, Metsähallitus, water protection associations, ELY Centres, municipalities, forest industry companies	€€€€€
C3	Defragmentation of migratory connectivity in rivers and water systems used for migration	Monitoring the operation of fishways built in water bodies targeted in the Freshabit project will continue. Efforts will be made to find a solution for the remaining obstacles in the Mustionjoki River and enable fish migration within the next five years. NOUSU programme will continue to restore migratory connectivity nationally, while NGOs and municipalities will promote local solutions.	Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, ELY Centres, environmental organisations, municipalities	€€€€€
C4+C6	Improving habitats and enhancing the reproduction potential for freshwater pearl mussel, migratory fish populations, and other stream biota by restoring stream habitats	In Helmi habitat programme, 600 km of streams will be restored by 2030. Life Revives will contribute to improving the conservation status of the freshwater pearl mussel. Stream restoration projects will additionally be funded from fisheries support funds.	Ministry of the Environment, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, ELY Centres, Metsähallitus Parks & Wildlife Finland, environmental organisations, municipalities	€€€€€

€ = less than EUR 10,000
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Practical restoration and management measures 2/3

Measure	Description of measure	Continuity	Organisations responsible for continuation	Funding and budget
C7	Restoration of bird wetlands	In Helmi habitat programme, 80 bird wetland areas most urgently needing measures will be restored by 2030. SOTKA project supports Helmi's objectives by restoring reproduction areas, setting aside resting sites outside protected areas, and improving the efficiency of culling small carnivores.	Ministry of the Environment, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, ELY Centres, Metsähallitus Parks & Wildlife Finland, environmental organisations, municipalities	€€€€€€
C8	Management fishing	Management fishing is used as a water protection measure on suitable sites, among other things in bird wetland restoration projects of Helmi programme. Further development efforts will be made with the aim of turning the catch from management fishing into a commercially viable product.	Ministry of the Environment, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, ELY Centres, fishery areas, municipalities, companies	€€€
C9	Protection of freshwater pearl mussels	The measure will be continued in the LIFE Revives project and on national funding. In addition, a precondition for implementing the conservation strategy for the freshwater pearl mussel is taking occurrences of the species into account in forestry and land use measures.	Ministry of the Environment, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, ELY Centres, Metsähallitus Parks & Wildlife Finland, environmental organisations, water protection associations, municipalities	€€€€€€

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Practical restoration and management measures 3/3

Measure	Description of measure	Continuity	Organisations responsible for continuation	Funding and budget
C10	Land acquisition and compensation	<p>Marketing and procuring METSO sites on stream banks will continue after the project.</p> <p>In the call for proposals of the METSO programme 2022, the focus areas of the biodiversity continuum on shores theme will include forests on small water bodies: https://metsonpolku.fi/-/metsien-monimuotoisuuttaturvaaville-yhteistoimintaverkostohankkeille-avatturahoitushaku</p>	Ministry of the Environment, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, ELY Centres, Finnish Forest Centre, forest management associations, municipalities	€€€
C11	Improving recreational structures	Latokartanonkoski rapids will be under Metsähallitus' management from now on. Replacing the hiking structures in both Southwest Finland and Vanajavesi will not be necessary for another 20 years or so. In Vanajavesi the aim is, that local associations would at that point assume responsibility for their maintenance.	Metsähallitus Parks & Wildlife Finland, local associations	€
C12	Volunteer camps	WWF's volunteer camp activities are set to continue, and stream restoration will remain on their agenda.	WWF	€€€

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Monitoring the impact of measures

Measure	Description of measure	Continuity	Organisations responsible for continuation	Funding and budget
D1-5	Monitoring the functioning of ecosystems and impact of restoration measures.	Existing resources do not enable a sufficient level and continuity of monitoring. Support for ex-post monitoring or long-term background monitoring is inadequate. Further measures are needed to develop monitoring.	Ministry of the Environment, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Finnish Environment Institute, Natural Resources Institute Finland, Metsähallitus Parks & Wildlife, ELY Centres	€€€€€
D6	Implementing and monitoring the Prioritized Action Framework programme	Implementation and monitoring of the PAF programme will be continued as part of the National action plan for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity in Finland and in future projects, including Biodiversity LIFE. PAF has been mainstreamed in other activities, and its objectives are taken into account in land use management, for example.	Ministry of the Environment, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry	€€€€€

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Communication and dissemination of outcomes

Measure	Description of measure	Continuity	Organisations responsible for continuation	Funding and budget
E1, E4, E5	Communication	After project conclusion, communication regarding project sites will mainly focus on monitoring results (such as the functioning of fishways). Communication about the monitoring results will be the responsibility of the ELY Centre for South Ostrobothnia, the ELY Centre for Southwest Finland and Vanajavesi Centre. Pro Puruvesi will continue to operate, but the model for further work is under consideration. The goal of the Finnish Association for Nature Conservation's Ostrobothnia district is to continue organising Taimenpäivä theme days and working parties after the project. JAMK University of Applied Sciences is also interested in continuing to organise volunteer camps.	ELY Centre for Southwest Ostrobothnia, ELY Centre for Southwest Finland, Vanajavesi Centre, Finnish Association for Nature Conservation's Ostrobothnia district, JAMK University of Applied Sciences	€€
E6	Documentary series The Kingdom of Water	The series can be watched on YLE Areena for at least five years and probably longer. International dissemination will be continued after the project.	DocArt, YLE	€€
E7	Environmental education	Almost all activities will continue seamlessly after Freshabit's conclusion. The Life of the brown trout exhibition at Yllästunturi Visitor Centre will remain on display for at least ten years. After Freshabit, the Finnish Association for Nature Conservation's South Häme district and Vanajavesi Centre will continue their environmental education activities in other projects. No continuation has been planned for the lake schools at this stage, but this activity could also be continued in some form. Pro Puruvesi will continue to organise its Puruvesi theme day and seminar. Natur och Miljö will continue to organise nature school days; the first days have already been arranged in autumn 2022. Natur och Miljö is also planning to expand its activities. The continuation of WWF's mobile learning materials is somewhat uncertain due to the high licence fees and the need to update the materials.	Metsähallitus Parks & Wildlife Finland, Finnish Association for Nature Conservation, Vanajavesi Centre, Pro Puruvesi, Natur och Miljö, WWF	€€

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The project has received funding from the LIFE Programme of the European Union. The material reflects the views of the authors, and the European Commission or the CINEA are not responsible for any use that may be made of the information it contains.

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