



*Enhancing the quality of life
through eco-efficient tourism*



This programme is funded by the European Union, the Russian Federation and the Republic of Finland

Project no. KA358

ECO EFFICIENT TOURISM

Enhancing the Quality of Life

**Management of Recreational Areas
(Finnish experience and best practices)**

Suvi Kärmeniemi
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Eco Efficient Tourism

(Karelian ENPI project KA358)

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1. Introduction

First it is very important to find out the utilization of recreational areas. Balance between demand and supply must be gained. This information is got by following for example amount of visitors or amount of traffic. Also surveys can be done and ask for customers what they need. For example gas stations have replaced stop over points. There are no toilets or garbage containers at stop over points anymore because it has been drawn conclusion they have no need to be facilitated because there are so many gas stations on the road. People get service at gas stations where you can use toilet, fill gas tank, recycle garbage and take something to eat or drink at the same place. Other reason is the inappropriate use of facilitated stop over points: local people threw their domestic wastes to the garbage containers which were planned to be for the travelers. In addition there was vandalism at night: local youngsters used to break the constructions.

At the gas stations you can control people's action by installing video cameras and there is always staff present. Also it is easier to keep the gas station area clean and comfortable than the stop over points where is no staff to care of them. But though there are many gas stations on the road there is garbage at stop over points. Travelers throw garbage to the ground when there are no garbage containers. And still the local people and people who have a summer cottage take their wastes to the stop over points. It has been talked that video cameras could be installed to stop over points so that people's action could be controlled. In North Karelia Tiehallinto (Road Administration) is responsible for stop over points and gas stations are run by entrepreneurs. Owner of the gas station must purchase waste management services from a private entrepreneur.

At the stop over points are info boards sometimes but some of them are nowadays built up on the yards of gas stations. It is important to update boards regularly and maintain them in good condition. Co-operation between Tiehallinto (Road Administration), municipality and enterprises is needed to get high-quality info boards. Location of recreational areas must concurrently be taken account the. When they are near the road it is easy to come there also by public transport and they are easy to find. Also it is profitable if recreational areas are located near visiting targets. For example on the shore of the popular river Jänisjoki it is arranged accommodation with restaurant services and different activities, for example fishing and paddling. In addition, a recreational area with nice landscape makes that area more

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attractive. People while their business travels want often that their hotel is near the events so they want to stay in the centre of the city. So, in the centre of the city Joensuu are many hotels. On the other hand, in holidays people want to relax and maybe go further from the cities. In North Karelia there are not only hotels in the middle of the cities or municipalities but also accommodation services further near the nature. There are farm tourism enterprises which offer accommodation in traditional farm environment where people can familiarize themselves with farm animals and tasks of farm. There are often different kinds of activities arranged, especially sports activities and recreational possibilities in nature.

At camping sites are versatile possibilities to accommodate so that these recreational areas would serve different kinds of clients. Besides caravan and tent areas there are often also cabins or holiday apartments available. There are different services, too. For example electric car places, common toilets, showers and saunas, cooking possibility and emptying possibility for chemically toilets and grey water. When camping sites are established it has to be planned who takes care of the area's different segments. It is important to clean the area regularly and check the place every day so that it would be comfortable place to customers. Usually camping sites are near the reception and other services so the staff is found easily. The entrepreneur is responsible for camping site so he/she must get staff enough.

It is important to take account different seasons. Summer is maybe the liveliest period in tourism business. In the cities and municipalities in North Karelia summer season is taken account by upholding summer cafés, summer theatres, camping sites, boat cruises, beaches etc. It means also that work force is needed more in the summer. It is very important to plan different kinds of services for different seasons, too. Down-hill skiing, cross-country skiing, snow-shoeing and dog sled racings are very popular activities in winter. Technical solutions have an important role. It has to be planned how to arrange the waste management, water supply etc. Many public targets have a dry toilet in North Karelia. Dry toilets have benefits compared to water used toilets. They save clean drinking water, ease the management of wastewater, function regardless electric breaks, weather, drought and frozen pipes, collect nutrients so it protects body of water and doesn't pollute groundwater. When a dry toilet is chosen it should be taken account that toilet is easy to empty and keep clean. Also the management of toilet waste should think already: where the waste can be put? Tanks of dry toilets for public use must be big enough. On the markets are many dry toilets for use of public targets.

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2. Waste and water management

Garbage is also an important issue in recreational areas. There are two municipal waste corporations in the region of North Karelia. They offer waste management services to residents of municipality, communities and enterprises. There are also eco points for waste recycling, collecting points for dangerous waste and waste management guiding service. In Finland different containers are arranged for different garbage so that garbage could be recycled and re-used. There is also a waste law which requires that every estate has to join in organized waste management. In recreational areas has to be good instructions how to recycle and the instructions must be in different languages. Instructional pictures ease recycling, too. And the entrepreneur must take care of joining in waste management and make sure that the emptying of garbage containers is done enough regularly.

In national parks waste management has been arranged very clever. There are no garbage containers on the nature trails but there are containers only on the egress routes, visiting centers and protect zones. The idea is that people take their garbage away so that waste transport doesn't have to be arranged to the nature trails. Waste transport would disturb nature and would take more gasoline than pick up garbage from the points surrounding national parks. There are also other progressive arrangements in these parks. For example all the entrepreneurs who are working in a national park must obey the rules of sustainable development so everybody must recycle and activities are "muscle power activities" like hiking, climbing, paddling etc. The nature trails for hiking are guided very well so there are info boards and route marks on the trails. There are also nice places for breaks. In national parks are no motor activities which would disturb and pollute nature. Local people are involved to the development of national parks so it has been heard them and local enterprises run the services. There is co-operation between different entrepreneurs. Also the quality of national parks is monitored.

When the water supply is planned to recreational area it should be found out does the area belong to water supply system and if not is there any need to belong that. Bottle water is quite unecological solution so if there is need for water it is good to arrange a water supply point. At many hiking targets people get water from a well, spring or sometimes from surface water. At that kind of targets it has to remember customers to boil the water.

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3. Recreational Area management

There are many possibilities to manage recreational areas. Municipalities and cities are responsible for many public beaches, waste management (Waste recycling points, community waste), cleaning and upholding of public recreation areas etc. Tiehallinto (Road Administration) takes care of roads and stop over points. Private entrepreneurs are responsible for the management of their enterprises. Upholding and mounting of signposts about services is service provider's responsible. Entrepreneurs must get permission from Tiehallinto (Road Administration) or other road keeper (for example municipality) to mount signposts of service targets on the roadsides. Entrepreneurs can make a contract with regional contractor to take care of management and uphold of these info signs. In this management include for example removing of dirt, ice and snow. Village societies can manage some recreational areas. This needs adequate resources and co-operation with other village societies and municipalities is often needed. For example the recreational area of Lammassaari in Koitere is managed by village societies. Lammassaari is in Ilomantsi which is geographically big municipality with lots of villages so the management by village societies is reasonable. There were 5 villages by establishing this recreational area. Beyond villages a fishing region of Koitere, water regions of Kivilahti and local tourism entrepreneurs participated to financing this project. Village societies are responsible for the waste management and campfire sites. There is a dry toilet in Lammassaari and the waste management is arranged by giving information so that everybody would take their garbage away. There are no garbage containers.

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4. Conclusions

So, in managing recreational areas it has to be planned what kinds of services are needed and who is responsible for these services. Is it municipality, village society, private entrepreneur or some national organization (for example Road Administration)? Or is there co-operation? By centralizing some services it can be made a well-functioning tourist attraction. It is comfortable that you can find different services at the same place. It is good thing if local people would be involved to development of recreational areas. Considering the opinions of local people and co-operation with local entrepreneurs would strength the social sustainable development. Location is also an important thing when recreational areas are planned. Also different seasons must take account: which is the liveliest period and what kinds of activities can be offered in different seasons? Waste management has to be organized carefully so the recreational areas would be clean and comfortable. Also water supply must be planned forehand. Guiding is also very important thing. In recreational areas should be info signs in different languages and the nature trails etc. should be marked clearly. So, there are many things which have to be thought so that comfortable and functional recreation areas can be made.

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