

Health benefits of contact with nature

- case *OpenAIR* in Oulu region, Finland



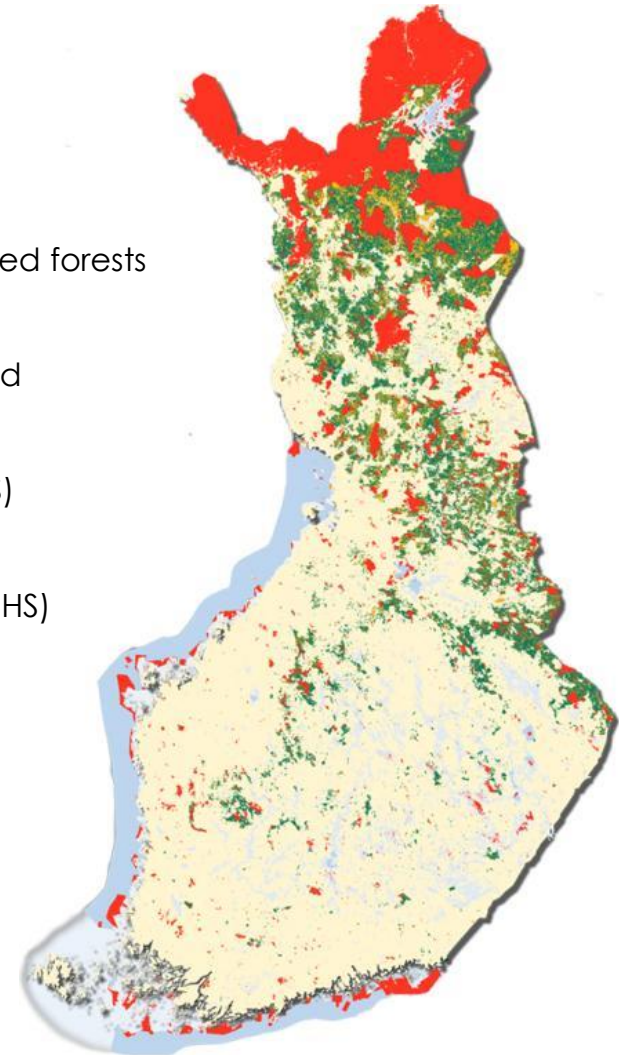
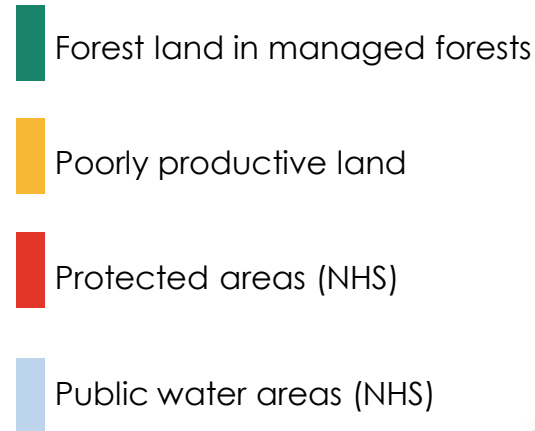
METSÄHALLITUS

Matti Tapaninen

NHS manages all the state-owned PAs

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

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



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



Healthy Parks Healthy People Finland

- Metsähallitus, Natural Heritage Services 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 national parks and other protected areas become more positive



Objectives – cooperation and partnership

NHS and service providers in the wellbeing and health sector collaborate on the design, production and marketing of products

NHS is a reliable and desirable partner for the health service and organisations promoting health at the local, national and international level

Objectives– Research and monitoring

More research data becomes available on the health benefits of protected areas

The health benefits of the use of protected areas are monitored and measured, with findings used to develop and enhance services

Objectives – Accessibility

Protected areas form an integral part of the networks of green spaces and protected areas of various kinds offering opportunities for outdoor recreation near urban communities

Protected areas are easily accessible, and barriers to outdoor recreation are low, encouraging people to enjoy outdoor activities all year round

Objectives – Nature and health for people of all ages

Special focus in (re)connecting child and nature



OpenAir

Oulu Parks, enjoying nature –
Activation, interaction, recreation



OpenAir

Open Oulu Parks – Enjoying Nature

Air Activation, interaction, recreation

Metsähallitus Natural Heritage Services / Ostrobothnia

in collaboration with

the municipalities of Oulu region, University of Oulu, Oulu Deaconess Institute
+ etc..

380 000 + 1 60 000 €, European Regional Development Fund, European Social
Fund, Oulu Region, Oulu Deaconess Institute

spring 2012 – summer 2014



Leverage from
the EU
2007–2013



OpenAir ○ overall objectives



To maintain and improve people's relation to nature, as well as to increase usage of green spaces for everyday recreation.

To find new ways to exploit and to enhance nature-based wellbeing and health benefits among local people and tourists in Oulu region.

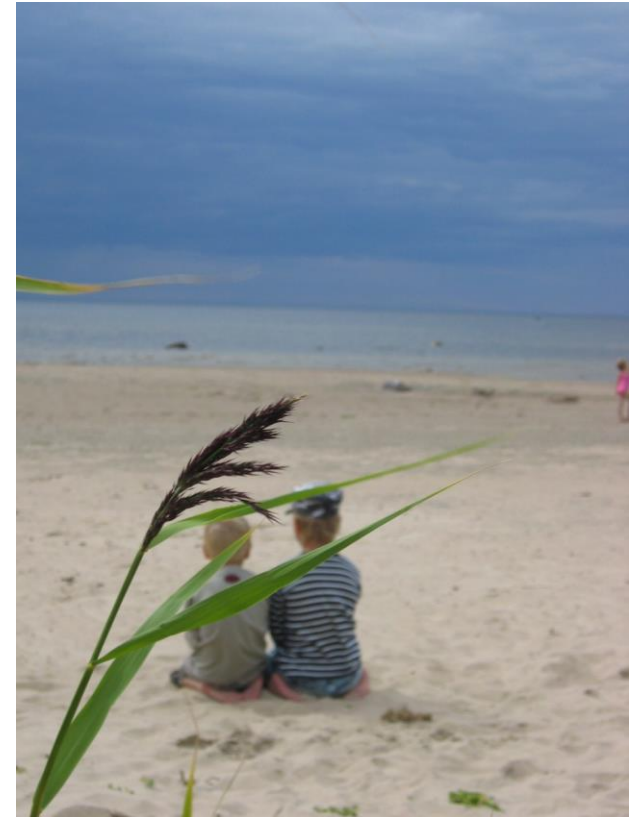
To gain knowledge and know-how in health benefits connected to recreation in green spaces, and to activate international cooperation among this theme.

OpenAir ◦ activities

Forming a regional network of green spaces.
Enhance physical, informative and functional accessibility of green spaces in Oulu region.

Modelling the use of natural environments as part of the promotion of health and well-being as well as rehabilitative activities.

Development of research-based knowledge and expertise dealing with the effects of green spaces on health and well-being.



OpenAir ◦ activities

Oulu Outdoors Zone –concept

- Nature areas from urban green spaces to wilderness areas and national parks
- Visitor management elements
- Communication elements



Oulu Outdoors Zone, from urban green spaces to wilderness areas and national parks.

OpenAir o activities

Modelling the use of natural environments and nature-related activities in..

- prevention of social exclusion
- various forms of rehabilitation
- occupational well-being



OpenAir ○ activities

- Development of research-based knowledge and expertise dealing with the effects of green spaces on health and well-being
 - Desk study of nature's positive effects on health and well-being
 - **Develop a monitoring method of nature's health and well-being effects**





“If people think nature is their friend,
then they sure don't need an enemy”
- Kurt Vonnegut-

Thank You !