Finland’s Ramsar Wetlands Action Plan 2016-2020: Improving the condition of wetlands benefiting society through cooperation

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Finland

Finland’s National Ramsar Wetlands Action Plan 2016–2020 was prepared as part of the Strategy for the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biodiversity in Finland for 2012–2020 and the related action plan for 2013–2020, adopted by a Government resolution on 20 December 2012. The Plan was drafted by the Ramsar Wetland Working Group, which is a cooperation network of parties working with wetlands. The member organisations of the network are committed to promoting the protection and sustainable use of wetlands in their own operations.

According to the latest assessment of the conservation status of habitat types in Finland, the state of wetlands is alarming: roughly half of the wetland habitat types in the Baltic Sea, the coast and inland are classified as threatened.

Finland’s Ramsar Wetlands Action Plan includes a review of the current state of wetlands and presents an analysis of the strengths, weaknesses, threats and opportunities in the protection and sustainable use of wetlands. Based on these a total of 55 measures aimed to improve the state of wetlands have been established. The action plan also presents an estimate of the economic and environmental impacts of the plan.

“Emphasis on action is exactly what wetland habitats need”, said Kristiina Niikkonen, Chair of the national Ramsar Wetland Working Group, Ministry of the Environment, “Maintenance, rehabilitation and restoration are necessary. International cooperation is required to battle climate change and prevent the eutrophication of the Baltic Sea. Strong Finnish expertise in the multi-goal restoration of habitats could also be exported.”

This strategy and action plan were updated to correspond to the goals specified in the Convention on Biological Diversity, CBD (78/1994), as well as the biodiversity strategy targets agreed upon in the EU.

The aim of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands is to protect internationally valuable wetlands and, in a broader sense, to promote the sustainable use of all wetlands and
The Action Plan was drafted by the Ramsar Wetland Working Group.

The Ramsar international strategy for the years 2016–2024 was approved at the 12th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (2015). Finland’s Ramsar Wetlands Action Plan is part of the contribution of Finland to its implementation. The Ramsar strategy emphasises the particularly alarming condition of wetlands: of all the habitats in the world, wetlands are the most threatened. The loss of habitats is one of the key reasons behind the global decline of biodiversity. The Ramsar strategy implements the so-called Aichi Biodiversity Targets of the CBD and several of the goals set in the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Finland was the second country in the world to sign the convention in 1975, at which time Finland added 11 sites to the list of Ramsar Sites. Currently Finland has a total of 49 Ramsar sites. Combined, these sites cover approximately 785,000 hectares. Half of the Ramsar sites in Finland are mires. Finland and the Nordic countries have a special role to play in conserving northern mire habitats, as 2.5% of the world’s mires are located here.

Finland country profile