



Naturskyddsföreningen

# Coastal protection in Sweden

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- Swedish right of public access to nature
- Coastal strip protection today
  - What does it say
  - How does it work
- Proposal to change legislation
  - What changes?
  - What will be the consequences?

# Swedish right of public access to nature

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- Right to be on any one's property and walk, collect mushrooms and berries, rise a tent overnight etc.
- But you should respect people living on any property and shall not go nearer houses than ca. 150 m.
- The coastal strip protection originates from the same kind of thinking – access should generally be possible.
- Important for outdoor activities of all kinds, kayaking, walking, boating, cycling etc.

# Protection of species in the coastal zone

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1994 a second aim of this legislation was introduced

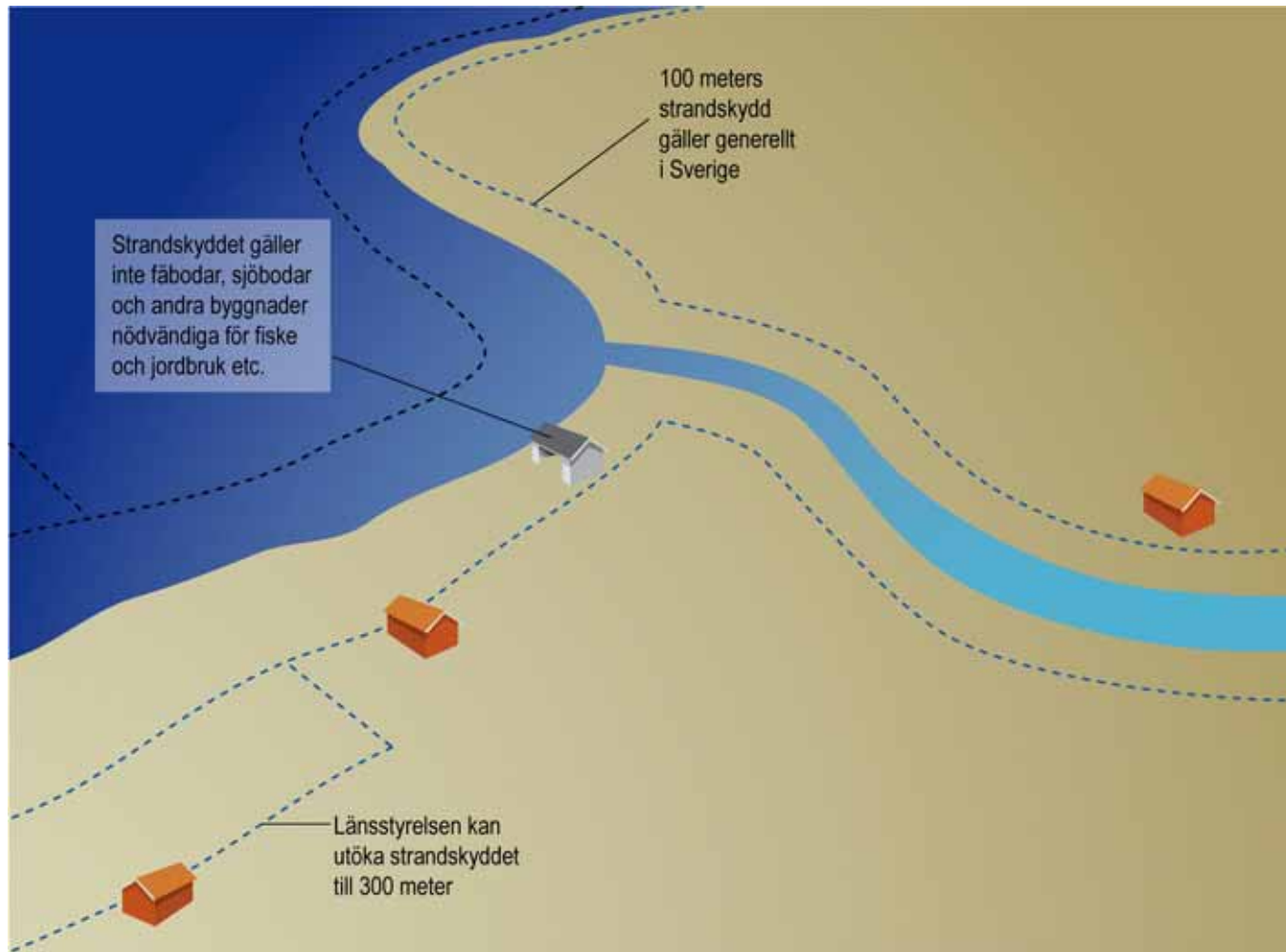
- To protect animals and plants in the coastal strip
- Beaches and shallow waters are important for e.g. migrating birds and reproduction of marine species
- Ecologically sound wildlife also important for sustainable tourism

# Coastal strip protection

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- First coastal strip legislation introduced in 1950
  - To guarantee public access to the coast
  - Since 1975, a coastal strip of 100 m land and seawards is generally protected. In some areas, it is extended to 300 m. Within this area most development is prohibited, including the construction of new buildings, fences or piers.
  - Later (1994) also to protect animals and plants along the shore
  - Exemption: buildings necessary for fisheries, agriculture, forestry etc.

# Coastal strip protection

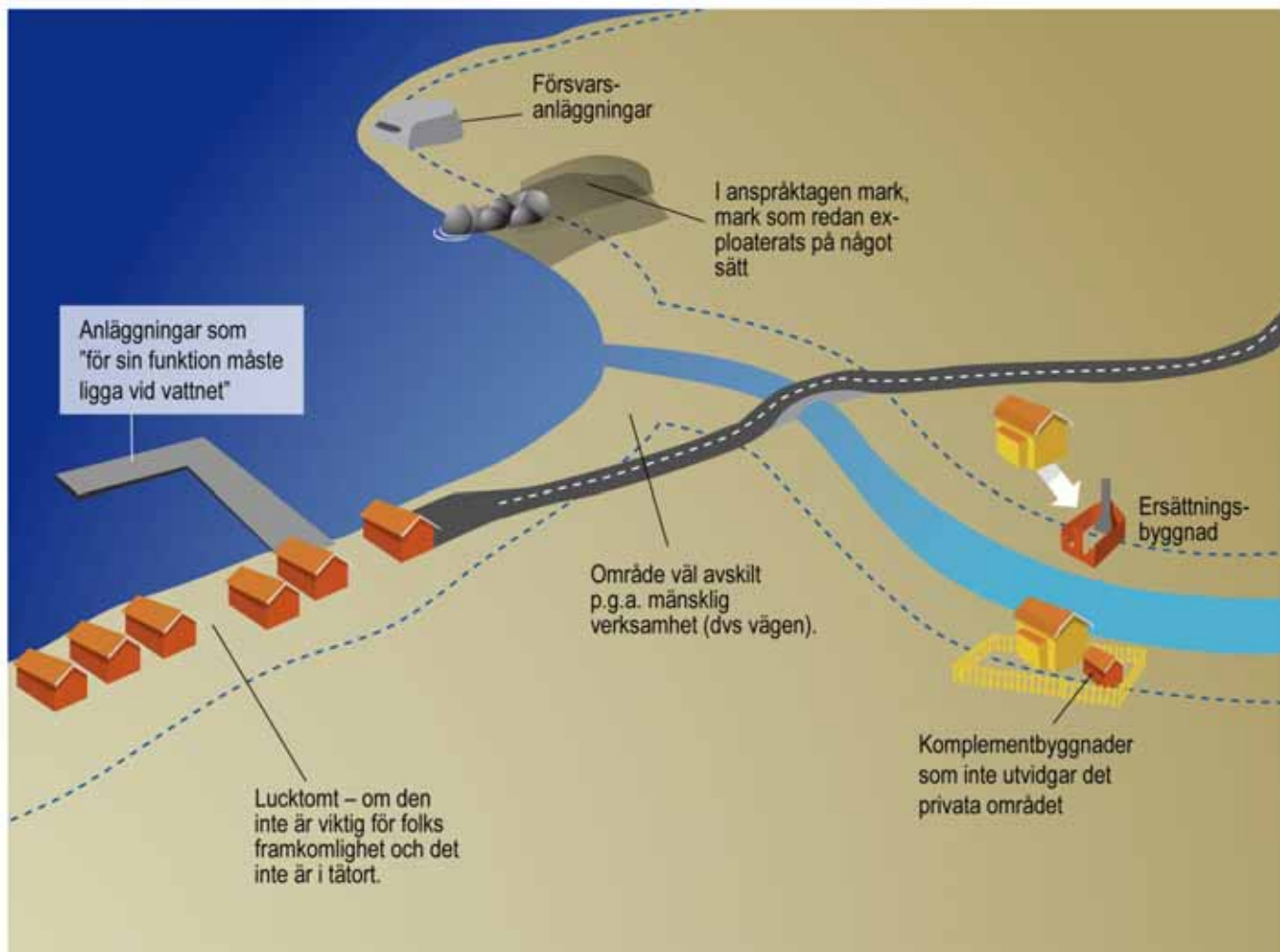


# Coastal strip protection

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- In protected coastal zone, new buildings are generally forbidden, but building permits possible if exceptional reason and aim of legislation not at risk.
- County Administrative Boards can grant exemptions, but have often transferred responsibility in 100 m zone to municipalities.
- In most of the 300 m zone, County Administrative Boards responsible.
- In case that a municipality disregards the coastal strip protection, the County Administrative Board can withdraw the transferred competence from the municipality. Happens very seldom.

# Legal reasons for exemptions



# Too many exemptions!

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- The pressure on the coastal strip is very high, mainly for building private houses and summer cottages.
- Building permits close to the coastal strip are rather rule than exception.
- The local authorities and the county administrative boards grant 4 – 5 000 exemptions during one year. Only about 30 % of applications have extraordinary reasons, but much more are granted.
- Swedish Environmental Protection Agency and environmental NGO's with > 2000 members can appeal. Many court cases were won, but resources stop us from appealing more often.

# Legislation good enough, reality poor

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- Employees at local authorities sometimes recommend not to grant an exemption.
- BUT the final decision lies with local politicians who often believe that it's important for the welfare and development of their local community to authorize building permits.



- Resources are lacking to control exemptions, so illegal decisions are seldom discovered and stopped.

# Coastal protection in Sweden

- WHICH MEANS that public access to attractive areas around lakes and by the sea and the protection of valuable nature are at stake.



# Proposed changes in the legislation

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- Existing legislation could guarantee good enough coastal strip protection
- ➔ Problem is not legislation but how it is used and its interpretation.
- **Needed:**  
measures to safeguard public access to coastal areas and protection of animals/plants along the shoreline
- **Reality:**  
Swedish politicians now are preparing a dangerous change of legislation.

# Proposed changes in the legislation

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- Many local politicians have done serious lobbying to change the legislation in order to
  - give the local level more power to make their own decisions,
  - allow more buildings near the shore lines of lakes, rivers and the sea.
- To some extent common understanding:
  - Already developed areas with many beaches without public access, should get stronger protection.
  - In areas in northern Sweden where few people live it might be more acceptable to allow more buildings near the shore.

# Proposal for new legislation

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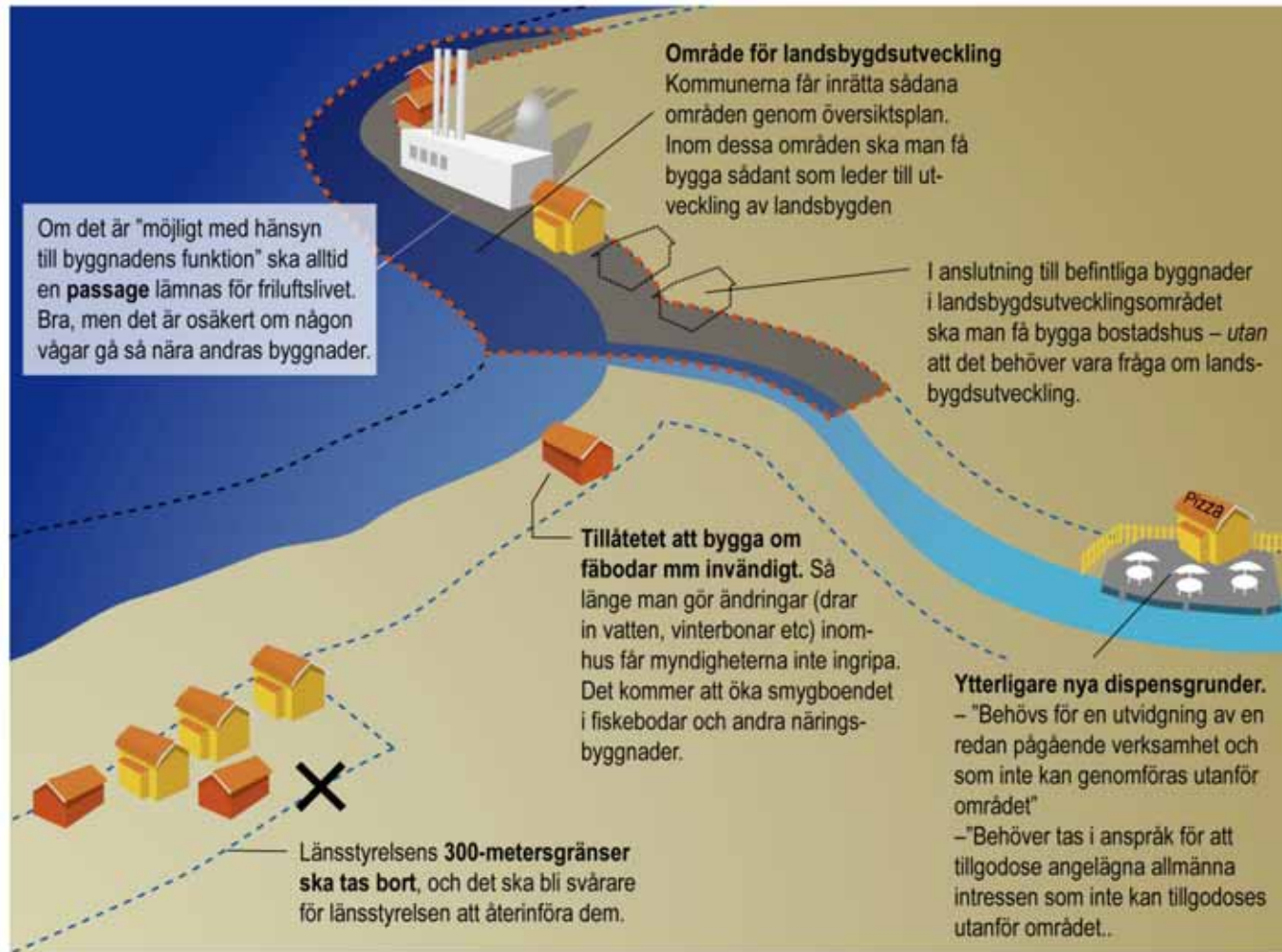
- Municipalities will become directly responsible for building permits within the coastal protected strip.
- Municipalities can decide on areas for “rural development” where they easily can give exemptions for buildings.
- BUT this “rural development”-areas will not be possible along the Swedish coast from Norway to ca 100 km north of Stockholm. Only along northern Swedish coast and near lakes and rivers.
- The municipalities must also investigate and show how many untouched coastal areas they have and how enough beaches will stay untouched even if more permits are given.

# Proposed changes in the legislation

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- “Rural development”
  - Houses/cottages near water are attractive and will lead to more people moving to a municipality where this is possible
  - This will be good for local enterprises
  - And can stop people from moving to the big cities
  
- We do not believe this is true!

# New legal reasons for exemptions



# What can be done?

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- The new law is supposed to enter into force on 1 July, 2009.
- A lot of organisations have protested against the proposed changes. All will give comments in the public consultation.
- Environmental groups, associations working with outdoor activities, anglers and boating clubs etc. work on influencing politicians in the parliament and in the government. They represent ca 2 million Swedish citizens (of totally 9 mio.)
- Many letters are written by readers to newspaper to point out that the planned changes only will favour a few house owners or enterprises.