



## Safeguarding the Saimaa Ringed Seal (LIFE Saimaa Seal)



Photo: Ilpo Aalto



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LIFE12FIN/NAT/000367

## PROJECT LOCATION: Lake Saimaa

(Pohjois-Savo, Etelä-Karjala, Pohjois-Karjala, Etelä-Savo)

## BUDGET INFO:

Total amount: 5 261 612 €

% EC Co-funding: 75 %

DURATION: 01/08/13 - 31/07/18

## PROJECT'S IMPLEMENTORS:

Coordinating Beneficiary:

Metsähallitus, Natural Heritage Services

Associated Beneficiaries:

South Savo ELY Centre, Finnish Association for Nature Conservation, Finnish Game and Fisheries Research Institute, The Finnish Federation for Recreational Fishing, University of Eastern Finland, University of Turku, WWF Finland



## BACKGROUND and AIMS:

Conservation of endangered Saimaa ringed seal

*The project is targeted to reducing the key threats and problems identified in the Saimaa ringed seal conservation strategy*

Specific goals:

- to reduce by-catch mortality by developing and promoting seal-friendly fishing methods and reinforcing compliance of the fishing restrictions
- to reduce human-induced disturbances by indentifying and defining risk areas, guiding land use planning and activities on vulnerable areas
- to adapt to climate change by adopting a method of making man-made snow drifts to improve the Saimaa seal´s lairing conditions during mild winters
- to strengthen the role of voluntary work and involvement of local people in conservation actions
- to produce broader and updated knowledge on essential ecological issues as well as knowledge about potential threats to seals for development of conservation policy and effective conservation and monitoring.
- to increase the awareness about the seal and its protection



## By-catch:

- Seal-friendly fykes for professional use are developed, tested and used.
- Seal-friendly fishing methods are promoted by campaign where fishing nets are replaced with safe traps and organising two information campaigns via mail, internet and events.
- Survey on amount and type of recreational fishing in the seal areas is conducted.

## Human-induced disturbances:

- Scouting camera traps used to reveal the rate of disturbance and predation during breeding season
- Risk areas of human induced disturbances identified by computer modeling, analysis of possible conflicts sites made and guidelines for land use planning drafted.
- Management plans are made for areas vital to the seal
- Important seal land and water areas acquired for the state
- Methods for marking of conservation and restriction areas in the field are developed and areas marked.
- Control over restrictions (disturbance, fishing) is reinforced by increasing surveillance and informative actions

**Data gaps:** Telemetry studies conducted to reveal habitat usage of the seal and survival of the pups and for determining the permanent distribution area of the seal. The mortality rate and reasons of the seal analysed.

**Climate change:** After testing, the for securing nesting is established capacity to implement man-made snow drifts

**Voluntary work:** Voluntary network established and training events organised for volunteers

**Awareness:** Information offered for target groups via media, campaigns, events and leaflets environmental education for children at various age groups is organised, exhibition produced and project's results disseminated on international forums

**Based on the information produced the conservation strategy and regulations will be updated and followed up**