



This leaflet was published as part of the international project KA 529 IntelliGreenBelt (Intellectually driven management of natural resources of Green Belt of Fennoscandia) implemented within the Karelia Cross-border Cooperation Programme funded by the European Union, Russian Federation and Republic of Finland. The Project Lead Partner is Karelian Research Centre, Russian Academy of Sciences.

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GREEN BELT OF FENNOSCANDIA





The Green Belt of Fennoscandia (GBF) encompasses protected areas (PA) of different categories on both sides of the national borders of three adjacent countries – Russia, Finland and Norway. It stretches for 1500 kilometres from the Baltic to the Barents Sea. This unique natural object is of pan-European value, constituting the northern part of the European Green Belt.

GBF was first heard of early in the 1990s. It was then that scientists from Russia and Finland came up with the idea of conserving the unique natural complexes in the area, which remained nearly undisturbed due to the strict border zone regime. Owing to active efforts of scientists from the Karelian Research Centre of the Russian Academy of Sciences and their partners from Finland, the GBF Karelian-Finnish stretch has by now grown quite tangible. The boundaries of the territory have been outlined, PAs of different ranks, which act as its cores, have been established: Kostomukshsky Strict Nature Reserve (47,500 ha); national parks Paanajärvi (104,500 ha) and Kalevsky (74,500

ha); landscape reserves Tolvojärvi (42,000 ha) and Iso-Ijärvi (6,000 ha), and some other, smaller protected areas. Natural complexes within GBF in Finland are also officially protected. PAs on both sides of the Russian-Finnish border occupy a combined area of over 1 million hectares.

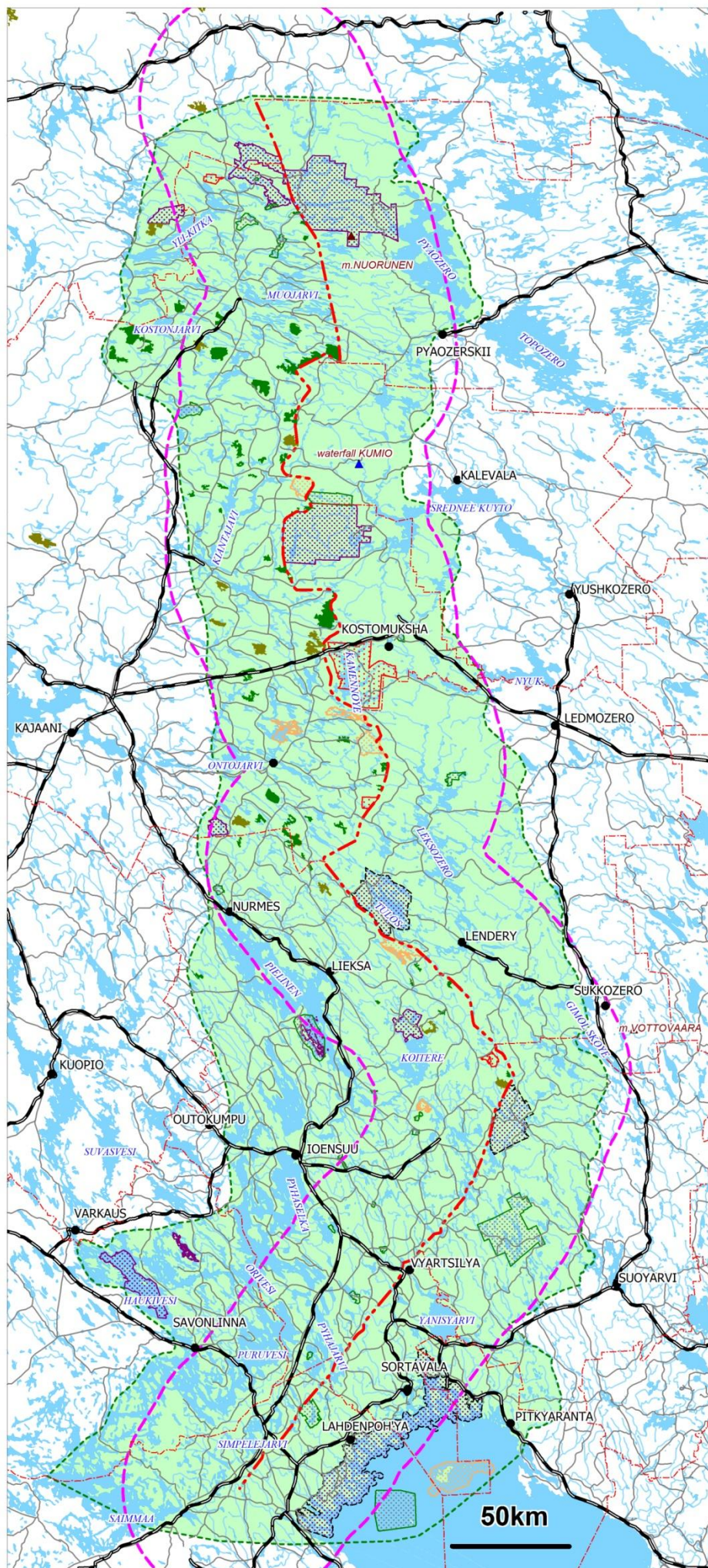
Yet, GBF is not simply an assemblage of PAs of different ranks. Karelian and Finnish scientists now argue this territory should be regarded as a historical-cultural and socio-economic entity. Essentially, further GBF development should aim at maintaining the environmental sustainability of this territory simultaneously with promoting its recreational appeal. With this approach in mind, a consideration of special importance is so-called ecological corridors – stretches that secure spatial connectivity between individual PAs (wildlife migration pathways).

Specific plans related to GBF development are mainly implemented by means of scientific programmes and projects, including international ones. One example is the IntellGreenBelt project (under Karelia Cross-border

Cooperation Programme), with Muezersky, Kalevsky and Kostomuksha Districts as its pilot areas, where cross-border ecological corridors were defined, the recreational potential was assessed, the feasibility study for the Tulos Landscape Reserve was prepared, a number of solutions for conserving and regenerating natural resources, as well as for invigorating socio-economic activities on both sides of the border (hunting, fishing, learning tourism) were suggested.

At present, GBF is a showcase of successful interactions between neighbouring countries in building a common environmental-economic domain. Its significance is witnessed not just by joint conservation projects, cultural exchanges and development of cross-border tourism, but also by intergovernmental agreements, the weightiest one being the Memorandum of Understanding on cooperation between Russia, Finland and Norway on the development of the Green Belt of Fennoscandia ecologically, economically, socially and culturally (2010).





LEGEND

- Finnish - Russian border
- Buffer 50km on each side of the Finnish - Russian border
- Railroads
- Roads
- Admin. borders
- Towns
- Rivers
- Lakes
- Green Belt

PROTECTED AREAS IN FINLAND

- Strict nature reserves
- National parks
- Nature Reserves
- Landscapes
- Old forest protection programme
- Protected mires

PROTECTED AREAS IN RUSSIA

- Strict nature reserves
- National parks
- Nature Reserves
- Landscape reserves
- Planned protected areas