



## PRESS RELEASE - 11<sup>th</sup> December 2007

**PAN Parks reaches new frontiers – Archipelago National Park, Finland becomes the first marine national park to be certified as the best of Europe's wilderness.**

Archipelago National Park in the Baltic Sea has received recognition this week of being one of the best managed wilderness areas in Europe. As a result of undergoing an intensive independent assessment of its conservation, visitor management and sustainable tourism development it received the coveted status of being a certified PAN Park. Oulanka National Park was the first Finnish national park in the PAN Parks network.

This means that it now joins the PAN Parks network that brings together some of the most outstanding wilderness National Parks across Europe that are working to combine nature conservation with developing a future for local communities through sustainable tourism development. Archipelago National Park is the first marine park in the network and the 10<sup>th</sup> park to be certified.

Archipelago National Park in the Baltic Sea between Åland and mainland Finland is part of one of the largest archipelagos in the world. The National Park itself includes more than 2,000 islands and rocky islets shaped by waves and the ice sheet during the Ice Age. Inside the co-operation area of the park, there are about 8400 islands and islets altogether. You can discover Archipelago National Park by visiting [www.outdoor.fi/archipelagonp](http://www.outdoor.fi/archipelagonp).

PAN Parks is working to create an eco-tourism brand that guarantees visitors a quality wilderness experience where they can be sure that their visit is supporting the protection of these stunning and beautiful areas. The network of certified parks stretches from the Arctic Circle, to the Mediterranean and across to the Caucasus – but is growing every year. PAN Parks ([www.panparks.org](http://www.panparks.org)) was originally set up by WWF in a response to the need to improve the management of protected areas across Europe.

Archipelago National Park is managed by Metsähallitus Natural Heritage Services. The PAN Parks certification is recognition of the excellent management standards they have achieved but they are not content to stop there. Park Superintendent Laura Lehtonen said 'Archipelago National Park has applied for the PAN Parks brand for several reasons. One aim is to raise the profile of Archipelago National Park; to send a stronger signal for local and other people about the valuable and unique nature we have here. Since this brand includes high standard for the nature protection we also forced to evaluate our work in this field both above and under water along this process. This is good and may even lead into some improvements in our work. This process possibly also raises the level of general knowledge considering this area'

Zoltan Kun, Executive Director of the PAN Parks Foundation said 'Archipelago National Park is an exciting addition to our network, a new habitat that brings exciting challenges and new opportunities for those wishing to enjoy and explore the best wilderness in Europe. Given the limited human resources allocated to the park it is reflective of their commitment that so much has been achieved in making this such a prime destination. The addition of Archipelago National Park as the 10<sup>th</sup> certified PAN Park to the network is also a timely celebration of PAN Parks 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary.'

WWF Finland ([www.wwf.fi](http://www.wwf.fi)) has been playing a crucial role in promoting the conservation of the Baltic Sea and in supporting the activities in Archipelago National Park. Anita Mäkinen, Head of Marine Programme of WWF Finland, said 'Archipelago National Park is an internationally important

area and a vital resource in preserving wildlife of the Baltic Sea. However, there are outside influences, national and international, that threaten the ecological integrity of this special area, notably through increasing eutrophication of sea water. Collective action is required therefore if this special park is to have the protection it deserves. There is also a need for closer co-operation between the park and those living on the islands of the Archipelago. We see the PAN Parks process as a key mechanism in making this happen. In protecting both the natural and cultural treasures of the area, Archipelago National Park is in a position to lead the way in developing the means to effectively manage what is a rare habitat in Europe'.

A key part of the PAN Parks ethos is bringing park managers, local communities and business together to develop a sustainable tourism strategy for the area. This deals with threats and pressures on the park at the same time opening up opportunities to promote the region to discerning eco-tourists across Europe. Rauno Väisänen, Director of Metsähallitus Natural Heritage Services said 'Hopefully the PAN Parks brand also serves as a way to increase the amount of visitors, especially the amount of foreign visitors in our National Park because nature tourism would help to keep the Archipelago alive. Sustainable nature tourism requires quality products and increased co-operation between Metsähallitus and local entrepreneurs. What kind of products there are now and what kind of products could and should be developed - hopefully the Sustainable Tourism Development Strategy will give answers to these questions.

Having the PAN Parks brand means that we are part of the PAN Parks network which offers valuable chances to exchange experiences and information among European National Parks. This in turn helps us to manage Archipelago National Park even better than today'

To learn more about Archipelago National Park and the rest of the PAN Parks network visit [www.panparks.org](http://www.panparks.org)

## **Notes to Editors**

The certification ceremony will take place at Forum Marinum, Turku, Finland, on Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> December at 9:00 am. There will be photo opportunities and the possibility of interviews with the key representatives involved.

A selection of hi-resolution images of Archipelago National Park are available from Mr. Hannu Sipinen, tel. +358 205 64 4395 or [hannu.sipinen@metsa.fi](mailto:hannu.sipinen@metsa.fi)  
Contact for video footage of the park: Laura Tahkokallio, + 358 40 556 9860 [laura.tahkokallio@wwf.fi](mailto:laura.tahkokallio@wwf.fi)

To find out more about the work of the PAN Parks Foundation and the wider European network of the best of Europe's wilderness contact Gavin Bell, Communications Manager, PAN Parks Foundation [gbell@panparks.org](mailto:gbell@panparks.org) Mob: +36 70 326 5926 or visit [www.panparks.org](http://www.panparks.org)

To learn more about Archipelago National Park and the work of Metsähallitus in managing the area, along with opportunities for your readers and viewers to explore this beautiful area contact Park Superintendent Laura Lehtonen, mobile +358 40 0 172 572 [Laura.Lehtonen@metsa.fi](mailto:Laura.Lehtonen@metsa.fi), [www.metsa.fi/naturalheritage](http://www.metsa.fi/naturalheritage)

To learn more about the work of WWF Finland in protecting the Baltic Sea please contact Anita Mäkinen, Head of Marine Programme, mobile + 358 50 527 1425, [anita.makinen@wwf.fi](mailto:anita.makinen@wwf.fi), [www.wwf.fi](http://www.wwf.fi)