

## **The conflicts and solutions of river basin planning are investigated within a new EU project Watersketch**

**The broad development scheme belonging to EU's Baltic sea programme dives into the conflicting usage objectives and regulations for river basin planning. The purpose of this large three year project to be carried out in Finland, Germany, Denmark, Poland and Lithuania is to create a so-called "Watersketch" to support spatial planning. Such a general plan would help in planning how to use and protect river basins. The problems are being mapped out in seven different kinds of areas extending from River Oulujoki to Polish countryside and to the harbour area of Hamburg metropolis. The kick-off meeting for the 1.5 million euros project headed by Finnish environment institute has been held in Reposaari during the 26th to the 28th of September.**

Management of waterway areas is a complicated process, and is very different between countries. To make the situation clearer, EC water framework directive was introduced in 2000. The objective of this directive is to create a general river basin plan, so that all water bodies could reach a good ecological status by the year 2015. To achieve this goal, varied information gathering is needed, and the status of water bodies must be determined and, most importantly, water bodies not reaching a goal must be restored. When, at the same time, the EU member states have committed to increasing hydro-power production, and in many areas the society supports ditching forests, there are a lot of challenges ahead in making the status of water bodies better.

During the project, the problems are being mapped out in seven different kinds of areas extending from Oulujoki areas burdened by hydropower production to remote Polish countryside and all the way to the harbour area of Hamburg metropolis. New EU member states include the Baltic states and Poland. The historical backgrounds and rapid economic development of these countries also set specific requirements on waterway usage.

The purpose of the WATERSKETCH-project is to gather all directives and practices related to condition of water bodies, as well as often conflicting objectives, into a shared planning system. Traditional control of land use via zoning has not adequately addressed the objectives set for the condition of water bodies nor the requirements set by the new water framework directive. Societal and protecting needs for waterbodies are too demanding for spatial planning. Therefore, new methods for decision-making are urgently needed. The results of the project will be summarised in a manual. Results will be presented in seminars on different sides of the Baltic sea.

Experts of river basin management and spatial planning from 15 facilities will participate in this development project. The project is headed by the Oulu unit of Finnish environment institute, and other Finnish participants include regional environment centres of North Ostrobothnia and Kainuu, Satakunta Environmental Research Institute of University of Turku, regional councils of Satakunta, Kainuu and Oulu Region and the NorNet research co-ordination unit. Work carried out in Finland will be financed by the ministry of environment.

The kick-off meeting for the project was held in Reposaari, at Satakunta environmental research centre, during 26th to 28th of September. In the Pori area, research work concentrates on conflicts of local planning and solution models for the Yyteri peninsula.

### **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:**

Senior researcher **Seppo Hellsten** Finnish environment institute tel. +358 40 500 4999

**Manager** Mikko Ojanen **Satakunnan environmental research institute, tel. +358 40 748 8930**

Information officer **Sirpa Pellinen** tel. +358 9 4030 0703 or +358 40 740 2754