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All sources of livelihood are needed in Forest Lapland

All sources of livelihood are important to the vitality of Northern Finland. The region is big enough to accommodate tourism as well as forestry and reindeer husbandry. Over half of the woodlands in Forest Lapland, i.e. the region that stretches from the northern parts of the Muonio, Kittilä, Sodankylä, Savukoski and Salla municipalities to the forested areas of Inari and Enontekiö, have already been placed under protection. Actual forest management on state land in Forest Lapland covers only 37% of forest land.

Sustainable forestry takes natural biodiversity into account and ensures that areas being used for commercial forestry remain wooded. For the environment and nature of Northern Finland, it is important to examine also the environmental effects of other industries, such as tourism and reindeer husbandry.

"About 500,000 hectares of the forests in Forest Lapland are already protected statutorily and under the decisions of Metsähallitus – this equals 51% of the total forested area in the region. This makes it hard to consider demands for additional conservation justified, says **Anders Portin**, Senior Vice President of the Finnish Forest Industries Federation's Sustainable Development and Resources unit.

"Are we Finns becoming too distant from our natural environment, if we are unable to see the sustainability of wood, a renewable resource? At the same time, we are prepared to forget the environmental burden caused by the use of non-renewable raw materials or expanding tourism. Lapland needs all the forms of industry it can get and it is up to the locals to decide what the structure of their economy is. Otherwise, the area risks becoming an impoverished nature sanctuary, whose people are forced to relocate to crowded southern Finland," Portin points out.

The conservation situation in Forest Lapland is good

The vegetation zone of Forest Lapland stretches from the northern parts of the Muonio, Kittilä, Sodankylä, Savukoski and Salla municipalities to the wooded areas of Inari and Enontekiö. In Lapland, the State owns a large portion of all forests – in Forest Lapland, the share is almost 89%. State lands are administered by Metsähallitus. Felling is only carried out in areas that have been designated for commercial forestry by the national and regional authorities.

According to a report by the Ministry of the Environment, a Metsähallitus study of the quality and quantity of conservation in Forest Lapland which was published in autumn 2006 demonstrates that the region's conservation situation is good. Lapland's unique network of conservation and wilderness areas covers the areas that are of the greatest significance to the effort to safeguard the biodiversity of this environment and the ability to put it to multiple uses. The biodiversity of Forest



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Lapland can be protected adequately with existing conservation measures and by taking into account the nature values of commercial forests. Felling does not threaten the conservation of endangered species in Finland. Other national and international assessments and studies of nature conservation in Finland have also come to the same conclusion.

Lapland needs forestry as well

Sustainable forestry takes into consideration the ecological, economic and social impacts of activities. For the local economy and area residents, it is important that different sources of livelihood can exist side by side, structured according to the population's wishes. Metsähallitus, which administers State forests, plans the use of natural resources in cooperation with reindeer herders' associations, tourism entrepreneurs and other forest users.

Expanding statutory conservation would hamper the development of tourism and extensive new conservation areas would make it more difficult to supply especially the local sawmilling industry with timber, jeopardising jobs in the area. The forest sector employs over 4,000 people in Lapland and the value of its annual exports is more than one billion euro.

According to forest inventory data, the annual growth of Lapland's commercial forests has risen from seven to ten million cubic metres over the previous decade. There are plenty of well-growing young forests in Lapland. It has not been possible to increase felling volumes to match this growth, however. Some 43% of the timber coming onto the market is felled during the thinning of young growing forests. For Lapland, it is important that demand for timber continues in the future and that it is possible to utilise the wood produced in well-growing young forests.

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Useful links:

Ministry of the Environment report on felling in old-growth forests in Forest Lapland:
<http://www.ymparisto.fi/default.asp?contentid=224081&lan=en>

Metsähallitus investigation of the conservation situation in Forest Lapland:
<http://www.metsa.fi/news.asp?Section=2757&Item=5488>



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Wood is a renewable natural resource and we should promote its use in order to preserve non-renewable resources for future generations.

Paper and Wood