

Green Belt of Fennoscandia Project Workshop - building a cross border project promoting biodiversity values

5th April, 2016, Finnish Environment Institute SYKE, Helsinki

WORKSHOP REPORT



Ympäristöministeriö
Miljöministeriet
Ministry of the Environment

Background

Green Belt is a unique network of nature sites near the border of Finland, Russia and Norway. The biodiversity values of the area are outworthy also on a global scale. The well-connected network of nature sites is crucial for species in their adaptation to the climate change. Livelihoods of many people living in the area are dependent on the nature.

In the coming years the Green Belt will be developed into a widely acknowledged transboundary model area for biodiversity conservation, social well-being, and environmentally sustainable economic growth generated by the region's unique biological and geological diversity and cultural heritage. The development priorities have been defined in the strategy for the development of the GBF prepared in the trilateral cooperation process.

The development of the GBF is implemented through institutional cooperation and through projects and programs financed by external funding instruments such as ENI CBC. The new ENI CBC Programmes have been accepted by the European Commission and they are expected to be opened in autumn 2016.

The workshop was organised by the Green Belt of Fennoscandia -project of the Finnish Environment Institute with a supervision of the Ministry of the Environment. The project is financed by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland.

The workshop

The workshop was held as part of the development of the Green Belt of Fennoscandia. It was organized by the Green Belt - coordination project of the Finnish Environment Institute SYKE and the Ministry of the Environment of Finland.

The purpose of the workshop was to build capacities and partnership for enhanced project planning and better project applications and projects in the Green Belt of Fennoscandia. The development of the GBF is implemented through institutional cooperation and through projects and programs financed by external funding instruments such as ENI CBC. The new ENI CBC Programmes have been accepted by the European Commission and they are expected to be opened in autumn 2016.

Workshop participants represented all three countries of the Green Belt of Fennoscandia. There were altogether 41 participants. They represented mostly governmental and regional administration, research institutions and universities.



The workshop was divided into three sessions. The first session set the framework for the project planning and presented jointly agreed priorities for the development of the Green Belt as well the financing opportunities existing. In the second session the ENPI Programme was once again reflected and the experiences from that were discussed in order a general expression on how an idea is built to a best practice and how to avoid pitfalls. The third session concentrated in looking forward and in presenting new project ideas.

Introductions and framework

The day began with an introduction to the development of the Green Belt presented by the counsellor **Kristiina Niikkonen** from the Ministry of the Environment. In the coming years the Green Belt will be developed into a widely acknowledged transboundary model area for biodiversity conservation, social well-being, and environmentally sustainable economic growth generated by the region's unique biological and geological diversity and cultural heritage. The development priorities have been defined in the strategy for the development of the GBF prepared in the trilateral cooperation process.

The overview on the strategic framework of the cooperation was followed by presentations on financial opportunities for the Green Belt projects. **Katja Sukuvaara** from the Regional Council of Lapland presented the new Kolarctic ENI Programme which is due to open in the autumn 2016 and **Aino Rekola** from the Finnish Environment Institute other financial opportunities there are for the Green Belt projects.

In the discussions it was raised up a question whether it is possible to launch a project targeted for the whole Green Belt area. The ENI instrument enables financing of project with benefits outside the core area if it is relevant for the project to have the other areas includes. The main activities should however benefit the programme area. The ENI Programme will not have upper limits for the size of the project. It is required to have 10 % own contribution. PROMAS system will be made simpler.

ENPI debriefing session

The second session started with an outlook made by trainee Alwin Hardenbol, Ministry of the Environment of Finland on the best practices on biodiversity and nature tourism in all three ENPI Programmes in the Green Belt area.

After the introductions the experiences from the ENPI projects were highlighted. Valentina Ipatova from Kostamus National Park, Pertti Itkonen from the Parks & Wildlife Finland and Paul Eric Aspholm from the NBIO told about their experiences. They pointed out that the different kind of accounting systems should be prepared for, emphasized the importance of face-to-face meetings and putting effort into planning, reporting and dissemination. It was estimated that it takes approximately 3-6 months to plan a project with a budget of 1-2 million euros.

The experiences were then discussed by the audience. The successes such as projects in which Russian municipalities



were involved by their own initiatives and proposals were raised up. There was also general discussion on sharing experiences and cooperation between the projects as it was seen important that we know more on each others and each other's' projects. There was an idea to organize more targeted workshops for specific themes in the ENI Programme.

A specific theme under discussion was the focus of the projects in the Russian side of the Green Belt in the future. It was seen important to take more focus on knowledge on regions and supporting them.

There are both federal protected areas and regional protected areas in Russia. Less than 3 % are of the land area is covered by the federal PA's, but 10 % by the regional PA's. Also people living in the area and frontier guards who are actually protecting the Green Belt in the Russian should be taken into account to the project implementation.

The question whether the Green Belt area should be considered as a one solid area and common projects for the whole GBF should be planned was also discussed. The opinions varied.

Commenting the speeches and the discussion *Katja Sukuvaara* pointed out that it is extremely important and difficult to find the relevant partners and define their role in the project. It is also difficult to manage the project if there are too many partners. It is important to reserve resources for managing staff. It will help the project implementation. Communication plan will be obligatory for the project plan. Involving the local authorities is also important. It helps in the decision making if the decision makers support and promote it. Russian partners have to have a currency account. Exchange rate losses are not eligible.

Mikko Tiira from Parks and Wildlife Finland pointed out in his comment that logical framework is a good tool for project planning. The key partners should be found as early as possible.

Project idea session

TRANS CONNECT (Anna Kuhmonen, SYKE) would develop and transboundary ecological connections in order to adapt better to climate change in the Arctic. Species inventory data and this field inventory data will be taken back to the map level. Partners: Lapland ELY Center, Park & Wildlife, WWF Russia, Regional nature conservation authority.

Green Belt river corridors (Kari-Matti Vuori, SYKE) would develop **integrated** restoration in the water areas and combine restoration and ecotourism which have seldom been combined. The project would result in improved condition along the whole river continuum. Geographical scope of the project is still under discussion.

Monitoring impacts of climate change (Timo Hokkanen & Hannu Luotonen, ELY Centre of North Karelia) would pre-study the climate change impacts and monitor them.

ANNET – Arctic Network of Nature Education and Tourism (Pertti Itkonen, Parks & Wildlife Finland) would develop a network of modern Nature Centers for education and nature tourism. Siida, Kiehininen, Naava, Lake Tsuna in Montshe Tundra, Nikel and Svanhovd have so far been under discussion. Restoration of salmon in River Tuuloma is another project which would compile many projects.

LIFE GOES – RIVER FLOWS -project (Teppo Vehanen, Natural Resources Institute Finland) would concentrate on ecosystem services, biodiversity conservation, fisheries tourism and free fish migration in Vuoksi river system. It would tackle the organizational barriers for water tourism and recreational fishing and fishing industries.

Raimo Heikkilä (SYKE) had many project ideas and partners from the KRC, Directorate of Regional Protected Areas of Karelia and Energy Efficiency Office. The main and overall idea behind the projects is to evaluate how the

nature can benefit the well-being and society and mainstreaming also the concept of the ecosystem services in Russia.

There were also suggested projects focusing on European Great Lakes and Saimaa Ringed Seal and cultural heritage project to establish a network of residencies for different kinds of artists and scientists (Riitta Nykänen, Juminkeko Foundation).

Feedback

General feedback:

- There is a same goal with the work and lot of links between projects.
- useful concerning the circumstances, nice to see that so much experience already
- There is a need for a common, frequent information exchange. Sharing the experience is very valuable as well as seeing each other face-to-face.
- Planning phase is long and we should encourage people for project planning.

Ideas which would benefit the whole area and which would have had larger impact, were missing

- There are certain amounts of risks for planning project for the whole region. As the projects are managed regionally, everyone will push their own regions objectives.
- As regions are very different, it is very laborious to arrange a project for the whole Green Belt area.

Thematic comments:

- Ecosystem service approach would be valuable for the Southern part of the Green Belt.

Regional specifics:

- The results should be now shared in the regions
- It should be kept in mind that Leningrad region belongs also to the Green Belt area. The projects in the Barents Region should be extended also to the regions outside
- St. Petersburg is maybe too far. From the St. Petersburg it could be participated to the project related to the education or restoration of rare species.
- Contacts to the Murmansk Region are missing.
- it would have been nice to hear project ideas from the Russian side

Openness on the project planning is an asset

- website for harmonizing the project ideas could be necessary

EU-Russian Agreement on the ENI Programme has not yet been signed and Russian stakeholders will not be able to participate until it has been made.

Participants

Last name	First name	Organisation
Alekseeva	Nadezhda	Committee for Natural Resources of the Leningrad Region
Andersen	Helén Johanne	The Norwegian Ministry of Climate and Environment
Aspholm	Paul Eric	NiBio
Balakireva	Anna	Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment of the Russian Federation
Haapala	Henna	Ministry of the Environment
Hardenbol	Alwin	Ministry of the Environment
Heikkilä	Raimo	SYKE
Hokkanen	Timo J.	Centre for Economic DEvelopment, Transport and the Environment for

Hovi	Matti	North Karelia/North Karelia Biosphere Reserve
Huitu	Otso	Metsähallitus, Parks and Wildlife Finland
Hämäläinen	Arto	Natural Resources Institute Finland
Ijäs	Asko	Etelä-Karjalan liitto
Ilmonen	Jari	Metsähallitus Parks & Wildlife Finland
Ipatova	Valentina	Zapovednik Kostomukshskij
Itkonen	Pertti	Metsähallitus Luontopalvelut
Juvonen	Sanna-Kaisa	Metsähallitus, Parks & Wildlife Finland
Karhunen	Anna-Riikka	Regional Council of Kymenlaakso
Kovaleva	Tatyana	Directorate of the Protected Areas of St. Petersburg
Kuhmonen	Anna	SYKE
Kurhinen	Juri	Helsinki University and Forest Research Institute Russian Academy of Sciences
Lindholm	Tapio	Finnish environment institute
Lundvall	Päivi	Lapland ELY Centre
Luotonen	Hannu	Centre for Economic Development, Transport and Environment for North Karelia
Maksimov	Denis	Directorate of Regional Protected Areas, Republic of Karelia
Niikkonen	Kristiina	Ministry of the Environment
Nykänen	Riitta	Metsähallitus, Parks & Wildlife Finland
Pihlaja	Jouni	Geological Survey of Finland
Rekola	Aino	Finnish Environment Institute
Saano	Aimo	Metsähallitus, Parks & Wildlife Finland
Sagitov	Rustam	Baltic Fund for Nature
Salminen	Tiina	Finnish Environment Institute
Shorohova	Ekaterina	Karelian Research Centre RAS, Forest Research Institute
Sukuvaara	Katja	Regional Council of Lapland, Kolarctic CBC 2014-2020
Sutkaitis	Oleg	WWF Russia
Tiira	Mikko	Metsähallitus, Parks & Wildlife Finland
Tolkki	Taina	Parikkalan kunta
Tyrväinen	Liisa	Natural Resources Institute Finland
Vehanen	Teppo	Natural Resources Institute Finland
Vuori	Kari-Matti	Finnish Environment Institute

Presentations

The presentations of the workshop are found behind the [link](http://www.ym.fi) (www.ym.fi).