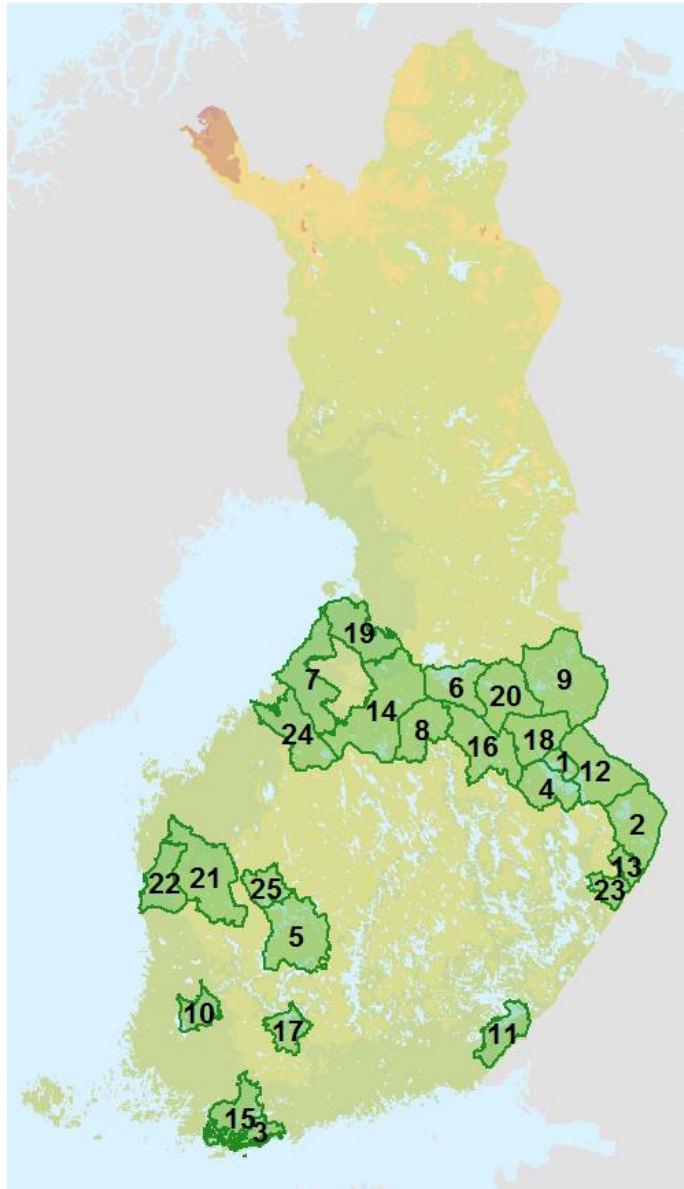
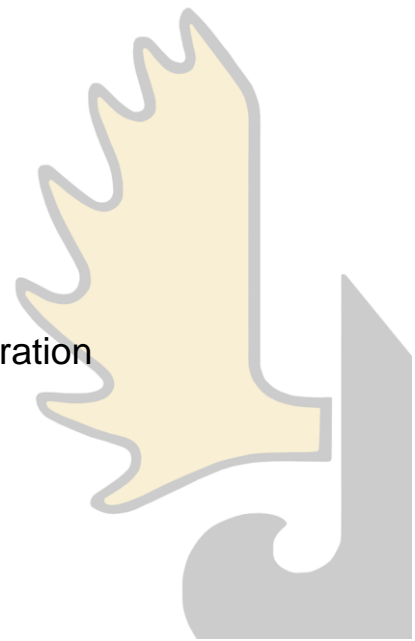


INSTRUCTIONS FOR WOLF TERRITORY COOPERATION GROUPS



By Antti Rinne & Mari Lyly
Project for Development of Wolf Territory Cooperation
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Purpose of the working groups

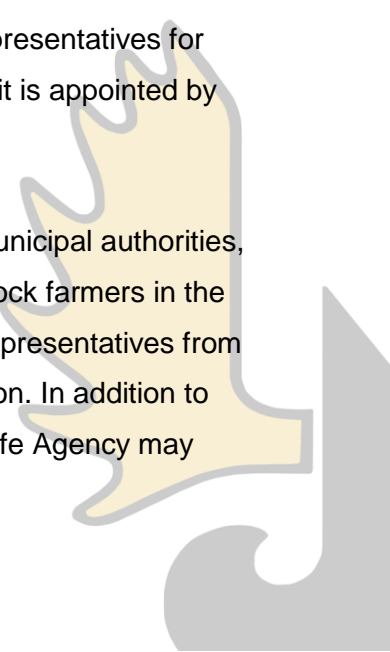
The Management Plan for the Wolf Population states the following: “A key principle of the new approach to wolf population management with focus on individual territories is that the people living and operating in the territory should have more opportunities for participating in planning that concerns the wolf.” With this in mind, local wolf territory cooperation groups have been established to bring together different perspectives and represent the local community when dealing with wolf-related questions.

The task of the wolf territory cooperation groups is to develop a comprehensive view on the wolf situation in their areas, notify the local population concerning wolf-related issues and consider the prerequisites for and priorities of hunting. One of the main aspects of the cooperation groups' activities is planning and implementing measures to prevent conflicts and wolf-related damages and to promote coexistence with wolves. Another task that can be considered equally important is providing fact-based information on wolves to the local community and, in turn, communicating the positions of the local community to the authorities. In addition to these functions, the groups carry out discussions and planning concerning the special issues in their areas, such as border cooperation or coordinating the protection of forest reindeer and wolves. The idea is therefore not to focus only on whether there is a need to hunt wolves and to what extent; the groups are also concerned with other local influencing measures for managing wolf-related issues. Once a year or more frequently, the cooperation groups hold meetings in which they discuss matters related to the management of the wolf population and local measures.

Formation of the cooperation groups

The need for a territory cooperation group comes from the wolf territories that have formed in the area and from the desire of local operators to discuss wolf-related matters together with different concerned parties. The creation of the cooperation groups usually begins with a meeting of concerned parties, with invitations sent to those stakeholders that may be interested in being a part of the group. After the meeting, the concerned parties propose representatives for the cooperation group, and once the composition of the group is confirmed, it is appointed by the chair of the regional wildlife council.

The members of the cooperation groups are usually representatives from municipal authorities, local hunting associations, local nature conservation associations and livestock farmers in the area. Depending on the situation, the cooperation group may also include representatives from the local police, Metsähallitus or the Border Guard, and the village association. In addition to these, a representative from the regional wildlife council or the Finnish Wildlife Agency may



also participate in the activities. The goal is to select representatives from all concerned parties equally so that no group is underrepresented. The representatives must be widely trusted by the groups they represent and in particular, understand the perspectives of the other concerned groups.

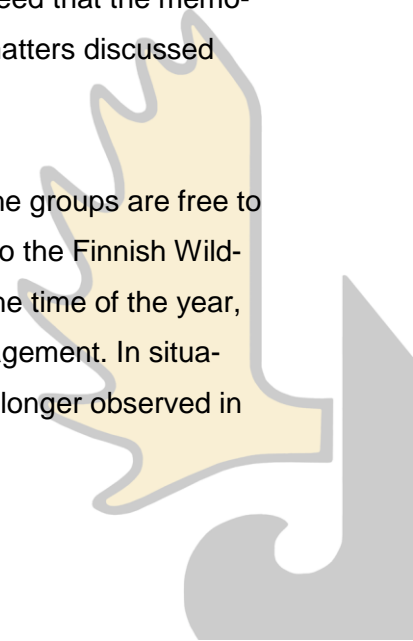
The activities of the wolf territory cooperation groups began in 2015–2016, and new groups have been established regularly since then. The objective is for the work of the cooperation groups to continue until further notice and to cover the entire area of wolf territories.

Meetings

The cooperation groups generally include people from very different backgrounds who do not always agree about the matters under discussion. For this reason, it is especially important to actively ensure that the groups maintain a constructive atmosphere and that the views and thoughts of all members are heard at the meetings. In line with good meeting practices, all members are given equal turns to speak, and any dissenting opinions expressed when giving statements are recorded in the memorandum of the meeting. The cooperation groups are encouraged to focus their discussions on local measures in particular, although national-level matters at the background of population management will also come up at times in the discussion.

Keeping memorandums of the meetings makes it possible for the activities and statements of the cooperation group to reach the local community. It also keeps the project coordinator and the regional offices of the Finnish Wildlife Agency up to date with the measures the groups are planning and implementing, and informs them of any problems related to the activities of the group. The matters recorded in the memorandum can also be brought to the attention of other operators in the administration or at research institutes. It is important to submit the memorandum of the minutes soon after the meeting so that the coordinator can consider the matters discussed when planning the agenda for the next meeting. It has been agreed that the memorandums of the meetings will be publicly available, which means that the matters discussed and decisions made will be published on the web.

The project coordinator sends agenda templates for the meetings, which the groups are free to edit to suit their needs. Groups can also propose matters to be discussed to the Finnish Wildlife Agency. The idea is that the agendas will include matters relevant for the time of the year, as well as other topical matters and new issues related to population management. In situations where a group has been already been established but wolves are no longer observed in



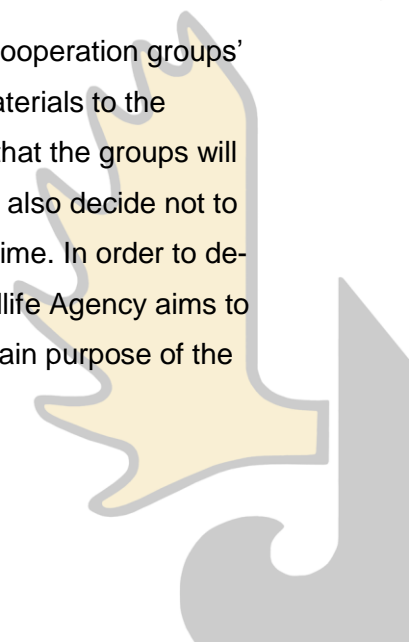
the area in question, it may be best for the group to put its activities on hold until a new wolf territory forms in the area. The group itself is in the best position to assess the need for its activities based on the wolf situation in its area.

It is not always fruitful or necessary to come up with unanimous statements on matters. Instead, the statements can provide a concise description of the discussion without a unanimous conclusion. For example, when it comes to questions on the hunting of wolves, it is not necessary to issue a statement on the need for hunting or the number of wolves to be culled. Instead, the group can describe the wolf situation in the area and provide the related background information to the wildlife administration. It is particularly important for the statements to highlight the special characteristics of the area. When preparing statements, it is essential to stick to fact-based information and to refrain from generalising personal opinions without justification. It is important to remember that when it comes to statements concerning hunting, a permit applicant is disqualified from participating in the discussion on the statement.

Measures

Planning and implementing measures are an integral part of the activities of the cooperation groups. In these activities, the project coordinator can also support the groups by offering different options for how to proceed and by discussing with the group, which actions should be implemented specifically in their area. Communication activities are a good starting point for new groups but are just as important for more established groups, as they raise awareness about the group among the local population and ensure that local information flows better in both directions. Communication also helps to better highlight any problems or needs of the local residents. The Finnish Wildlife Agency and the project coordinator can provide support and guidance on communication activities. However, it is important to make sure that any requests to the Finnish Wildlife Agency and other administrative bodies for support are expressed clearly and directly in the memorandums to avoid misunderstandings.

Meeting materials will be published in order to help set a schedule for the cooperation groups' activities (incl. agendas and any appendices). The goal is to send these materials to the groups more regularly and at a more predictable schedule than before, so that the groups will have clear timeframes for arranging their meetings. Of course, a group can also decide not to hold a certain meeting if it does not have topical matters to discuss at that time. In order to develop the activities of the wolf territory cooperation groups, the Finnish Wildlife Agency aims to organise development days in various locations throughout Finland. The main purpose of the



events is to explore the role of the groups' activities in wolf territories and to exchange ideas on development.

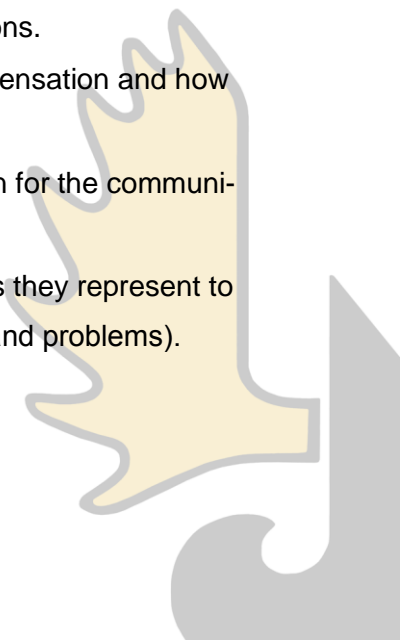
A private Facebook group has been created as a discussion platform for the cooperation groups. Members can join the group only with an invitation from the administrator (the Wildlife Agency / the coordinator), and the group is not visible to others. The discussions in the group are visible only to the group members. The group is an easy platform for sharing files and links, starting new discussions and commenting on them. The Finnish Wildlife Agency will add important materials to the group and inform the members of important matters related to the activities of the territory cooperation groups. If you are not already on Facebook, it is easy to create an account using your email address. The cooperation groups must make sure the coordinator has the email addresses of all group members, so they can all be invited to the Facebook group. However, email will continue to be the primary communication channel between the wolf territory cooperation groups and the Finnish Wildlife Agency.

Possible measures that can be implemented by the cooperation groups are listed below.

Communication

The purpose of increasing the amount of communication is to reduce prejudices about the accuracy of data on large carnivores.

- The amount of local communications about the wolf should be increased. Residents are informed e.g. in local newspapers about the local wolf territory cooperation group and the large carnivore contact persons, and on how to report large carnivore observations to them. Also, information on how to apply for compensation for damage will be provided.
- It is important to work together with other operators when communicating about wolves.
- Articles and series of stories in local newspapers can provide information on the local wolf situation from a neutral perspective without value judgments.
- Groups can provide information on what to do in wolf-related situations.
- Communication about reporting damages by large carnivores, compensation and how to apply for it.
- The members of the cooperation group act as sources of information for the communities they represent (correcting mistaken beliefs).
- The group members communicate information from the communities they represent to the cooperation group (highlighting the local community's thoughts and problems).



Education and training

The purpose of education and training is to disseminate information, increase the public's awareness about wolves, educate municipal authorities, and promote open cooperation and exchange of information between wildlife authorities and the local residents.

- Arranging events on wolf awareness and educational for local communities. The organisers can be, for instance, game management associations or village societies. Organisers are encouraged to plan their training events in cooperation with the Finnish Wildlife Agency, Metsähallitus, the police or other operators (e.g. presentations by experts). The events also offer an opportunity to compare and exchange experiences of different local solution models.
- Meetings between cooperation groups, exchanges of information and experiences.
- Guidelines on how to proceed in wolf-related situations.

Prevention of damages

The goal of damage prevention is to decrease or eliminate damages caused by wolves to local livelihoods and property. The purpose of prevention measures is to improve the relationship between humans and wolves and to proceed it without killing wolves.

- Identifying and removing food sources and other factors that attract wolves.
- Building predator control fences
 - The cooperation group acts as a disseminator of information and a local organiser.
 - One option is to try to develop more flexible fencing solutions, such as lighter fences that are easier to move, instead of heavy fencing.
 - Fencing solutions suitable for different situations.
 - Experiments with combining fences and other prevention measures (e.g. noise and light deterrents).
 - Financial support and labour force for fence building (state, hunters, nature organisations)
- The cooperation group communicates information from the local level to the wildlife authorities concerning how resources should be allocated in the wolf territory area (e.g. for building large carnivore fences)
- Livestock guardian dogs
 - Testing livestock guardian dogs, training for dogs and owners.
- Communicating information about the possibility of using protective vests to prevent wolf attacks on hunting dogs.



- More flexible practices for removing disruptive individuals (damage-causing wolves) in problem situations.
 - Finding and testing dogs that are capable of tracking wolves, using suitable dogs for repelling or hunting problem wolves.
 - Testing the reaction of dogs in encounters with wolves (large carnivore tests)

Development of large carnivore observations

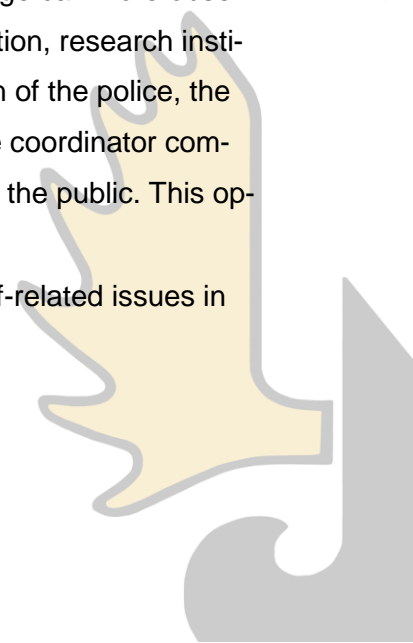
Developing observation practices provides more information about the movement of wolves, the number of individuals and the size of wolf packs. This also leads to fewer differences of opinion concerning the size of wolf populations.

- With this in mind, the goal is to increase the amount of local communications about the wolf. This includes providing information in local newspapers about the area's large carnivore contact persons and how to report large carnivore observations.
 - This is also important from the perspective of preventing damages.
- Increasing awareness about the role of large carnivore contact persons through communications, which also leads to more comprehensive observations.
- Emphasising the importance of the Tassu system and reporting of observations.
- Activating nature photographers to report their observations.
- Activating other work communities to report their observations.
- Emphasising the importance of litter observations.
- Collecting observations on non-frozen land (incl. winters with poor snow conditions).
- Use of DNA samples in population estimates.
- Developing the collection and use of data from camera traps.

Wolf territory coordinator (wolf mediator)

A volunteer contact person focusing on wolf-related issues is appointed for each wolf territory. The contact person should be someone who is widely trusted by the people in the wolf territory area. The task of the contact person is to confirm cases of damage and large carnivore observations. They also act as a point of contact between the wildlife administration, research institutes and the local population in the wolf territory, as well as in the direction of the police, the local office of the Finnish Wildlife Agency and wildlife research bodies. The coordinator communicates about wolf-related matters and educates interested members of the public. This operating model increases trust between operators in the wolf territory area.

- Each cooperation group appoints a contact person focusing on wolf-related issues in the territory area.



Preventing the illegal killing of wolves

In order to achieve a favourable conservation status for the wolf population and carry out systematic population management, we need effective measures to prevent the illegal killing of wolves. By preventing and eliminating illegal killing of wolves, the wildlife value of the wolf can be increased, and the public image of hunters as honest operators improved.

- At their annual meetings, hunting associations in wolf territory areas discuss measures to prevent the illegal killing of wolves.
- The hunting associations in the territory areas emphasise to their members, landowners and local communities that the illegal killing of wolves is not acceptable and that the association will notify the authorities of any suspected illegal activities.
- Development and strengthening of cooperation:
 - With the hunting supervisor of the local game management association and/or the police.
 - With others who move about in nature.
- At the local level, to create an atmosphere that does not tolerate illegal activities.

Strengthening cooperation with the wildlife administration, wildlife research bodies and other authorities

Cooperation between the people living in the wolf territory area, the wildlife administration, wildlife research bodies and the authorities is necessary to ensure well-functioning wolf population management, population estimates and the prevention of damages.

- Cooperation between cooperation groups
- Cooperation and active communication with the wildlife administration, research bodies and other authorities.
- Issuing statements and proposals through the memorandums for meetings.

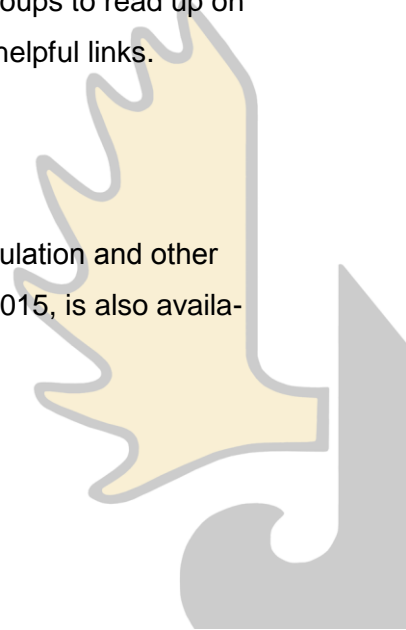
Links to useful material

It would be a good idea for the members of the wolf territory cooperation groups to read up on the management of the wolf population and related topics. Here are some helpful links.

Management Plan for the Wolf Population (in Finnish and Swedish)

<https://riista.fi/riistatalous/riistakannat/hoitosuunnitelmat/susikanta/>

The Finnish Wildlife Agency's website provides information on the wolf population and other related topics. The Management Plan for the Wolf Population, updated in 2015, is also available on the website.



Wolf territory cooperation groups

<https://riista.fi/en/riistatalous-2/game-stock/cooperation-groups-of-wolf-territory-areas/>

The Finnish Wildlife Agency website provides information on the activities of the territory cooperation groups. The website also has the contact information of the Development of Wolf Territory Cooperation project coordinator, minutes from the meetings of the cooperation groups and contact information for their members.

Largecarnivores.fi – general information on large carnivores

<http://www.largecarnivorest.fi/>

The Largecarnivores.fi website provides objective and reliable information about large carnivores and related issues. The Large Carnivores and Us tab, for example, has information on damages by large carnivores and how to prevent them. The information on the website is provided by Metsähallitus, the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, the Finnish Wildlife Agency, Natural Resources Institute Finland and the Ministry of the Environment.

Compensation for damages due to large carnivores

<https://www.ruokavirasto.fi/henkiloasiakkaat/kalastus-metsastys-ja-villielaimet/vahin-gonkorvaukset/petovahingot/> Website (in Finnish and Swedish) of the Finnish Food Authority

(previously the Agency for Rural Affairs) on compensation for damages due to large carnivores, reporting damages and applying for compensation

<https://www.finlex.fi/fi/laki/alkup/2012/20120503>

Decree of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry on the current values to be used when calculating the compensation for damage to animals (in Finnish and Swedish)

Large carnivore fences (presentation in Finnish)

<http://docplayer.fi/31955559-Suomen-riistakeskuksen-petoaita.html>

Presentation on the large carnivore fences used given by Jörgen Hermansson, game planner for Finnish Wildlife Agency Varsinais-Suomi, at an event of the SusiAita project.

Derogations for the hunting of large carnivores (available in Finnish and Swedish)

<http://suurpetopoikkeusluvut.riista.fi/>

Decisions on granting derogations for the hunting of large carnivores.



Large carnivore observations (website available in Finnish and Swedish)

<http://riistahavainnot.fi/suurpedot/havaintokartta>

The Riistahavainnot.fi large carnivore observation service contains information on observations of bears, wolves, lynx and wolverine reported to large carnivore contact persons, along with identification data from wolf DNA analyses, the territories of wolves GPS-collared in previous years and geospatial data on collared wolves. The service also provides background information on large carnivore research.

Natural Resources Institute Finland

<https://www.luke.fi/en/natural-resources/game-and-hunting/the-wolf/>

Natural Resources Institute Finland's pages about the wolf. The website includes the most recent population estimate and a description of how the population estimate is carried out, as well as information on the role of different operators in managing wolf-related matters.

SusiAita project pages and materials

<https://www.sll.fi/varsinais-suomi/toiminta/susaitahanke>

The SusiAita project was a local cooperation project carried out in the Salo region in 2016. The goal of the project was to disseminate information on the prevention of damage by large carnivores and to establish operating models to develop the coexistence of wolves and people. The website provides a variety of material on the project, including its events (Events tab) and a handbook on measures for protecting domestic and farm animals (Results of the project tab). The presentations from the events are available in electronic format, and a video summary is available for almost all of the events.

Pages and materials of carnivore project "Petohanke"

<https://petohanke.fi/>

The project on large carnivore-related impacts, monitoring and damage prevention (Petohanke) was a cooperation project carried out in Suomussalmi in 2011–2014 with the goal of developing practices to prevent damage by large carnivores. The project involved testing different technological applications and assessing their suitability, particularly for sheep farming and reindeer husbandry and for pinpointing the location of large carnivore damage. The project also explored the effects of large carnivores on reindeer husbandry and reindeer herders in the area. The website provides a links to the final report on the project and guides on preventing large carnivore damage, for example.

