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POUR L'EDUCATION, LA SCIENCE ET LA CULTURE

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Point 7 de l'Ordre du jour provisoire: Etat de conservation de biens inscrits sur la Liste du patrimoine mondial et/ou sur la Liste du patrimoine mondial en péril

MISSION REPORT / RAPPORT DE MISSION

Białowieża Forest (Belarus/Poland) (33ter)
Forêt Bialowieza (Bélarus/ Pologne) (33ter)

4 – 8 June 2016.



**IUCN Advisory Mission
to the World Heritage WH property "Białowieża Forest"**

Białowieża, 4-8 June 2016.

MISSION REPORT



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FOREWORD

This report presents the major findings and recommendations by the mission experts which took place from 4 to 8 June 2016, upon an invitation from the Polish Ministry of Environment.

The experts visited areas within the property (**Annexes 2 and 3**) and met with national and local stakeholders during plenary sessions, meetings with groups of stakeholders, and during bilateral discussions with local experts and specialists (**Annexes 4 to 7**).

According to the Terms of Reference of the mission (**Annex 1**), the experts conducted a field visit to the Polish part of the Białowieża Forest World Heritage Property (the "WH property" in the report) and made the necessary assessments, in order to develop recommendations regarding:

- how the recently adopted amendments to the Forest Management Plan relate to the needs for protection of the WH property's Outstanding Universal Value (OUV);
- possible changes needed in this regard.

They reviewed the condition of the WH property and performed its assessment, concentrating on the following key issues:

- the existing status of protection and risks to habitats caused by bark beetle attacks;
- planned protective actions for the forest habitats at risk resulting from the Plan of protection tasks and the annex to the Forest Management Plan for the Białowieża Forest District for the years 2012 – 2021 (**Annex 8**).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The mission experts wish to acknowledge all officials and colleagues met during their visit in Białowieża, whether or not named here below, first of all Mgr. Andrzej Szweda-Lewandowski and Mgr. inż. Andrzej Konieczny, Under Secretaries of State, Ministry of Environment (MoE), and their staff, for their welcome, hospitality and continuous presence and assistance to the experts, throughout the mission.

Further thanks go to Dr Konrad Tomaszewski, General Director of State Forests National Forest Holding, also to the foresters from the Białystok region and from the Białowieża, Browsk and Hajnowka forestry districts, who provided the mission with excellent and detailed information and data on the management of the Białowieża Forest in a very open way.

The experts were most honoured to meet and exchange with Mgr. Tomasz Duszkiewicz, Priest, from Parafia Św. Jana Chrzciciela w Sadwnem.

They would like also to thank Prof. Janusz Sowa, President of the Scientific Council of Forestry and the other members of the Council who participated in the field visit and the various meetings, as well as Dr hab. Rafał Paluch, Director of the Forest Research Institute, Prof. dr hab. Rafał Kowalczyk, Mammal Research Institute, Dr. hab. Przemek Chylarecki, Museum and Institute of Ecology, Polish Academy of Science, and Dr hab. Bogdan Jaroszewicz from the University of Warsaw, Białowieża Geobotanical Station who shared their extensive expertise and wide knowledge of the context with the experts.

They express their great appreciation to Prof. Sławomir Ratajski, Secretary General of the Polish National Commission for UNESCO and the specialists from the Commission who shared very positively their views with the experts and actively contributed to the discussions.

Moreover, the mission wishes to express its appreciation to all friends and colleagues representing the non-governmental organisations for their useful and constructive dialogue, namely: Fundacja "Dzika Polska", Green Mind Client Earth, GreenPeace, Liga Ochrony Przyrody, Lokalsi przeciw wycince Puszczy Białowieskiej, OTOP, Polskie Towarzystwo Ochrony Ptaków, Pracownia na rzecz Wszystkich Istot, Santa, Society for Conservation Biology – Europe section, Stowarzyszenie na Rzecz Dialogu Tropinka, Towarzystwo Ochrony Krajobrazu and Związek Polskich Fotografów Przyrody. Their permanent contribution before, during and after the visit, was indispensable and irreplaceable to build an open and honest public debate between all stakeholders and with the experts.

The experts are grateful to the officials from the local communities who agreed to meet and exchange with them, Mirosław Romaniuk (President of the Hajnówka district), Elżbieta Laprus (Municipal County of Białowieża), Leon Małaszewski (Major of Dubicze Cerkiewne), Andrzej Pieskowicz (Mayor of Narew), Mikołaj Pawlicz (Mayor of Narewka), Michał Wróblewski (Mayor of Czeremcha), Jerzy Sirak (Major of Hajnówka) and Aleksander Sielicki (Mayor of Kleszczele). The discussions the mission had with those persons were extremely useful for the understanding of the local institutional and socio-economic context.

Special thanks to Olimpia Pabian, Director of the Białowieża National Park and her staff, who were instrumental in organizing the mission and whose availability and assistance throughout the mission are very much appreciated.

Lastly but not least, many thanks for their outstanding work and support to Mrs Joanna Warchoł and Tomasz Grudniewski, the two interpreters; without them, it would have been more than difficult for the experts to perform their task.

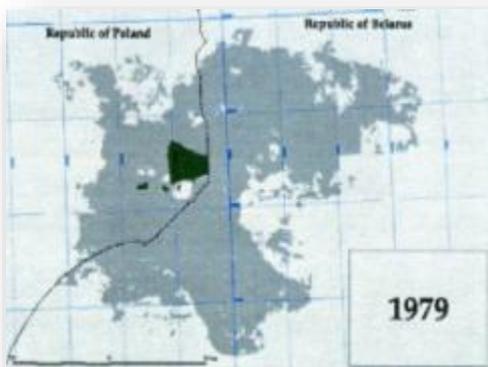
Finally, the mission wishes to conclude by thanking Beata Wołczuk, Adviser to the Minister of Environment and Ewa Siddique-Olesiejuk, Counsellor at the Department of Sustainable Development for their tremendous work in the successful preparation of the mission; their assistance throughout the mission is gratefully acknowledged.

INTRODUCTION

The property was inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1979 (**Map 1**), under criterion iii, then extended two times:

- in 1992: the "Belovezhskaya Pushcha" State National Park (Belarus) was included as an extension to the property which was renamed "Belovezhskaya Pushcha/Białowieża Forest" (**Map 2**);
- in 2014: the World Heritage property was extended again, under criteria ix and x, and renamed as "Białowieża Forest" (Belarus, Poland) (**Map 3**).

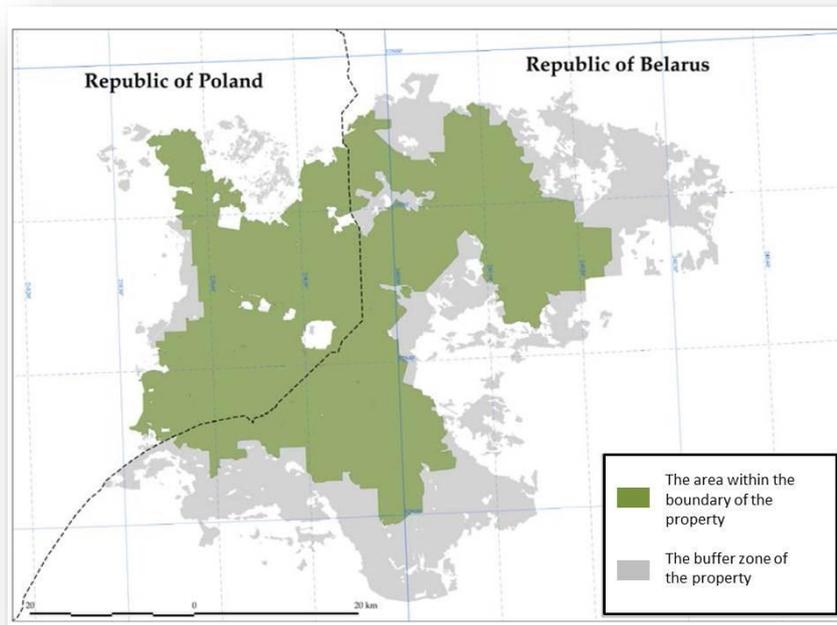
It spans an area of 141,885 ha (59,577 ha in the Polish part) and is surrounded by a buffer zone covering 166,708 ha (35,835 ha in the Polish part).



Map 1 – WH property as inscribed in 1979



Map 2 – WH property as extended in 1992



Map 3 – The WH property as extended in 2014 (present situation).

1. BACKGROUND OF THE MISSION

A major discussion arose in late 2015/early 2016 between the Polish authorities and various institutions and environmentalists, in relation to potential threats to the WH property, following a decision taken by the Minister of the Environment to amend the Forest Management Plan for the Białowieża Forest District on March 25th 2016.

That decision aims to substantially increase the volume of logging allowed in the Białowieża Forest and is stated to be in response to a massive attack of bark beetles during the last months. The significant increase of the maximum volume of logging in the Białowieża Forest, from 63 000 m³ to 188 000 m³ in the 2012-2021 period, was justified by the Polish authorities as a necessity to fight this outbreak.

This decision is supported by various institutions such as the Forestry Scientific Council, the Voivodship sanitary and epidemiological station in Białystok and the Steering Committee of the World Heritage (WH) property, but strongly challenged by non-governmental organizations (NGOs), as well as by several institutions such as the State Council for Nature Conservation, the Committee for Nature Conservation of the Polish Academy of Sciences, as well as some nature conservation experts.

UNESCO was informed of this decision and its attention was drawn on the threats to the WH property; in February 2016, the World Heritage Centre (WHC) requested the State Party to submit further information that the latter provided in May 2016.

Following the approval of the amendment to the Forest Management Plan, a group of environmentalists brought a complaint before the European Commission in April 2016 on the basis of which, the European Commission started infringement proceedings against Poland, on 16 June 2016, over allegations that the logging in the Białowieża Forest breaches the EU regulation.

Finally, the Minister of the Environment (MoE) invited an IUCN Advisory Mission to the WH property, to discuss the current protection principles of the Polish part of the property.

2. CURRENT CONTEXT

This context will be examined at three levels.

2.1 The Convention and the Operational Guidelines for its implementation

The Białowieża Forest was inscribed on the World Heritage List as a natural WH property, on the basis of criteria (ix) and (x) of the World Heritage Convention; it is considered as:

- being an outstanding example representing on-going ecological and biological processes in the evolution and development of terrestrial and fresh water ecosystems and communities, of plants and animals;
- containing the most important and significant natural habitats for *in-situ* conservation of biological diversity, including those containing threatened species of Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) from the point of view science or conservation.

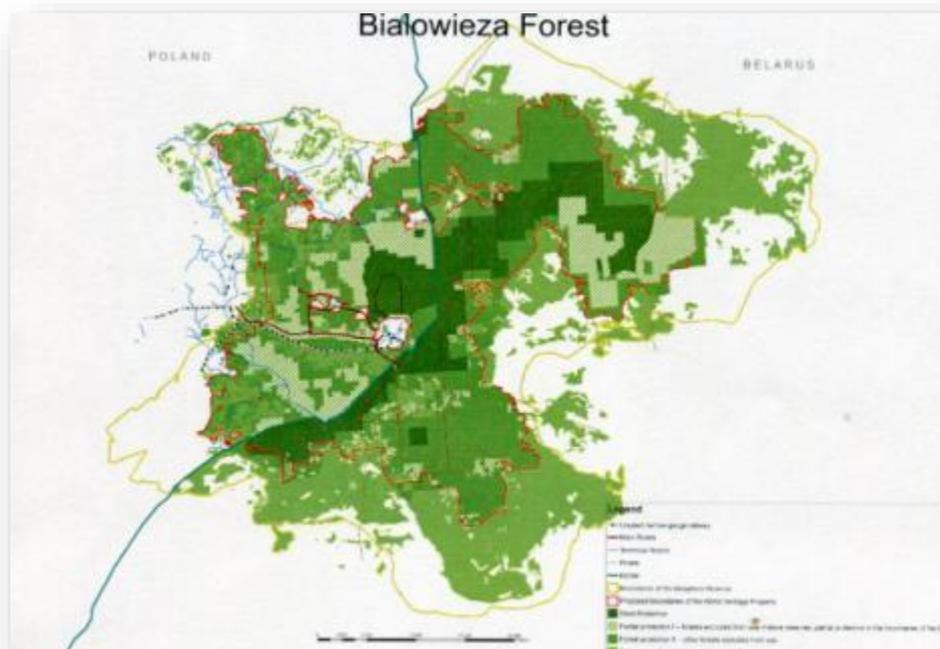
The World Heritage Committee has adopted the statement of its Outstanding Universal Value, which, among other attributes, recognizes "*the scale of its old growth forests, which include extensive undisturbed areas where natural processes are on-going. A consequence is the richness in dead wood, standing and on the ground, and consequently a high diversity of fungi and saproxylic invertebrates*".

Moreover and according to the Operational Guidelines (OG) for the implementation of the World Heritage Convention, the properties designated under criterion ix should

contain "the necessary elements to demonstrate the key aspects of processes that are essential for the long term conservation of the ecosystems and the biological diversity they contain" and those designated under criterion x "should contain habitats for maintaining the most diverse fauna and flora characteristics of the bio-geographic province and ecosystems under consideration".

2.2 The management of the WH property

The Management Plan for the World Heritage property "Białowieża Forest": Roadmap for Preparation and Implementation, attached to the nomination document of 2012 (*hereinafter*: "Management Plan Roadmap"), defines a zoning (**Map 4**) and sets use regulation specific to each zone, consistent with the maintenance of the OUV of the WH property and the preservation of its integrity in compliance with Art. 87 of the OG.



Map 4 – Zoning of the WH property (*Source*: nomination dossier to the UNESCO, for the inscription on the World Heritage List, 2012).

Table 1 summarizes the legal regime of the main uses and activities regulated in each of the defined areas of the WH property and its buffer zone.

| Zones | Logging | Hunting | Fire prevention | Road maintenance for safety | Recreational activities | Berries and mushroom picking | Others |
|--|-------------|-------------|-----------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------------|--|
| Strict protection | Not allowed | Not allowed | Allowed | Allowed | Not allowed | Not allowed | |
| Partial protection 1 | Not allowed | Not allowed | Allowed | Allowed | Allowed | Allowed | Maintenance of meadows allowed |
| Partial protection 2 | Not allowed | Allowed | Allowed | Allowed | Allowed | Allowed | Maintenance of meadows allowed |
| Zone of Active protection and buffer zone | Allowed | Allowed | Allowed | Allowed | Allowed | Allowed | Sanitary cutting allowed Maintenance of meadows allowed |

Table 1 – Zoning and regulation (*Source*: adapted from the nomination dossier to the UNESCO for the inscription on the World Heritage List, 2012)

2.3 Forest legislation and management

Historically, logging has been for a long time the main economic activity in the Białowieża Forest; even today, in the Białowieża Forest District (12 585.3 ha), about a quarter of the Polish share of the WH Site where the debate lies, is managed by the state forest service, National Forest Holding "State Forests" (SFS) on the basis of a Forest Management Plan defined for 10 years and approved by the MoE; the current plan covers the period 2012-2021.

At the end of 2015, over than 96% of the logging limit fixed at around 500 000 m³ for the three districts of the Białowieża Forest, were reached.

In its decision of March 25th 2016, the MoE took the decision to increase the logging limit for the Białowieża district from 63 471 m³ and fix it at a maximum of 188 000 m³, if necessary, in response to three main concerns:

- *the "occurrence of significant damage to tree stands in effect of continuing gradation of spruce bark beetle that triggers the necessity of (incidental) logging in the period of forest management plan execution to maintain forests in adequate sanitary state, ensure sustainability of forest ecosystems, tackle degradation and commence restoration of natural habitats, including those important to the community";*
- *the "threats to safety of visitors to the Białowieża Forest, due to the accumulation of dying back trees poses a threat to public safety";*
- increased risk of fire in the forest due to the abundance of the dead trees.

This decision was taken, based on the conclusions of a Strategic Environmental Assessment carried out by the Regional Directorate of National Forests in Białystok, after a series of local public consultations.

A program for the Białowieża Forest as a "cultural and natural UNESCO-heritage and the area of NATURA 2000 network" was also co-signed by the MoE and the General Director of the SFS on 25 March 2016 aiming to "document different points of views, ... and "express responsibility of particular people for decisions being made"; this program, however, deals mostly with the preservation of NATURA 2000 habitats and does not refer explicitly to the OUV of the WH property.

3. ASSESSMENT

3.1 in general

- contrary to what the title of the Program mentioned here above implies, the WH property was not inscribed under cultural criteria and thus the Program needs to be adapted to the natural World Heritage criteria. Regarding the possible application of cultural criteria, IUCN would not be the appropriate Advisory Body to provide primary advice in this regard (the issue would need to be considered by ICOMOS, in consultation with IUCN);
- this Program does not take into account the conservation of the OUV of the WH property, as per its inclusion on the World Heritage List, particularly its values recognized under criterion (ix);
- the Strategic Environmental Assessment of the amendments to the Białowieża Forest Management Plan, does not make reference to the possible effects of this modification on the OUV of the WH property, nor its integrity; it does not address this matter at all.

3.2 on the bark beetle outbreak

- bark beetle outbreaks should be considered as a biological process, in the sense of the World Heritage Convention. While most likely influenced by a range of external elements, such as climate change and recurrent droughts, such events represent a biological response of cyclical nature widely referenced in the literature (**Figure 1**).
- the cause of the outbreak in this particular case and its scale can be seen as anthropogenic and resulting in part from forest management practices undertaken to date which favoured production of soft wood lumber, mostly spruce trees, including through artificial plantations;
- single-species spruce plantation should be considered as an aggravating factor of risk of attack by bark beetles;

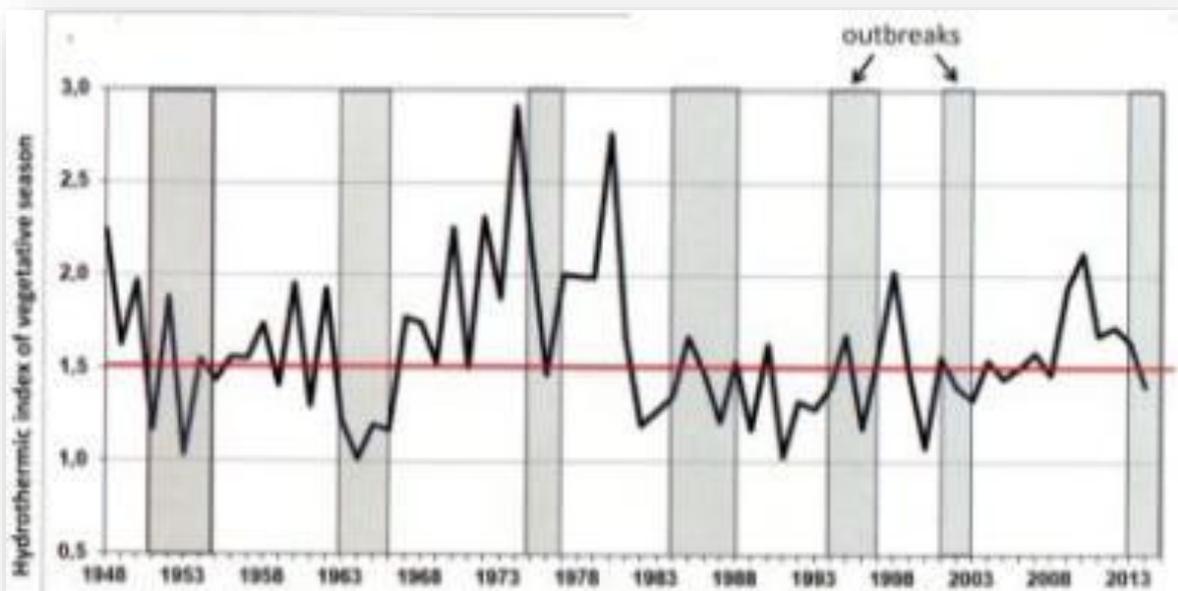


Figure 1 – Spruce bark beetle outbreaks/hydrometric index in the Białowieża Forest (Source: Malzahn, I.J., and Gutowski, M., unpublished).

3.2 on how to address this issue

- by nominating the Białowieża Forest under the World Heritage Convention, the State Party has clearly expressed its political will to protect and maintain the OUV of the WH property, as it was recognized at the time of its inscription in 2014, and to preserve its integrity;
- the recent discussions have centred around the question of what type of forest management, active or not, should be implemented in the WH property. The answer is given by the Convention itself and its OG that this management should maintain the natural dynamic state and requires elements consistent with the ecological and biological processes. As stated in the Statement of OUV of the property, *“the area has exceptionally conservation significance due to the scale of its old growth forests, which include extensive undisturbed areas where natural processes are on-going. A consequence is the richness in dead wood, standing and on the ground, and consequently a high diversity of fungi and saproxylic invertebrates”*;

During their field visit, the experts also made a certain number of findings regarding:

- *the interpretation of various concepts such as "sanitary cutting" and "safety reasons"*: there is a lack of definition of those concepts which is detrimental to the understanding of what forest management measures, compatible with the preservation of the OUV, can be taken in order to preserve the key features of the forest in the long-term and to ensure the safety of the visitors;
- *the decision making process with regards to such cuttings*: the decisions are taken by the SFS with no consultation with other stakeholders; this process led in the past to frustrations from environmentalists and to some incongruities observed by the experts in the field, where it is not always easy to understand the aims of the measures taken and relate them to visitors safety or to "fire prevention". On the other hand, the data and information made available to the experts, show that the risk of fire has been relatively low to date in the context of the Białowieża Forest and that it is not currently a matter of concern (**Figure 2**), despite the fact that the "sanitary" cuttings and other "safety" measures seem to have been conducted to date without the residual biomass being removed, as required by the national regulations on forestry;

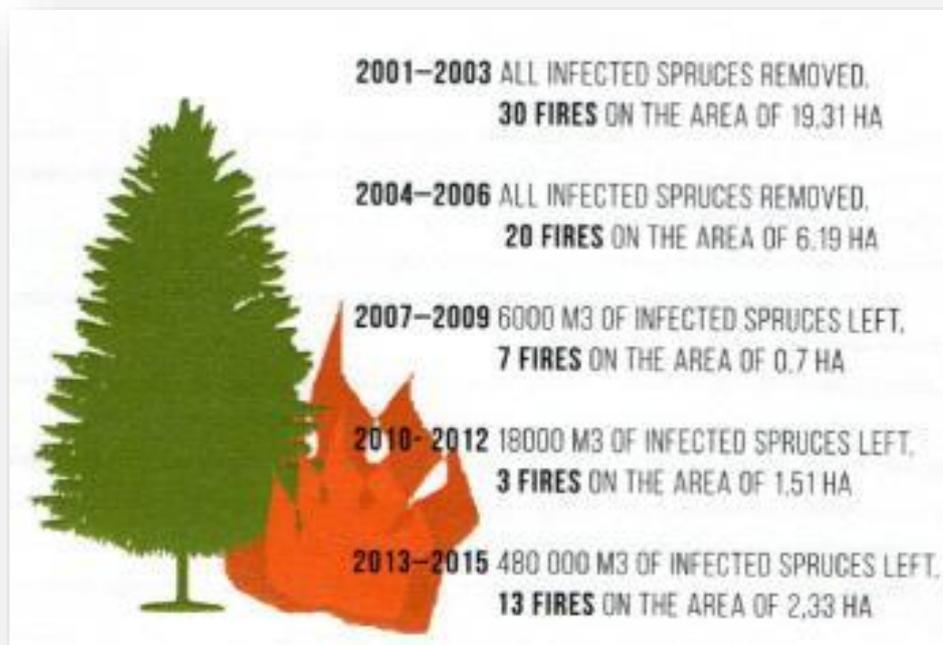
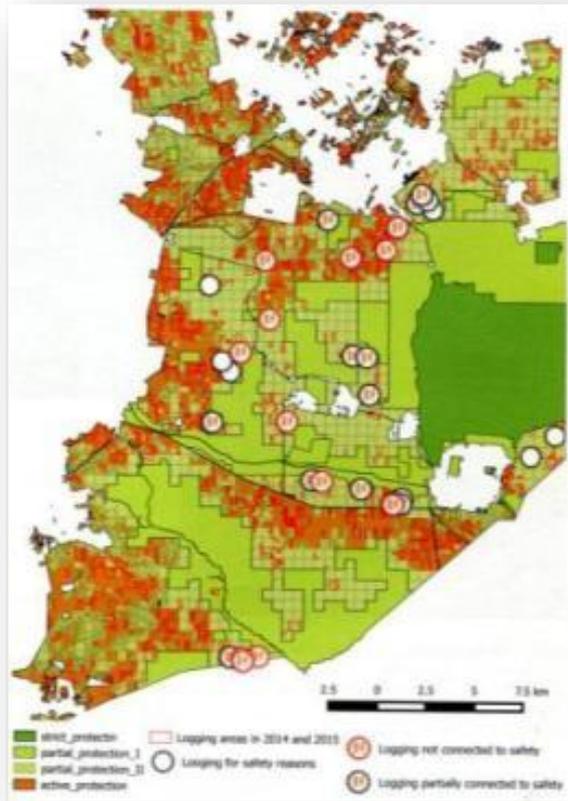
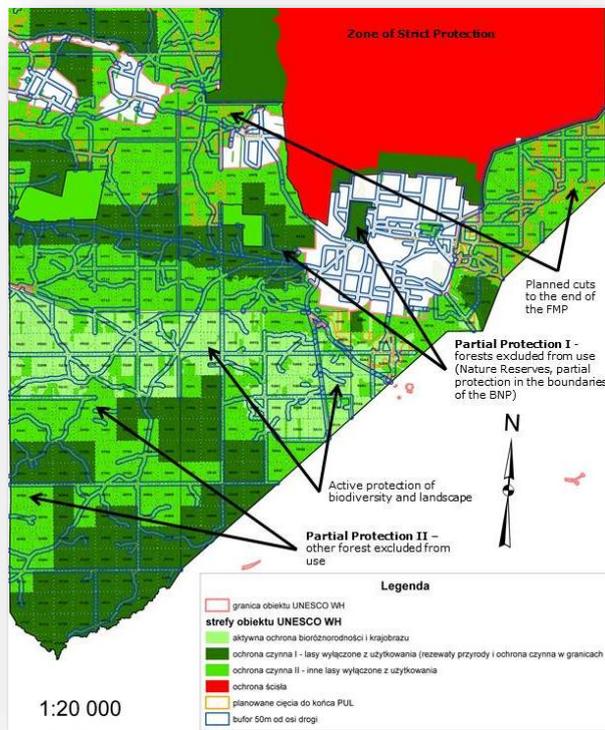


Figure 2 – Fire occurrence in the Białowieża Forest from 2001 to 2015 in relation to bark beetle outbreaks (Source: Greenpeace).

- *the location of the "sanitary cuttings"*: the experts have observed that those cuttings have been made several times in areas subject to Partial Protection II, in contradiction to the Management Plan Roadmap (**Maps 5 and 6**);
- *the detailed location of the areas dedicated to afforestation (12 583.30 ha) in the decision of 25 January 2016*: the amendments to the Forest Management Plan lack details on the proposed restoration measures and their scope and location.



Map 5 – Location of “sanitary” and “safety” cuttings in the WH property (Source: Greenpeace Poland)



Map 6 – Location of “sanitary” and “safety” cuttings in the WH property (Source: adapted from a map provided by the SFS).

4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Four major issues or themes emerged during the expert mission that led to the following conclusions.

4.1 Legal framework

The representatives of the SFS have expressed their concerns over the overlapping and somewhat contradicting requirements and obligations stemming from international obligations and commitments made by the Polish Government, and the national laws.

In response to these legitimate concerns, mission experts wish to make the following key recommendations:

- *Compatibilities between the World Heritage Convention and the EU environmental legislation:* The experts consider that the requirements of the World Heritage Convention and the EU Habitats and Birds Directives are compatible with each other. With regards to the requirements of the World Heritage Convention, the management and protection of the property should be aimed at preserving its OUV which specifically recognizes its “*substantially undisturbed nature*” and “*extensive old-growth forests*” whose preservation in the long-term would require minimizing any interventions. In a few specific cases, however, the preservation of a very limited number of natural types of habitats or species designated under the EU Habitats and Birds Directives requires active management measures; they should be addressed case by case and be treated by specific management measures. The Integrated Management Plan to be developed for the Polish part of the WH site needs to identify such cases and clearly define them in its zonation plan;
- *Clarification of the objectives of forest management:* most of the difficulties arise from the discrepancy between the management objectives of the WH property and those set out by the *Forest management plan of the Białowieża Forest*. In addition to its World Heritage status, the Białowieża Forest is also a Biosphere Reserve and the Białowieża National Park (BNP) has been awarded with the European Diploma for Protected Areas. The whole Polish part of the WH property is encompassed within the boundaries of the NATURA 2000 Site, and a Plan of Protective Tasks for the Natura 2000 “Białowieża Forest” has been submitted with the nomination dossier. In each case, the Polish authorities have to implement specific management measures meeting those regulations. All legal management plans and programs covering the WH property should clearly ensure the maintenance of the OUV and sustain the conditions of its integrity in a proper way. Preparation of an Integrated Management Plan for the Polish part of the property should be used as way to review all existing management plans and harmonize through appropriate mechanisms defined for each of these designations;
- *definition of the concepts of “sanitary cuttings” and “safety measures”:* clear technical guidelines should be established for “*sanitary*” cuttings and “*safety measures*”, detailing when, where and how those measures can be decided and then implemented; those guidelines should be established by a working group involving all types of stakeholders and be fully compatible with the World Heritage requirements;
- *forest fire protection/prevention and visitor safety:* the Management Plan Roadmap allows fire prevention measures. Some stakeholders questioned whether additional fire risk would arise in the absence of active management of the WH property. The mission experts recommend the development and implementation of a comprehensive detailed Forest Fire Prevention and Suppression Plan for the WH property. This plan should be developed by a working group involving all categories of stakeholders and it should regulate the access to the most sensitive areas by cars and visitors.

4.2 Governance

The experts observed that the communication between the key stakeholders was quite poor since the extension of the property in 2014.

The SFS has been forging the ties with the communities, in particular with their elected leaders, whereas the administration of the BNP looks to be more opened to environmentalists and the associated research community.

Little or no exchange of information and knowledge seems to take place between the two "*camps*", despite the fact that both the SFS and BNP are formally members of the WH property Steering Committee.

The lack of communication across the disciplinary and institutional divides has exacerbated the conflicts and created hostility among the parties; this was perpetuated despite the fact that the opposing camps are not capable of addressing a number of issues on their own.

Effective mechanisms for the involvement of local communities, NGOs, research community, experts/specialists, and other major stakeholders practically do not exist.

In this unfavourable context, the experts recommend strongly to (1) significantly improve the quality of governance of the WH property, and the Białowieża Forest in general, by establishing and maintaining governance institutions that enjoy broad acceptance and appreciation, and (2) ensure that all stakeholders concerned receive appropriate and sufficient information, can be represented and can have a say in advising and/or making decisions (as said before, who decides to make a sanitary cutting and how to do it), at all levels, national and local. Current tensions and difficulties will not be resolved without significant efforts of the parties to a community and shared approach to the WH property management.

The Polish National Commission for UNESCO should play a facilitating and catalytic role at national level, while appropriate fora should be set up at local level as part of the broader governance arrangement, to address the main issues.

4.3 Socio-economic issues

The experts collected a number of opinions and comments on this subject.

- the elected local officials voiced their concerns over the lost income due to the expansion of the WH property, mostly related to reduction in timber production (e.g., sawmills being closed, jobs lost) and the shortage of cheap firewood. They have also expressed their dissatisfaction over broken promises by the government for compensation (e.g. building a local gas public installation);
- surprisingly, little was said about the importance of the tourism sector in the WH property and most of the local officials stated that the village of Białowieża reaps most of the benefits. Apparently, the SFS does not see foresters playing a significant role in promoting and managing visitors in State forests, including the forest within the boundaries of the buffer zone of the WH property; at the same time, however, the SFS staff repeatedly emphasized during the discussions with the experts, its legal obligations concerning visitor/user safety;
- despite the fact that both foresters and local officials have repeatedly asked for an increased production of fuel wood, mainly from hornbeam, to satisfy the energy needs of the local population, no specific data were presented to the experts and it has not been possible to get at least a broad estimate of those needs;
- there seems also to be a lack of local capacity to raise EU funding opportunities by the local governments which does not have probably enough capacities to prepare applications;
- cultural heritage protection is another prominent issue for some of the stakeholders.

These opinions and comments led the mission experts to the following conclusions:

- while cultural heritage protection was often expressed to be opposed to nature protection, and bearing in mind that the WH property is inscribed under natural criteria (ix) and (x), the mission experts think that there is room to integrate protection of cultural heritage into the management of the property and to diversify and enrich services and opportunities for visitors and therefore increase tourism-related benefits for local communities. In addition to tourism, all other environmental services provided by the Białowieża Forest should be better understood, valued, and incorporated into the forest management;
- a vision for sustainable development should be developed for the Białowieża Forest region which would cover diverse socioeconomic issues and consider all benefits provided by the forest. A tourism strategy is urgently needed in line with such a vision for the property which should be compatible with protection of its OUV. Such a vision needs to be based on (1) reliable socioeconomic data (presently not available), (2) a gap analysis identifying what is needed, (3) a clear strategy adopted commonly by all stakeholders, and then (4) a strong program of activities which might be funded by the EU, at least partly, with methodological/technical support from external specialists; UNESCO and IUCN could bring their technical expertise in that field where they have skills and specific programs of activities;
- a strong awareness program should be developed for the local communities and the civil society, on the functions and all of the values of the Białowieża Forest, addressing concerns regarding logging, but also focusing on other environmental services, such as recreation and tourism, small wood manufactures that may in the short term find use of the dead spruce trees affected by bark beetle;
- the local needs of fire wood and timber for local use should be estimated accurately and a supply plan should be developed to meet these needs, prioritizing resources coming from the buffer zone or from the "active protection zone" and in line with the Integrated Management Plan.

4.4 Active management of habitats and species

The lack of a detailed and operational management plan for the WH property is a major source of misunderstanding and conflicts between foresters and environmentalists. It should also be recalled that at the time when the extension and renomination of the property was approved by the World Heritage Committee in 2014, one of the requests made by the Committee was that the States Parties "*expedite the preparation and further official adoption of the integrated management plan for the property addressing all key issues concerning the effective conservation and management of this transboundary property, particularly those concerning forest and wetlands management, and the need to increase functional ecological connectivity in the property, and to reduce the existing large network of roads and fire prevention corridors*". While considering that the property met the conditions of integrity, IUCN in its evaluation report noted that "*action is needed, to be followed via the State of Conservation process, to ensure both the existing property and the extended area meet fully the protection and management requirements of the Operational Guidelines*".

The SFS forest experts and specialists seem to have misinterpreted the rules applying to the different management zones within the WH property which led to proposing cutting in the "Partial Protection II Zone" where it is not allowed, according to the zoning presented in the nomination file. Furthermore, they believe in the necessity of active management of the forest stands in the "Partial Protection II Zone," in particular in the stands which had in the past been replanted with spruce and the stands with severe bark beetle infestation. Overall it appears that a number of current forestry norms and practices are not entirely appropriate for nature conservation purposes.

On the other hand, there seems to be some understanding among environmentalists that strict protection may be not appropriate in some specific cases, such as in some restricted areas of artificial spruce plantations originating from past forest management

practices, where restoration of natural biological processes might be speeded up and facilitated with active measures.

From the mission experts view, the main objective should be to maintain the overall ecological character of the Białowieża Forest and restore it, when necessary, by minimizing human intervention and facilitating the natural processes; in that sense, reducing high spruce trees ratio in the ecosystem to match the species composition observed in unmanaged old-growth stands in the Białowieża National Park by banning new spruce plantations should guide the forest management.

As recommended before, the current goals and objectives of the forest management of the whole forest should be assessed and revised, in line with the European and international obligations of the State Party, in order to also clearly focus management efforts on the objective of the conservation of the species and habitats of European interest on the basis of which the WH property is also designated under criterion X. Forest management tools/measures that respect and facilitate the ongoing natural biological and ecological processes in line with criterion IX, should be promoted and favoured such as limited preparatory works in case of the areas covered by spruce plantations originating from forest management practices when such interventions would speed up the natural processes and facilitate the recovery of the forest towards a more natural state of conservation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In summary and taking into account these conclusions, the mission wishes to make the following recommendations to the State Party of Poland:

- 1) to initiate a management planning process for the property in the nearest future which should cover the whole Polish side of the property while also taking into account its transboundary nature, and should
 - a) seek to elaborate an Integrated Management Plan fully compatible with the World Heritage requirements and favouring natural ecological and biological processes,
 - b) be led by a management planning team comprising representatives from all of the relevant institutions (Ministry of Environment, National Forest Holding "State Forests", Białowieża National Park) working collaboratively with the local communities and stakeholders,
 - c) use appropriate methods and mechanisms to involve all stakeholders, in particular local and national NGOs, research communities, including the Academy of sciences and universities as well as local scientists. It should also associate stakeholders from the Belarus side and international expertise to the planning process.
- 2) to submit the Integrated Management Plan to the World Heritage Centre for review by IUCN, once it has been developed and prior to any decision to finalize the plan;
- 3) to develop effective and revised governance arrangements for the Polish part of the property, in addition to the transboundary Steering committee, in order to provide for participation of all key stakeholders in the management of the property (see detailed recommendations above in the report);
- 4) to build a wider vision of local sustainable development in the Bialowieza region and districts, shared by all stakeholders, that values appropriately the ecosystem services provided by the property (including tourism, adaptation to climate change etc.);
- 5) to suspend the implementation of the Annex (**ANNEX 8**) to the FMP for the Bialowieza district, until the new Integrated Management Plan is prepared and approved, with appropriate zoning and regulations which can guide future preparation and revisions of forest management plans for areas within the property;

The Polish National Commission for UNESCO should play a key role of facilitator in the above process.

LIST OF ANNEXES

- Annex 1 - Terms of Reference
- Annex 2 - Programme
- Annex 3 - Field visit
- Annex 4 to 7- List of participants to the meetings
- Annexes 8 – Decision of the MoE

Terms of Reference**IUCN Advisory mission to
"BIAŁOWIEŻA FOREST" World Heritage WH property****(POLAND)****(4-8 June 2016)**

The 'Białowieża Forest' was inscribed on the World Heritage List in 2014 under the criteria (IX) and (X) as the extension of 'Belovezhskaya Pushcha / Białowieża Forest/' WH property.

In December 2015, the draft annex to the Forest Management Plan (FMP) for the Białowieża Forest Division for the years 2012 – 2021 was published at the official webWH property of the Regional Directorate of the State Forests in Białystok, aiming at increasing the volume of acquired wood to 317 thousand m³. The announcement of the Białowieża Forest Division on annexing the FMP has been deleted as invalid after a short period of time. In effect of the Białowieża Forest Division announcement on the intended FMP annexing, various institutions, organizations and natural persons began to send their protests to the Ministry of Environment and international organizations, including for the most UNESCO.

This announcement has been the subject-matter of a correspondence between the World Heritage Centre and the Ministry of the Environment, which resulted in inviting the UNESCO experts to Poland to the 'Białowieża Forest – Facts, Myths and Future' scientific conference, followed by re-invitation of the IUCN expert mission by the Minister of Environment to visit the 'Białowieża Forest' World Heritage WH property at the time convenient to IUCN. At this time, the Minister notified of the decision of 25 March 2016 on approving the annex to the Forest Management Plan (FMP) for the Białowieża Forest Division for the years 2012 – 2021 assuming the acquisition volume of 188 thousand m³.

In response, the World Heritage Centre, by the letter of 20 May 2016 informed that the IUCN advisory mission may visit the Polish part of the 'Białowieża Forest' WH property between 4 and 8 June 2016. The proposed visit of the mission to Poland was confirmed, followed by invitation of the IUCN experts.

Article 1

The IUCN advisory mission shall conduct a field visit to the Polish part of the property and make the necessary assessments, in order to develop recommendations regarding how the recently adopted amendments to the Forest Management Plan would relate to the needs for protection of the Outstanding Universal Value of the World Heritage property, and any possible changes needed in this regard.

Article 2

1. The mission shall review the condition of the WH property and perform its assessment including consideration of the following key issues:

- The existing status of protection and risks to habitats caused by development of harmful organisms;

- Planned protective actions for the forest habitats at risk resulting from the Plan of protection tasks and the annex to the Forest Management Plan for the Białowieża Division for the years 2012 – 2021;
- Protective actions under the Programme for the Białowieża Forest as the UNESCO Cultural and Natural Heritage and Natura 2000 WH property.

2. The programme of the mission will include meetings with all authorities and stakeholders concerned, including representatives of those organizations who have expressed opposite views to the proposed changes to the Forest Management Plan.

Article 3

The following items should be provided to the World Heritage Centre (copied to IUCN) as to enable preparation for the mission:

- Detailed information concerning the amendments to the forest management plan, and the areas to which they would apply in relation to the boundaries of the World Heritage property,
- Information about any changes to management prescriptions that are proposed within the property boundaries, together with full details and maps, as well as copies of the scientific assessments in relation to these changes will be essential.

**IUCN experts mission
to the World Heritage WH property „Białowieża Forest”
Białowieża, 4-8 June 2016.**

Programme

04. 06. 2016 (Saturday)

- Experts' arrival to Warsaw
- Welcome at the airport and transport to the Ministry headquarter
- Inception meeting with representatives of the Ministries of the Environment, Foreign Affairs, Culture and National Heritage
- Lunch
- Departure to Białowieża
- Accommodation in the hotel in Białowieża
- Working-level dinner with representatives of Białowieża Forest WH propertyManagement

05. 06. 2016 (Sunday)

- 8:00 – breakfast
- 9:00 – video presentation and field visit of the Białowieża Forest
- 12:30 – return to the hotel
- 13:00 – lunch
- 14:30 – field visit of the Białowieża Forest
- 18:00 – return to the hotel
- 19:00 – official dinner

06. 06. 2016 (Monday) (Arrival of Mr. Luc Bas, IUCN Regional Director)

- 8:00 – breakfast
- 9:00 – meeting with the stakeholders (plenary session), including:
 - Conservation status and threats of the Białowieża Forest
 - Actions planned in Białowieża Forest Districts according to the annexes to the Forest Management Plan
 - Programme of activities for the Białowieża Forest as UNESCO and NATURA 2000 WH property
- 10:30 – coffee break
- 11:00 – discussion in plenary session
- 13:00 – lunch
- 15:00 – discussion in plenary session
- 16:00 – closing of the meeting
- 16:15 – bilateral meetings with groups of stakeholders
- 19:00 – dinner

07.06.2016 (Tuesday)

- 8:00 – breakfast
- 9:00 – tour of the “Białowieża Forest” WH property
- 12:30 – return to the hotel
- 13:00 – lunch
- 15:30 – debriefing meeting with representatives of the “Białowieża Forest” WH property management and discussion on preliminary results of the mission.
- 16H30 - field visit with NGOs and other officials

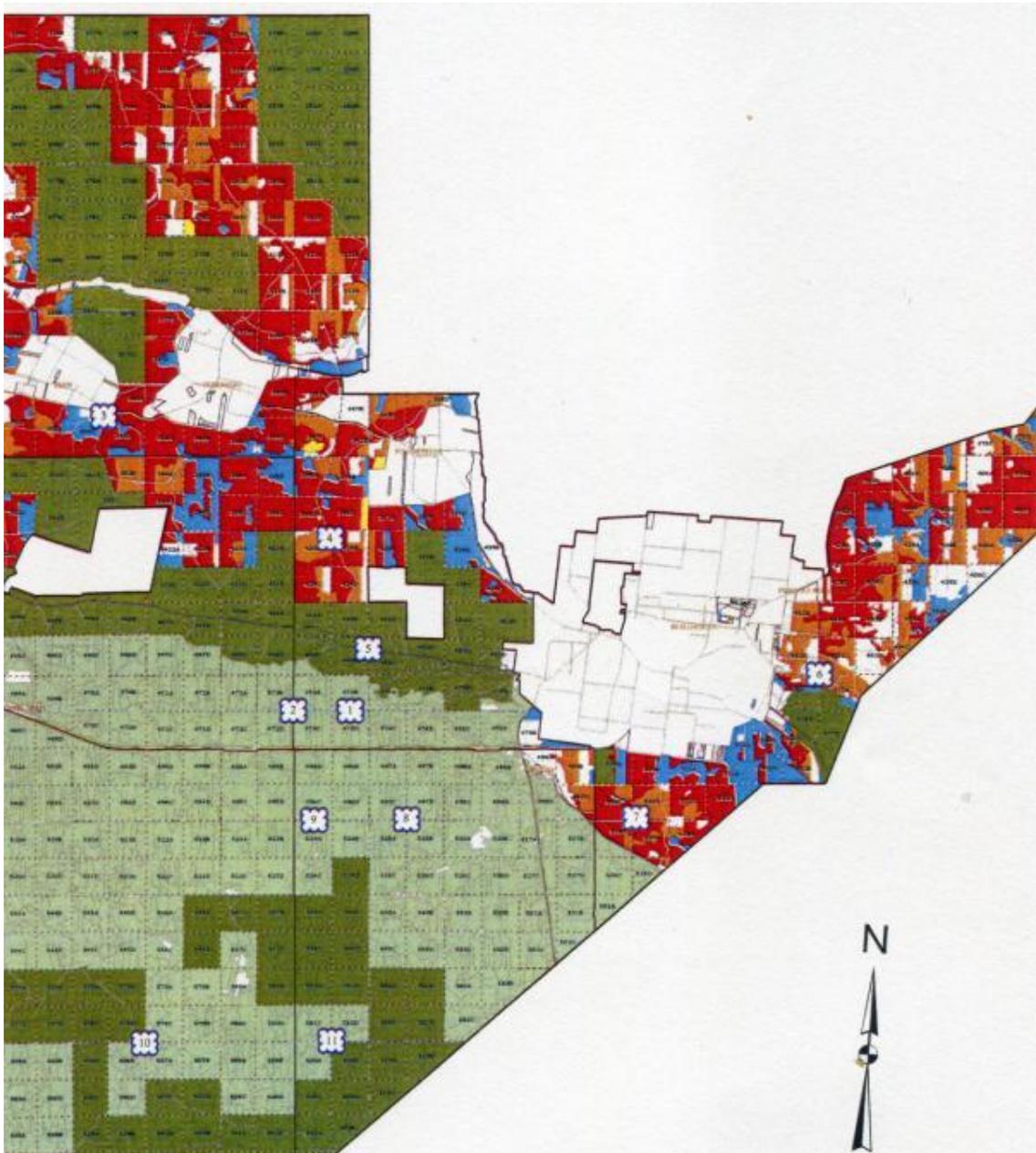
- 19:00 – dinner with representatives of the local communities (district and municipalities)

08.06.2016 (Wednesday)

- 8:00 - breakfast
- 9:00 – IUCN experts' departure to Warsaw
- 13:00 – departure to the Warsaw "Frederic Chopin" Airport

FIELD VISIT

Location of plots
(Source: SFS)



ANNEX 4

| Meeting - 4 June 2016 | | | | |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------|---------------------------|---|---|
| List of participants (Source : MoE) | | | | |
| Title | First Name | Last Name | Position | Organisation |
| Mr. | Herve | Lethier | Expert | IUCN |
| Mr. | Oliver | Avramoski | Expert | IUCN |
| Prof. dr hab. | Bogdan | Brzeziecki | Member | Scientific Council of Forestry |
| Prof. dr hab. | Jacek | Hilszczański | Member | Scientific Council of Forestry |
| Prof. | Janusz | Sowa | President | Scientific Council of Forestry |
| Prof. dr hab. | Jerzy | Starzyk | Member | Scientific Council of Forestry |
| Mr. | Andrzej | Szweda-Lewandowski | Under Secretary of State | MoE |
| Mr. | Krzysztof | Lissowski | Director General for Environmental Protection | MoE |
| | Monika | Figaj | Department Forestry and Nature Protection | MoE |
| Mr. | Jakub | Dziubecki | Department Forestry and Nature Protection | MoE |
| Mr. | Zygmunt | Krzemiński | Department Forestry and Nature Protection | MoE |
| Mrs. | Anna | Żornaczuk-Łuba | Department Forestry and Nature Protection | MoE |
| Mrs. | Ewa | Siddique-Olesiejuk | Department of Sustainable Development | MoE |
| Prof. | Sławomir | Ratajski | Secretary General | Polish National Commission for UNESCO |
| | | | Representative | Ministry of Culture and National Heritage |
| | | | Representative | Ministry of Foreign Affairs |
| Mrs. | Anna | Marconi-Betka | Representative | National Heritage Board of Poland |
| Mr. | Tomasz | Grudniewski | Interpreter | |
| Mrs. | Joanna | Warchoł | Interpreter | |

ANNEX 5

| Meeting - 5 June 2016 | | | | |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------|---------------------------|---|--|
| List of participants (Source : MoE) | | | | |
| Title | First Name | Last Name | Position | Organisation |
| Mr | Herve | Lethier | Expert | IUCN |
| Mr | Oliver | Avramoski | Expert | IUCN |
| Mr. | Andrzej | Szweda-Lewandowski | Under Secretary of State | MoE |
| Dr. | Andrzej | Konieczny | Under Secretary of State | MoE |
| Mr. | Krzysztof | Lissowski | Director General For Environmental Protection | MoE |
| Dr. | Zygmunt | Krzemiński | Department of Nature Conservation | MoE |
| Prof. dr hab. | Bogdan | Brzeziecki | Member | Scientific Council of Forestry |
| Prof. dr hab. | Jacek | Hilszczański | Member | Scientific Council of Forestry |
| Prof. | Janusz | Sowa | President | Scientific Council of Forestry |
| Prof. dr hab. | Jerzy | Starzyk | Member | Scientific Council of Forestry |
| Prof. | Sławomir | Ratajski | Secretary General | Polish National Commission for UNESCO |
| Ks. mgr | Tomasz | Duszkiewicz | Priest | Parafia Św. Jana Chrzciciela w Sadwnem |
| Dr. | Konrad | Tomaszewski | General Director | State Forests |
| Dr. | Renata | Krzyściak-Kosińska | Staff | Regional Directorate of State Forests in Białystok |
| | Jan | Tabor | Staff | State Forests |
| | Marta | Gaworska | Staff | State Forests |
| Mrs. | Magdalena | Stępińska | Head | State Forests Information Center |
| Dr hab. | Rafał | Paluch | Director | Forest Research Institute |
| Mgr inż. | Olimpia | Pabian | Director | Białowieża National Park |
| Mr. | Aleksander | Bołbot | Deputy Director | Białowieża National Park |
| Mr. | Andrzej | Keczyński | Staff | Białowieża National Park |
| Mrs. | Katarzyna | Daleszczyk | Staff | Białowieża National Park |
| Mr. | Wiesław | Klimiuk | Staff | Białowieża National Park |
| Mgr inż. | Andrzej Bogdan | Gołembiewski | Director Regional | Regional Directorate of State Forests in Białystok |
| Mrs. | Beata | Bezubiuk | Regional Director | Regional Directorate for Environmental Protection in Białystok |
| Mr. | Piotr | Czyżyk | Deputy Regional Director | Regional Directorate for Environmental Protection in Białystok |
| Prof. nadzw. dr hab. | Rafał | Kowalczyk | Member | Mammal Research Institute Polish Academy of Science |
| Prof. dr hab. | Zbigniew | Mirek | Member of the National Board of Nature Conservation | Polish Academy of Science |
| Mrs. | Anna | Marconi-Betka | National Heritage Board of Poland | National Heritage Board of Poland |
| Pan | Grzegorz Zenon | Bielecki | Staff | Forest District Hajnówka |
| Pan | Dariusz | Skirko | Staff | Forest District Białowieża |
| Dr | Renata | Krzyściak-Kosińska | Staff | Forest District Białowieża |
| Pan | Andrzej | Nowak | Staff | Forest District Browsk |
| Mr. | Andrzej | Antczak | Staff | Forest District Hajnówka |

| | | | | |
|------|-----------|---------------------------|--|-----|
| Dr. | Agnieszka | Dalbiak | Deputy Director Department of Nature Conservation Department Ochrony Przyrody | MoE |
| Dr. | Monika | Figaj | Department of Forestry | MoE |
| Mrs. | Beata | Wolczuk | Department of Nature Conservation | MoE |
| Dr. | Anna | Żornaczuk-Łuba | Deputy Director Department of Forestry | MoE |
| Mrs. | Ewa | Siddique-Olesiejuk | Department of Sustainable Development and International Cooperation | MoE |
| | | | Press | |
| Mrs. | Joanna | Warchoł | Interpretor | |
| Mr. | Tomasz | Grudniewski | Interpretor | |

ANNEX 6

| MEETING 6 JUNE 2016 | | | | |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------------|--|
| List of participants (Source : MoE) | | | | |
| Title | First Name | Last name | Position | Organisation |
| Mr | Herve | Lethier | Expert | IUCN |
| Mr | Oliver | Avramoski | Expert | IUCN |
| Mr | Luc | Bas | Regional Director | IUCN |
| Mr. | Andrzej | Szweda-Lewandowski | Under Secretary of State | MoE |
| Dr. | Andrzej | Konieczny | Under Secretary of State | MoE |
| Mr. | Mirosław | Romaniuk | Starosta | District Office Hajnówka |
| Mrs. | Elżbieta | Laprus | Municipal County of Białowieża | Gmina Białowieża |
| Mr. | Leon | Małaszewski | Major | Community Dubicze Cerkiewne |
| Mr. | Andrzej | Pieskowicz | Mayor | Community Narew |
| Mr. | Mikołaj | Pawlicz | Mayor | Community Narewka |
| Mr. | Michał | Wróblewski | Mayor | Town of Czeremcha |
| Mr. | Jerzy | Sirak | Mayor | Town of Hajnówka |
| Mr. | Aleksander | Sielicki | Mayor | Town of Kleszczele |
| Prof. | Janusz | Sowa | President | Scientific Council of Forestry |
| Prof. dr hab. | Bogdan | Brzeziecki | Member | Scientific Council of Forestry |
| Prof. dr hab. | Jacek | Hilszczański | Member | Scientific Council of Forestry |
| Prof. dr hab. | Jerzy | Starzyk | Member | Scientific Council of Forestry |
| Prof. | Sławomir | Ratajski | Secretary General | Polish National Commission for UNESCO |
| Ks. mitrant mgr | Michał | Niegierewicz | Priest | Dekanat Hajnówka |
| Ks. Prał. Mgr | Zbigniew - Jan | Niemyjski | Priest | Narew |
| Ks. mgr | Tomasz | Duszkiewicz | Priest | Parafia Św. Jana Chrzciciela w Sadwnem |
| Ks. płk rez. | Michał | Dudicz | orthodox Priest | Prawosławny Ordynat Wojska Polskiego |
| Dr. | Konrad | Tomaszewski | General Director | State Forests |
| Mgr inż. | Andrzej Bogdan | Gołembiewski | Director Regional | Regional Directorate of State Forests in Białystok |
| Dr. | Renata | Krzyściak-Kosińska | Staff | Regional Directorate of State Forests in Białystok |
| Mr. | Jan | Tabor | Staff | State Forests |
| Mr. | Marta | Gaworska | Staff | State Forests |
| Mrs. | Magdalena | Stępińska | Head | State Forests Information Center |
| Mr. | Grzegorz Zenon | Bielecki | Staff | Forest District Hajnówka |
| Mr. | Dariusz | Skirko | Staff | Forest District Białowieża |
| dr | Renata | Krzyściak-Kosińska | Staff | Forest District Białowieża |
| Mr. | Andrzej | Nowak | Staff | Forest District Browsk |
| Mr. | Andrzej | Antczak | Staff | Forest District Hajnówka |
| Dr hab. | Rafał | Paluch | Director | Forest Research Institute |
| Mgr inż. | Olimpia | Pabian | Director | Białowieża National Park |
| Mr. | Aleksander | Bołbot | Deputy Director | Białowieża National Park |
| Mr. | Andrzej | Keczyński | Staff | Białowieża National Park |
| Mrs. | Katarzyna | Daleszczyk | Staff | Białowieża National Park |
| Mr. | Wiesław | Klimiuk | Staff | Białowieża National Park |

| | | | | |
|----------------------|------------|---------------------------|--|---|
| Mr. | Krzysztof | Lissowski | Director General for Environmental Protection | MoE |
| Mrs. | Beata | Bezubiuk | Regional Director for Environmental Protection in Białystok | MoE |
| Mr. | Piotr | Czyżyk | Deputy Regional Director for Environmental Protection in Białystok | MoE |
| Prof. nadzw. dr hab. | Rafał | Kowalczyk | Member | Mammal Research Institute Polish Academy of Science |
| Prof. dr hab. | Zbigniew | Mirek | Member | Polish Academy of Science |
| Prof. dr hab. | Bogdan | Jaroszewicz | Representative | University of Warsaw, Białowieża Geobotanical Station |
| Mrs. | Anna | Marconi-Betka | Member | National Heritage Board of Poland |
| Dr. | Agnieszka | Dalbiak | Deputy Director Department of Nature and Conservation Ochrony Przyrody | MoE |
| Dr. | Anna | Żornaczuk-Łuba | Deputy Director Department of Forestry | MoE |
| Dr. | Monika | Figaj | Department of Forestry | MoE |
| Mrs. | Beata | Wołczuk | Department of Nature Conservation | MoE |
| Mrs. | Ewa | Siddique-Olesiejuk | Department of Sustainable Development and International Cooperation | MoE |
| Mrs. | Dorota | Ochocińska | NGO | OTOP |
| Mr. | Radosław | Ślusarczyk | NGO | Pracownia na rzecz Wszystkich Istot |
| Mr. | Robert | Cyglicki | NGO | Greenpeace |
| Mr. | Anatol | Filipczuk | NGO | Santa |
| Mr. | - | Chlabicz | NGO | Santa |
| Mr. | Walenty | Wasiluk | NGO | Santa |
| Mr. | Mieczysław | Gmiter | NGO | Santa |
| Mr. | Dariusz | Gatkowski | NGO | WWF |
| Mr. | Adam | Bohdan | NGO | Fundacja "Dzika Polska" |
| Mrs. | Joanna | Łapińska | NGO | Lokalsi przeciw wycince Puszczy Białowiejskiej |
| Mrs. | Diana | Maciąga | NGO | Związek Polskich Fotografów Przyrody |
| Mr. | Zenon | Kruczyński | NGO | Towarzystwo Ochrony Krajobrazu |
| Mr. | Arkadiusz | Smyk | NGO | Stowarzyszenie na Rzecz Dialogu Tropinka |
| Mr. | Nuria | Selva | NGO | Society for Conservation Biology-Europe section |
| Mrs. | Agata | Szafraniuk | NGO | Client Earth |
| - | - | - | NGO | Liga Ochrony Przyrody |
| Mrs. | Marta | Wiśniewska | NGO | Greenmind |
| Mr. | Przemysław | Chylarecki | NGO | Greenmind |
| Mr. | Adam | Zbyryt | NGO | Polskie Towarzystwo Ochrony Ptaków |
| Mr. | Artur | Hampel | NGO | DEVANA |
| Mr. | Robert | Mysłajek | NGO | - |
| Mr. | A.W. | Buryj | Director | National Park Bielvezskaja Puscha - Belarus |
| Mr. | W.M. | Arnolbik | Deputy Director | National Park Bielvezskaja Puscha - Belarus |
| Mr. | Jarosław | Żukowski | - | - |
| Mr. | Krzysztof | Oniszczyk | - | - |
| Mr. | Robert | Cierech | - | - |
| Mr. | Józef | Żuk | - | - |
| Mr. | Andrzej | Wrzeszkowski | - | - |
| Mr. | Jan | Adamczuk | - | - |

| | | | | |
|------|---------|---------------------|-------------|---|
| Mrs. | Lucyna | Smoktunowicz | - | - |
| Mr. | Andrzej | Keczyński | - | - |
| Mrs. | Sabina | Nowak | - | - |
| Mr. | Marcin | Gmiter | - | |
| Mr. | Andrzej | Łukasiewicz | - | - |
| Mrs. | Joanna | Wachoł | Interpreter | |
| Mr. | Tomasz | Grudniewski | Interpreter | |

ANNEX 7

| MEETING 7 JUNE 2016 | | | | |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------|---------------------------|--|--|
| List of participants (Source : MoE) | | | | |
| Title | First Name | Last Name | Position | Organisation |
| Mr | Herve | Lethier | Expert | IUCN |
| Mr | Oliver | Avramoski | Expert | IUCN |
| Mr | Luc | Bas | Regional Director for Europe | IUCN |
| Mr. | Andrzej | Szweda-Lewandowski | Under Secretary of State | MoE |
| Dr. | Andrzej | Konieczny | Under Secretary of State | MoE |
| Pan | Mirosław | Romaniuk | President | District Office Hajnówka |
| Pani | Elżbieta | Laprus | Municipal County of Białowieża | Gmina Białowieża |
| Pan | Leon | Małaszewski | Major | Community Dubicze Cerkiewne |
| Pan | Andrzej | Pieskowicz | Mayor | Community Narew |
| Mr. | Mikołaj | Pawlicz | Mayor | Community Narewka |
| Mr. | Michał | Wróblewski | Mayor | Town of Czeremcha |
| Mr. | Jerzy | Sirak | Mayor | Town of Hajnówka |
| Mr. | Aleksander | Sielicki | Mayor | Town of Kleszczel |
| Prof. | Janusz | Sowa | President | Scientific Council of Forestry |
| Prof. dr hab. | Bogdan | Brzeziecki | Member | Scientific Council of Forestry |
| Prof. dr hab. | Jacek | Hilszczański | Member | Scientific Council of Forestry |
| Prof. dr hab. | Jerzy | Starzyk | Member | Scientific Council of Forestry |
| Prof. | Sławomir | Ratajski | Secretary General | Polish National Commission for UNESCO |
| ks. mgr | Tomasz | Duszkiewicz | Priest | Parafia Św. Jana Chrzciciela w Sadwnem |
| Mgr inż. | Olimpia | Pabian | Director | Białowieża National Park |
| Mr. | Aleksander | Bołbot | Deputy Director | Białowieża National Park |
| Mr. | Andrzej | Keczyński | Staff | Białowieża National Park |
| Mr. | Wiesław | Klimiuk | Staff | Białowieża National Park |
| Dr. | Renata | Krzyściak-Kosińska | Staff | Regional Directorate of State Forests in Białystok |
| Mr. | Jan | Tabor | Staff | State Forests |
| Mrs. | Magdalena | Stępińska | Head | State Forests Information Center |
| Pan | Grzegorz Zenon | Bielecki | Staff | Forest District Hajnówka |
| Pan | Dariusz | Skirko | Staff | Forest District Białowieża |
| dr | Renata | Krzyściak-Kosińska | Staff | Forest District Białowieża |
| Pan | Andrzej | Nowak | Staff | Forest District Browsk |
| Mr. | Andrzej | Antczak | Staff | Forest District Hajnówka |
| Dr. | Agnieszka | Dalbiak | Deputy Director Department of Nature Conservation Department Ochrony Przyrody | MoE |
| Dr. | Monika | Figaj | Department of Forestry | MoE |
| Mrs. | Beata | Wołczuk | Department of Nature Conservation | MoE |
| Dr. | Anna | Żornaczuk-Łuba | Deputy Director Department of Forestry | MoE |
| Mrs. | Ewa | Siddique-Olesiejuk | Department of Sustainable Development and International Cooperation | MoE |
| Mrs. | Dorota | Ochocińska | NGO | OTOP |
| Mr. | Radosław | Ślusarczyk | NGO | Pracownia na rzecz Wszystkich Istot |
| Mr. | Robert | Cyglicki | NGO | Greenpeace |
| Mr. | Anatol | Filipczuk | NGO | Santa |

| | | | | |
|---------------|------------|--------------------|----------------|---|
| Mr. | | Chlabicz | NGO | Santa |
| Mr. | Walenty | Wasiluk | NGO | Santa |
| Mr. | Mieczysław | Gmiter | NGO | Santa |
| Mr. | Dariusz | Gatkowski | NGO | WWF |
| Mr. | Adam | Bohdan | NGO | Fundacja "Dzika Polska" |
| Mrs. | Joanna | Łapińska | NGO | Lokalsi przeciw wycince Puszczy Białowieskiej |
| Mrs.; | Diana | Maciąga | NGO | Związek Polskich Fotografów Przyrody |
| Mr. | Zenon | Kruczyński | NGO | Towarzystwo Ochrony Krajobrazu |
| Mr. | Arkadiusz | Smyk | NGO | Stowarzyszenie na Rzecz Dialogu Tropinka |
| Mrs. | Nuria | Selva | NGO | Society for Conservation Biology-Europe section |
| Mrs. | Agata | Szafraniuk | NGO | Client Earth |
| | | | NGO | Liga Ochrony Przyrody |
| Mrs. | Marta | Wiśniewska | NGO | Greenmind |
| Mr. | Przemysław | Chylarecki | NGO | Greenmind |
| Mr. | Adam | Zboryt | NGO | Polskie Towarzystwo Ochrony Ptaków |
| Prof. dr hab. | Bogdan | Jaroszewicz | Representative | University of Warsaw, Białowieża Geobotanical Station |
| Mrs. | Joanna | Warchoł | Interpretor | |
| Mr. | Tomasz | Grudniewski | Interpretor | |



MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT

DLP-I.611.16.2016

DECISION

Pursuant to Article 23(1) of the Act of 28 September 1991 on forests (Journal of Laws of 2015, item 2100) and Article 104 of the Code of Administrative Proceedings, upon examining the motion submitted by the Director General of the State Forests of 18 March, 2016, ref. no.: ZU.6005.14.2015,

I hereby approve

The annex to the forest management plan drawn-up for the years 2012 – 2021 for the Białowieża Forest Division in the Regional Directorate of the State Forests in Białystok, approved by the decision of the Minister of Environment of 9 October 2012, ref. no.: DLP-lpn-611-31/40283/12, amending the forest management plan, referred to above, in the part addressing to:

1. total area of the forests and lands intended for afforestation, as of 1 January 2016 upon amendment – 12 585.30 ha,
2. Volume contribution of timber products (mature and maturing stands), upon amendment – 188 000 m³ of net large timber,
3. Estimated afforestation and restoration area, upon amendment – 28.63 ha.

Statement of Reasons

Pursuant to Article 23(1) of the Act on forests, the Director General of the State Forests by the motion of 18 March 2016 submitted for approval of the annex to the forest management plan for the Białowieża Forest Division, drawn-up for the years 2012 – 2021, with regard to occurrence of significant damage to tree stands in effect of continuing gradation of spruce bark beetle that triggers the necessity of (incidental) logging in the period of forest management plan execution to maintain the forests in adequate sanitary state, ensure sustainability of forest ecosystems, tackle degradation and commence restoration of natural habitats, including these of importance to the Community. The annex to the forest management plan for the Białowieża Forest Division addresses for the most the issue of removing the inhabited spruces to reduce bark beetle gradation (necessary sanitary cutting). In addition, tress will be removed to ensure safety of the visitors to the Białowieża Forest (Białowieża Forest Division), since accumulation of dying-back trees poses a threat to public safety. This applies to tourist routes as well as leisure and recreation WH properties in the forest. Drought taking place in recent years has additionally triggered dieback of spruces and spruce tree stands, which translated into increased fire risk in the Białowieża Forest.

The Regional Director for Environmental Protection in Białystok, by the letter ref. no. WPN.611.38.2015.GP of 12 February 2016 and the State Sanitary Inspector of the Podlaskie Voivodeship in Białystok, by the letter ref. no.: NZ.0523.191.2015 of 10 November 2015, acting pursuant to Article 54(1) of the Act of 3 October 2008 on the provision of information on the environment and its protection, public participation in environmental protection and environmental impact assessments (Journal of Laws of 2013, item 1235, as amended), gave their opinion on the draft annex to the forest management plan drawn up for the Białowieża Forest Division for 2012 – 2021.

Therefore the decision is fully justified.

Any party not satisfied with the decision may, pursuant to Article 127 § 3 of the Code of Administrative Proceedings, appeal to the issuing authority for judicial review within 14 days from receiving the decision.

To:
Director General of the State Forests