



A planning meeting in Palanga, Lithuania, with beaver dams causing flooding of the forest. Photo Daniel Thorell. Photo: Daniel Thorell.

## Forest project focuses on water in the Baltic Sea region

**The regional water management project WAMBAF has kicked off. Over three years, the project will produce and deliver practical guidelines and tools aiming at reduced nutrient and mercury export to streams, lakes and the Baltic Sea.**

Daniel Thorell at the Swedish Forest Agency is coordinating the project, the full name of which is Water Management in Baltic Forests.

– WAMBAF is financed by the EU through the fund *Interreg Baltic Sea Region*. We started off planning this project back in 2012. Several workshops with our partners from Poland and the Nordic and Baltic countries revealed support for focussing on three main topics. The application we submitted was approved so we could start operationally in March 2016, he says.

The forests and forestry activities do indeed have an impact on streams and lakes in the forested landscape. When it comes to nutrients reaching the Baltic Sea, several other sources probably play a more significant role but, due to its large area, the forest still makes an important contribution.

– We lack detailed knowledge of the effects of forest management on the Baltic Sea. However, HELCOM\* estimated that the natural background load from forests constitutes approximately 19 % of the nitrogen and 16 % of the phosphorus load reaching the Baltic Sea. A small per-hectare leakage becomes an important

Daniel Thorell, Swedish Forest Agency: “We will develop practical tools which will help us to reduce the negative impacts on streams, lakes and the Baltic Sea”.

\*HELCOM (Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission - Helsinki Commission) is the governing body of the Helsinki Convention.

source when we take into account the large extent of forests in all our countries.

The three focussed topics of the project will be ditch maintenance, management of riparian forests and how to tackle beaver dams.

– Beaver dams may seem to be a subordinate issue in Scandinavia, but it is indeed a topic that has an impact in the lowland Baltic countries and Poland. In Lithuania, for example,



half of all the beaver ponds are regarded as damaging to drainage systems and forests. We will develop tools that classify beaver dams and give advice on best management practices.

Photo Steve Hersey, Wikipedia commons.



Ditch maintenance and forestry in riparian forests may have important impacts on sediment loads, nutrient leakage, and also mercury transport to surface waters. The project will focus on practical tools and guidelines for forest managers, planners and contractors based on current knowledge and experience in the participating countries.

– Maps showing distance to ground water have proved effective in reducing soil disturbance during logging. We will develop these maps, make them more accurate and adapted to more countries.

Another practical deliverable will be the development of Blue Targeting,

a system for classifying streams and lakes and giving specific advice depending on their condition.

– In the end, we will present a set of guidelines and tools for ditch maintenance, riparian forests and beaver dams in each country. These guidelines should serve as an inspiration for future national policies and laws, which now vary greatly between the countries, says Daniel Thorell.

**Read more about the project:**

[www.skogsstyrelsen.se](http://www.skogsstyrelsen.se) (search for WAMBAF)

**Contact Daniel Thorell, Swedish Forest Agency, [daniel.thorell@skogsstyrelsen.se](mailto:daniel.thorell@skogsstyrelsen.se)**

## Time to get a joint grip on Nordic science communication

**The Nordic–Baltic countries have a common story to tell about their sustainable forestry, a story that needs to be told particularly to policy makers from other parts of Europe.**

But how can this story be told, and to whom? This was one of the points discussed when leading forest research communicators from the Nordic and Baltic countries met for a two-day workshop outside Uppsala, Sweden in October 2016.

The workshop did not end up with a definitive suggestion, but all participants agreed that combined forces can do more than individual efforts. A joint news feed assembling popular research articles from each

university and institute is one way. The news feed could be disseminated via social media and on joint websites such as [NBForest.info](http://NBForest.info). A prerequisite for a comprehensive stream of research information is that enough popular science is published in English. Here, we all have a lesson to learn since most popular communication today is directed to a national audience.

Another aim of the workshop was to share experiences, tips and tricks for the most efficient ways of communicating with different target groups. Communicators from Iceland, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Finland and Estonia described their growing use of new channels such as social media, videos, blogs and story telling, besides regular press releases and popular summaries on websites. Some of the tips and tricks are listed here.

The EU Parliament, one key target for facts about sustainable forestry in the Nordic and Baltic countries.

Photo: Cedric Puisney, CC licence.



### Researchers can be prompted to communicate more

Writing courses have proved to be successful. *Cathrine Glosli* at NMBU described how these courses had resulted in some researchers becoming very efficient communicators. She had also found that the reluctance to blog is lower than that to produce an article for a news magazine. Many researchers are afraid of having their name and face in a newspaper article, but media training can help.

### Q&A – a good way to interact

Several of the presentations highlighted the role of communicating with the public and professionals through question and answer services. *Kjell Suadicani* and *Iben Margrete Thomsen* have seen how such Q&A services draw attention and attract many visitors to the website. About 10-20 questions are sent to the service each month.

Similar services are used in many institutes. *Gunilla Häggström*, [Skogssverige.se](http://Skogssverige.se), coordinates the “question box” to which member of the public can send questions to be answered by experts. In Sweden, journalists can use Expert Answer, a service delivered cooperatively by all universities and a number of research institutes.



"All our results are now available on the web in an easy-to-read format". Erik Viklund from the Swedish institute Skogforsk describes the focus on digital communication. Photo Mats Hannerz.

**"Who will read if they can watch?"**  
 All presenters had experienced a growing focus on videos. *Kairit Prits*, head of communication at the Estonian University of Life Sciences, has a set of 3-minute and sometimes 100-second videos presenting research to the public and potential students. "Who will read if they can watch?" she asked, particularly with young students in mind. But she also admits the challenge of simplifying science. The researchers at EMU are forced to summarise their research "in words so simple that their grandmother can understand".

**Say it in English as well**  
 Most popular articles and news on the institutes' websites are written in a domestic language, where most of the target groups are. Very few press releases are targeted at the international audience. This is a challenge for a joint project aiming to reach outside the Nordic region. The question of translating more news into English (and other relevant languages) is a strategic question for each of the organisations. SNS can play a role to promote more international outreach.

**Journalists ask for more stories**  
*Bengt Ek*, chief editor of the magazine *Skogen*, emphasised the need to focus on the receiver rather than the sender in university news. He encouraged the scientists and communicators to send out news, and also describe new findings. Organisational news and events are usually less interesting, but people and new research results are more interesting. Magazines always need more material; they also want short stories.

**Popularised research, more to do**  
 Although many universities disseminate many of their findings in a popular form, only a small share is "translated" for non-experts and released as news or popularized articles.  
 One organisation that has closed this gap completely is Skogforsk. *Erik Viklund* presented the current strategy to publish all of the scientific and technical reports in short format articles in a Knowledge Bank on the web. The bank is growing with almost an article per day.

"Be creative and use the opportunity". Cathrine Glosli from Norwegian University of Life Sciences told how Valentines Day was used to sell in a story when fungi and algae meet in lichens. Photo Mats Hannerz.



**Shortcuts**

**Finland: Diverse forests save money**

Thirty million trees and 8,737 tree species were included in a global analysis of biodiversity. Published in *Science*, it showed that the abundance of tree species increases the quantity of biomass output, as well as preserving biodiversity. The researchers believe that productivity losses due to species extinction in a forest will cost 500 billion dollars per year globally. The financial benefits of forest biodiversity seem to be more than double the costs of biodiversity conservation. Researchers from Luke took part in the network of scientists behind the report.

*Source Luke, Mixed forests maintain biodiversity.*

**Sweden: Predators in man-made landscapes**

Large carnivores such as wolves, lynx and/or brown bears have permanent populations in most European countries. But what are their effects on the ecosystem? A review article in *Proceedings of the Royal Society B* concludes that the effects will be rather different from those found in natural landscapes, such as Yellowstone National Park. The European landscape is strongly modified by man, who is part of these ecosystems. Research on large carnivores must therefore consider the human impact from e.g. forestry and hunting. SLU-researchers took part in the study.

*Source SLU, Paws without claws? Effects of carnivore comeback in European anthropogenic landscapes*

**Norway: Finding exotic trees by satellite**

Norwegian authorities regard the spread of introduced tree species as a problem. Some of the invasive species are on the official "black list". It is time consuming to find the trees with field surveys, but now researchers at NMBU have used remote sensing to identify exotic spruce species. The project has identified alien species such as Sitka spruce in Vestland, Nordland and Troms, and also the native Norway spruce when it is growing outside its natural range in northern Norway.

*Source NMBU, Finner fremmede treslag med satellitt*

## Cross-sectorial promotion of bioeconomy

**SNS and NKJ (Nordic Joint Committee for Agricultural and Food Research) organised a new Matchmaking Day in Vantaa, Finland on 15 September 2016. The ideas from the workshop will be used as a basis for a coming cross-sectorial call from SNS and NKJ.**

The event brought together 41 researchers, government officials and industry stakeholders from Sweden, Latvia, Norway, Finland, Denmark, and Estonia. The day was filled with inspirational presentations including information from the Nordic Council of Ministers, tips on applying for research funding and lectures by members of already funded networks.

Ideas that came up for the cross-sectorial call included production of paper through mixing wood fibres and agricultural residues, plant health, increased public understanding of active sustainable land use, information availability and statistics.

### SNS–NKJ networks

For the period 2015–2017, SNS is collaborating with NKJ by financing Nordic research networks in which researchers and stakeholders from the agricultural and forestry sectors work together to promote a transition to a bio-based economy. A future call for networks is in preparation. In this call, cross-sectorial collaborations will also include the environment and energy sectors, along with agriculture and forestry.



Participants discussing ideas for the upcoming call. Photo Mimmi Blomquist.

*Text Mimmi Blomquist*

**Read more about ongoing SNS-NKJ networks, [www.nordicforestresearch.org](http://www.nordicforestresearch.org)**

## How to build green, climate-resilient cities: let the people take part

**Include citizens in the urban greening processes, and listen to their stories and what they want from their neighbourhood.**

Many urban greening and urban forestry campaigns have had a strong ecological and technocratic focus but have ignored social–cultural values such as what the people living there want. An example – tree planting and ecological conservation in cities can spur gentrification by raising real estate values, thereby disfavouing those who lived there before.

In a new Policy Brief, a group of researchers introduce the concept of

*Place-based governance.* With this concept, a “space” is transformed to a “place”. A place conveys the personal and emotional bonds people have to a location. The researchers recommend actions such as bio-cultural inventory, decision-making tools and storytelling which engage the citizens.

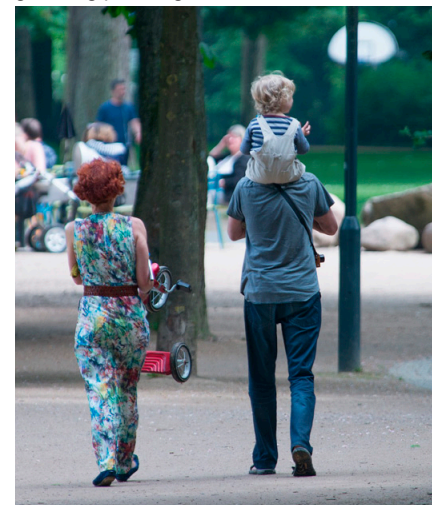
### Read more in

*SNS Policy brief: Place-based governance of urban forests and green spaces for climate-resilient cities.*

[www.nordicforestresearch.org](http://www.nordicforestresearch.org).

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Their voices must be heard in the urban greening planning. Photo Pixabay.



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News & Views is a newsletter from SNS containing short, popularized articles covering Nordic forest research and forestry. Articles presenting SNS-supported activities are prioritized. The newsletter is published eight times per year, and is available for download from the SNS and Scandinavian Journal of Forest Research websites.



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