

FINLAND – CASE AREA DESCRIPTION AND 1. FOCUS GROUP MEETING

Location: 60.020275 N, 23.663226 E

Finland (FIDAS, the Finnish Field Drainage Association)

Project: The Raasepori river project. The project was started in summer 2018 in order to decrease the nutrient load of the Raasepori river on the coastal areas of the Gulf of Finland, and thereby improve the water quality and the ecological status of the river and the coastal sea areas. The coastal areas in the Raasepori region are ecologically in a very poor condition according to the Environmental Institute of Finland (see figure 1). See appendix for a more detailed map over the Raasepori catchment area.

The river itself is relatively small and have a catchment area of 68 square kilometers. 25 % of the catchment area consists of agricultural land, while 53 % is forested area. The rest is built environment and lakes. The annual phosphorus load is approximately 4 tons, of which 70 % is estimated to stem from the agriculture. The objective of the project is to reduce the anthropogenic phosphorus load by 14 %.

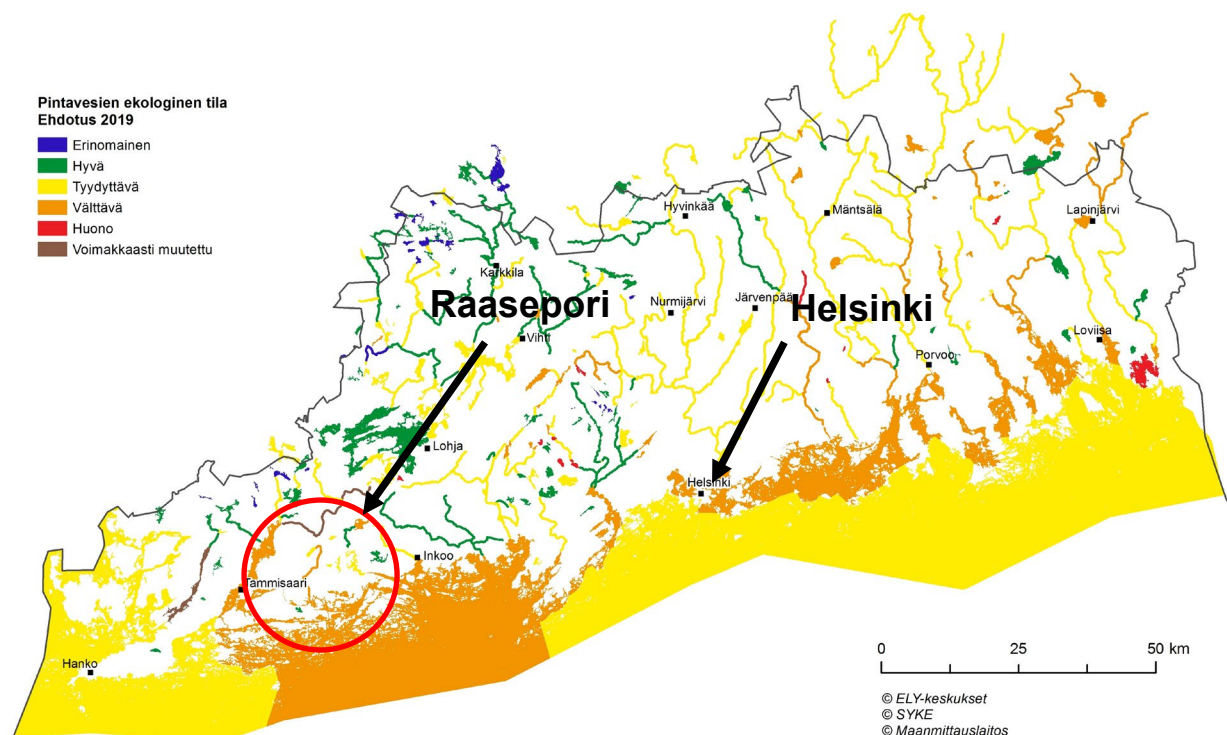


Figure 1 – The ecological state of the coastal waters of Southern Finland.

The agricultural areas have for many years been bothered by annual floods in spring (rarely in summer due to heavy rainfall), which cause cultivation practices to be delayed and contributes to the nutrient and sediment load. The underlying cause for the floods is the bad shape of the river channel, which has deteriorated over the

years, and cannot facilitate the water flow during spring and winter (see figure 2 and 3). The drainage corporate body made an initiative to renovate the river channel in the beginning of the 2000s. However, this attempt falls short, as the investigations required for the governmental subsidies were seen as too challenging and extensive. A new drainage plan was ordered from an advisory organization, but was not accepted by the regional authorities, who deemed it too concise, as it did not include an investigation concerning whether the channel had become a nature-like channel.



Figure 2 – The Raasepori river flooding in December.



Figure 3 - Flooding in spring 2019

The Raasepori river project identified the restoration of the river channel as one of the most important measures in order to improve the runoff quality. Therefore, the project has teamed up with one of the drainage corporate bodies of the river channel (another drainage corporate body is located downstream, close to the mouth of the river), and they have agreed to co-operate in restoring the the river channel. The drainage corporate body (i.e. the landowners of the area) will be the main funder of the actual measures (renovation) carried out on the river channel, while the Raasepori river project will fund 50 % of the investigations and parts of the other water protection measures (e.g. spreading of lime or gypsum), depending on the size of the subsidies.

Investigation of the ecological state and the topography of the channel in preparation for a renovation started in spring 2019. So far, the ecology of the river (mussels, crayfish, rare plants and vegetation, the naturalness), the spring flood water levels and the presence of acid sulphate soils has been mapped. The investigations have shown that the ecological condition of the river is weak, and that the river is far from its natural state. A draft for the renovation plans has also been presented. The investigations and a renovation plan are all needed in order to get government-granted subsidies needed to carry on with the renovation. The draft was prepared by a professional water management planner and included water protection measures such as two-step-ditches and a wetland. If subsidies are granted, the implementation of the renovation will be started in late winter 2020.

The Raasepori river project is carried out by the Raaspori municipality (Raseborgs miljöbyrå), on whose initiative the project also was started. The project is funded by the Ministry of the Environment and the municipality.

The area is also culturally and historically important, and close to the mouth of the river lay the old Raasepori Castle ruins, which today functions as a museum and as a backdrop for the outdoor summer theater.

The role of FIDAS in the Raasepori river project is mainly observational, as FIDAS does not provide any consulting or planning services.

Main results of the focus groups in case area

So far, the project has been successful in carrying out the required investigations concerning the ecological state of the river, as well as drawn up preliminary renovation plans required by the authorities for granting financial support for the project.

Main tasks/goals of the focus groups

Renovate the drainage channel (river), in order to avoid floods and improve the drainage of the agricultural area. Currently the new plan for the channel is being worked out. The aim is to repair/maintain the channel as organically as possible, and to include water protection measures, such as two-step ditches and a wetland. Also other water protection measures will be implemented in the fields (possibly lime, gypsum or structural fibers).

Strategic planning of focus groups (what to do when and how?)

The Raasepori river project will conclude in 2020, but the drainage corporate body will supposedly continue until the renovation of the river has been carried out.

Focus group meeting 1

Minutes/resume of meeting

- **The main purpose of the meeting**

Informing the stakeholders about the outcome of the investigations and talking about investigations to come. Presentation of the draft of the channel renovation plan. Presentation of the Waterdrive-project.

- **Participants (at least the stakeholder categories)**

The Raasepori municipality (project coordinator as well as the person who carried out the investigation of the naturalness of the river), approximately 1/3rd of the landowners, the head trustee drainage corporate body, the water management planner and two representatives for FIDAS.

- **Main inputs made for the future work in the case area (minutes and resume of meeting)**

The draft of the plan was received positively by the landowners. The two-step ditches brought discussion about the need for the clearing of vegetation on the flood plains of the ditches. The landowners were generally positive towards giving up arable land for the two-step ditches and concluded that the remaining part of the field will benefit from the renovation of the channel as well as from the extra land masses, which can be used to increase the field level.

- **What we learned from the focus groups meeting**

- **What worked great?**
- **What might be improved at the next meeting (content, format, facilitation, etc)?**

The attendance of the meeting was lower than expected. With more information about the meeting could have resulted in a higher attendance. The meeting also took place during the evening in the middle of harvest season, which might be one reason for why some of the landowners (many of which are farmers) did not show up.

There was not much discussion about the topics presented, and the meeting was more of a monologue. Next time, the presenters could try to engage the listening stakeholders in a dialogue. On the other hand, this was only an informative meeting, where no decisions were made. This might have affected the attendee activity and attendance

- **Special needs?**

- Possible actions and improvements before and during next meeting

Appendix – map over the catchment area

