

Involved parties in the projects The 1200 landowners and villagers of Hyypä. **Associations:** Hyypä Village Association, Hyypä Sport Club, JoPaKi Village Association, Farming Society of Etu-Hyypä, The Finnish Association for Nature Conservation /Ostrobothnia, Hunting Club of Hyypä, Ornithological Society of Suupohja, Fishing Society of Kauhajoki, Farming Society of Hyypä, Water and Nature Association of Ostrobothnia, The Shareholder Council of Kauhajoki River, Farming Society of Kauhajärvi. **Public authorities:** Kauhajoki Town (Building Control, Urban Planning, City Board), Centre for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment, Regional Council of South Ostrobothnia, Finnish Forestry Centre /South Ostrobothnia, Metsähallitus, Geological Survey of Finland, Regional Museum of South Ostrobothnia, National Board of Antiquities, Suupohja Consortium on Municipalities – Commercial Enterprise of Health and Social Services. **Expert organisations:** Suupohja Development Association, Seinäjoki University of Applied Sciences (natural resources and environment, building conservation), The Central Union of Agricultural Procedures and Forest Owners /Kauhajoki Department, ProAgria South Ostrobothnia /Rural Women's Advisory Organization, Finnish Youth Cooperation – Alliassi, Forest Management Association Lakeus, National Land Survey of Finland. **Companies:** Vapo, Suupohja Credit Union, South Ostrobothnia Tourist Service Ltd. **The involved entrepreneurs of the Hyypä area:** Leo Lappalainen / Kirveshovi Accommodation, Mäki Village Shop, Catering Minna-Maria, The Pearl of Hyypä Restoration, Aatos Suvanto Private Museum, Määskylä Lamb Farm and Wool Shop, Johanna Rotola-Pukkila Highland Cattle Farm, B&B Anna-Liisa and Olavi Kangasniemi, Koivumäki Berry Farm, Nature Guide Keijo T. Seppälä.



HYYPÄ VALLEY LANDSCAPE PROJECTS

**The Finnish Candidate for the Landscape Award
of the Council of Europe 2013**





Content

Introduction	3
Active parties in Hyypä Valley landscape conservation	5
How did it all begin?	5
Hyypä Valley landscape projects in 2006–2009	7
Information on landscape projects and landscape conservation.....	7
Usage and maintenance plan.....	9
Landscape conservation work.....	9
Preliminary plan for the ecological restoration of the River Hyypänjoki.....	11
Achievements.....	13
Hyypä Valley landscape projects in 2009–2012 and future prospects	15
Hyypä Valley Landscape Conservation Board.....	15
Care of brook environments.....	17
Plan for the ecological restoration of the River Hyypänjoki 2010–2012.....	17
Future prospects.....	18
Summary	19

Introduction

Located in Kauhajokki, western Finland, the Hyypä valley represents the varying riverside cultural landscape of Southern Ostrobothnia's open agricultural expanses. Land forms give this landscape its special character: a narrow, elongated valley with steep slopes begins on the edge of wide open spaces. Thanks to openness and differences in altitude, long vistas over the surrounding landscape reveal themselves as you pass through. Due to the land forms and soil characteristics, several canyon-like natural brooks, of locally significant natural value, have been created in the area. Almost the entire area is a groundwater basin and there are dozens of springs in the valley. Forest islands and diverse groves around the springs and brook channels alternate with wide-open field landscapes. Linear villages nestle along charmingly undulating village roads. The built environment includes large Ostrobothnian country houses and outbuildings that embody the region's strong building traditions, dating back to the 19th and early 20th centuries.

Several landscape projects have been implemented in nationally valuable landscape area of the Hyypä Valley, a site of national value. A key project that has enhanced landscape conservation and the recognition of landscapes involved is the establishment of the Hyypä Valley Landscape Conservation Area. This resulted in the creation of a landscape conservation area in accordance with the Finnish Nature Conservation Act. A landscape conservation area can be established in order to preserve and manage a natural or cultural landscape of outstanding beauty, historical interest or other special value. The purpose of landscape conservation area status is to promote landscape conservation in an incentive-based, voluntary manner. Changes in the landscape, and imminent threats to it such as unsuitable construction, an overgrown landscape, dilapidated building stock, falling competitiveness in agriculture, loss of diversity

in the landscape and natural setting, and road projects destroying old structures, prompted actors in the area to take action to preserve the area's value. The project for the establishment of the Hyypä Valley Landscape Conservation Area and the actual establishment of the landscape conservation area intensified the need for local actors to actively nurture local landscape values. The landscape conservation needs that arose during the project for the conservation area's establishment have been addressed enthusiastically. Several projects were launched both during and after the project.

The primary aim of landscape conservation in the Hyypä Valley is to preserve the vitality of villages and the structure, openness and natural values of the traditional cultural landscape. This requires continuity of agriculture and the related livelihoods, as well as participation by residents in the planning and implementation of landscape conservation. The best way to succeed in nurturing the landscape is through grassroots initiatives. In fact, a common intent has emerged between local residents and authorities in the Hyypä Valley, to promote long-term landscape conservation. When all parties concerned can participate in decision-making and project implementation, there is stronger commitment to nurturing the natural and cultural values of the immediate surroundings.



Active parties in Hyypä Valley landscape conservation

The parties responsible for the Hyypä Valley landscape projects include the Hyypä Village Association, the City of Kauhajoki, the Hyypä Valley Landscape Conservation Board and the South and Central Ostrobothnia regional unit of Suomen metsäkeskus – The Finnish Forest Centre. A large number of other cooperating parties have also been involved. The Hyypä Village Association is an active residents' association seeking to promote the wellbeing and pleasantness of the environment. The Hyypä Valley Landscape Conservation Board serves as a forum for information exchange between various authorities and villagers, with key authorities, expert organisations, associations, villagers and landowners represented. Operating under the guidance of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, the Finnish Forest Centre is a nationwide organisation for the development and implementation of forestry. In addition to implementing its own projects, the Finnish Forest Centre has assigned representatives to the steering groups of a number of other projects and made proposals for new projects.

How did it all begin?

The City of Kauhajoki has engaged in long term inventory and landscape conservation efforts in the Hyypä Valley region, including surveys of the area's natural environment and history in 1998–2006. Back in 1974, the City purchased the Hämes-Havunen country house, with its traditional closed yard. This estate of national value was renovated in 1981 by the city, for use as festive facilities. When the City of Kauhajoki proposed to the Hyypä Village Association that the possibilities for establishing a landscape conservation area should be examined, the proposal was met with enthusiasm. In fact, the establishment of the Hyypä Valley Landscape Conservation Area project was initiated by the Hyypä Village Association in Kauhajoki. As a result of this project, a landscape conservation area in accordance with the Nature Conservation Act was established in the nationally valuable landscape area of the Hyypä Valley. The project for the establishment of the Hyypä Valley Landscape Conservation Area and the establishment of the landscape conservation area strengthened the status of landscape conservation in the Hyypä area. During the project, landscape conservation became a serious topic, both in terms of cooperation by local authorities and in local activities. Several follow-up projects resulted, as did notable concrete results in landscape conservation, involving numerous authorities, corporations and communities, landowners and businesses.



Hyypä Valley landscape projects in 2006–2009

The project for the establishment of the landscape conservation area was launched in August 2006. It culminated in the actual establishment of the Hyypä Valley Landscape Conservation Area by a decision of the Ministry of the Environment in August 2009. During the project, the area's values and special characteristics were defined, the usage and maintenance plan for the Hyypä Valley Landscape Conservation Area was prepared, extensive landscape conservation work was carried out, and information was distributed on these activities. Simultaneously, the Finnish Forest Centre implemented forest nature management projects in the area.

From start to finish, the landscape conservation area project was implemented in close cooperation with interest groups. It was managed by a steering group comprising representatives of authorities (11) and village associations (8) and a landscape workgroup comprising representatives of various villages (6). Those involved could influence the contents of the plan throughout the process. The project was favourably received by landowners, villagers and other interest groups, who showed a keen interest in landscape conservation and were prepared to implement work and projects they found useful. Villagers and authorities actively communicated on their needs, wishes and thoughts during the project, and feedback was taken into account in the planning process. Those involved were also given an official consultation period. Implementation of new projects, based on the wishes and needs expressed, has already begun.

In 2008, the Hyypä Village Association established a landscape conservation work group subordinate to it, tasked with assuming local responsibility for landscape conservation and handling the implementation of follow-

up projects. The conservation work group prepares measures related to landscape conservation for the village association to determine and implements decisions. Since its establishment, the group has convened informally a few times a year. Selection and planning of follow-up projects were already begun during the Landscape Conservation Area Project. In 2008, a fund was also established for the purpose of implementing landscape conservation.

Information on landscape projects and landscape conservation

Information on the establishment of the Hyypä Valley Landscape Conservation Area Project was posted on the project's website throughout the process, and information bulletins were sent to landowners and local residents by mail. Three events were organised for presenting the project, attracting a total of approximately 200 participants. All comments received during these events were positive. Moreover, the opinions and wishes of all stockbreeders in the Hyypä area were examined at the beginning of the project, by making personal phone calls to each of them. Local, provincial and national newspapers reported on the progress of the project in several newspaper articles. The project was also covered by provincial news on radio and television.

Together with cooperating parties, the project for the establishment of the Hyypä Valley Landscape Conservation Area organised briefings on the subsidies, principles and planning services related to landscape conservation in agriculture and forestry. These events attracted dozens of interested listeners. The Finnish Forest Centre also organised a briefing on its forest nature



management project, alongside an information meeting for landowners. Under the project for the establishment of the Hyypä Valley Landscape Conservation Area, an example agreement was commissioned on EU support for non-productive investments from ProAgria South Ostrobothnia's landscape conservation consultant. Together with Seinäjoki University of Applied Sciences School of Culture and Design's bachelor programme in Building Conservation, a briefing was also arranged on repairing timber buildings. Wood is the most common traditional construction material in Finland, but since it is rather susceptible to the strains of a harsh climate, burns easily and is easy to move, relatively little old building stock is left.

Usage and maintenance plan

The project for the establishment of the Hyypä Valley Landscape Conservation Area defined the values and special characteristics of the nationally valuable Hyypä Valley landscape area and the preconditions for preserving them, while a plan was compiled for nurturing these. The usage and maintenance plan places its main focus on recommendations and a voluntary approach. The plan's purpose is to preserve the beauty of the agricultural landscape, without hindering development and land use. It includes preservation recommendations related to the usage and maintenance of the area, marked on the map (13 themes, 103 recommendations) and instructions on building methods, aimed at accommodating new buildings in the landscape. The plan also defines the needs for follow-up projects, presents financing and cooperation models for landscape conservation, and puts forward a proposal for a model on monitoring changes in landscape values. As regards conservation of landscape values, it was considered vital that attention be paid to the operating environment as a whole, so as to incorporate recommendations on land use, built-up

environment, the maintenance of the landscape and its openness, development of recreational values, forest management and the nurturing of natural values. The usage and maintenance plan has provided a sound basis, particularly for the work of public authorities, building projects and the preparation of follow-up projects. This plan is a vital source of reference information for environmental authorities and includes jointly approved principles for the management of landscape values. Interpretation of various principles is refined in everyday meetings between authorities and citizens. The landscape conservation work group under the Hyypä Village Association has initiated the first follow-up projects implementing the usage and maintenance plan.

Landscape conservation work

During the project for the establishment of the Hyypä Valley Landscape Conservation Area, large-scale landscape conservation work was performed under the project and as part of auxiliary projects. In 2008–2009, the Finnish Forest Centre cleared tree stands and bushes at 15 locations, under its forest landscape and nature management project. The project examined forest areas of landscape value in the project area, such as exterior portions of tree stands and forest islands, preparing estate-specific landscape conservation and the related nature management plans. The plans covered 800 hectares of forest, and landscape conservation work was carried out on 25 hectares. Valuable habitats, the occurrence of species and the game and recreational values of forests in the area were also charted during planning, while examining the grounds for agri-environmental subsidies for each estate. Personal advice was provided to forest owners on the management of the forest landscape and forest nature. Within the framework of the Forest Biodiversity Programme METSO for southern Finland, forest sites considered valuable as habitats for species



were identified for conservation based on a voluntary commitment by landowners. Landowners seized this opportunity without hesitation. The Centre for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment for South Ostrobothnia has acquired 98 hectares on these sites, in order to annex them to the Kauhaneva–Pohjankangas National Park, and established 3.5 hectares of nature conservation areas on private land.

As part of the Jokimetsuri (River Forester) project of the Ostrobothnia District for Nature Conservation, 0.5 hectares of meadow overgrown with bushes was cleared. The Jokimetsuri project involves testing a contract-based service, which enables the landowner to commission a contractor to undertake landscape conservation work. The Kauhajärvi agriculture and household association engaged volunteers to open up views from the main road over the Kauhajärvi village church. The village association of Jokimäenkylä, Panttikylä and Kiviluomankylä engaged volunteers to clear the overgrown landscape in the surroundings of the old school, the current day care centre and club premises. A two-day international work camp was organised in Hyypä Valley, with young attendants participating in voluntary clearance work. During the camp, landscape was also conserved at two other locations: the volunteers painted the walls of an old co-op store using traditional red ochre paint made by a local Hyypä Valley entrepreneur, and built a wooden fence for the horses at the village riding stable. The Hyypä Village Association and the sports club Hyypän Urheilijat founded and reconditioned a recreational path called 'Töyhtöhyypänkierros' in the Korhoskylä and Jokimäenkylä area. On their own initiative, landowners cleared the landscape along the route. A fantastic scenic route of around 5-kilometres undulates in the field landscape on both sides of the valley. The route received an enthusiastic welcome and has been actively used ever since.

Preliminary plan for the ecological restoration of the River Hyypänjoki

Among the conservation needs highlighted in the project for the establishment of the Hyypä Valley Landscape Conservation Area, the restoration of the River Hyypänjoki was assessed as the most important by the landscape conservation work group. It had also been emphatically highlighted in cooperation with residents during the project. Cooperation with the village, and inventories, had revealed the need for improving the condition of the river. Ponds that have previously been important to fish fauna and as recreation sites have filled up with sediment in recent years, due to factors such as erosion caused by ditch drainage in forests. Lack of water in the river basin has promoted vegetal invasion, thus undermining the possibilities of fish fauna to inhabit the river. The riverside landscape has become overgrown with bushes. Key needs included the reduction of flood damage, by making the flow more uniform and increasing the quantity of water in dry periods, removal of sludge accumulated in former pond sites and at the bottom of the river basin, control of erosion, improving the quality of water, management of the valuable fish stock, attention to the abundance of bird species, conservation of landscape values and more efficient exploitation of recreational values.

In 2009, the Hyypä Village Association commissioned a preliminary plan from a consultant, on the restoration of the river. This preliminary plan was a proposal on hydraulic engineering targets evaluated as feasible and earmarked for inclusion in the planning assignment. The assignment was to be subjected to competitive tendering. On the basis of the plan, the village association assessed the necessity of the project, delimited the assignment, applied for funding for the ecological restoration of the river and organised competitive tendering on restoration planning. On the





basis of the preliminary plan, the village association applied for funding. The funds granted were used for implementing a plan for the ecological restoration of the River Hyypänjoki in 2009–2012.

Achievements

The project for the establishment of the Landscape Conservation Area motivated and committed local residents, and parties active in the area, to engage in landscape conservation. This project and other, related projects, have produced information on the values and characteristics of the area, strengthened the status of landscape values locally, increased the public authorities' knowledge of landscape values, increased dialogue between the aforementioned parties and promoted the development of tourism and nature management in the cultural landscape. Information on the projects has been distributed openly and citizens have had the opportunity to influence their progress and content. Due to the active and favourable approach taken by villagers, landscape conservation measures have been implemented on a large scale. In many cases, conservation planning has begun on various sites when the villagers themselves have acknowledged the need for conservation and been willing to contribute to preserving the landscape. In fact, many conservation measures were based on their ideas and implemented by them. However, whenever necessary, the authorities have been a source of expertise in planning the conservation measures. This has ensured the best possible end result. Cooperation and mutual trust between authorities and villagers that arose during the project for the establishment of the Hyypä Valley Landscape Conservation Area, and a permanent organisation for promoting issues, number among the follow-up projects' strengths.

Villagers and representatives of authorities celebrating the establishment of the Hyypä Valley Landscape Conservation Area. Photo: Marketta Nummijärvi.



Hyypä Valley landscape projects in 2009–2012 and future prospects

The decision to establish the Hyypä Valley landscape conservation area further strengthened the need of local actors to nurture and actively utilise the landscape values of Hyypä Valley. A long-term approach and the intention to maintain enthusiasm for voluntary landscape conservation are emphasised in landscape planning and conservation. With this in mind, the City of Kauhajoki established the Hyypä Valley Landscape Conservation Board, to serve as a forum for information exchange between authorities and activists in the village. Correspondingly, landscape conservation work group under the Hyypä Village Association has already led to the initiation of the River Hyypänjoki's restoration, as the first and primary follow-up project implementing the usage and maintenance plan. In 2010–2012, a plan was commissioned on the restoration, the intention being to implement the plan in 2012–2014. In addition, the Finnish Forest Centre has carried out maintenance projects on minor water bodies in 2009–2011.

Hyypä Valley Landscape Conservation Board

The decision to establish the landscape conservation area motivated provincial and municipal authorities to accept the challenge posed by Hyypä villagers' active approach to caring for the landscape. The need arose to arrange regular discussion and presentation events on matters concerning the Hyypä Valley, for the parties with most influence over the development of the Hyypä Valley's environment. Hence, in March 2010, on the initiative of the Centre for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment for South Ostrobothnia, the City of Kauhajoki established

the Hyypä Valley Landscape Conservation Board as a forum for information exchange between authorities and active villagers in particular. In addition to representatives of the city, the Board includes representatives of environmental authorities, expert organisations, associations, villagers and landowners.

The work of the Board established to support landscape conservation is groundbreaking, as it offers the possibility to create and test new operating methods for promoting more-comprehensive landscape conservation. The aim is to highlight development needs while encouraging various actors, within their respective sectors, to engage in measures necessary to promoting landscape conservation in the Hyypä Valley. The Board is seeking to combine the forces of several public and private actors in developing landscape conservation into a determined activity that supports wellbeing and livelihoods in a reasonable, professional and productive manner. During its two years in operation, the Board has served as a key discussion forum for authorities, organisations, associations and villagers. It has also initiated concrete measures for nurturing and utilising landscape values, and for increasing awareness of landscape values and the work done on their behalf.

The key task of the Board is to keep the various parties informed about important topical issues related to landscape conservation in the Hyypä Valley and to provide a positive, impartial forum for discussing such issues. To achieve this goal, the Board arranges a meeting twice a year for the presentation of topical projects and opportunities for participating in them, provides briefings on these on its Internet site and in a newsletter, maintains an e-mail communication list for landowners in the Hyypä Valley



Landscape Conservation area and, at the end of meetings, arranges presentations of landscape conservation sites. The Board has also set itself the objective of making the Hyypä Valley better known and promoting the utilisation of values. For instance, one aim is to promote the erection of roadside signs guiding people to the Hyypä Valley. In the autumn of 2011, together with one of its partners, the Board arranged a tourism workshop for Hyypä area entrepreneurs. In accordance with the 2012 action plan, the Board is seeking to clarify special needs for controlling construction in one of the landscape conservation area's most sensitive spots. The Board will also encourage debate on prospective wind power production planned in the vicinity of the landscape conservation area.

Care of brook environments

Several brook environments in the Hyypä area have been addressed by a number of projects. The Finnish Forest Centre's project, implemented in 2009–2011 for the management of habitats in the head waters of Kauhajoki, targeted the catchment area formed by several brooks in the Hyypä Valley, and the forested lands surrounding these minor water bodies. Measures taken under this project, planned and implemented in cooperation with forest owners, targeted minor water bodies in the area such as brooks and springs and the habitats in their immediate environments. The project involved charting sites suitable for the Forest Biodiversity Programme for Southern Finland (METSO) and preparing nature management plans for habitat sites and action plans for nature management restoration work, providing advice to forest owners on the nature management methods and objectives offered by METSO, and renewing agreements safeguarding biodiversity in accordance with METSO. METSO is an action plan which seeks to combine forest conservation with their commercial use. Conservation is voluntary and the

state will compensate forest owners for loss of income related to timber production and nature management.

Restoration work undertaken as part of the project for the management of habitats in the head waters of Kauhajoki was implemented as a separate follow-up project. Brook restoration projects continue, for instance under the EU-funded FLISIK project protecting minor water bodies in the Quark area of the Gulf of Bothnia. Hyypä's brook environments have also been restored as part of the project 'Running waters of the Quark' implemented through collaboration between Finland and Sweden, and involving the participation of the Finnish Forest Centre.

Plan for the ecological restoration of the River Hyypänjoki 2010–2012

The plan for the ecological restoration of the River Hyypänjoki seeks to improve water quality in the river, nurture the landscape and recreational values, and enhance biodiversity. Planning took account of the special needs of groundwater areas, flood protection in the Hyypä area and the lower reach of the river, and the need to dry fields. The principles of ecological hydraulic engineering formed the starting point. These measures seek to restore and preserve the river's natural characteristics. Measures for restoring the river were defined and their implementation planned in cooperation with the planner, expert instructors and landowners.

Three information and discussion events for landowners were organised during the planning project: one in the beginning, one when the draft was completed, and one when the plan was completed. Personal letters of invitation were sent to landowners and an open invitation to the events was published in a newspaper. Among other activities, the first information event sought to identify

landowners who were in favour of implementing the restoration measures proposed for their land by the preliminary plan. Targets were selected in cooperation with landowners. During the final information event, information on special agri-environmental support (wetlands and traditional biotopes) was provided and the contents of the implementation stage were agreed. Landowners on whose land the restoration measures were planned, and numerous associations, promised to participate in the voluntary work required for restoration.

Planning of ecological restoration comprised the preparation of implementation plans for two small sills intended for raising the level of low water in the river basin. Raising the water level will improve the living conditions for fish fauna and raise water quality at times when there is little water. In addition, restoration plans were drawn up for seven small pond sites in the river basin.

The restoration plan also identified stretches of riverside with shrubbery and proposed that bushes and trees be removed in order to open out riverside landscapes and reduce the number of trees falling into the river. Targets were selected according to their landscape impacts and whether landowners were in favour of the work. The project also involved drawing up an implementation plan for three wetlands, which landowners will seek to implement, using EU agricultural aid for non-productive investments. The aim of wetlands is to enhance biodiversity within the landscape and natural environment, while improving water quality. In addition, a structural plan for a bird-watching tower was prepared, with the aim of offering better possibilities for observing the valuable, diverse bird fauna and admiring the beautiful scenery of Hyypä. The local ornithological association is responsible for implementing this tower.

As the planning project reached its final stages, preparation commenced for a follow-up project to implement the plans. In addition to the aforementioned measures, the project intends to plan, commission and erect tourist map guides of the landscape conservation area at two locations, expand the recreation routes, tidy up the environment and restore spawning grounds of salmonids with gravel bedding. In 2012, funding has been applied for the ecological restoration of River Hyypänjoki and the related landscape conservation work. The next task for the landscape conservation work group is to organise work at the implementation stage, with the participation of several associations and landowners. The implementation of these measures is planned for 2012–2014.

Future prospects

Planning and conservation of the Hyypä Valley's landscape will continue on a long-term basis. The Hyypä Valley Landscape Conservation Board aims to maintain strong landscape and environmental development efforts in the Hyypä Valley, while preserving the valley as a source of wellbeing in the province. The landscape conservation work group under the Hyypä Village Association will continue to implement projects in accordance with the usage and maintenance plan, based on the order of priority it views as being best. Implementation of the usage and maintenance plan will also maintain the village as a pleasant and beautiful residential environment in the future.

Summary

Local residents' appreciation of the surrounding landscape, and their willingness to care for it, have formed the core and strength of Hyyppä Valley landscape projects. Partners, permanent structures and seamless cooperation with authorities have facilitated the expansion of landscape conservation measures to their current scale. In addition, good cooperation has resulted in remarkable achievements on a national scale. Landscape planning and conservation in the Hyyppä Valley entails a continuous dialogue between landowners, residents, expert organisations, associations and authorities. All actors aim to preserve the vitality of villages and the structure, openness and natural values of the traditional cultural landscape. Common intent and a mutual organisation comprising authorities, organisations and citizens have given further impetus to the implementation of these objectives.

The Hyyppä river is narrow and meandering.
Photo: Marketta Nummijärvi.

