

Opening address

Director General

Dr. Hannu Raitio

Finnish Forest Research Institute

The Finnish Forest Research Institute along with our partners the Arctic Centre, University of Lapland, Metsähallitus and Rovaniemi Polytechnic, is happy and proud to host the Second Conference on Monitoring and Management of Visitor Flows during this week, here in Rovaniemi. This conference has brought people from 22 different countries and from four continents to Lapland. We hope that the conference will serve as a good example of international networking and cooperation among the scientists and practitioners involved in recreational and protected area management, in order to improve understanding and appreciation of these issues all over the world.

This conference is the first international scientific conference on nature-based recreation and tourism organized in Lapland and in Finland. The topic is an interesting one from the Forest Research Institute's point of view. We have a long tradition of inventorying forest resources in Finland, and we are acknowledged as one of the top agencies in terms of methods and skills for producing good data on timber resources. But, the ability to inventory recreational use of the forests is a new challenge for our country. The Forest Research Institute has worked on visitor monitoring methods together with Metsähallitus, the Finnish Forest and Park Service, in order to develop these methods. We hope also to develop leading methods and skills for studying how people use the forests for recreation. We are happy to share our experiences with the scientific and professional community of recreation researchers and practitioners. Even more, we hope that this conference will provide good opportunities for us and for all participants to learn from each other and to bring new ideas, fresh approaches and deeper perspectives to the work done in their own countries.

I sincerely hope that this conference will serve as a creative forum between researchers and practitioners who are responsible for serving the general public in providing the best available recreation services and opportunities to experience the best of natural environment, forests and waters, for the benefit of society, families and individuals.

Nature-based tourism and recreation is an essential part of people's lives here in Lapland, since we have excellent opportunities for outdoor recreation activities in the many national parks and wilderness areas. The first professorship of nature-based tourism in all Finland, is also based here in the Rovaniemi Research Station and University of Lapland. Thus, thinking both academically and professionally, this is a perfect place to hold a conference on recreation research and management practices. I wish you all an enjoyable stay in Rovaniemi. I hope that you will benefit to the full from the conference discussions and that you will take pleasant experiences of Lapland and Finland back home with you.