

GUIDE

FOR ORGANIZING YOUTH NATURE RESTORATION CAMPS



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Observation drawings by participants during the Restoration camp in Finland.

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Forewords

Nature restoration is one of the most important ways to address today's environmental crisis. As climate change and biodiversity loss accelerate, restoring degraded ecosystems is more urgent than ever. The UN has declared this the *Decade on Ecosystem Restoration*, and the EU's 2023 *Nature Restoration Law* calls for broad participation—including from civil society.

Young people are a vital part of our civil society, and restoration work offers an empowering form of youth engagement which can combine environmental education and civic action. Nature restoration benefits both people and the planet. It gives young people hands-on ways to connect with nature, learn new practical skills, and take meaningful action on complex problems. These experiences can empower youth in their path to becoming active citizens and finding a place in an increasingly destabilised world.

This tool pack is a practical guide for anyone looking to organize nature restoration activities for young people across Europe. It is filled with practical advice from real-life experiences. You will find camp stories, organizing tips, templates and checklists, budgeting tools, and ideas for getting started – even if you have no prior experience. Activities are generally suitable for ages 15 and up, but many can be adapted for younger participants as well.

"I believe that all organizing is science fiction - that we are shaping the future we long for and have not yet experienced."

— Adrienne Maree Brown, *Pleasure Activism: The Politics of Feeling Good*

"Restoration can be an opportunity to travel to new places and bond with the nature. If you don't have the possibility to go far to restore, there is luckily something to restore almost anywhere nowadays – for example, meadows or small streams in cities."

"I remember best when we were told about old growth forests and how there is naturally a large amount of wood cut by wind, and how forests are restored by stacking up cut wood that is left there to decay."

"Sometimes humans have to actually backtrack and fix some things and mistakes that they've made, and so I think learning that restoration requires destruction at times of things that humans let grow, you know, I think that was something very cool."

"I think my favourite moment was definitely when we were on the island, and it was snowing that day and I really just enjoyed having snow all around us and ripping out the trees. I kind of just put my tools down and used my arms as tools, and I think that was a really powerful moment that I never experienced before."

Quotes from youth participants during international Restoration Academy camps.

WHY ACT?

**BASICS OF NATURE
RESTORATION**

**RESTO
ACAD**



Photographer: Anja Matthes
During the camp organised by RE-PEAT in the Netherlands, 2025

This chapter introduces the basics of nature restoration.

We start from the basics: what restoration means, what it aims for, and how it can be carried out in different ecosystems. We explain how young people can participate in it and what is the organizers or youth workers role in the process? What is the restoration work like?

Step by step, you will see how to turn restoration from an abstract idea into hands-on action.

What is Nature Restoration?

Nature restoration means assisting in the recovery of ecosystems that have been degraded or destroyed. It can be either an active or passive process, depending on the ecosystem and the goals of the restoration. While it is not always desirable or possible to return an ecosystem to its original state, it can still be restored to a more biodiverse condition that provides the greater benefits to the local environment.

Nature restoration efforts vary by location, depending on local priorities and ecological needs. **Common goals include:**

- Protecting endangered species
- Creating favorable habitats for biodiversity
- Increasing species diversity
- Enhancing carbon sequestration

These goals often overlap and can be achieved simultaneously, though in some cases they may conflict, requiring careful prioritisation.

Many restoration projects mix both manual and machine work — machines are used for large-scale or heavy tasks, while manual work is preferred for more delicate operations and in areas hard to reach by machines. Manual methods can also be chosen for their educational value when working with youth.

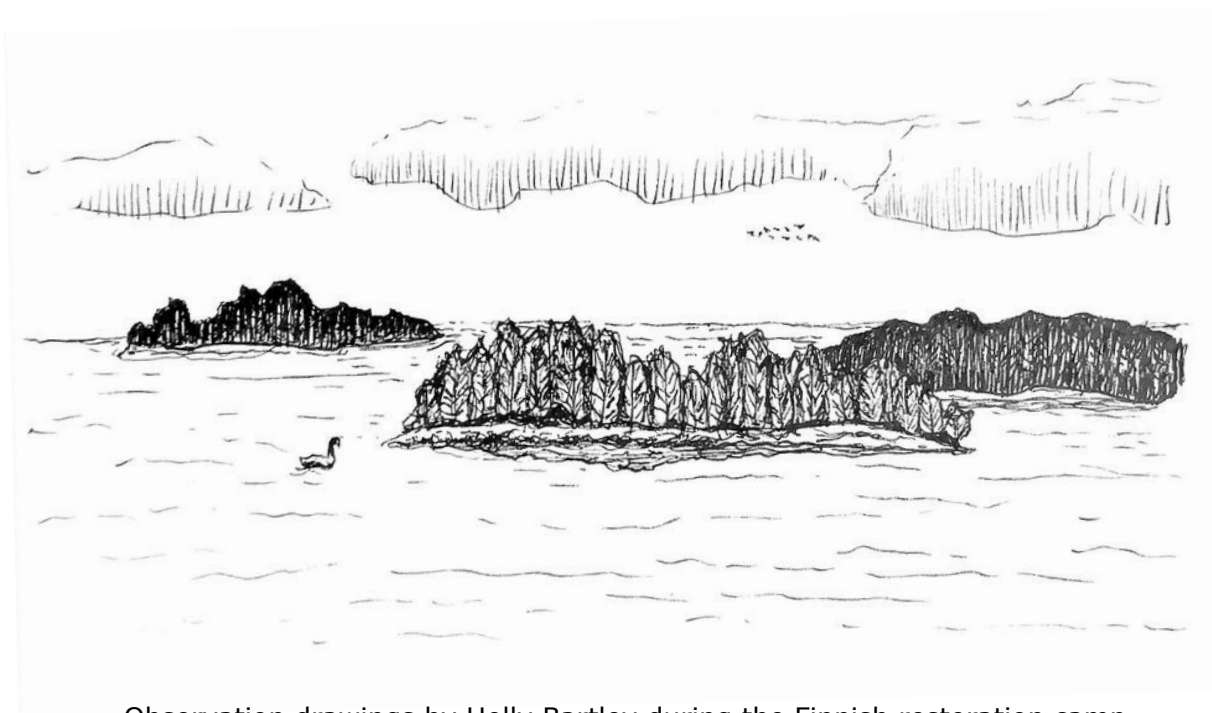
Restoration Across Europe: the EU Law

Effective August 18, 2024, the EU Nature Restoration Law is the first continent-wide legislation of its kind. The law aims to enable the long-term and sustained recovery of biodiverse and resilient nature, contributes to achieving the EU's climate mitigation and climate adaptation objectives and meet international commitments.

As an overall target to be reached at the EU level, Member States will put in place restoration measures in at least 20% of the EU's land areas and 20% of its sea areas by 2030. By 2050, such measures should be in place for all ecosystems that need restoration. This means that more nature restoration projects will start in the upcoming years, bringing along also a growing possibility for young people to get involved in the work.

Currently EU member countries are preparing national restoration plans. The work is carried out by responsible ministries. The plans should be ready by August 2026 to be presented to the European Commission.

¹ <https://www.decadeonrestoration.org/what-ecosystem-restoration>



Observation drawings by Holly Bartley during the Finnish restoration camp.

Restoration Across Ecosystems

Different ecosystems and habitats have varying needs, and a restoration plan is tailored to each location. This is done by an expert who manages the restoration work.

Below are some examples of what nature restoration can look like in different ecosystems and habitats. These places can be in rural as well as urban areas.

Freshwaters



For example: **streams, lakes, shorelines**

- Managing nutrients
 - Preventing nutrient runoff from land (eg. fields, production. forests) areas by creating buffer zones and wetlands
 - Removal fishing
 - Chemical nutrient removal
- Removal of dams and migration barriers to enable the passage of migratory fish
- Promoting biodiversity by modifying streambeds, building spawning gravel beds, planting native plant & animal species

Forests



For example: **boreal forest, temperate forest, mediterranean forest**

- Planting and growing trees (native species & biodiverse forests)
- Accelerating natural processes by mimicking natural disruptions such as, controlled burns, windthrows, increasing deadwood.
- Promoting natural regeneration by i.e. removing invasive species and guarding young saplings
- Preventing wildfires by creating firebreaks and other cleared zones (mediterranean forests)

Open and semi-open environments



For example: **traditional rural biotopes, steppes, heaths**

- Preventing overgrowth by grazing or mowing, and removing trees and shrubs
- Promoting biodiversity by planting and reintroducing native plants and animals

Wetlands



For example: **mires, marshes, bogs**

- Rewetting drained peatlands by building barriers to block drainage channels or slow down water flows
- Promoting biodiversity by constructing more mosaic-like habitats and planting native species

Seas and brackwaters



For example: **shorelines, gulfs, seabed, tidal zones**

- Managing nutrients
 - Preventing nutrient runoff from land areas by creating buffer zones and wetlands
 - Removal fishing
- Promoting biodiversity by restoring seabed structure and planting native plant, mollusc & animal species

Youth in Restoration

Nature restoration is a powerful and engaging way for young people to take meaningful action against climate change and biodiversity loss. It can strengthen their connection to nature and foster environmental awareness and a sense of community. Hands-on activities can also build hope and support mental well-being by offering purpose and empowerment.

As a form of nature-based education, restoration follows the principles of experiential learning, active citizenship, and youth empowerment.

It enables young people to:

- Create tangible, positive impact
- Develop practical skills
- Deepen connection with nature
- Experience nature conservation in action
- Understand ecological processes
- Strengthen their sense of agency
- Practice collaboration and teamwork

Restoration camps emphasize learning by doing, with a community.

While organizers and experts introduce the work, participants are encouraged to be proactive—trying new things, asking for help, and supporting one another. Youth workers play a key role in fostering peer learning and maintaining motivation.

Working together builds a strong sense of belonging.

Connecting with like-minded peers helps participants cope with environmental concerns and reinforces shared values. Restoration work can also make abstract ecological issues more concrete and understandable.

Youth groups of many kinds can take part in restoration.

Young people can even lead such initiatives themselves. When suitable, the educational impact can be extended by including pre-meetings before the camp and reflection sessions afterward, ensuring deeper engagement and long-term learning. Despite its potential, a study within this project revealed that nature restoration is often misunderstood in youth work. Many mistake activities like trash picking for restoration. This highlights the need for greater awareness and education to fully utilize nature restoration's benefits.



Photographer: Anja Matthes
Camp organised by RE-PEAT at a paludiculture farm in the Netherlands, 2025

Your Role in Organizing Restoration

Nature restoration camps can be organized by both youth workers and young people themselves. No prior knowledge of restoration is required, the actual restoration work is guided by an expert. Restoration projects typically lack resources for manual work, thus volunteer support is often warmly welcomed.

If you are a youth worker, your role may include:

- Connecting young volunteers with restoration sites
- Coordinating logistics such as accommodation, meals, and travel
- Guiding the educational content by:
 - Planning in advance with the restoration expert
 - Supporting (and supervising) the youth during work
 - Ensuring everyone understands what is being done and why

If you are a **young person or youth group**, you can also take the lead in organizing a camp, especially with support from a mentor or partner organization. Many restoration projects are happy to collaborate with motivated youth groups!

Essentially, organizing a nature restoration camp is much like organizing any youth camp—with the added benefit of contributing to environmental recovery and learning new practical skills.

Restoration in Practice: Tasks and Tools

Restoration tasks vary depending on the ecosystem and location. The work is often physical but typically simple and repetitive, making it accessible to participants with a wide range of skills. Tasks frequently involve using (or learning to use) hand tools, and different levels of difficulty can usually be accommodated at the same site.

Common nature restoration activities include e.g.:

- Cutting and sawing branches and bushes
- Piling branches
- Mowing and raking hay
- Constructing small dams

Country-specific examples:

- In **Finland**, youth volunteers can help with restoration of traditional rural biotopes, which depend on long-term nature management. You can also take part in rewetting peatlands e.g. by building small dams.
- In **Slovakia**, restoration camps focus on planting native trees and shrubs, removing invasive species, collecting seeds for ecological restoration, or helping to restore wetlands and riverbanks.
- In **Greece**, young participants contribute to coastal restoration by planting native dune vegetation and cleaning up degraded wetland areas.
- In the **Netherlands**, activities often include reshaping urban green spaces or restoring wetland habitats by managing water levels and planting native species.



Photographer: Anja Matthes
Camp in the Netherlands, 2025



Photographer: Martin Sopinec
Camp in Slovakia, 2024



Photographer: Aino Huotari
Camp in Finland, 2024



Observation drawings by participants during the Dutch restoration camp.

HOW TO

**ORGANIZE A NATURE
RESTORATION CAMP?**

RESTORATION



Photographer: Martin Sopinec
During camp organised by Strom Života in Slovakia, 2024

Nature restoration camps combine hands-on environmental action with youth participation, learning, and community-building.

This chapter provides guidance on how to plan and run such camps. All the tips are based on real camp organizing experiences.

Whether you are a youth worker, educator, or young person yourself, you will find practical tools and examples to help turn your motivation into a successful camp.

Empower Young People Through Participation

If you are a youth worker, consider how young people can be actively involved in shaping the nature restoration camp, before reaching out to potential partners.

Involving youth in the planning, implementation, and evaluation phases not only increases their ownership and motivation but also strengthens the relevance and impact of the camp. **You can, for example:**

- Invite young people to co-design the goals and daily structure of the camp.
- Include them in decision-making about the location, activities, and communication.
- Encourage peer-led sessions or workshops during the camp.
- Collect feedback and reflections from participants to improve future camps.

This participatory approach helps ensure that the camp is meaningful, inclusive, and empowering for all involved.

Partner with a Restoration Site Manager

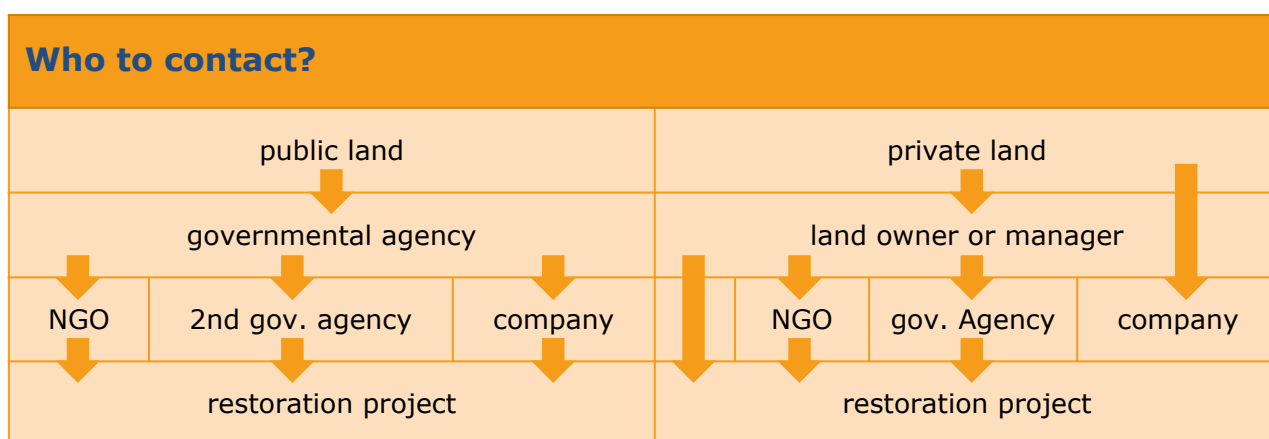
When planning a nature restoration camp, the first and most important step is to connect with stakeholders who manage or carry out restoration projects. By finding a partner who needs volunteers, you also identify potential restoration sites.

Partnering should be done before setting dates for the camp, since nature restoration is often dependent on the season. E.g. bird's breeding season or the moment of plant seeding affects the work's timing.

You can also get information on the local landownership practices from the partner. For the camp's educational goals, it's essential that your partner can provide an expert to teach participants about the local restoration project: why it's done and how the work you will be doing helps.

Who should you contact?

Nature restoration and habitat management are typically overseen by a governmental agency, though the actual work may be carried out by NGOs or private companies. You can reach out directly to stakeholders running ongoing restoration projects, many welcome volunteers support. For example, projects under the EU-funded LIFE programme often include volunteer participation as a core goal.



You can approach stakeholders at any level of the restoration site management, but easiest might be to start with a governmental agency. If you already know local projects, contact them directly. You can also try local NGOs or companies involved in nature restoration or management.

Country-specific tips

Finland

- Contact Metsähallitus (Parks and Wildlife Finland), which manages state-owned conservation areas and coordinates many restoration projects.
- Restoration work often takes place in national parks or Natura 2000 sites, and permissions are typically well-structured.

Slovakia

- Care programmes for protected areas are developed by the State Nature Conservancy of the Slovak Republic, which operates regional branches across the entire country.
- Restoration camps require coordination with local municipalities or landowners.

Greece

- Contact the Ministry of Environment and Energy, which oversees national restoration strategies.
- Restoration work may be more feasible in Natura 2000 areas or through EU-funded projects due to stricter land-use regulations.

The Netherlands

- Restoration is often coordinated by provincial governments and Natuurmonumenten or Staatsbosbeheer.
- Due to dense land use, restoration sites are often small but highly strategic—focus on biodiversity corridors or wetland recovery.





Photographer: Martin Sopinec, Slovakia, 2024

Tailor the Work to Different Groups

Once you've found a partner who needs volunteers for a restoration site, it's important to communicate clearly about your group. Restoration activities can often be adapted to suit the group's needs and doing this in advance helps ensure the experience is both safe and educational. Tailoring the tasks and location to your group can make a big difference.

Here are some key aspects to consider:

Group size and specific needs

Are there young participants or individuals with disabilities?

- You may need to allow extra time for guidance and breaks.
- Motivation and engagement strategies might be especially important.

Relevant experience

What is their familiarity with outdoor work or tools?

- How much instruction will they need to use hand tools?
- Which tools are appropriate and safe for them?

Physical capability

Are there mobility limitations or challenges with uneven terrain?

- Choose locations and tasks that are accessible and safe for all.

Other group-specific needs

Consider dietary restrictions, language preferences, or cultural aspects that may affect the experience.

In addition to adapting tasks and location, the level of guidance and responsibility should match the group's age and experience. Younger or less experienced participants may need more structure and support, while more experienced groups can be given greater independence.

Adjusting the instructor's role helps ensure a safe, empowering, and engaging experience for everyone.

These factors should be discussed with the restoration site manager or expert well in advance. This allows you to allocate enough time and resources for guidance, safety, and learning—ensuring a meaningful and inclusive experience for everyone involved.

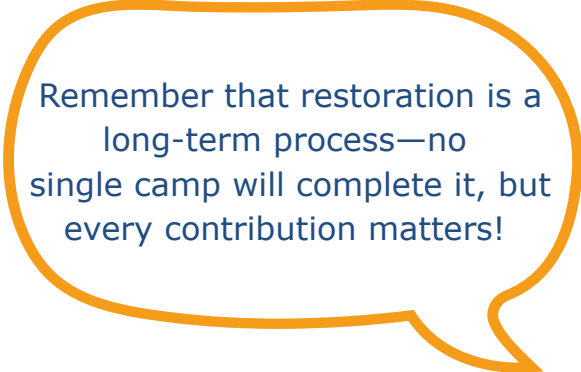
Roles to Plan For

Planning a camp can be easier if you can split up the work between people. Typically, you have:

- **Camp coordinator(s)** : to handle logistics and planning Communication coordinator – to document and share the activities
- **Cook(s)** : to plan & manage meals and food preparation
- **Restoration expert (partner)** : who is familiar with the restoration site and can explain what is being done & why and guides the work

Camp Program

Before starting with a regular day program, it's important to orient participants to the restoration site and the work ahead. A guided tour of the site helps everyone understand the landscape, its ecological context, and the goals of the restoration work.



Remember that restoration is a long-term process—no single camp will complete it, but every contribution matters!

Start each day with purpose and safety

It is recommended to begin each day with an opening circle. This is a moment to gather the group, share the day's goals, review safety practices, and check in with how everyone is feeling. It sets a positive tone and builds a sense of community.

Before starting work, make sure the participants get to know each other first, as it helps create a safer and more comfortable group environment, and that everyone understands two key things:

- What is the long-term aim of restoration here?
- What is the purpose of today's work tasks?

When participants know the "why" behind their efforts, they are more motivated and engaged.

Tailor the day to the group

The structure of the day can be adjusted based on the group's needs. Working hours can be shorter or more flexible depending on age, ability, and energy levels.

End with reflection

It is recommended to close the day with an end-of-day reflection. This can be a short group discussion or individual journaling. It's a chance to share what was learned, how the day felt, and what could be improved. This reflection helps reinforce learning and builds a stronger group experience.



Photographer: Anja Matthes, Camp in the Netherlands, 2025

First-day program

| Time | Task |
|-------|--|
| 12:00 | Arrival |
| 13:00 | Landing E.g Finding beds for everyone or setting up tents. |
| 14:00 | Lunch |
| 15:00 | Welcome and info session E.g Introducing programme and icebreaking activities. |
| 16:30 | Introducing restoration work E.g What will be done and why? |
| 17:00 | Tour on the working site |
| 18:00 | Dinner |

Working day program

| Time | Task |
|-------|---|
| 8:00 | Breakfast |
| 9:00 | Morning check-in E.g Start by going through all work tasks of the day. |
| 9:30 | Working E.g Be clear that everyone can have their own breaks when needed. |
| 12:00 | Lunch |
| 13:00 | Working |
| 15:00 | Snack break E.g Cherish how much you have done already! |
| 16:00 | Working |
| 17:00 | Final push E.g Everyone working in a small area makes a noticeable impact and lifts the spirit. |
| 17:30 | Evening check-in E.g Go through and reflect together what was achieved today. |
| 18:00 | Dinner |

Working time and group dynamics

A typical day at a nature restoration camp can include up to 6–8 hours of restoration work. While this may sound like a lot, the work is often relaxed and interspersed with breaks. Young participants can take time to socialize, learn from one another, and enjoy snacks throughout the day.

The longer the working hours, the more important it is to schedule official breaks and maintain motivation by highlighting what has already been accomplished. Celebrating progress—no matter how small—can keep energy levels high.

Tips for managing the day:

- Larger groups require more time for transitions, instructions, and breaks. Plan accordingly.
- Outdoor work builds an appetite—make sure to reserve plenty of food and snacks.
- A great way to end the day is by working together in a small area as a group. Even 15 minutes of focused effort can yield visible results and a strong sense of accomplishment.

Creating a sense of community and inclusion

In addition to the restoration work, small everyday elements can help build a strong sense of community. Shared meals, regular snack breaks, and informal moments—like relaxing together after the workday—foster connection and trust.

Invite participants to co-design parts of the camp in advance or take on roles that match their interests, such as leading community-building activities. This approach not only strengthens participation but also deepens the sense of ownership and belonging.



Photographer: Anja Matthes, 2025



Photographer: Frankie Turk, Camp in Slovakia, 2024

Inclusivity and Accessibility

Nature restoration camps have the potential to be inclusive and accessible spaces for many. While working in nature presents some inherent challenges, with thoughtful planning and open communication, camps can be made accessible to far more people than we might initially assume.

By paying attention to detail, clearly communicating accessibility information, and being open to listening to the needs of diverse people, organizers can create an environment where everyone feels welcome and supported.

Nature restoration sites vary widely—some are remote and wild, while others are in urban areas. Consider your location and explore how you can make your camp as accessible as possible.

Inclusivity is not just about infrastructure—it's about culture. It's the responsibility of the entire camp community, including organizers, participants, experts, and support staff, to foster a respectful and inclusive environment.

Helpful tools are to name an equality contact person so that participants know who they can contact related to equality, inclusivity & accessibility.

Another tool for inclusiveness is the use of safer space principles at the camp, which can be co-created with participants before the camp begins. These principles help set shared expectations for behavior and communication.



Photographer: Aino Huotari, Finland, 2024

Things to consider when writing accessibility information

Accessibility information provides necessary information for people with disabilities. When preparing accessibility information for your camp, clarity and transparency are the key. Here are some important points to keep in mind:

- **Be specific about the site:** Describe the terrain, facilities, and any potential barriers (e.g. uneven ground, lack of shelter, distance from parking).
- **List available amenities:** Include details about toilets, water access, seating, and shaded areas.
- **Explain the work tasks:** Outline the physical demands and whether tasks can be adapted.
- **Consider intimacy:** Inform about the level of privacy in sleeping arrangements and showering etc. Can you offer more privacy if needed?
- **Inclusive communication:** Let participants know if information is available in plain language, large print, or other accessible formats.
- **Include contact details:** Clearly name a contact person for accessibility-related questions or requests.
- **Be honest and encouraging:** Acknowledge limitations but also highlight what is possible and what accommodations can be arranged.
- **Use inclusive language:** Avoid assumptions about ability and emphasize openness to diverse needs.

Safer space principles for inclusivity

Safer Space Principles are guidelines designed to foster inclusivity and mutual respect within a group. They help to create environments where everyone feels welcome, safe, and free from discrimination or harm. These principles are a practical tool for making youth spaces more equitable and respectful.

How to use safer space principles at camp

The principles should be introduced and discussed with the group at the beginning of the camp. Ideally, they are not just handed down by organizers—but co-created with participants. This builds ownership and ensures the principles reflect the group's shared values.

Example principles often include:

- Be open to others and aware of your own biases.
- Respect everyone—including yourself.
- Use inclusive language and avoid reinforcing stereotypes.
- Don't make assumptions—ask respectfully instead.
- Support and encourage equal participation. Acknowledge your own power and privilege. Respect your own and others' boundaries, both physical and mental.
- Intervene if safer space is not being upheld.
- Remember to say thank you.
- Do your best — that's enough.

If someone feels unsafe or uncomfortable, they should know who to turn to. It's recommended to clearly name a **contact person** responsible for handling concerns or inappropriate behavior.

Tip: Start the camp with a group activity where participants create their own safer space principles. Co-creating them at the beginning of a camp helps build trust, inclusion, and shared responsibility, as well as empowers participants to shape the culture of the camp from day one.

Safety and Risk Management

A clear safety plan helps prevent accidents at a camp and supports a calm and inclusive atmosphere. Safety planning can also be a shared responsibility—engaging participants in identifying risks and setting rules increases awareness and ownership.

Before the event

- Conduct a basic risk assessment (e.g. terrain, tools, weather, how to reach medical services) and make a safety plan
- Assign safety roles (e.g. first aid responsible, emergency contact)
- Ensure a first aid kit is complete, available and accessible
- Share emergency contacts and procedures with all participants
- Check for allergies and special needs (e.g. medication, accessibility)
- Consider whether a group insurance policy is needed for participants

During the event

- Go over safety plan with the group (age-appropriate)
- Maintain good hygiene and food safety
- Monitor participants' well-being (fatigue, dehydration, cold)
- Ensure fire safety (campfire, stoves)
- Be prepared for weather changes

In case of an accident

- Prevent further harm
- Assess the need for help and give first aid
- Urgent: Call 112 (or relevant). Make sure all participants know which number they should call in urgent cases.
- Not urgent: Contact the health center and arrange transport.
- Inform the event coordinator
- Review the incident and learn from it



Photographers: Martin Sopinec and Frankie Turk
Camp organised by Stromzivota on a meadow ecosystem in Slovakia, 2024

Funding and Budgeting

Nature restoration camps can be organized with a wide range of budgets, from minimal-cost grassroots efforts to fully funded, inclusive programs. The key is to align your budget with your goals, group needs, and available resources.

Budget considerations

No-budget or minimal-cost camps

Some restoration activities, such as invasive species removal, can be organized with little to no budget. This can be done locally, with participants bringing their own food, gear (and tools). You might also manage to loan tools for free, if they are needed. While this approach is not always inclusive or accessible, it can be a quick and effective way to engage people.

Low-cost camps

The most affordable way to run a camp is to use tents for accommodation and cook meals with camp stoves. Participants may bring their own gear and food. While this approach is quick to organize and may not require external funding, it is not a very inclusive or accessible option.

Higher-cost camps

Providing accommodation, meals, and travel support increases inclusivity by lowering the barrier to participation. However, these services significantly raise costs and often require external funding.

Tip: The budget of a restoration camp can range from very low-cost to high-cost—just remember how this affects accessibility and inclusivity. Cooking with camp stoves can be a great nature experience, but it takes time away from restoration work. Decide what you prioritize!

Sample budget template

| Category | Description | Minimal-cost camp (EUR/person) | Low-cost camp (EUR/person) | Higher-cost camp (EUR/person) |
|----------------------------|--|---|---|--|
| Accommodation | tent, cabins, or other lodging | 0 € tents, own or sponsored, self-paid | 10-30 €/Day | 30-100 €/Day |
| Food | meals and snack for participants | 0€ own food | 10-20 €/Day full meals, own food | 20-50 €/Day full meals, catering, ordered |
| Transportation | travel expenses to and from the site | 0€ self-paid, easy access to the site | 10-20€ public transportation, easy access to the site | 30-150 € depends on the location and the means of transport |
| Tools and materials | equipment and supplies for restoration work | 0€ loaned or partners own | 10-50€ mostly loaned | 100-500€ buy new, serves also for future activities |
| Insurance | insurance for participants and activities | 0€ everyone's own responsibility | 50-100€ normal volunteer insurance | 200-500€ for long time and big group |
| Staff/ coordination | salaries or stipends for camp staff and coordinators | 0-200€ all or mostly volunteer | 300-1000€ paid camp leader + assistant, also per diems | 1000-5000€ planning, management, camp leader, assistant, cooks, experts |
| Contingency | extra funds for unexpected expenses | 0€ | 10-150 € | 150-1000 € |
| Total | | 0-200€ | 400-1370 € | 1530-7300€ |

Learning opportunity: involve youth in budgeting

Involving young people in exploring funding sources and planning the camp budget is a great way to build ownership and teach valuable skills. By learning how to apply for funding and managing resources, participants gain insight into project planning and may feel more committed to the camp's goals.

Cost-sharing with partners

Some expenses may be covered or shared with the restoration site manager.

These might include:

- Transportation to the site
- Tools and equipment
- Meals during workdays

Discuss cost-sharing options early in the planning process, especially when the restoration work benefits both parties.

Participation fees

- Small fees (e.g. 1-10 €) can help commitment without being a barrier
- Slightly higher fees (e.g., 5-10 € per day) can cover costs but still be affordable to many
- Consider having a free option for economic accessibility
- Consider having smaller fee for Early Bird registrations to avoid last minute registrations



Photographer: Martin Sopinec, Finland, 2024

Funding sources

Funding for youth nature restoration camps can come from a variety of sources, below are listed some ideas on where to start searching from:

| Funding source | Description |
|---|---|
| EU funding programmes | |
| Erasmus+ (Youth and European Solidarity Corps) LIFE Program | Youth exchanges enable the organization of international camps for young people from different countries. European Solidarity Corps provides funding for voluntary projects, which can focus on nature restoration. The EU's funding program for environmental and climate action, supporting nature restoration projects. |
| National and local funding sources | |
| Ministries and environmental authorities Regional and municipal grants National youth organizations and funds | Often support restoration initiatives and may provide funding for youth activities. Many cities and regions support environmental projects and youth initiatives. These organizations may offer grants or support for many kinds youth-led activities. |
| Foundation and funds | |
| National and European environmental foundations Environmental organizations (such as WWF) | Provide grants for different kinds of environmental projects. Many international and national conservation organizations provide grants for environmental education and youth engagement. |
| Corporate partnerships and sponsorships | |
| Corporate social responsibility(CSR) programs Tourism and outdoor industry companies | Many companies, particularly in the green transition sector, may support environmental initiatives as part of their sustainability efforts. Ecotourism and nature travel companies may be interested in supporting camps in exchange for collaboration. |

EASY

**NATURE
RESTORATION
ACTIVITIES**

RESTORATION



Photographer: Aino Huotari
During camp organised by Nuorten Akatemia and Luontoliitto in Finland, 2024

Organizing a full nature restoration camp might feel like too much at first, but you can start small!

This chapter introduces easy nature restoration activities for youth groups, schools, or individuals interested in making a difference.

Visit Restoration Sites

Get youth acquainted with the topic by visiting restoration sites! This makes the barrier lower to participating in actual work.

Nature restoration is very different depending on the environment and scale of the project, so the sites are interesting places to visit! Ask for a tour on site from a local expert.

Remove Invasive (Alien) Species

Invasive species are non-native to the local ecosystem and can harm biodiversity by outcompeting native species. National authorities often provide management plans and guidelines for their removal.

- The EU maintains an official list of invasive alien species of Union concern.
- Most EU countries also have national lists and removal guidelines.
- Landowner often has an obligation to remove invasive species from their property, so there are many accessible sites where help is needed.
- Can be organized as one-day & low-cost activity



Photo by Luontoliitto

Always check local guidelines and consult authorities before starting. Some invasive species can be harmful to humans, and proper disposal is essential for effective control.

Learn more:

- [European Commission: Invasive alien species](#)
- [Finland: Vieraslajit.fi](#)
- [Slovakia: Nepôvodné a invázne druhy](#)
- [The Netherlands: Controlling invasive alien species](#)

Rewilding

Rewilding is a conservation practice that aims to transform human-altered monotonous areas into more biodiverse ecosystems. In rewilding this is done through reducing human management and allowing natural processes (like predation, grazing, flooding, or forest regeneration) to shape the ecosystem.

Learn more:

- [European Young Rewilders](#)
- [Rewilding Europe](#)
- [Young Wilders](#)

Guerrilla Gardening

Guerrilla gardening involves cultivating land without formal permission— often in neglected urban spaces. Cities include loads of unused spaces that could be used for urban farming.

Learn more:

- [What Is Guerrilla Gardening? A concise guide.](#)
- [Guerrilla Gardening.org](#)

Your Family Garden

Private gardens collectively cover a large area—making them more powerful spaces for restoration than you would think.

Biodiversity and pollinator-friendly gardening

- Add diversity, plant native flowers and create habitats for pollinators.
- Apply rewilding principles to your own backyard.

Avoid invasive species

- Remove invasive plants and replace them with native or endangered species.

Influence Policy

Influencing policy is a powerful way to combat biodiversity loss and promote nature restoration. Biodiversity loss is a complex, interconnected issue, and positive change can be achieved through various policy areas.

Whether you focus on protecting a single species or broader environmental goals, your efforts contribute to the health of entire ecosystems. Closely related policy areas to nature restoration include land use, agriculture, and nature conservation.

Ways to get involved:

- Organize or join campaigns
- Contact local or national representatives
- Participate in public hearings
- Write opinion pieces, remember also local newspapers!
- Launch or support citizen initiatives
- Make youth voices heard

Join Activities Organized by Other Groups

Often joining forces is more powerful than each organization working on its own and alone. If you have no prior experience of nature restoration, join activities organized by someone who has!

They do not have to be a youth organization, since you can bring in expertise on working with young people. If you have a group of eager volunteers, there may already be opportunities where your help is needed. This is an easy and effective way to gain experience, learn practical skills, and connect with the restoration community.

Who organizes activities?

Nature restoration activities with volunteers are organized by a wide range of organizations, actors, and entities. Projects are also often carried out in collaboration with several stakeholders.

Common organizers include:

- Municipalities and regional authorities
- National parks and protected area managers
- State-funded or EU-funded restoration projects (e.g., LIFE programme)
- Environmental NGOs
- Youth environmental networks
- Neighbourhood associations

You can find detailed information about potential organizers, ongoing projects and stakeholders in the attachments (covering the project partners countries Finland, Slovakia, the Netherlands, Greece, and the EU level).



Photographer: Aino Huotari
Camp organised by Luontoliitto and Nuorten Akatemia
on Öro and Norstö islands in Finland, 2024

Where to Read More?

Explore these resources to deepen your understanding of nature restoration, ecosystem recovery, and youth engagement in environmental action.

Key readings and toolkits

- [European Commission. Nature Restoration Regulation.](#)
- [Generation Climate Europe 2024. Empowering Youth. A guide to Advocate and Engage in Nature Restoration using Nature-based solutions.](#)
- [IUCN 2021. Community organizing toolkit for UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration.](#)
- [United Nations Environment Programme 2021. Ecosystem Restoration Playbook A Practical Guide To Healing The Planet.](#)
- [UN Decade on Nature Restoration 2021-2030. What is ecosystem restoration?](#)
- [WWF European Policy Office. The Benefits of Nature Restoration.](#)
- [Youngwilders. Youth-led nature recovery.](#)

Videos and documentaries

- [TED 2020. The global movement to restore nature's biodiversity. Thomas Crowther.](#)
- [UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration 2021-2030. Restore: Films from the Frontiers of Hope.](#)
- [UN Environment Programme. What is ecosystem restoration?](#)

References

- [Four reasons why restoring nature is the most important endeavour of our time \(theconversation.com\).](#)
- [The What, Why, and How of Ecosystem Restoration | World Resources Institute \(wri.org\).](#)
- [UN Decade on Restoration](#)
- [We Must Restore Nature This Decade—Here's How | TNC](#)

Attachments

- **Registration form template**
- **Infopack examples**
- **List of potential organizers and stakeholders**
- **Participants' packing list**
- **Organizers' packing list**
- **Camp organizers check-list**
- **Feedback form template**



Observation drawings by Holly Bartley during the Finnish restoration camp.



Photographers: Aino Huotari, Martin Sopinec and Anja Matthes

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