



Interreg



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Aurora OUR PRECIOUS TRANSBOUNDARY WATERS

<https://www.interregaurora.eu/approved-projects/our-precious-transboundary-waters/>

Operations of Strategic Importance (OSI) – OPreWa project is chosen as an OSI. A project which provides a significant contribution to the achievement of the objectives of the Interreg Aurora Programme.



Where waters and their resources are being shared between two or more countries, the same threats to the environment are shared across the borders.

Interreg Aurora's 'Our Precious transboundary waters' is a project that aims to develop joint tools that are needed in the joint water management of the border rivers Pasvik, Neiden and Tana.



State of the environment in the Pasvik river catchment area

One of the biggest sources of pollution in the Pasvik river catchment area has been the Kola GMK nickel smelter in the town of Nickel in Russia. The smelter was closed in December 2020. The cessation of this source of pollution will now give the fragile sub-arctic environment the opportunity to recover.

We will document the long-term effects of the pollution from Russian metallurgic industry on the Finnish-Norwegian border area and how the cessation of this industry will have a positive improvement on the aquatic environment

Brown trout of Pasvik-Inari area

The brown trout is socioeconomically valuable for local communities across borders. Currently this unique migratory fish is facing multiple challenges connected to hydroelectric power: habitat fragmentation due to dams, habitat loss due to loss of spawning areas, and loss of genetic diversity due to breeding programs. This has led to a concerning nationwide decline in natural brown trout populations. Consequences of stocking programs, initially introduced to counter the effects of hydroelectric power dams, may lead to loss of genetic diversity, which compromises the long-term survival of the brown trout.

We will build a genetic library to reveal human-induced changes in brown trout in the unique Pasvik-Inari watershed to improve cross-border management and conservation of brown trout.

Neiden river salmon

The number of salmon returning to the Neiden river seems to have decreased in recent years. A fourth-coming renewal of the bilateral fishing agreement between Finland and Norway requires access to, and wide usage of all existing information and data on salmon on both sides of the border.

We will update and complement the database, run latest assessments, and share all information on the status of the Neiden river salmon stocks as a basis of salmon conservation and management.



Gyrodactylus salaris, the deadly salmon parasite

A spread of the salmon parasite *Gyrodactylus salaris* to the northern cross-border waters of the Tana and Neiden rivers, would have significant negative ecological consequences for the salmon populations in these rivers. This will again have social implications for the inhabitants of the area and especially for the Sami culture. It is therefore important to maintain the common awareness for this parasite to minimize the likelihood of spreading to the area. In addition, it is important to be prepared for infection and work with preparedness. Early detection of possible infection with *G. salaris* in the river systems is crucial.

We will increase common awareness regarding the salmon parasite *G. salaris* and develop a joint contingency plan for the *G. salaris* in the Finnish-Norwegian border area. Monitoring will be improved by further developing and implementing an environmental DNA monitoring method.

Cover picture: NIBIO
Background flower: Rolf Sch. Kollstrøm
Moss sample: NILU
Brown trout: Valery Buzun
Neiden river: Panu Orell
Tana river: Tana river Interreg

