

# SUSTAINABLE NATURE TOURISM –Framework, Principles and Tools



## EXPERIENCES FROM SAIMAA PARK DISTRICT, FINLAND

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Section

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# Topics of the presentation

Principles &  
indicators of  
Sustainable  
Nature Tourism

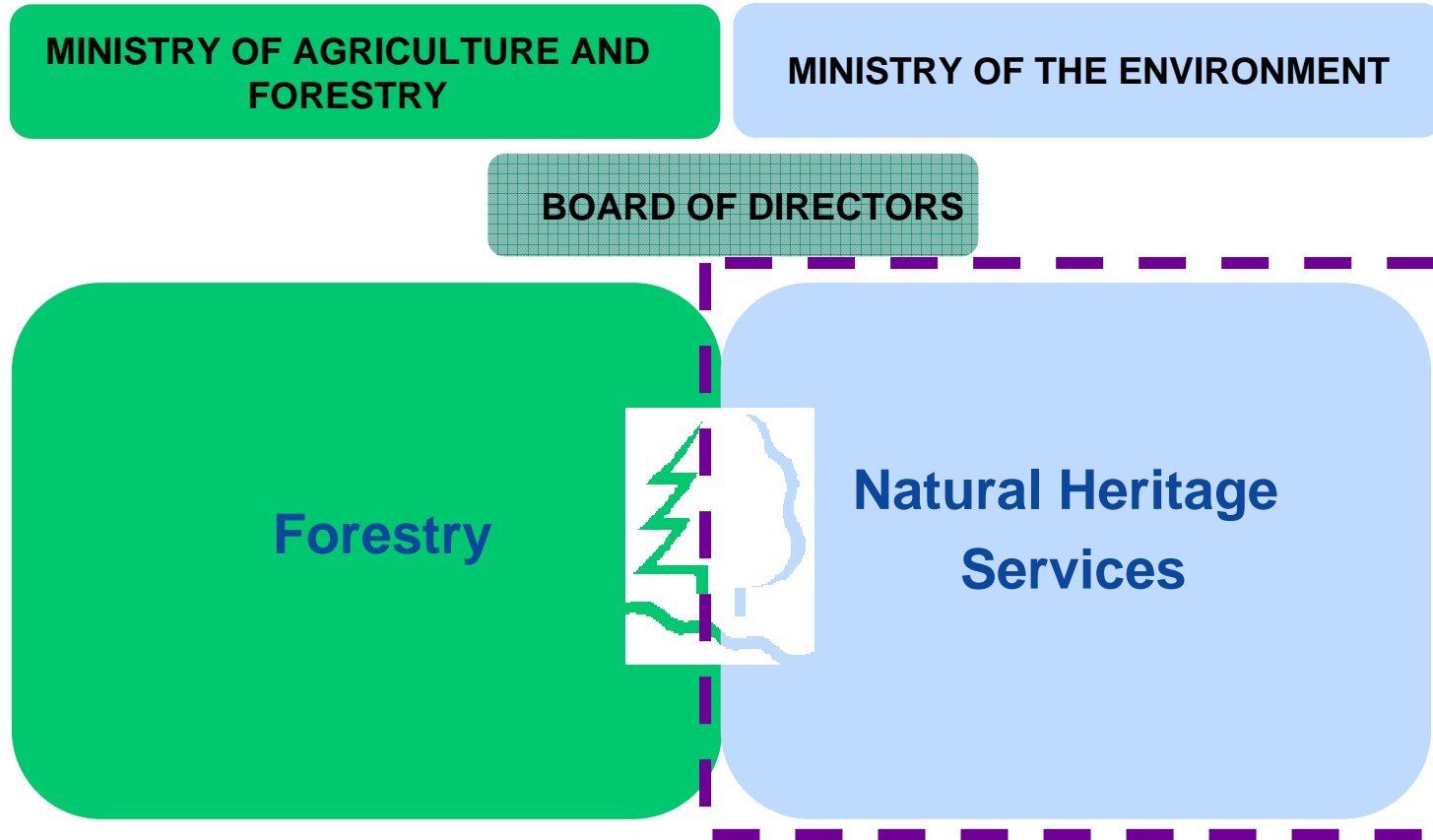
The role of  
Metsähallitus in  
Nature Tourism

Integrating it all  
at destination  
level: The  
Saimaa Nature  
tourism plan  
as example

TOOLS: Interpretive  
masterplan,  
Visitor surveys,  
Entrepreneur  
questionnaire, SME  
contracts



# Introduction



Foria



morenia



# Mission of Natural Heritage Services

- We manage our areas in accordance with the best practices based on research and experience to protect natural diversity and cultural values.
- **We provide our customers with a possibility to recreation in and learning about nature.**
- **We create opportunities for nature tourism and sustainable regional development.**
- We do cooperation on national and international level.
- We develop our service competence and the effectiveness and productivity of our operations.



# Vision 2010, Natural Heritage Services

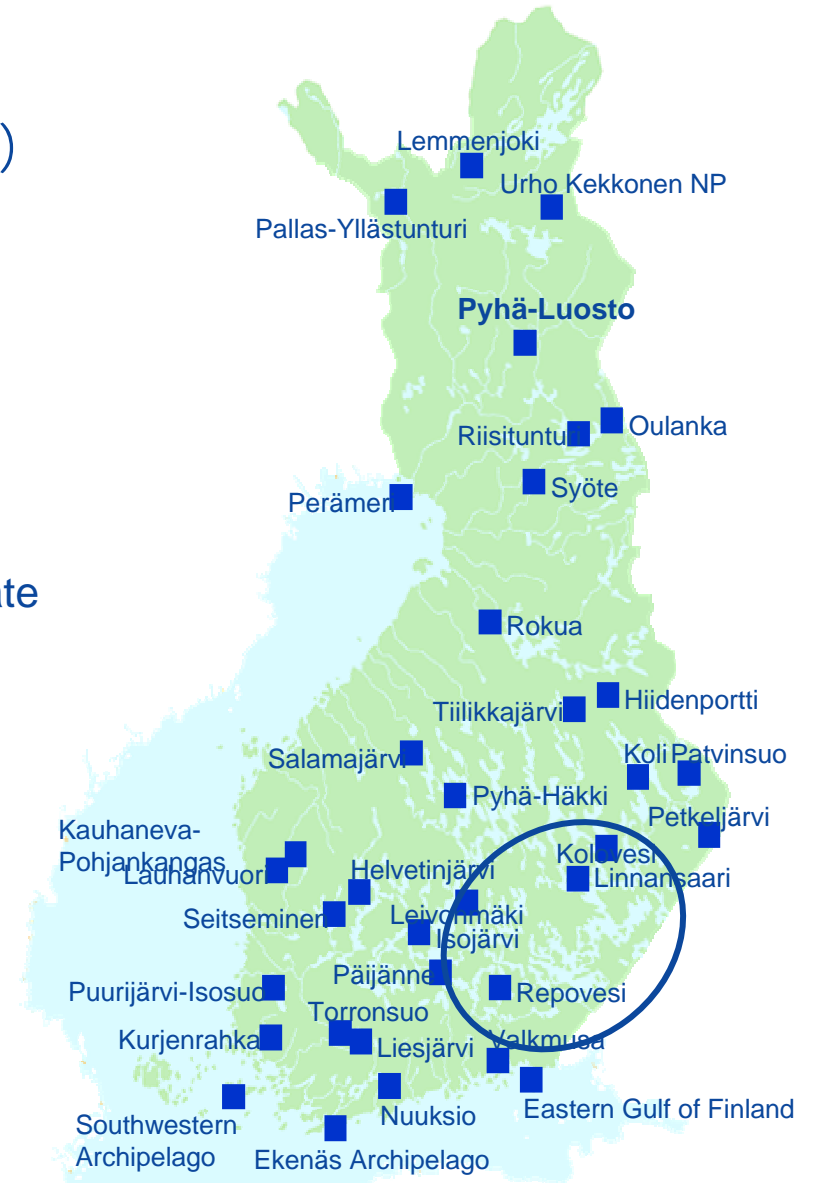
- The favourable conservation status of species and habitats in our areas is safeguarded.
- Our services are appreciated and promote to the welfare of nature and man.



# National Parks and Other Protected Areas

- 35 National parks (1,5 million visits)
- 7 National Hiking Areas
- 12 wilderness areas
- More than 400 other PA's

Most of the protected areas are owned by the state and managed by Metsähallitus, NHS



# Protected Areas Are Used for...

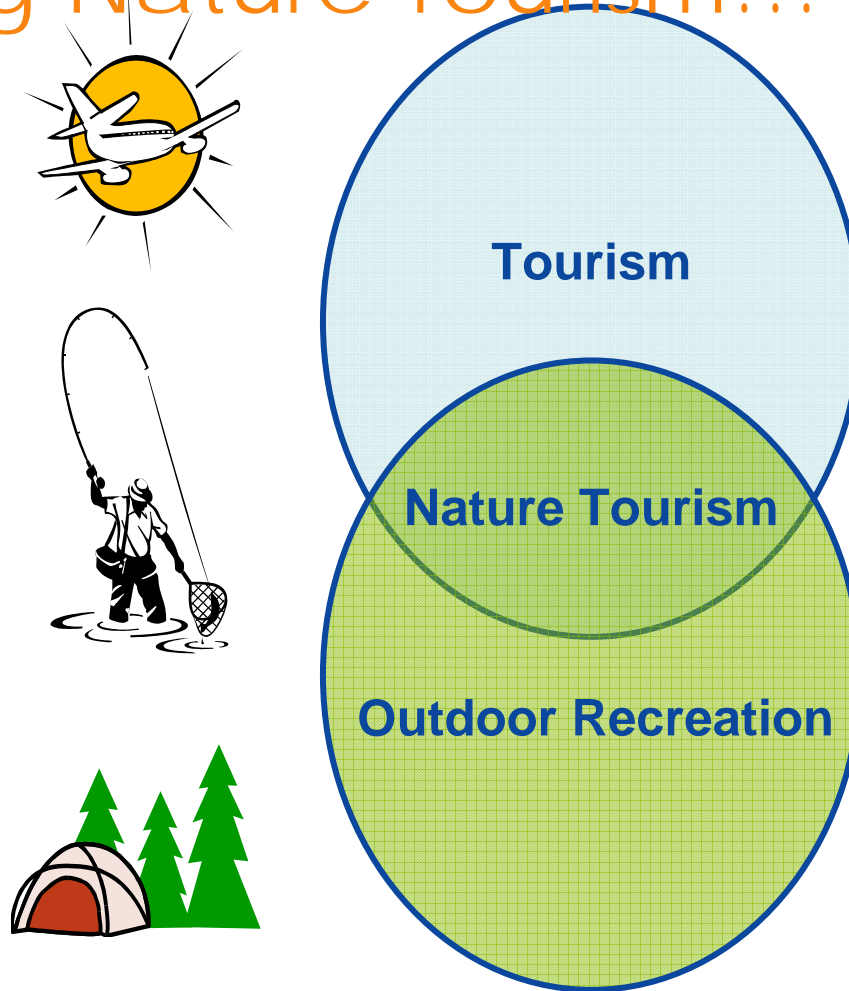


- Nature protection
- Research and Education
- Outdoor recreation
- Traditional use of nature resources
  - hunting, fishing and reindeer husbandry
- Promoting local economy and communities
- Nature tourism

Sustainability



# Defining Nature Tourism...



Source: Finnish Government action plan for developing outdoor recreation and nature tourism



# Successful Nature Tourism consist of

1. An attractive destination
2. Accessibility to the destination and in the destination
3. Contents and product development
  - products
  - interpretation
  - marketing
4. Sales and delivery
5. Service quality
  - Fulfilling or preferably exceeding the expectations

**The entire product and service chain needs to function!**



# Public-private Partnerships

- The roles of public and private sectors in developing nature tourism need to be set
- The role of public organisations e.g.:
  - Providing public infrastructure, facilities, settings:
    - Free-of-charge hiking services for the public, trails, cabins, campsites, waste mgmt
    - Public customer services, i.e., interpretation and information services, guidance & monitoring
    - Chargeable services and clear rules for the private sector
    - Marketing (destination amenities and public services)
  - Maintenance of the above
- The role of private sector:
  - Creating products
  - Marketing (destination, market products and services)
  - Tourist operations



# Efficient Marketing

- Product and brand development
  - E.g. National parks and World Heritage Areas are strong international brands
- Making the full use of web
- One needs to live up to one's promises
  - A satisfied customer is best marketing!



# The Customers' Value Chains Need to Match with the Product and Service Chains

- Knowing and targeting customer segments (visitor studies)
  - Values, profiles, lifestyles, motivations etc.
- Recognizing the potential customers
  - Proximity to population centers
  - Connections, access



# Sustainability

- Sustainability in all its dimensions
  - Ecological, economical and social-cultural sustainability go “hand in hand”; e.g. without economic viability, the ecological goals cannot be afforded, and vica versa
- Especially including:
  - Quality of the environment and services
    - Safety
    - Ethics: the tourist needs to find his/her own values in the product
  - Economic impacts at the local / regional level
  - Acceptability at the local / regional level
- The economic benefits to the state and municipalities come most efficiently via increased small and medium nature tourism enterprise development



*Sustainable nature tourism is practiced in the protected areas administered by Metsähallitus so that..."*

1. Nature values are preserved and the tourism activities promote nature protection
2. Minimum loading of the environment is assured
3. Local culture and heritage are respected
4. Customers' appreciation and knowledge of nature and culture are promoted
5. Customers' opportunities to find recreation in nature are enhanced
6. Customers' mental and physical wellbeing are reinforced
7. Positive impacts are made on local economy and employment
8. Communication and marketing are of high standard and carried out with a sense of responsibility
9. Activities are planned and implemented in co-operation



# General Principles of Sustainable Nature Tourism

## Implemented

- In protected areas (incl. national parks), wilderness areas and protected areas managed by Metsähallitus, NHS
- Total area 37 664 sq. km,
  - 12,4 % of the land area of Finland
  - 19 % larger than the land area of Belgium and almost as large as the land area of Netherlands
- Approx. 2,5 - 3 million visits/year (in Finland 5,2 million Inhabitants)



# Principles of Sustainable Nature Tourism

## Implementers

- Metsähallitus, NHS - guidelines, training
- Entrepreneurs - cooperation, training agreements
- Customers - interpretation
- Interest parties - cooperation



# 1. Nature Values Are Preserved and All Activities Promote Nature Protection

- Nature is an important reason for travel
- Visitors can learn about nature and conservation
- Tourism does not disturb nature; all areas are not suitable for tourism
- Groups are small, and marked trails are used whenever possible
- Tourism is channeled with the help of information and by placing of facilities

- Facilities are constructed without harm to the environment and areas of natural beauty are left in their natural state

Degradation of nature and other impacts are monitored, and if necessary, certain actions are undertaken



## 2. Minimum Loading of the Environment Is Assured

- All forms of loading of the environment is avoided and nature's own terms are followed
- The objective is rubbish-free hiking with minimum stress on the environment
- Firewood is used economically
- Emissions into water and air are minimised and renewable energy sources are favoured
- Metsähallitus and entrepreneurs provide examples of how to act when in taking care on environment



### 3. Local Culture and Heritage Are Respected

- Local culture is met open-minded
- Whenever possible, cultural heritage is included in information and experiences are offered
- Local guides are familiar with local culture and conditions



## 4. Customers' Appreciation and Knowledge of Nature and Culture are Promoted

- Information acquired beforehand
- Information is easy to find in interesting form and content
- Opportunities are given for participating in the management of the area
- Guides are well-trained



# 5. Customers' Opportunities to Find Recreation in Nature Are Enhanced

- All nature lovers taken into account
- Services are optimal in relation to demand and site
- Peace of wilderness and guided excursions in nature are offered
- Tourism products developed in co-operation with entrepreneurs



## 6. Customers' Mental and Physical Wellbeing are Reinforced



- Muscle-powered mobility favoured
- Appropriate hiking equipment provided
- Both easy and demanding hiking routes are available
- Opportunities for nature experiences are offered
- All routes, facilities and programmes are safe



## 7. Positive Impacts Are Made on Local Economy and Employment

- Products and services of local entrepreneurs are used when possible
- Local people are employed when possible, but also people and ideas outside the region are seen as a potential



## 8. Communication and Marketing Are of High Standard and Carried out with a Sense of Responsibility

- Information is reliable
- Communication is open and interactive
- Marketing is not in conflict with nature conservation



## 9. Activities Are Planned and Implemented in Co-operation

- Opinions of the customers are appreciated
- Training organised in co-operation with entrepreneurs
- Planning procedure is open for anybody
- Priority is given to those who wants to commit themselves to these nine principles of sustainable nature tourism



# Feedback of the Nine Principles

- Very acceptable
- Clear and easy to understand
- Entrepreneurs consider the principles more positive compared to other groups

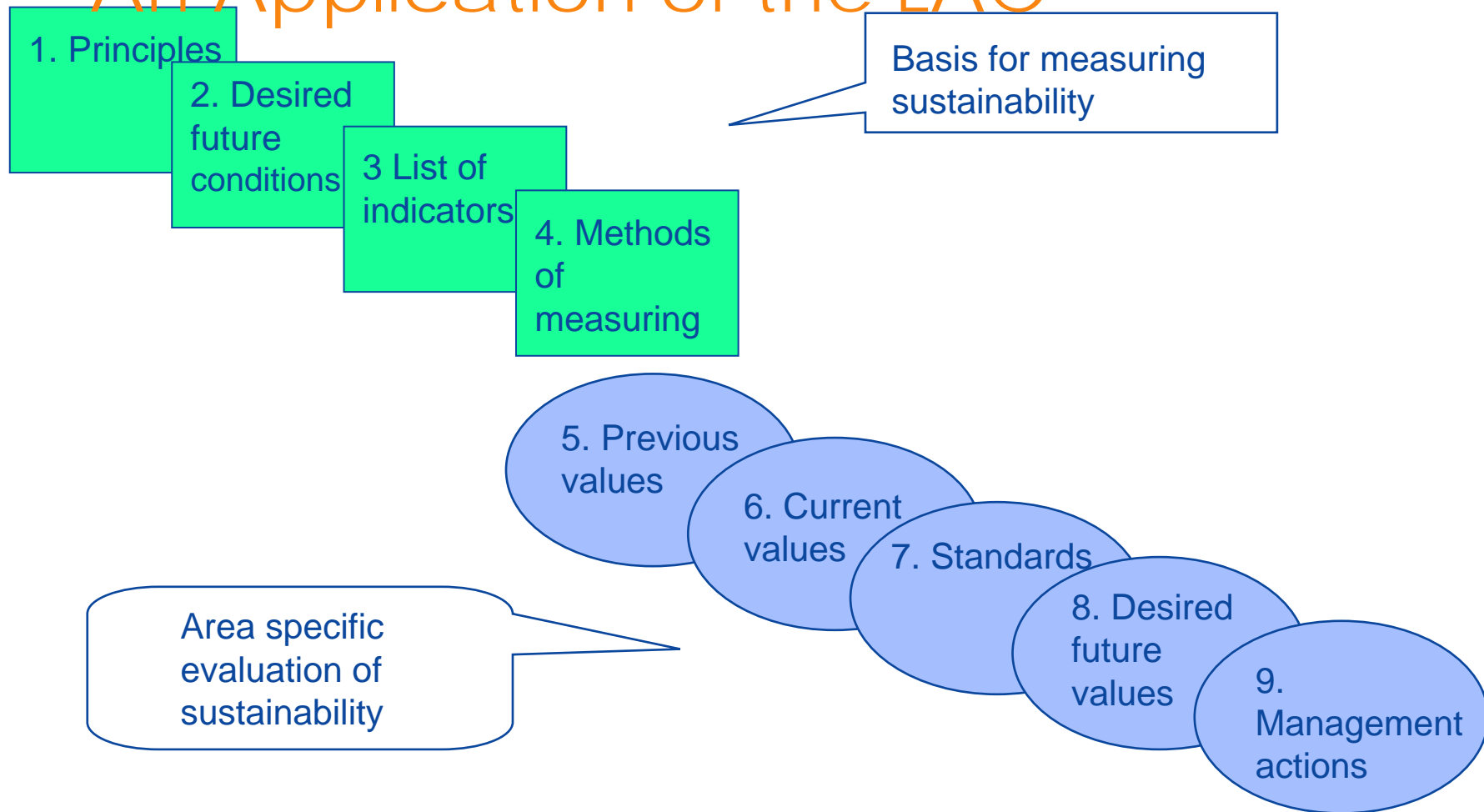


*We are on a right track and hiking to the right direction.*

*We all are facing a lot of challenges with applying the principles of sustainable nature tourism in practise.*



# An Application of the LAC



# How to put the General Principles into Action?

The principles will be concretized in destination level

*Sustainable Nature Tourism Plans, e.g.*

- Oulanka National Park
- Saimaa NP Lake Area
- Seitsemien – Helvetinjärvi NP:s
- Pyhä-Luosto NP



# Contracts With Entrepreneurs

- All nature tourism entrepreneurs acting in protected areas are encouraged to sign a contract with Metsähallitus
  - Either right of use or co-operation contract
- The enterprise is committed to the principles of sustainable nature tourism
  - Clearly defined criteria and indicators
  - Regular monitoring and reporting
- The enterprise receives information, regular meetings with Metsähallitus and other entrepreneurs, efficient ways to affect decisions, brochures to Metsähallitus Nature Centres, and an Internet link to [www.outdoors.fi](http://www.outdoors.fi)

***outdoors.fi***



Thank you for your  
attention!

