

Will Primary and Old-growth Forests be Found, Mapped and Protected in Finland in Line with EU Biodiversity Strategy?

Jarmo Pyykkö

Forests' Hidden Secrets

Why we need better forest monitoring

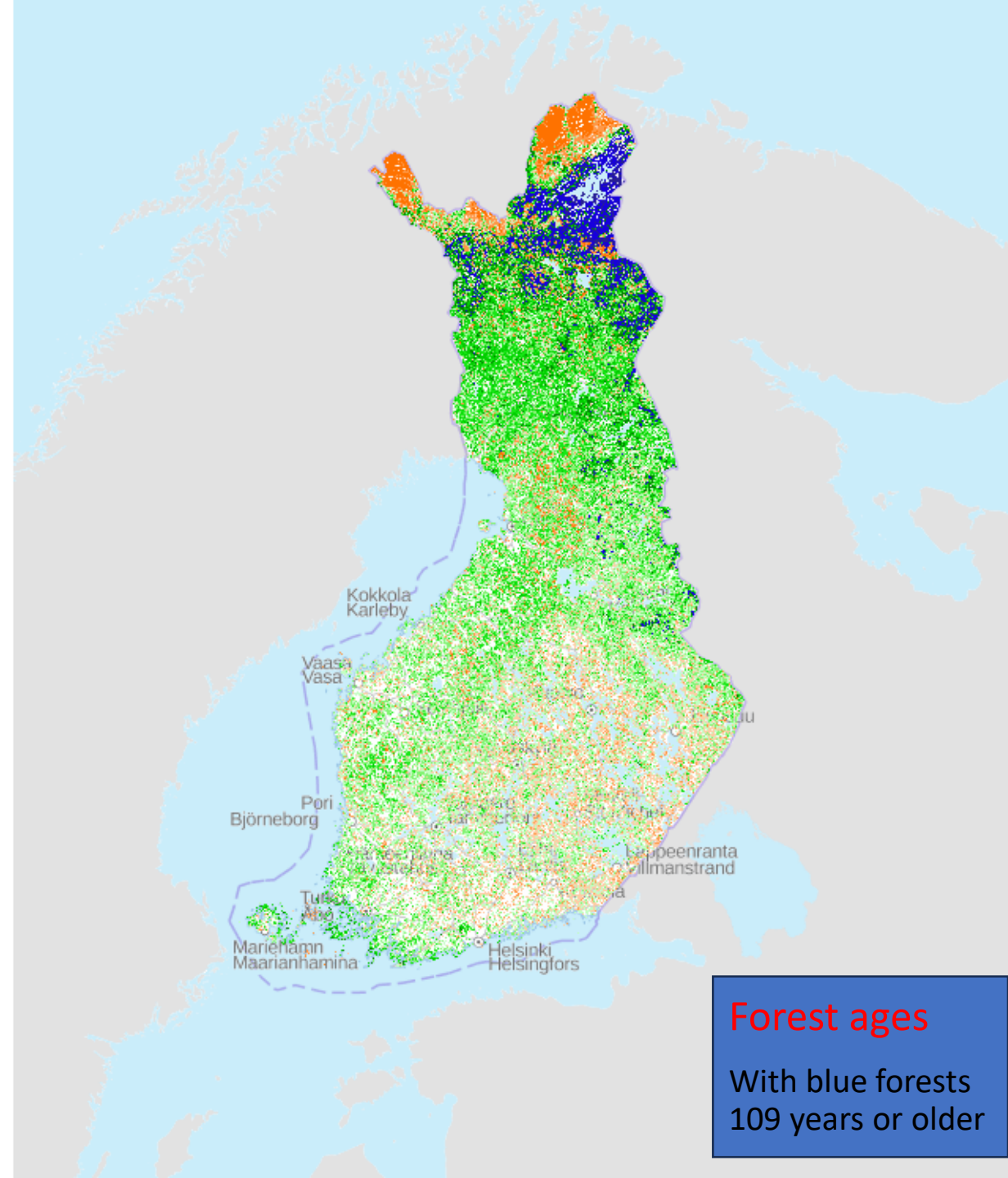
Event 12 October, Brussels



Mapping of unprotected primary and old-growth forests in Finland

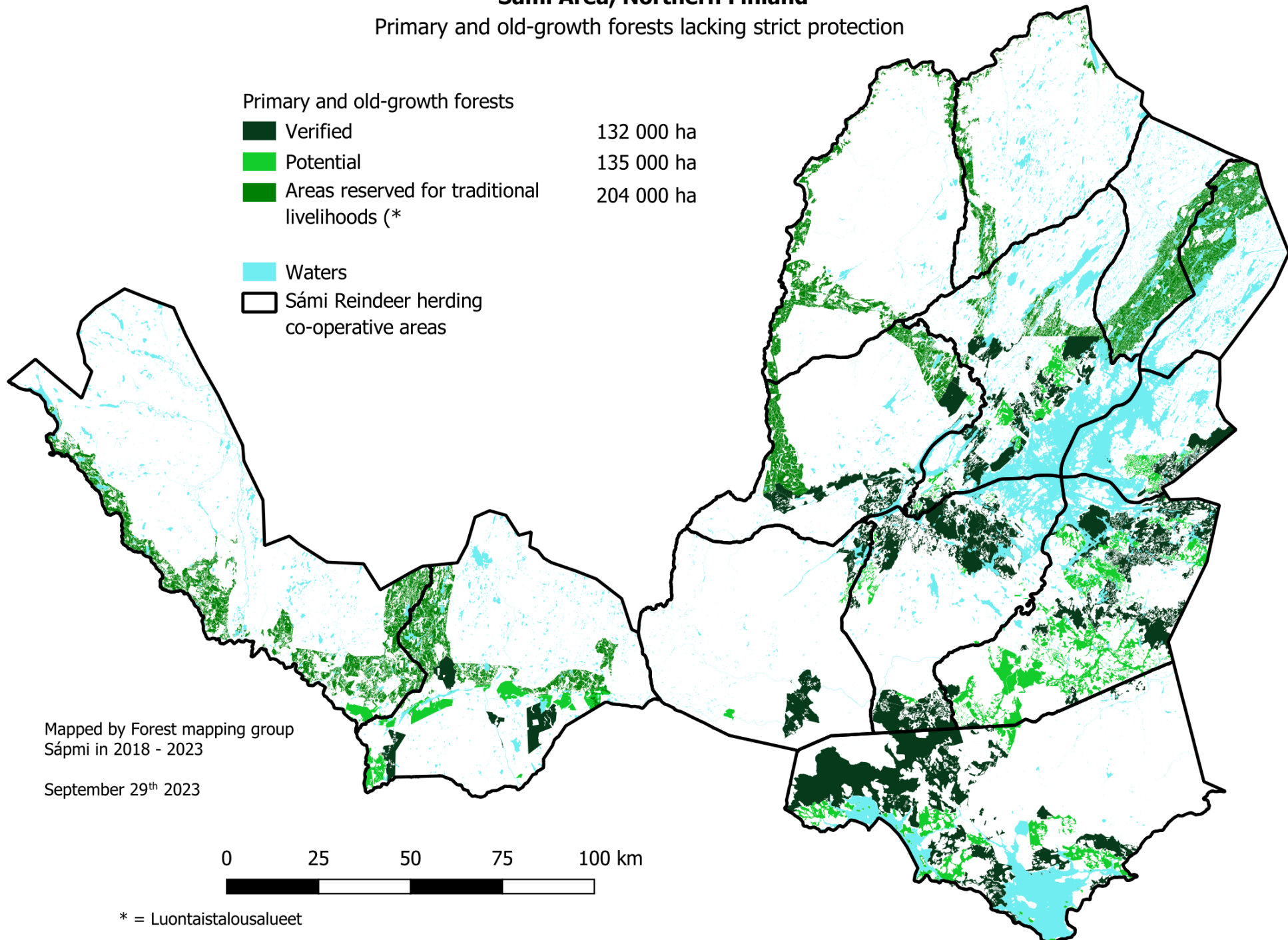
- Intensive work done **by volunteer environmentalists and experts**
- **Very limited resources**
- No real thorough mappings made after **1990's** by the **State**
- No mapping before us in the Sámi area!

We have proved: Most of the **remaining primary and old-growth forests** found in **Sápmi**, the Sámi Home area



Sámi Area, Northern Finland

Primary and old-growth forests lacking strict protection



Sámi rights and forests

- **Heavy industrial forestry** has harmed the **Sámi cultural landscape**, in particular Sámi reindeer herding by destroying **old forests** which provide most of the winter food of their reindeer
- Our work: to **show the cumulative negative impact** caused by **forestry and other industrial land use** activities
- It can be shown that within several Sámi reindeer herding communities **significant negative impact** has already been caused which is **forbidden by international law and the Finnish Constitution**

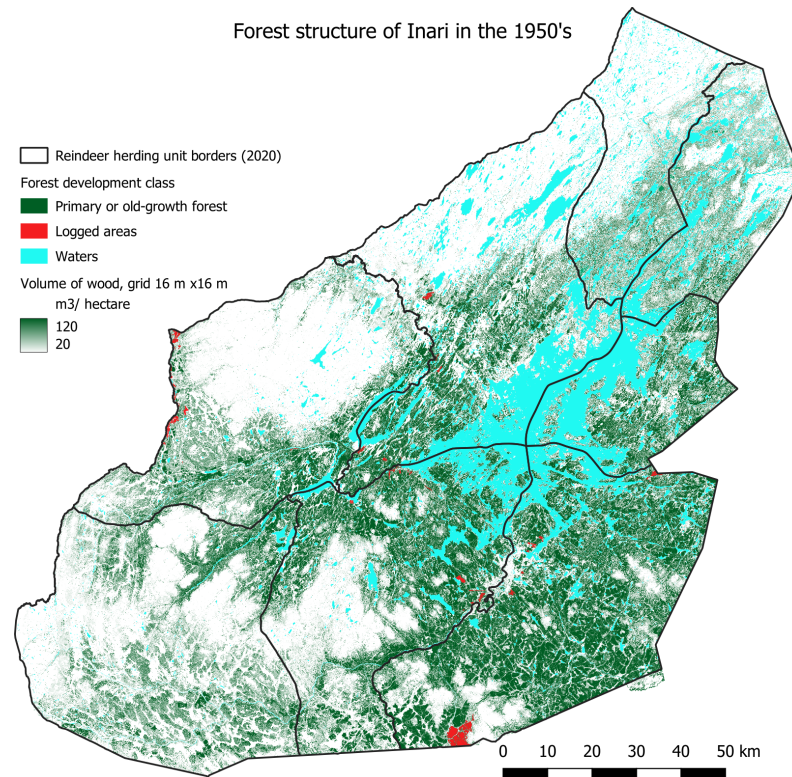
Several Sámi reindeer herding communities have demanded the **strict protection of all remaining primary and old-growth forests**

Forest change 1940 - 2020

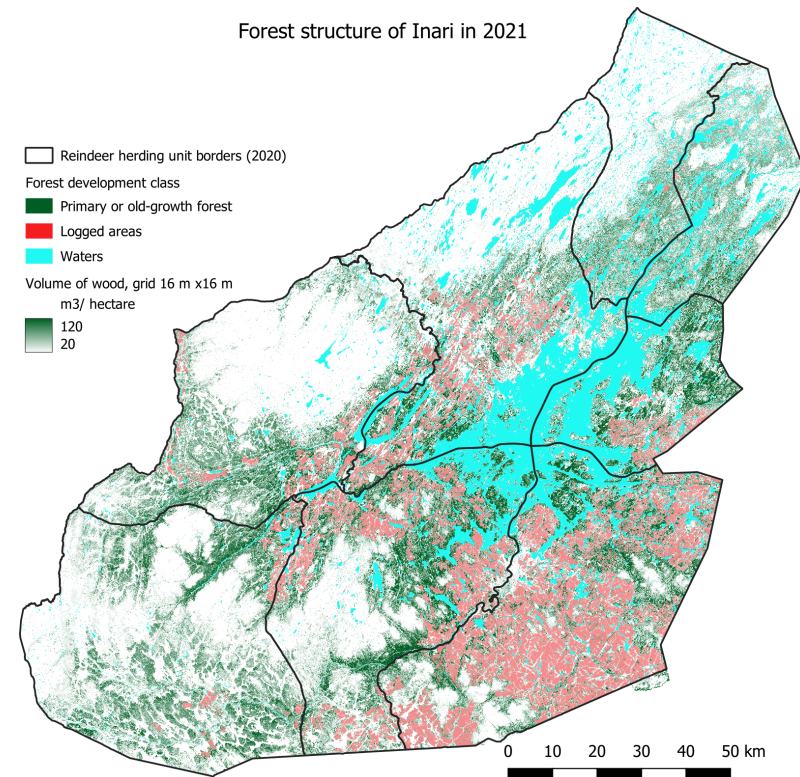


Change brought by intensive forestry in the Sámi cultural landscape in Inari, Finland

1950's



2021



EU biodiversity strategy demands:

- Strict protection of
 - 10%
 - all primary and old-growth forests

What is happening in Finland?

- Roughly **7 % of productive forests** strictly protected
- Current Finland counts that 10 % of strict protection has already been reached. **But** it includes both Boreal and Alpine ecoregions as well as waters and land areas where **intensive land use is allowed!**

This is not at all enough to **stop biodiversity loss** in forest ecosystems!



Gold digging in a “strictly protected “Wilderness protection area” in Inari, Sápmi, Lapland

Also happening in Finland

- Last Autumn the Finnish Environment Institute requested to get information on state forests for **mapping purposes** from Metsähallitus (the Finnish Forest and Park Service). Metsähallitus **refused** to give the information
- Currently: national process on **criteria for primary and old-growth forests** under heavy **influence** by **political and economic interests**
- Accordingly, the **criteria** most likely **becomes too tight** to mitigate the loss of biodiversity to any significant extent
- **Information** on **unprotected primary and old-growth forests** created by volunteer experts in danger to become **ignored**

When the primary and old-growth forests are not **found**, they will be lost forever

What should be done?

- The **Sámi** should be taken into the **national implementation process** without delay in line with the **FPIC** (Free, Prior and Informed Consent) principle
- **Mapping information** from **all parties** should be taken into the process
- Already **confirmed** as well as **potential** primary and old-growth forests should be put under a **moratorium** in line with the **precautionary principle**