Water management in Baltic forests

→ The project is initiated in order to tackle problems concerning forestry activities in relation to water quality. Special emphasis is set on clear water, nutrient export and hazardous substances such as mercury.

Summary

The project works on three main topics that all have a large impact on water quality: riparian forests, drainage and beaver activity. Riparian forests constitute the areas close to surface waters, and can be also discharge areas for groundwater. Draining and ditch maintenance conducted in an erroneous way have large effects on clear water. Beavers have large impact especially in flat areas and have substantial effects on surface water quality, both positive and negative. However, these activities are linked to each other in the overall landscape. Cooperation among many actors is needed for developing management for protecting water. The project will help these actors help learn from each other and develop and implement best management practises.

Initially the project maps scientific knowledge, regulations, guidelines and tools in the Baltic Sea countries. Based on this background information the project will produce tool boxes to reduce the leakage of nutrients and hazardous substances into regional and coastal waters.

The tool box produced for managing riparian forests consists of:

- New digital maps for management of buffer zones
- Developed version of "Blue Targeting" tool for use in the Baltic Sea Region (BSR)
- Guidelines for management of riparian forests
- A video/film showing the use of GIS data for designing buffer zones
- Demonstration areas and training courses for management of riparian forests and for monitoring the impacts of practices
The tool box produced for managing forest drainage areas consist of:
- Guidelines for managing drainage systems
- A decision support application for mobile devices and for desktops for planning drainage systems
- Demonstration areas and training courses for management of drainage areas and for monitoring the impacts of drainage

The tool box produced for managing beavers consist of:
- A beaver handbook, "Beaver as a resource", containing information on beaver populations and management needs, as well as country specific legislation and policy
- A decision support tool for classification of beaver dams
- Demonstration areas and training courses for management of beavers and for monitoring the impacts of practices

These tool boxes will be tested and used by the project target groups, consisting of national policy makers, forest and environment authorities, private and state owned forest enterprises and NGO's (hunters, environmental, forest owners etc.).

The project will finally create the final output of an action plan "Water Management in Baltic Forests". The action plan will give recommendations on how to further implement tools and guidelines to reduce nutrients inflows and decrease discharge of hazardous substances to the Baltic States and the regional waters in the Baltic Sea Region.