Area types in Metsähallitus' OECM area definitions

Protected forest

Valuable forest and peatland areas that had been permanently protected by an administrative decision of Metsähallitus even before the decision on OECM area definitions was made. These sites are not statutory protected areas, however.

Site included in the proposal for complementary mire conservation

Mire sites identified by the working group on mire conservation (2012–2015) which are of national importance in terms of their nature values and which ideally complement the current network of protected areas. This area type includes those sites listed in the proposal for complementary mire conservation that had been protected by an administrative decision of Metsähallitus even before decision on OECM area definitions was made.

Sites of METSO programme excluded from forest management

Habitats that are valuable or under-represented among protected areas, that have been protected by an administrative decision of Metsähallitus based on inventory data and that meet METSO programme criteria. The area type contains various METSO programme sites to be protected or restored.

Sites in Forest Lapland

Protected forest areas valuable for preserving and fostering biodiversity. These areas were identified as part of a broader negotiation process with stakeholders concerning certain state-owned forest areas in Lapland. This area type includes sites on which, as the end result of the negotiation process, an agreement was reached to exclude them permanently from commercial forestry use by a Metsähallitus' administrative land use decision.

Permanent ecological corridors

This area type includes protected forest areas that are valuable in terms of conserving and fostering biodiversity, spread of organisms as well as habitat connectivity excluded from commercial forestry operations. The group of area types consists of sites protected by an administrative decision of Metsähallitus as part of natural resource planning negotiations in Southern Finland and Lapland even before the decision on OECM area definitions was made. The area type does not include the ecological corridors of a landscape ecological network on which no separate administrative decision has been made to exclude them from forestry operations and in which restricted forestry operations can consequently take place following the instructions in Metsähallitus’ Environmental Guide.

Sites of high nature value

This area type includes site of high nature value in state-owned multiple-use forests excluded from forestry operations. Nature management measures are possible in them, however. Sites

of high nature value include habitats of special importance referred to in section 10 of the Forest Act as well as conserved habitats referred to in section 64 and strictly protected habitats under section 65 of the Nature Conservation Act. The area type additionally includes other valuable habitats to be considered. Sites of high nature value in multiple-use forests as defined in Metsähallitus Environmental Guide (see Metsähallitus Forestry Ltd Environmental Guide) are included in this area type. In addition to sites of high nature value, this area type comprises habitats for species protected under the European Union Habitats Directive and the Nature Conservation Act.

Restored sites of high nature value

Restored sites of high nature value are sites where nature management measures have been taken (see Metsähallitus Forestry Ltd Environmental guide). Of restored peatland sites, only nutrient-rich mires are included in the area type Restored sites of high nature value. Other mire restoration sites are included in Peatland ecosystems undergoing a renaturalisation process. Restored sites of high nature value are excluded from forestry operations. Nature management measures will also be possible on them in the future, however.

Natural and semi-natural mire ecosystems

This area type includes natural and semi-natural mire ecosystems that have not been drained for forestry purposes. While these sites have few trees in their natural state and they are not in forestry use, transport connections required for logging may be arranged through them, for example to patches of heath forest not excluded from forestry use beyond the mires. However, transport connections are arranged ensuring that the characteristics and hydrological conditions of the area type are preserved.

Peatland ecosystems undergoing a renaturalisation process

This area type includes peatlands that have been previously drained and that, following active restoration measures, are undergoing a renaturalisation process to revert back to their pre-drainage natural state. The selection criterion for peatlands to be restored is that they contain indicator species and structural features characteristic of mire habitats and are consequently expected to respond well to restoration. The objectives also include creating hydrologically sound mire complexes. These areas also improve the ecological connectivity of natural and semi-natural mire ecosystems. Once restoration measures have been completed, the sites will be permanently excluded from use and commercial activity.

High elevation rock outcrops and screes in northern areas of the country

The sites in this area type have been defined by extracting ones that meet the criteria from the Sakti habitat inventory in Metsähallitus' balance sheet for business operations by means of a spatial data search. As part of the examination, the extraction result was verified by comparing it to Forestry Ltd's growth site data.

Ecosystems of high biodiversity value in the subsistence economy areas of Northern Finland

This area type comprises forest ecosystems that are valuable in terms of conserving and fostering biodiversity as well as the spread of organisms, and natural or semi-natural mire ecosystems in the northern parts of Lapland in subsistence economy areas of the Sámi Homeland included in Metsähallitus' third balance sheet.

The third balance sheet areas, which are primarily reserved for reindeer husbandry and subsistence economy purposes, are excluded from commercial forestry use, and no yield requirement has been set for them. The most significant and extensive Natura habitats of this area type are natural forests, aapa mires and wooded mires. While the area type definition also includes sites whose Natura habitat type has not been determined, their share of the total surface area is minor. State-owned inland waters located in subsistence economy areas have also been added to this area type definition: the water bodies located in the subsistence economy area are natural or semi-natural, and their nature values can be deemed to be preserved when the areas are used according to the terms of use applicable to them. In the subsistence economy area of Lapland, land use is concentrated along the roads. In the area type definition, a one-kilometre zone is reserved on both sides of main roads that is excluded from the OECM area definition. The definition also excludes zoned areas, existing mineral aggregate sites, mining concessions and areas subject to valid leases.