

Encouraging the Use of the Outdoors

Parks & Wildlife Finland

Veikko Virkkunen, 15th December 2014



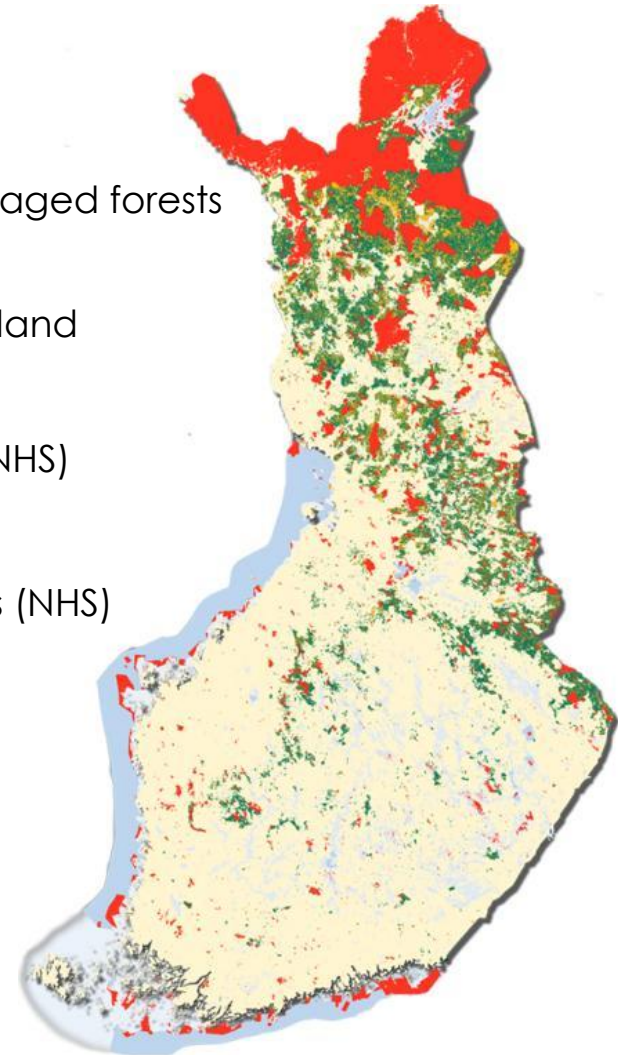
METSÄHALLITUS



Parks & Wildlife Finland manages all the state-owned PAs

- 39 national parks
- 19 strict nature reserves
- 6 national hiking areas
- 12 wilderness areas
- almost 500 other PAs
- public water areas

Altogether over 7 million hectares,
18% of Finland's surface area





>75% of the Finnish adults do not meet the physical activity guidelines

2/3 of men and ½ of women are overweight or obese

The number of overweight adolescents has tripled since 1970

Physical activity declines dramatically after the age of 15

Finnish adults are sedentary 76% of their waking time

42% of Finnish men and 33% of women have a metabolic disturbance (aged 45-74 years)

Mental health problems are the leading cause of premature retirement

Social exclusion and health inequalities cause major challenges in the modern society

The Effect of Green Exercise on Blood Pressure, Heart Rate and Mood State in Primary School Children

Michael J. Duncan *, Neil D. Clarke, Samantha L. Birch, Jason Tallis, Joanne Hankey, Elizabeth Bryant and Emma L. J. Eyre

Nature and Health

Terry Hartig,¹ Richard Mitchell,² Sjerp de Vries,³ and Howard Frumkin⁴

Let's Go to the Park Today: The Role of Parks in Obesity Prevention and Improving the Public's Health

Heidi M. Blanck, Ph.D.,¹ Diana Allen B.S., MCRP,² Zarnaaz Bashir, M.P.H.,³ Nina Gordon, M.P.A.,⁴ Alyson Goodman M.D., M.P.H.,^{1,5} Dee Merriam, FASLA,⁶ and Candace Rutt, Ph.D.¹

The influence of urban green environments on stress relief measures: A field experiment

Liisa Tyrväinen ^a, Ann Ojala ^{a,*}, Kalevi Korpela ^b, Timo Lanki ^c, Yuko Tsunetsugu ^d, Takahide Kagawa ^d

Review

What are the Benefits of Interacting with Nature?

Lucy E. Keniger ^{1,*}, Kevin J. Gaston ², Katherine N. Irvine ³ and Richard A. Fuller ¹

The relationship of physical activity and overweight to objectively measured green space accessibility and use[☆]

Emma Coombes ^a, Andrew P. Jones ^{a,*}, Melvyn Hillsdon ^b

Nature promotes health

Nature promotes human health by people

- seeing and observing nature
- being in or near nature
- active doing, participating and learning in nature

Two equally important means for increasing health benefits of nature:

- people to the nature
- nature to the people



Nature prevents stress and helps in recovery from stress



Physiological effects on:

- blood pressure
- heart rate
- cortisol (stress hormone) levels
- muscle tension and headache

Psychological effects on:

- mood
- anxiety, hostility
- self-esteem
- problem-solving and concentration
- perceived mental wellbeing and quality of life

Healthy Parks Healthy People Finland

- Metsähallitus, Parks & Wildlife Finland

Public health improves as people get out into natural settings, enjoy positive and authentic experiences, and improve their health through a wide range of outdoor activities.

→ outdoor activities become a more important aspect of Finnish lifestyles, and Finns live active outdoor life

- public health improves
- longer life expectancy
- improved work capacity
- health inequality declines

→ attitudes towards protected areas become more positive



Projects OpenAir and Moved by Nature



Promotion of health and well-being through natural environment and outdoor activities



Enhancing collaboration between protected area staff and the health sector



Diversifying and improving quality and provision of nature-based health and well-being services

Project OpenAir

Connecting locally

- Oulu Outdoors Zone -concept
- prevention of social exclusion
- various forms of rehabilitation
- occupational well-being
- people to nature – nature to people



Project Moved by Nature

Example 1:

Social care: immigrants and long-term unemployed

- Embedding nature into social integration, employment and *health promotion* activities in social care
- Creating networks, increasing know-how
- Interventions
 - 6 nature days / group of < 10 participants
 - Organizers: third sector volunteers and nature guides



A group of people, seen from behind, are walking along a snow-covered path in a winter forest. They are wearing various winter coats and hats. To the left of the path is a wooden fence. The background is filled with tall, snow-covered evergreen trees under a clear sky.

Findings

What was perceived important by the unemployed?

- Mental well-being
- Variety for the day - getting out of home
- Nature experiences and sceneries
- Activation, revitalisation, physical activity

According to the social workers

- Participants became significantly empowered
- Social capacity increased significantly

Example 2: Weight maintenance and type 2 diabetes prevention among overweight men

- New methods for lifestyle counselling
- New methods for motivating men





Intervention

- 20 men with metabolic syndrome risk factors
- Pre and post assessments
 - Fitness
 - BMI
 - Sense of coherence
 - PA
 - Readiness to change
- Personal lifestyle counselling and targets
- 6 meetings in nature
 - 1 meeting / month / á 4 h
 - Outdoor activities + preparing healthy food on campfire

"I wouldn't have participated if it was about gym"

"I felt this was the right thing for me, nature in the focus..."

Conclusions

There are various ways in how protected areas can serve as health promotion environments.

Nature motivates majority!

However, health sector and protected area managers traditionally do not cooperate.

Our experiences indicate that there is great potential in bringing together protected area and health professionals.



*"Let me bring you songs from the wood:
to make you feel much better than you could
know.*

...

*Let me bring you love from the field:
poppies red and roses filled with summer rain.
To heal the wound and still the pain
that threatens again and again"*

- Ian Anderson

Thank You !

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What's new?

Hannu Kaikkonen, Veikko Virkkunen, Liisa Kajala, Joel Erkkonen, Martti Aarnio and
Raija Korpelainen

Health and Well-being from Finnish National Parks – A Study of Benefits Perceived by Visitors

Executive summary

