

## Lapland Forest Jury

### Introduction

Lapland's forests are of great importance in achieving Finland's climate goals. The task of the Lapland Forest Jury, which consisted of residents of Lapland, was to produce a common statement about how Lapland's forests should be used in a climate-wise and fair way. An invitation to participate the Jury was sent to 6,000 randomly selected people from the region of Lapland in September 2022. Among the 240 volunteers who responded to the invitation to the Jury, 33 people were randomly selected so that the Jury resembled as well as possible the population of the province of Lapland according to place of residence, gender, age and educational background. The Jury included both forest owners and people who do not own forest.

The Lapland Forest Jury met on two weekends, 5.-6.11. and 19.–20.11. During the meetings the Jury heard expert presentations on the state of Lapland's forests, the use of forests and the effects of climate change, and discussed the situation and key issues of forest use in Lapland. In addition, the jury heard experts remotely on November 17th and received written background information on the subject. At the end of its discussions, the Jury formed a joint a statement on the climate-wise and fair use of Lapland's forests that compiled an overview of the state of forest use, the main problem areas and the Jury's recommendations.

The statement is the result of the joint work of the members of the Jury and its recommendations were agreed upon by the members of the Jury. The statement or its parts do not reflect the opinions of any individual member. Organizers or experts did not participate in deciding the content of the statement. The Jury hands over the statement to the Green transition division coordinated by the Regional Council of Lapland.

The Lapland Forest Jury was organized by researchers from the Natural Resources Institute Finland, the University of Turku and the Finnish Environment Institute.

## Statement of the Forest Jury

### An overview of the state of forest use in Lapland

*The Lapland Forest Jury sees that in the climate wise and fair use of the forests of Lapland it is important to consider the following starting points:*

Metsähallitus plays an important role in the coordination of different forms of forest use. The state is the main owner of Lapland's forests (64%), so it has a huge importance in decision-making related to the use of forests. There are a lot of carbon sinks in Lapland's forests.

Lapland is not one unified region.

As forests have many users (e.g. wind power, tourism, reindeer husbandry, hunting, industry, recreational use, berry picking, mining industry), cooperation and conflict mediation is essential. Coordination is being done e.g. with land use planning, which is managed by the municipality.

Tourism is of great importance to Lapland.

Logging in the Sámi's home region has decreased in recent decades, e.g. because logging has been limited for 20 years for more than 10 years ago. The situation has improved thanks to consolidation (camping, tourism, forestry). In addition, 70% of the country's nature conservation areas are located there.

There are many old forests in Lapland, which are important for biodiversity. Old forests, whose growth has slowed, are not so good carbon sinks, but they are carbon storages.

Preserving carbon sinks requires sustainable use.

Up-to-date information on carbon sinks is missing.

The need for domestic raw wood material is growing. Securing a sufficient supply of timber is a challenge as the climate changes and demand increases.

The amendment to the Forestry Act (2014) allows regeneration felling in a forest, which is younger and where the diameter of trees is smaller than before.

Carbon sinks are reduced when regeneration fellings are done too early.

Private forest owners would like to protect forest more often than funding is available. Funding runs out every year.

## Problems with the use of forests

*The Lapland Forest Jury sees that the most central problems in the current climate wise and fair use of Lapland's forests are the following:*

Partially conflicting operating pressures are increasing (forest industry's need for wood, mining, wind power, recreational use, reindeer husbandry, tourism etc.); at the same time the forests should both compensate emissions and produce raw material for industry.

The demand for raw wood material is increasing, which is a risk for the adequacy of carbon sinks and biodiversity. It is estimated that the Finnish land use sector's carbon sinks only cover half of the emissions from traffic and industry in Finland.

The challenge is to combine the needs of different users, different areas and livelihoods, by which fair use of forests in Lapland would be guaranteed.

Regeneration fellings are made in too young, half-grown forests.

Financial challenges of forest protection are unresolved both for private and state forests' part.

Metsähallitus must meet the yield requirements set by the Government, which are not in line with the climate goals. The problem is, that the Government does not make decisions, but postpones decisions to the future, even when there exists e.g. clear recommendations from the Climate Panel.

The problem is finding reliable, unbiased and easily understandable information and getting a general idea of what would constitute climate wise forest use.

## Recommendations for Regional Council of Lapland and Lapland's Green transition division

*For the use of Lapland's forests to be climate wise and fair, the Jury gives the following recommendations to the Regional Council of Lapland and Lapland's green transition division:*

A general and Lapland-wide review of the state of forests is needed to improve information flow and to increase transparency. All forest use demands require constant monitoring so that the situation would remain sustainable. Metsäkeskus works as an impartial observing party.

In order to secure the sustainable use of forests, long-sightedness spanning government terms is required. Scientific facts and ability to identify risks are needed to support decision-making. This will support awareness of the future demand and the adequacy of carbon sinks.

An annual maximum harvesting quota is needed based on how much logging is sustainable from the perspective of maintaining carbon sinks and what is the need to regrow forests. The quota must cover both private and state forests as a whole. The purpose of the quota is to limit logging if necessary, it does not oblige logging. The preservation of carbon sinks and the fairness of the division of logging rights are assured with supervision.

The diversity of forests will be secured with the right kind with forest management/logging methods.

Finland's emissions should be reduced to the level of carbon sinks in an economically and socially sustainable way. This includes, for example, energy production, industry, consumers, traffic, and land use emissions.

We shall continue open discussion and participatory planning, where all involved parties and different stakeholders, such as different industries, regions, forest users and forest management associations' representatives, are involved. This discussion can also take place at the municipal level, when needed. In addition to different interests, climate and other environmental effects of different measures must be considered. Solutions must consider existing knowledge in addition to opinions.

The Forest Act and Forest Decree should be reconsidered, taking into account the preservation and augmentation of carbon sinks and carbon stock. In young undergrown forests, which have significance for carbon sinks, regeneration felling should be given up, as it was legislated in the previous forest law before the year 2014 based on the trunk diameter.

Private forest owners shall be encouraged to sustainably use and protect forests with financial incentives such as taxation and funding and with informational means such as education.

Business must genuinely and transparently compensate the harm it causes. It must be acknowledged, however, that not all harm caused to nature can be compensated with money. Business operations must avoid environmental damage. Circular economy must be significantly developed so that overconsumption of natural raw materials can be reduced.

The Government must without delay advance The Climate Panel's clear recommendations to rescue carbon sinks. The Government has to reduce the yield requirements of Metsähallitus' Metsätalous Oy and decide that the state forests are not felled beyond their annual growth. The Regional Council of Lapland and Lapland's MPs must be active in promoting and following these things.

The Regional Council of Lapland should actively seek to spread information at the national level about the importance of Lapland's forests as Finland's carbon sinks and their role in climate change mitigation. Citizens should be offered comprehensible and reliable scientific information about the climate impact of different forest management and land treatment methods and other land use.