

Minutes - Pasvik-Inari transboundary area cooperation meeting 2025

Time and venue: 22.-23.9.2025, NIBIO Svanhovd, Svanvik, Norway

Participants:

Finland: Kirsi Ukkonen and Olli Lipponen (online, day 1) Metsähallitus Parks & Wildlife Finland, Arto Leivo Inari Municipality, Veikko Feodoroff (online, day 1) Skolt Saami Siida Administration. Absent: Lapland ELY-centre representative.

Norway: Kurt Wikan and Rolf Kollstrøm Øvre Pasvik National Park, Ida Helland Sør-Varanger Municipality, Lisa Helgason, Tiia Kalske and Yara Nieuwenhuis County Governor of Troms and Finnmark, Anne Wikan (day 2) and Runar Kjær (day 1) NIBIO Svanhovd (observer). Absent: none.

1. Opening of the meeting and presentation of the participants.

Kurt Wikan opened the meeting at 13. Participants presented themselves.

2. Selection of chair and secretary.

Kurt Wikan/ Lisa Helgason will chair the meeting and Tiia Kalske/ Yara Nieuwenhuis will write the minutes.

3. Adoption of the agenda.

The proposed agenda was adopted without amendments. The meeting has quorum.

4. Important information from each organization:

Metsähallitus Parks&Wildlife Finland:

- Services in transition: to major changes by making tough decisions to ensure long-term sustainability: 1) embracing innovation and digital tools to deliver greater customer value and smarter operations. 2) A combined national operating model with localized actions ensures both wide impact and community relevance.
- Financial adaptation and long-term planning also done. Strategic choices, savings and cost efficiency in all operations.
- Luontoon Services as national outdoor information platform: <https://www.luontoon.fi/en>

Municipality of Inari:

- Strong desire to include the youth, possibly by involving Inari's youth council. No concrete plans as of now.
- New strategy: 'Strong by nature'. Inari's unique nature is the foundation of everything, and it is essential for the livelihoods of those in and around the area. Focus on sustainability, both ecological and social sustainability.
- New position in Inari for environmental advisor. Cooperation/ transboundary cooperation could possibly become a part.
- Outside of the big cities, Inari is one of the few regions in Finland that is growing in prosperity and population.
- Tourism in Inari is growing fast. It brings opportunities, but also challenges, and we need to make sure growth is sustainable (socially and ecologically). There are ongoing, almost daily discussions about the limits of sustainable growth.



- Effects of climate change and land use pressures are real globally and locally. That's why cross-border cooperation is valuable – we can learn from each other and come up with better solutions together.

Skolt Saami Siida Administration:

- Presentation of the Skolt Saami Siida Administration. A traditional and immemorial self-governing regime of Skolt Saami. Most important task is to maintain and promote traditional Skolt Saami livelihoods, living conditions, language and culture.
- The administration does not have status of juridical person, and therefore can't own property, manage or apply for funding by itself. Received 100 000 euros from ELY-center in 2025, which must cover all costs. Submits 40-50 statements annually, provides advice and information on the Skolt Saami rights and measures under the Skolt Act.
- Skolt Saami area (map in Annex 1.). Further the presentation gave a clear view of the Skolt Saami Siida organisation and work.

Øvre Pasvik National Park Board:

- Presentation of the composition of the national park board and their activities. Determined on continuing our transboundary cooperation despite the 'border sorrow'.
- Treriksrøysa (Muotkavaara) is the biggest visitor attraction with approximately 2000 visitors yearly, this number is expected to increase.
- Facilitation for biking outside the protected areas. Part of the visitor strategy included the facilitation for bikers on the outskirts of the protected areas, the bike trail had a soft opening' in 2025, planning a bigger opening event in 2026.
- Dark Sky Park certification¹, focus on traditional knowledge of the Sami starry sky. Astro tourism is increasing. Information materials and training of tourism entrepreneurs are ongoing.
- Trail to and plateau of Treriksrøysa: Landscape architecture competition to help with the visitor management and revegetation, in close dialogue with the Border authorities.
- Stabburet 'art gallery' at the visitor point Gjøken, restored as a historic building in 2021, now to be opened as an exhibition room. An open community presentation 'Environmental protection without borders' 23.9. including illustrations by Yara Nieuwenhuis.

Municipality of Sør-Varanger:

- Working on a biodiversity plan for the municipality and currently in the finishing stages of the first draft which will hopefully be ready in January.
- Areal plan for the municipality should start within the next year/couple of years.
- Supervision and monitoring plan for dispersed private sewage systems.
- New water area coordinator for Sør-Varanger, Nesseby, Vadsø and Båtsfjord municipalities in place, helping and facilitate cooperation between County Administrative Council² and the municipalities.

NIBIO Svanhovd: Presentation of activities

- Brown Bear project (hair-trap study), collaboration with Finland and Russia in 2019, 2023 only in cooperation with Finland. Field sampling with harmonized and agreed method, followed by DNA sampling and analyses in the lab.

¹ <https://darksky.org/places/ovre-pasvik-national-park/>

² Finnmark fylkeskommune: <https://www.ffk.no/>



- PNC- Phenology of the North Calotte. Cultural exchange and communication, development in nature. Course for junior high school students.
- Bird watching: Norwegian Society for the Conservation of Nature, yearly hike with bird counting.
- Waterbird registration in Pasvik NR, from boats during spring and autumn. Long-term monitoring since 1996-. In collaboration with Russia until 2020. 57 species 24 endangered. Russians still participate, following each other up and down the border line, without any formal planning or communications. Communication through the border commissionaire.
- Bird ringing Birdlife Norway at Nyrud every year. NIBIO has a bird-box project.
- Nyrud area: more than 235 different bird species, 135 are found nesting. 93 species are endangered in Norway and 72 of these are registered in Pasvik. Less smaller birds, maybe due to water regulations. Not only blamed on the dams, but also on climate change. Drastic change in military patrol boat usage.
- Fish and water long-term monitoring: ecological impacts. Increase in temperature: trends show over 30 years. 2 degrees over 30 years, especially in autumn and summer. Increase in perch abundance, due to increased temperatures.

County Governor of Troms and Finnmark:

- Organization map³: Short presentation on the County Governor's role and responsibilities for tasks within the following areas: Health and social services, Municipal administration, Legal guardianship (or: Guardianship services), Civil protection and emergency preparedness, Environmental protection, Schools and kindergartens, Children and families, Agriculture, and Reindeer husbandry
- Other issues we are following up annually: Long-term monitoring on water quality in the Pasvik region and Interreg Aurora projects (will be presented later).
- Voluntary forest protection in Pasvik area and pink salmon work in both Troms and Finnmark counties.

5. Current situation in cross-border cooperation: discussion and information.

Report from the working group on implementation of the work in 2024-2025 (Annex 2)

5 a. Management and cooperation:

EUROPARC-cooperation:

- EUROPARC Federation **re-evaluation on-site visit** results from April 2025: report from the verifier. Follow up the recommendations.
- **Official cooperation agreement** between Norway and Finland: signed (copy in Annex 2).
- **Vision and mission:** status update (Approved by email, copy in Annex 2).
- **Stakeholder involvement:** Involvement of the youth in Pasvik-Inari cooperation: status development on going. Inari municipality youth council has announced interest. Øvre Pasvik NP Board has regular contact with local youth and schools into their management of the protected areas. The working group will keep this issue on the table and continue working on how to best involve the youth in the cooperation. The Sami parliament in Finland has nominated a member into the advisory board, Skolt Saami Siida Administration.

³ <https://www.statsforvalteren.no/nb/troms-finnmark/om-oss/avdelinger/>

- **Logo:** status for tender/ procurement, incl. short brainstorm session on background info to designer: First option (bear and the swan) was most liked by participants. Next step will be to ask for 3 different options, including the results from the brainstorm session (Focus on terms 'old-growth forest/ old pine tree, river/ water, Saami colors'). From there decisions on which option to work further with will be made. Designer's second options will be circulated on e-mail, and a meeting will be called if needed to discuss and agree on the new logo.
- **Update of guiding rules for cooperation:** draft version of updated guiding rules for the cooperation was circulated amongst meeting documents prior to this meeting. The draft was discussed and mended and approved (Annex 3.)
- **Joint website updating** status and discussion: Agreed that there should be updates to the website, but without removing the past information about the former trilateral cooperation including Russia. The 'outdated' pages should be archived and accessible via a separate tab on the updated website to conserve the 'history' of the cooperation. Working group will take this issue into work.

Meeting commences on Tuesday 23.9, time 8.30-12

5 b. Monitoring results:

- **Annual water bird registrations:** Waterfowl registrations in Norway (NIBIO). Spring registrations dates: 28.5. (472 ind., 26 species) and 5.6. (413 ind., 22 species). Autumn registrations dates: 20.8. (280 ind., 17 species) and 3.9. (357 ind., 13 species).
- **Golden Eagle:** Finland: In the municipalities of Inari and Utsjoki altogether 61 (Inari 52, Utsjoki 17) territories and 11 (Inari 9, Utsjoki 2) successful breedings in 2025. Norway: 2024/2025: 1 uncertain breeding at Sametti. 1 documented golden eagle damage on livestock (reindeer) at Lyngklumpen in December 2024. No other golden eagle activity registered in roibase.no.
- **Bird ringing:** Bird ringing: the database will be updated for both Norway and Finland, 2015-2024/ 2025. Including also recapture data/controls, when we get it from the ringing centers. Finland hopes for easier dialogue with the bird community (contact person Inga Grøndal)
- **Visitors' numbers:** Counting visitors will help with visitor strategies and planning. Collected at a joined table annually.

5 c. Enlightenment and dissemination of information:

- Day of parks SOME joint post published, 24 May.
- Brown bear DNA-laboratory in Finland. Future collaboration/funding from Inari-municipality.
- Phenology of North Calotte in Pasvik, a few pupils from Inari taking part as well. NIBIO Svanhovd activity (PNC).

5 d. Other activities from the action plan: status update.

No information.

6. Targets for 2026, Suggestion from the Working Group:

a. Management and cooperation

- Staff exchange: Evaluation of the Staff exchange program – task to WG.
- Annual meetings WG and Advisory board.



- EUROPARC cooperation: TaskForce, TransParcNet, STEC, annual meeting etc.
- Implement and finalize Interreg Aurora projects: OPreWa and CLAP.
- Note for 2028/2029: possible application for EUROPARC TransParcNet meeting in 2029 (20-year anniversary hike for Piilola Wilderness trail).

b. Monitoring: brown bear monitoring in 2027, 2026 start planning and secure funding. Collect visitor numbers, bird ringing etc.

- Start to prepare for joint Brown bear monitoring in 2027, planning and working to secure funding. Planning meetings needed to be held in 2026.
- Continue collecting visitor numbers, bird ringing, bird registrations.

c. Environmental Enlightenment and dissemination

- Brown bear DNA-lab, to be implemented if/ when funding.
- Temporary exhibition: Illustrations by Yara Nieuwenhuis – circulation in Norway and maybe in Finland.
- Update the joint web site. Working group got this task. Update the joint web site and archive the trilateral history.
- New logo will be part of updated web site.

7. Status updates from CLAP and other Interreg Aurora projects in the Pasvik-Inari area

- CLAP/ Climate change communication and adaptation in Arctic protected areas were presented by Kirsi Ukkonen. <https://www.interregaurora.eu/approved-projects/clap-climate-change-communication-and-adaptation-of-arctic-protected-areas/>
- OPreWa/ Our precious transboundary waters were presented by Yara Nieuwenhuis. <https://www.interregaurora.eu/approved-projects/our-precious-transboundary-waters/>

8. Other issues:

Presentation of LAC work in Finland, perspectives on sustainability and foresight of protected areas use.

Joen Erkkonen Parks&Wildlife Finland presented. Monitoring and assessing sustainability of protected area use. From monitoring of sustainability to foresight of sustainability. Finland is working on moving from monitoring sustainability to foresight sustainable use through pilot areas and piloting. CLAP projects climate-smart campsite are part of this ongoing process too.

9.Next meeting in Finland 2026: time and venue

Week 35 in 2026 was suggested. Finland as organizer will come back with suggestions for dates and place.

After the meeting Finland has suggested that the next Advisory board meeting will be held in Sevettijärvi at Reindeer farm Sanila and the dates are 25.-27.8.2026.

10. Closing of the meeting

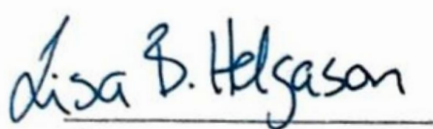
Meeting closes at 12.



Tromsø, 04.12.2025

Svanvik, 17.12.2025

Rovaniemi, 27.01.2026



Lisa Bjørnsdatter Helgason
Environmental Director

County Governor of Troms and
Finnmark



Kurt Wikan
Chair of the National Park
Board

Øvre Pasvik National Park
Board



Olli Lipponen
Corporate relationship manager

Metsähallitus Parks & Wildlife
Finland

Annex 1. Map

Annex 2. Working group report 2024/2025

Annex 3. Approved new guiding rules for the cooperation



Statsforvalteren i Troms og Finnmark
County Governor of Troms and Finnmark



Øvre Pasvik
nasjonalpark



METSÄHALLITUS
FORSTSTYRELSEN
MEAHCIRÁÐDEHUS

Annex 1. Map

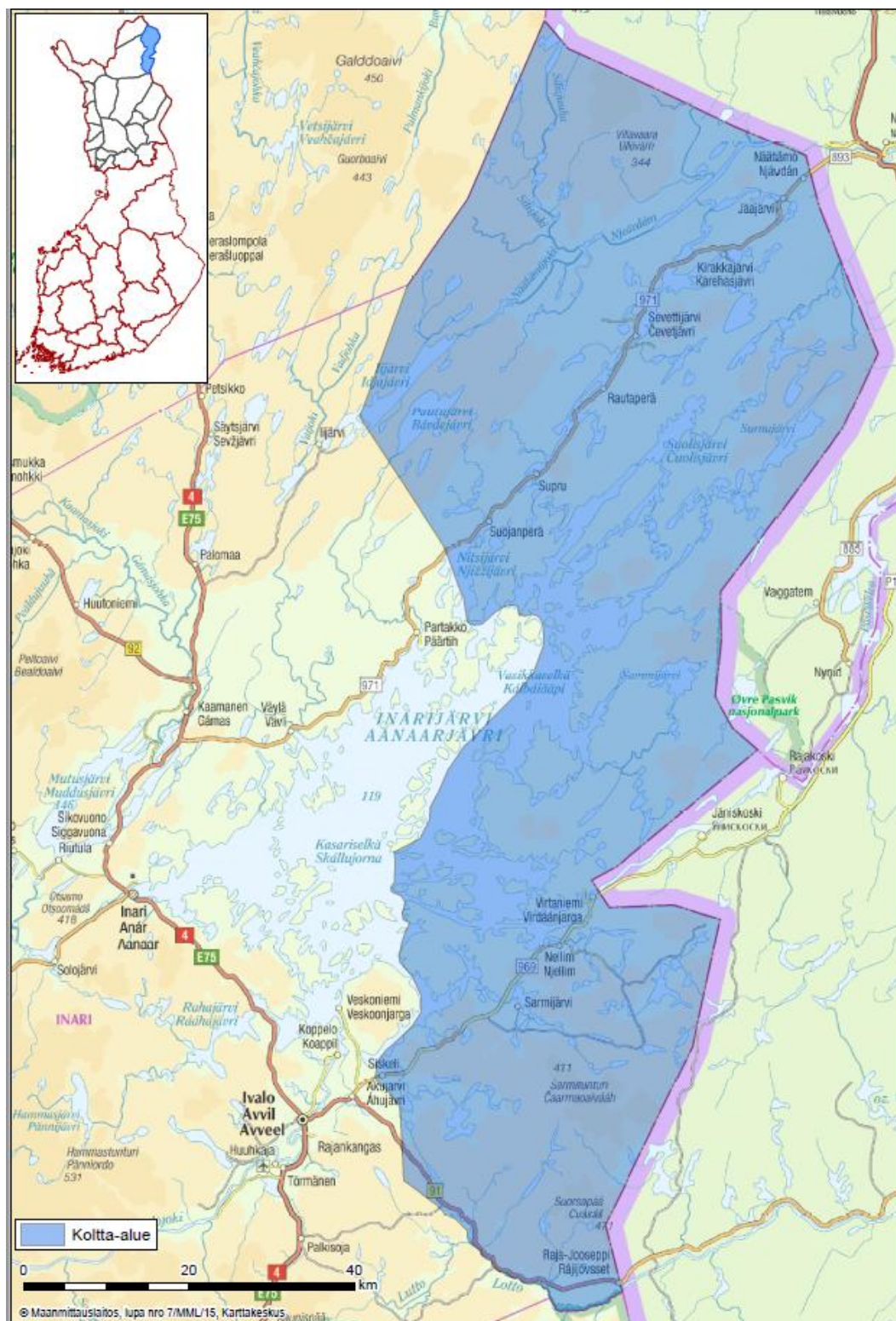


Figure 1. Map of Skolt Saami area. Defined verbally in section 2 of the Skolt Act.



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