

Minutes

Nature protection cooperation in Pasvik-Inari area

Meeting between Norwegian and Finnish organisations

Date and time: Wednesday, September 7th at 1 pm - 5 pm

Venue: Sámi museum and Northern Lapland Nature Centre Siida, Inari, Finland

1. **Opening of the meeting and presentation of the participants.** Regional director Jyrki Tolonen from Metsähallitus opened the meeting at 1.05 pm through Teams. He highlighted that it is important to discuss about the cooperation in nature protection in Pasvik-Inari area even though the Russian partners are not here today. Metsähallitus sees the cross-border cooperation bilaterally as a high priority.

Participants presented themselves:

- County Governor of Troms and Finnmark, Norway: Director of the Environmental department Lisa Bjørnsdatter Helgason and Senior advisor Tiia Kalske
 - Øvre Pasvik National Park, Norway: Chairman of the national park board Kurt Wikan and Park manager Rolf Kollstrøm
 - Nibio Svanhovd, Norway: Station manager Anne Wikan
 - Centre for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment in Lapland, Finland: Head of unit Jari Pasanen
 - Municipality of Inari, Finland: Maire Puikko as deputy for Janne Hannola
 - Metsähallitus, Parks & Wildlife Finland: Nature conservation manager Pertti Itkonen, Development manager Joel Erkkonen (via Teams), Recreation amenity specialist Kirsi Ukkonen and Project manager Riina Tervo. National Park superintendent Pirjo Seurujärvi joined the meeting from point 5 on.
2. **Selection of chair and secretary.** Pertti Itkonen was selected as chair and Riina Tervo as secretary.
 3. **Important information from each organization**
 - a. Norway:
 - i. County Governor of Troms and Finnmark. The regional political level with the Troms and Finnmark County Council administration will split back to Troms and Finnmark by January 2024. The State level with the County Governor might continue as one unit or it might also be



Statsforvalteren i Troms og Finnmark
County Governor of Troms and Finnmark



Øvre Pasvik
nasjonalpark



splitted in two – it is a political decision and more information will be available by the end of year. The County Governor's office is now back in the newly renovated office building in Vadsø, opening ceremony was on 23.8.2022. Biggest threat in nature conservation is currently the invasion of pink salmon. As a solution, different fish traps will be installed into Norwegian rivers (Eastern-Finnmark rivers primarily). The traps are designed to fit each river and not to harm other local fish species, so they are let out to continue their natural journey. Second topic is making of management plan for large carnivores, the work should be finished by 2023. Third topic are the marine protected areas. A new marine protected area called LoppHAVET marine protected area has been established in June 2022, and its Norway's biggest protected marine area, and the first in Finnmark area. Voluntary forest protection continues. Multiuse plan for rivers Pasvik and Grense Jakobselv until year 2030 is ready, and the publication was delivered to participants. Program of Measures (PoM) for the years 2021-2030 is in implementation. The cooperation along these transboundary rivers goes on bilaterally between Norway and Finland. It is being hoped that Russian side of the rivers is managed like agreed in this plan, but this is to be found out in the future. CoASal -project for protecting Atlantic Salmon and analysing threats like climate change continues until September 2022. County Governor has mapped Pasvik Nature Reserve for cultural marks in trees, and there were 21 identified trees. There are altogether approx. 400 trees with cultural marks in the protected areas of Pasvik river valley. Norwegian and Finnish partners in Transboundary water commission have had meeting this week in Inari. Commission gave three recommendations for future cooperation, and the themes are: Gyrodactylus salaris – actions against the spreading of the salmon parasite, research on wild salmon in the ocean and actions against invasion of pink salmon in the border rivers. A 40 years anniversary publication (booklet) about the transboundary water commission's work has just been published, it is written by Bente Christiansen and Kari Kinnunen.

- ii. Øvre Pasvik National Park Board. National Park board provides support to bird ringers working at Nyrud. This year is 7th year of bird ringing in Norway. There is cooperation with border guards who are present in the protected areas: staff of protected areas are involved in the training of border guards. National Park board is satisfied with the staff exchange: Victoria Gonzalez from Nibio visited Finland in June and Alexander Kopf from Metsähallitus visited Norway on last week. New visitor point Gjøken originating from old, conserved buildings is



getting ready with the financing from PAN -project. Local tourism entrepreneurs are eager to cooperate with national park board at Gjøken. Photos from Gjøken and its different buildings and spaces were shown.

- iii. Nibio Svanhovd. There are busy times with the new visitor point of Gjøken and especially its exhibition space. Otherwise, it is like business as usual apart from the Russia's aggression on Ukraine. It is possible to continue with research on Norwegian side based on funding for Norwegian-Russian cooperation. There are some straight contacts between Norwegian and Russian researchers. There is need for further funding for future. Nibio has mapped freshwater pearl mussel population in Grense Jakobselv/ Vuorjema river, and results are distributed later. Nibio is running citizen science -projects f. ex. on brown bear scat. A project application on cross-border monitoring of moose has been sent for Interreg Aurora -programme. The partners in this project application are Nibio, FeFo, Natural Resources Institute Finland and Metsähallitus.
- iv. There was no participant nor news from Municipality of Sør-Varanger.

b. Finland:

- i. Metsähallitus Parks & Wildlife Finland. There has been plenty of extra funding which has been used for habitat and species inventories as well as for renovating infrastructure in the protected areas. Work on protecting Freshwater pearl mussel and Arctic fox have had good results. There were three Arctic fox puppies this year in Finland - after a break of 25 years. Metsähallitus will have less funding on next year, and future is dependent on the elections and next government. Project for multisource inventory for habitats in Northern Lapland was presented. When the final report is ready in next year it will be sent to organisations in this meeting. There is reference to similar work made in the Pasvik nature reserve area in Norway.
- ii. ELY-centre. There has been plenty of funding from Helmi habitats programme for protecting biodiversity in Lapland, which has enabled inventories and other activities. Many river basin management plans have been approved by the government. Unit has had active recruitment, and it seems there is even lack of biologists currently in Finland. All environmental cooperation with Russia has stopped. There is minimum level communication for operational work with Russian



partners needed in water level regulation for Lake Inari. Ely-centre is busy with major scale projects in Lapland over metal industry, mines and forest industry. Also Swedish mining projects have reflection to Finland because of Natura 2000 -river Torneå between Sweden and Finland. List of current cross-border projects were shown: f.ex. the Revives -Life project protecting fresh water pearl mussel and Triwa - Life project for Tornio-Muonio river areas. Barents and Arctic cooperation takes place without Russia for the time being.

- iii. Municipality of Inari. Municipality of Inari is very positive about the restoration of the Kirakkajoki River between Lakes Rahajärvi and Inarijärvi. Restoration has been done in ReArc-project as activity by Ely-Center. Otherwise there were no specific topics from the municipality, but municipality's representative will be actively participating in the meeting and asking for further information.

4. Current state of affairs in cross-border cooperation and wishes for future.

There is no official cooperation in nature protection (or other environmental themes) with Russia in both countries.

- a. Norway. Organisations wish to continue the transboundary cooperation with Finland like before. The funding from Norwegian-Russian environmental commission is still used for the cross-border cooperation. For 2023 and further the source of financing is still unclear. There is need to have national funding for the Nordic cooperation.
- b. Finland. Same wish and will from Finland: let's cooperate cross-border like earlier. The basic budget for organisations could and perhaps should provide the funding at least for annual meetings. Nordiska Ministerrådet and Interreg-program are possible financiers for bigger future activities.

5. Issues from Pasvik-Inari Trilateral Park -cooperation, which need decisions

- a. EUROPARC -cooperation: planned reverification of the certificate in year 2023

Topic was discussed and it was agreed, that transboundary certificate should not run out: it requires work, time and money to start the process from the beginning again.

It was decided that ad hoc workgroup prepares a draft for official letter on postponing the re-evaluation of the certificate primarily for two years and secondarily for one year. This ad hoc advisory board will approve the letter prior it is signed by director of protected areas and sent to EUROPARC Council and



steering and evaluation committee (STEC) of the transboundary parks programme.

It was also discussed, that we need to consider in the future the communication towards Russian partners in the former trilateral cooperation f. ex. on the continuity of bilateral cooperation in Pasvik-Inari area. This kind of communication is about international affairs and agreements, and there is need to have an opinion from the ministries of environment in Norway and Finland on what we can communicate to our former Russian partners.

We call our bilateral cooperation now as Pasvik-Inari cooperation.

6. **Construction of possible bilateral work plan.** It was discussed that there is the trilateral action plan with follow-up sheets and existing structure for the work of advisory board and trilateral workgroup.

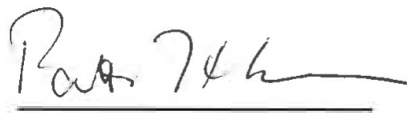
It was agreed, that an ad hoc working group consisting of Norwegian and Finnish representatives of the workgroup will update the action plan's timetables and follow-up -sheet and present it to this ad hoc advisory board, on the next meeting (in 2023).

7. **Targets for year 2023.** It was agreed that following topics listed below are prioritized, and organisations try to include these activities in their next year's budget. These activities are in addition to the regular annual meeting for the ad hoc steering group and work in the ad hoc working group.

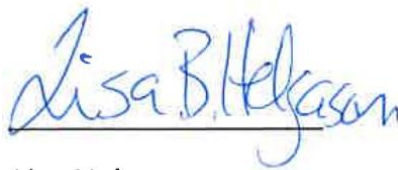
- Staff exchange
- Brown bear monitoring
- Work required for Transboundary Parks' certificate according to EUROPARC's and ad hoc advisory board's decisions
- Social media campaign for European Day of Parks (May 24th)
- Launching the review and update of Principles of sustainable nature tourism in Pasvik-Inari area. It will be started by communication on current situation in Norway and Finland.
- Common project ideas:
 - o Existing Piilola hiking trail between Norwegian Øvre Pasvik National Park and Finnish Vätsäri Wilderness area. Project should explore the possibilities for developing this wilderness trail f. ex. through branding the trail, possible updating of the infrastructure (some duckboards between Finnish Piilola and the Norwegian border), disseminating information about the trail and cooperating with tourism entrepreneurs.



8. **Other items.** There were no other items.
9. **Next meeting.** Next meeting will be from lunch to lunch in Norway, on June 7th-8th 2023.
10. **Closing of the meeting.** Chair thanked all the participants for discussion and meeting. Meeting was closed at 4.50 pm.



Pertti Itkonen
Metsähallitus, Parks &
Wildlife Finland



Lisa Helgason
County Governor of
Troms and Finnmark



Kurt Wikan
Øvre Pasvik National Park
Board

