



## 9<sup>th</sup> Pan-European Green Belt Conference

31st October – 03rd November 2016 in Koli, Finland

### Best Practice along the Green Belt - Session 6

Session 5 will highlight some of the best practices achieved along the Green Belt portraying also the variety of benefits of the Green Belt work and cooperation. The session will present cooperation between NGOs and governmental organizations at the European level as well as present a certain showcase of such cooperation from the Fennoscandian level, namely the Barents Protected Area Network –project.

Nature's benefits on well-being is a topic gaining attention both among the scientific community as well as among the policy makers. Green Belt of Fennoscandia has a significant effect on the local economy in the Finnish in addition to its outmost recreational value. Parks & Wildlife Finland has implemented a campaign on health impacts of the nature with good results. Pasvik-Inari Trilateral Park is an example of nature sites where nature tourism has been developed in cooperation of the stakeholders from three countries. Pasvik-Inari Trilateral Park is one of the pearls of Fennoscandian Green Belt's nature sites and of vital cross-border cooperation: Finland, Russia and Norway.

Connectivity of the Green Belt is promoted in several projects in the Green Belt of Fennoscandia. SuoMaa –project of the Finnish Association for Nature Conservation is drawing attention to the horizontal ecological corridor connecting Finnish and Russian mires and forests. Barents Protected Area Network –project is partly overlapping with the Green Belt area and producing valuable information for the decision making about the forests with high conservation value and with potential for the development of the connectivity of the habitats.

The following presentation will be given during the session:

### **Pasvik-Inari Trilateral Park – “Nature and History Shared”**

The Pasvik-Inari region is the area where Norway, Finland and Russia converge. The lush valley of the Pasvik river stretches from Lake Inari in the south towards the Barents Sea in the north, appearing as a vital nerve in the mosaic landscape of small lakes, wetlands and virgin taiga forests. The region comprises a unique nature system where European, Eastern and Arctic species meet. Here, some of the species reach the ultimate limits of their distribution. The area also offers a unique example of cross-border nature protection with three nations working together to protect a continuous stretch of land crossing three national borders. The region is a meeting point for different cultures too. Different Sámi people live in the area: the Northern, Inari and Skolt Sámi. Since the Early Middle Ages, Finns, Norwegians and Russians have also settled in the region. Even though different cultures coexist in the area and have learned a lot from each other, they have each retained their distinctive traditions. The main themes of the international cooperation are nature monitoring, environmental enlightenment and promotion of sustainable nature-based tourism.

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### **Tourism, health, well-being and nature**

Natural settings can contribute to human health and wellbeing in a variety of ways, from providing medicinal resources to bringing places of important recreational value that can aid physical, mental and social health. Over recent years many park management bodies have made decision to enhance health benefits connected to nature. Parks & Wildlife Finland has delivered “Healthy parks, healthy people” - programme since 2010 with good results. One important dimension of programme in GBF region is connected to responsible tourism, which provides unique experiences for customers and jobs for locals.

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### **SuoMaa: Safeguarding a large-scale taiga corridor between Finland and Russian Karelia**

The future of the taiga fauna in Finland depends on the connectivity of forests and mires to the vast taiga areas in Russia. The watershed ridge area of Suomenselkä-Maanselkä (SuoMaa) is a large-scale horizontal ecological corridor that connects forests and mires of Western Finland to the Russian Karelian taiga. Numerous valuable natural sites still remain unprotected and are threatened by intensive forestry and peat energy production. The SuoMaa initiative, launched by the Finnish Association for Nature Conservation in May 2016, suggest 274 sites to be saved, protected or restored in order to safeguard the still remaining original taiga nature and connectivity of the corridor. The initiative covers 78 000 hectares in eight Finnish counties on the lands owned by the government, companies (e.g. UPM-Kymmene, Tornator, Finsilva, Vapo) as well as municipalities and the church. The initiative is vital when completing the endeavours of Mire Protection Program and the Forest Biodiversity Programme for

Southern Finland (METSU). Maps, delineations and descriptions of each valuable natural site are available at [www.sll.fi/suomaa](http://www.sll.fi/suomaa).

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### **Barents Protected Area Network BPAN**

Barents Protected Area Network promotes and supports the establishment of a representative network of protected areas in the Barents Region for halting loss of biodiversity and achieving CBD Aichi Biodiversity Targets. The BPAN project prepared (2011-2014) an analysis on representativeness of protected area network using unified data from northern Norway, Sweden, Finland and Northwest Russia and implemented projects including e.g. inventories of habitats and species to support establishment of new protected areas in the intact forest areas of Northwest Russia. The BPAN follow-up project (2015-2017) studies the high conservation value forests and their transboundary connectivity, primarily in the large ecological corridors, such as the Green Belt of Fennoscandia and the green belt comprising intact forest landscapes between Republic of Komi and Arkhangelsk Region.

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### **Cooperation between governmental and non-governmental organization in the frame of the European Green Belt Initiative**

The network of the European Green Belt Initiative is a wide range of different governmental (GO) and non-governmental organizations (NGO) working together on different spatial and content-specific levels. From the international down to the municipality level manifold ways of cooperation can be identified: Like the Research- and Development- (R+D-) Project “Advancing the European Green Belt Initiative” (2011-2014) on international level or the current trans-boundary GO/NGO-cooperation targeting the project application “European Green Belt Bike Trail” in the cross-border cooperation programme Interreg Italy-Slovenia. Joint habitat management conferences for the inner-German Green Belt as well as a current project for a better public relation of the Green Belt Austria are examples on the national level. But also large scale nature conservation projects carried out by an administration union of four German rural districts or the cross-border activities for species protection of municipalities in close cooperation with local NGOs show the great variety of cooperation possibilities. Special example for the targeted and successful cooperation on national level is the nomination of two areas in Albania, the core zone Rajca in the Shebenik-Jablanica National Park and the strict protected area Lumi I Gashit in the Albanian Alps, as part of the UNESCO World Heritage beech forests. The participating NGO delivered the necessary nature conservation data and supported the GO in the nomination process. In addition, on local level the national and local NGOs work in close cooperation with the local Regional Agency of Protected Areas to improve the nature protection as well as sustainable development of the region in the frame of the project “Nature Conservation and Sustainable Development at the Green Belt Albania”.

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