Translation from Finnish
Legally binding only in Finnish and Swedish
Ministry of the Environment, Finland

Decree of the Ministry of the Environment on Voluntary Ecological Compensation (933/2023, amendments up to 1276/2025 included)

By decision of the Ministry of the Environment, the following is enacted under section 101, subsection 3 and section 103, subsection 7 of the Nature Conservation Act:

Section 1
Nature value equivalence

The nature value equivalence of an offset is assessed both qualitatively and quantitatively.

Nature value hectare means a nature value equivalence assessment unit that indicates a site's nature value per hectare in relation to a hectare of a site that is in its natural state or in a state comparable to a natural state. The amount of nature value hectares of a site equals the site's surface area multiplied by its nature value status.

Section 2
Assessment of nature value status

Nature value status is assessed on a ten-step scale where the lowest category, 0, is a site that has entirely lost its natural state and the highest category, 1, is a site that is in its natural state or in a state comparable to a natural state. Where the nature value status cannot be assessed with certainty as belonging to a specific category, it is assessed as belonging to the higher of the options.

The status of each habitat type is assessed as a weighted average of the characteristics of the habitat type groups referred to in Annex 1, where the primary characteristic is given double weight.

The characteristics of the habitat of a species are determined specifically for each individual case on the basis of best available scientific knowledge.

Section 3

Assessment of change in the natural state of an impacted site

The change in the nature values of an impacted site is assessed as nature value hectares by multiplying the difference between the status of each nature value assessed in accordance with section 2 and the status created as a result of the deteriorating measures by the surface area of the impacted nature value.

The threat status of the impacted nature value is taken into account by multiplying the assessed quantity of deterioration by the threat status factor, which is:

1) 1.52 for a Critically Endangered habitat type;

2) 1.14 for an Endangered habitat type;

3) 1.03 for a Vulnerable habitat type;

4) 8 for a Critically Endangered species;

5) 1.4 for an Endangered species;

6) 1.03 for a Vulnerable species.

The Red List category of a species or habitat type is determined on the basis of the most recent national threat status assessment.

Section 4
Assessment of change in the natural state of an offset site

The quality and quantity of nature values generated on an offset site is assessed as nature value hectares by multiplying the change in the status of each nature value generated by means of offset measures and conservation offsets by its surface area.

The change in nature value status is the difference between the nature value status assessed in accordance with section 2 prior to offset measures and conservation and the desired state sought by means of implementing offset measures and conservation. The desired state is determined on the basis of best scientific knowledge of the response of each nature value to offset measures and conservation. Scientific uncertainty is taken into account when determining the desired state.

If the desired state is not fully achieved by the time a matter referred to in section 104 of the Nature Conservation Act (9/2023) is being decided upon, the change generated until then by means of offset measures and conservation assessed on the basis of the response and the average of the cumulative benefits over the next 30 years assessed on the basis of the response is accepted as the change in nature value status.

Section 5

Nature value equivalence of a threatened nature value

A habitat type which belongs to the same habitat type group as the impacted habitat type in Annex 2 to this Decree is deemed to be equivalent to a threatened habitat type referred to in section 101, subsection 2 of the Nature Conservation Act. In the absence of one, a habitat type of the same main group may be accepted as equivalent on the basis of best available scientific knowledge.

The nature value equivalence of a habitat of a threatened species is determined specifically for each individual case on the basis of best available scientific knowledge.

Section 6

Offset plan

The information referred to in section 103, subsection 2, paragraph 1 of the Nature Conservation Act is provided by:

1) identifying the real estate and providing the details of its owner;

2) supplying a map of the offset site or its geospatial data in a machine-readable format and specifying the location of the nature values to be improved;

3) stating the nature value status in accordance with an assessment referred to in section 2 of this Decree.

The information referred to in section 103, subsection 2, paragraph 2 of the Nature Conservation Act is provided by:

1) stating the desired nature value status sought by means of the offset measures and conservation offsets as laid down in section 3 of this Decree and by providing the data on which the assessment is based;

2) providing an assessment of the quantity of nature value hectares to be generated.

Section 7

Geographical equivalence of offsets

The subzones of forest vegetation zones referred to in section 101, subsection 1, paragraph 1 of the Nature Conservation Act are:

1) hemiboreal southwest coastal land;

2) south boreal coast of Southwest Ostrobothnia;

3) south boreal lake area;

4) central boreal Ostrobothnia;

5) central boreal North Karelia-Kainuu;

6) central boreal triangle of Lapland;

7) north boreal North-East;

8) north boreal Bothnia;

9) north boreal forested Lapland;

10) north boreal mountainous Lapland.

The marine areas referred to in section 101, subsection 1, paragraph 1 of the Nature Conservation Act are:

1) the Bay of Bothnia;

2) the Kvarken;

3) the Bothnian Sea;

4) Åland-the Archipelago Sea;

5) the Gulf of Finland.

In section 101, subsection 1, paragraph 1 of the Nature Conservation Act, 'main river basin' means the river basins referred to in Annex 1 to the Government Decree on River Basin Districts (1303/2004). In the said provision, 'water body type' means the surface water types referred to in section 10 of the Government Decree on Water Resources Management (1040/2006).

Section 8 (1276/2025)
Area of the Sámi community

The area of a Sámi community referred to in section 101, subsection 1, paragraph 2 of the Nature Conservation Act is determined in negotiations between the Sámi living and practising a livelihood or culture on the impacted site, the Sámi Parliament referred to in section 1 of the Act on the Sámi Parliament (974/1995) and the Finnish Supervisory Agency.

Section 9
Entry into force

This Decree enters into force on 15 September 2023.

Annex 1

Characteristics of habitat type groups

Main group: The Baltic Sea

Habitat type group / habitat complex	*Characteristics (*primary)*
Hard benthic habitats (also hard benthic habitats characterised by perennial algae or aquatic moss, hard benthic habitats characterised by invertebrates, benthic habitats characterised by filamentous annual algae, benthic habitats characterised by *Chorda filum* and/or *Halosiphon tomentosus*, benthic habitats characterised by microphytobenthic organisms and grazing snails)	*Representativeness of benthos: species composition and structure (abundance, density, cover, biomass, abundance ratios of species/species groups)
	*Periphyton, quantity of loose sediment
	Secchi depth
	Hydraulic construction and benthic modification as well as other anthropogenic pressures
	Sessile benthic invasive alien species
Soft benthic habitats characterised by vegetation (also benthic habitats characterized by *Vaucheria* spp.)	*Representativeness of benthos: species composition and structure (abundance, density, cover, biomass, abundance ratios of species/species groups)
	Periphyton, quantity of loose sediment
	Secchi depth
	Hydraulic construction and benthic modification, other anthropogenic pressures
	Sessile benthic invasive alien species
	Overgrowth caused by helophytes and floating-leaved plants not included in natural succession
	In addition, for benthic habitats of shallow bays: impact of surrounding catchment area

Other soft benthic habitats (also soft benthic habitats characterised by invertebrates and other types of benthic habitats)	*Representativeness of benthos: species composition and structure (abundance, density, cover, biomass, abundance ratios of species/species groups)
	Benthic hypoxia
	Hydraulic construction and benthic modification (such as dredging, depositing), other anthropogenic pressures
Reefs and sandbanks	*Representativeness of benthos: species composition and structure (abundance, density, cover, biomass, abundance ratios of species/species groups)
	*Periphyton, quantity of loose sediment
	Secchi depth
	Hydraulic construction and benthic modification, other anthropogenic pressures
Flada-lakes (coastal lagoons), glo-lakes (coastal lagoons), coastal estuaries	*Representativeness of vegetation: species composition and structure (abundance, cover, abundance ratios of species/species groups)
	*Status of threshold (flada-lakes)
	*Modification, construction and other anthropogenic pressure
	Impact of surrounding catchment area

Main group: The Baltic Sea coast

Habitat type group / habitat complex	*Characteristics (*primary)*
Coastal rocky outcrop, gravel, shingle and boulder shores, sand beaches and dunes, drift lines with organic material, coastal meadows, reedbeds and scrubs, developmental series of coastal dunes, islands and islets in outer archipelago, islets and cliffs with bird colonies, Baltic esker islands	*Representativeness of vegetation: species composition and structure of vegetation (abundance, cover, abundance ratios of species/species groups)
	Coastal mass accumulation of filamentous algae
	Construction, modification, other anthropogenic impact
	Invasive alien plant species

Coastal primary succession forests, coastal wooded dunes	*Structural features of tree stands (multiple species, uneven-aged stands, stratification, zonation, random dispersion); in addition, the following structural features of tree stands for coastal wooded dunes: quantity and continuum of coarse woody debris, semi-openness, aged trees, wind impact *Position in succession series (primary succession forests) Coarse woody debris (primary succession forests) Construction, modification, other anthropogenic impact Invasive alien plant species

Main group: Inland waters and shores

Habitat type group / habitat complex	*Characteristics (*primary)*
Lakes	Lakes for which the classification of ecological status in accordance with the Water Framework Directive (WFD) with the following indicators is appropriate: *WFD: aquatic flora *WFD: hydromorphological changes *WFD: benthic invertebrate fauna *Catchment status Lakes for which WFD status classification is not appropriate: *Representativeness of aquatic and coastal vegetation: species composition and structure of vegetation (abundance, cover, abundance ratios of species/species groups) *Catchment status *Water level and water level fluctuation *Overgrowing *Invasive alien species Impact of factors that have changed the natural state of the littoral and nearby zones

Ponds and small lakes	Hydraulic construction and benthic modification
	*Representativeness of aquatic and coastal vegetation: species composition and structure of vegetation (abundance, cover, abundance ratios of species/species groups)
	*Catchment status
	*Water level and water level fluctuation
	*Overgrowing
	*Invasive alien species
	*Impact of factors that have changed the natural state of the littoral and nearby zones
Spring habitats	Hydraulic construction and benthic modification
	*Spring-influenced surface area
	Water yield
	Surface water influence and water quality
	Anthropogenic activity influencing the state of the immediate surroundings
	Anthropogenic activity influencing the state of the spring complex
	Location of groundwater discharges
Streams (rivers, streams, headwater streams, intermittent streams)	*Structural features of the channel characteristic of the habitat type and local conditions and their changes due to anthropogenic activity
	*Catchment status
	Representativeness of vegetation: species composition and structure of vegetation (abundance, cover, abundance ratios of species/species groups)
	Impact of anthropogenic activity that has changed the state of the littoral and nearby zones
	Regulation
	Absence of barriers
Shores of inland waters	*Representativeness of vegetation: species composition and structure of vegetation

	(abundance, cover, abundance ratios of species/species groups)
	*Water level fluctuation
	*Construction, modification, other anthropogenic impact
	Invasive alien plant species

Main group: Peatlands

Habitat type group / habitat complex	*Characteristics (*primary)*
Fens, rich fens, peatland complexes (open peatlands)	*Hydrology
	*Relationship of the peatland with its surrounding environment
	*Representativeness of peatland vegetation: species composition and structure of vegetation (abundance, cover, abundance ratios of species/species groups)
	*Overgrowing
	Other anthropogenic impact
Spruce mires, spruce-birch fens, pine mires and bogs, pine fens, swamps (wooded peatlands)	*Hydrology
	*Relationship of the peatland with its surrounding environment
	*Representativeness of peatland vegetation: species composition and structure of vegetation (abundance, cover, abundance ratios of species/species groups)
	*Structure of tree stands (density, age distribution, dispersion, canopy stratification, species distribution)
	Quantity of coarse woody debris
	Other anthropogenic impact

Main group: Forests

Habitat type group / habitat complex	*Characteristics (*primary)*
Heath forests, herb-rich forests, inland flooded forests	*Development class

	*Structural features of tree stands characteristic of the habitat type (uneven-aged stands, canopy stratification, random dispersion, burn marks, multiple species)
	*Quantity of coarse woody debris and structural features characteristic of the habitat type (continuum, large-diameter deadwood, multiple species)
	*Representativeness of vegetation: species composition and structure of vegetation (abundance, cover, abundance ratios of species/species groups) (*herb-rich forests and herb-rich forests with broadleaved deciduous trees, esker forests, inland dune forests, forests on ultrabasic soils)
	Quantity of large-diameter trees
	Invasive alien plant species
	Other anthropogenic impact
	Hydrology (moist herb-rich forests)
	*Flood conditions (inland flooded forests)

Main group: Rock outcrops and scree

Habitat type group / habitat complex	*Characteristics (*primary)*
Siliceous rock outcrops, excluding rock outcrops on shores and mountain bedrock outcrops	*Representativeness of vegetation: species composition and structure of vegetation (abundance, cover, abundance ratios of species/species groups)
	Other anthropogenic impact
	Tree stands (wooded rock outcrops)
Calcareous and serpentine rock outcrops, excluding fell areas	*Representativeness of vegetation: species composition and structure of vegetation (abundance, cover, abundance ratios of species/species groups)
	*Demanding vascular and/or bryophyte and/or lichen species
	Morphological diversity of rock outcrop (for acidic rock outcrops*)
	Morphological diversity of rock outcrop

	Other anthropogenic impact
	In addition, for wooded rock outcrops: tree stands
Siliceous rock faces, calcareous and serpentine rock faces	*Representativeness of vegetation: species composition and structure of vegetation (abundance, cover, abundance ratios of species/species groups)
	*Shading and microclimate stability (shady rock faces)
	Morphological diversity of rock face (for acidic rock faces*)
	Trees on and below rock face (wooded rock faces)
	*Demanding vascular and/or bryophyte and/or lichen species (calcareous and serpentine rock faces)
Scree	Size and variability
	*Demanding vascular and/or bryophyte and/or lichen species (calcareous and serpentine scree)

Main group: Seminatural grasslands and grazed woodlands

Habitat type group / habitat complex	*Characteristics (*primary)*
Heaths, rock meadows, dry meadows, mesic meadows, moist meadows, fen meadows, seashore meadows, pollard meadows, wooded pastures, grazed woodlands, alluvial meadows, freshwater meadows	Value class in accordance with the inventory of semi-natural grasslands
	If no value class:
	*Representativeness of vegetation: species composition and structure of vegetation (abundance, cover, abundance ratios of species/species groups)
	*Noteworthy species
	*Eutrophication and problem species
	Non-eutrophying mowing or grazing, or other corresponding management
	Overgrowing
	Invasive alien plant species

	*Representativeness of trees and shrubs (pollard meadows, wooded pastures, grazed woodlands) *Flood conditions (alluvial meadows)

Main group: Fell habitats

Habitat type group / habitat complex	*Characteristics (*primary)*
Mountain birch forests, mountain birch scrubs, mountain forests with aspen	*Structure and regeneration of tree stands *Representativeness of vegetation: species composition and structure of vegetation (abundance, cover, abundance ratios of species/species groups) Other anthropogenic impact
Mountain forests with pine or spruce (not mountain forests with aspen)	*Tree stand structure characteristic of the habitat type (uneven-aged stands, stratification, random dispersion, coarse woody debris detected, very old trees) Representativeness of vegetation: species composition and structure of vegetation (abundance, cover, abundance ratios of species/species groups) Other anthropogenic impact
Mountain heath scrubs (not mountain birch scrubs), mountain heaths, low-graminoid mountain heaths, mountain meadows, snowbeds and snow patches	*Representativeness of vegetation: species composition and structure of vegetation (abundance, cover, abundance ratios of species/species groups) Other anthropogenic impact
Patterned grounds, solifluction sheets, frost-influenced heaths	*Impact of ground freezing Representativeness of vegetation: species composition and structure of vegetation (abundance, cover, abundance ratios of species/species groups) Other anthropogenic impact
Mountain dunes and deflation basins, mountain oligotrophic and mesotrophic bedrock outcrops and boulder fields, mountain calcareous bedrock outcrops	*Representativeness of vegetation: species composition and structure of vegetation

and boulder fields, mountain serpentine rock outcrops and boulder fields	
	*Demanding vascular and/or bryophyte and/or lichen species (serpentine rock outcrops and boulder fields)
	Other anthropogenic impact
	Invasive alien plant species

Annex 2

Habitat type groups where a threatened habitat type may be offset by an equally threatened or more threatened habitat type of the same habitat type group

Main group	*Habitat type group / habitat complex*
The Baltic Sea	Hard benthic habitats
	Soft benthic habitats characterised by vegetation
	Other soft benthic habitats
	Flada-lakes and glo-lakes (coastal lagoons)
The Baltic Sea coast	Coastal sand beaches and dunes
	Coastal drift lines with organic material
	Coastal meadows, coastal reedbeds and coastal scrubs
	Coastal primary succession forests
Inland waters and shores	Low-humic lakes and esker ponds and small lakes
	Humic lakes and humic ponds and small lakes
	Naturally eutrophic lakes and eutrophic ponds and small lakes
	Spring habitats
	Headwater streams
	Rivers and large streams
Peatlands	Spruce mires and spruce-birch fens, excluding rich spruce-birch fens and thin-peated rich spruce mires
	Pine mires and bogs and pine fens, excluding rich pine fens and moderately rich pine fens
	Fens, excluding moderately rich fens
	Rich fens, rich spruce-birch fens and thin-peated rich spruce mires, rich pine fens, moderately rich pine fens and moderately rich fens

	Swamps
Forests	Herb-rich forests
	Heath forests
Rock outcrops and scree	Siliceous rock outcrops, excluding rock outcrops on shores and mountain bedrock outcrops
	Calcareous rock outcrops and scree
	Serpentine rock outcrops and scree
Semi-natural grasslands and wooded pastures	Heaths, dry meadows and rock meadows
	Mesic meadows and moist meadows
	Freshwater meadows, seashore meadows and alluvial meadows
	Pollard meadows and wooded pastures
	Grazed woodlands
Fell habitats	Mountain birch forests, excluding herb-rich mountain birch forests
	Herb-rich mountain birch forests
	Mountain heaths
	Snowbeds and snow patches