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Forest Management in Central Finland Passes Forest Certification Audit

The validity of the conditional forest certificate issued to Central Finland in 1999 may continue. This is the conclusion of Det Norske Veritas Certification Oy, which recently carried out a supplementary audit on the region's forests. However, room exists for improvement, in particular in connection with the attention paid to key biotopes in forest management. In addition, the commitment of forest owners needs further improvement.

The supplementary audit took place within the Forestry Centre of Central Finland's area on 13.-15.5.2002. This time an assessment was made of the degree to which key biotopes are taken into account in forests where forestry is being practised in various parts of Central Finland. The target of the audit were all the forest owners who had committed themselves to forest certification and their forest management activities over the period 1.7.2001-1.4.2002.

A total of 28 field audits were made throughout the region. Seventeen streams and brooks, 6 springs and seepage areas, and 5 ponds, tree stands below cliffs and strips of herb-rich forest, were audited. Additionally, special attention was paid in the audit to the water protection measures applied in conjunction with key biotopes.

As a result of the audit, Det Norske Veritas Certification Oy recommends continuation of the conditional certificate. However, the results of the audit indicated that it should be possible to further improve the standard of management, in particular in regard to key biotopes and buffer zones. In this connection the auditors made observations of non-compliance leading to two recordings of minor non-conformatives.

A large number of training sessions have been held in conjunction with forest certification. Training and the dispersal of information will be continued. To ensure the conservation of key biotopes in Central Finland a "Guide to the forest management of small water bodies" has also been published. Appearing this spring, the booklet was produced jointly by a variety of different stakeholders in the forestry sector. If a forest owner wishes to leave a key biotope as designated by the Forest Act or forest certification completely untouched, he may apply for forest management environmental support as compensation for more than slight economic loss. Further information on forestry environmental support is available from the Forestry Centre, Forest Management Associations, and timber buyers.

The Central Finland Forestry Centre region was issued with Finland's first forest certificate in the late autumn of 1999. This certificate is testimony to the fact that Central Finland's forests are being managed according to pre-agreed criteria. A certificate is conditionally valid for 5 years and each year an external party checks adherence to the certification criteria by means of an audit.

The FFCS forest certification system embodies annual audits and the recording and rectification of any non-compliance observed. The next forest management audit to be carried out in the forests of Central Finland will be the normal field assessment, which will take place in the autumn.

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