

EUROPE / NORTH AMERICA

**ANCIENT AND PRIMEVAL BEECH FORESTS OF THE
CARPATHIANS AND OTHER REGIONS OF EUROPE**

AUSTRIA / CROATIA

WORLD HERITAGE MINOR BOUNDARY MODIFICATION PROPOSAL – IUCN TECHNICAL EVALUATION

ANCIENT AND PRIMEVAL BEECH FORESTS OF THE CARPATHIANS AND OTHER REGIONS OF EUROPE (ALBANIA, AUSTRIA, BELGIUM, BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA, BULGARIA, CROATIA, CZECHIA, FRANCE, GERMANY, ITALY, NORTH MACEDONIA, POLAND, ROMANIA, SLOVAKIA, SLOVENIA, SPAIN, SWITZERLAND, UKRAINE) – ID No. 1133QUINQUIES

1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Ancient and Primeval Beech Forests of the Carpathians and Other Regions of Europe are a transnational serial property counting 94 component parts spanning 18 countries. The combined area of these component parts totals 97,945 ha with buffer zones totalling 294.909 ha.

The property was first inscribed in 2007 (Decision 31 COM 8B.16) with component parts in Slovakia and Ukraine, and extended in 2010 to include further component parts in Germany. In 2016, eleven States Parties submitted another transnational extension nominating 67 additional component parts, which were approved by the World Heritage Committee in 2017 (Decision 41 COM 8B.7). A third extension was approved by the Committee in 2021, modifying the boundaries of existing component parts in Slovakia and expanding the property to its current extent (Decision 44 COM 8B.32). IUCN's previous evaluations can be found in documents WHC-04/28.COM/INF.14B; WHC-07/31.COM/INF.8B.2; WHC-11/35.COM/INF.8B2, WHC/17/41.COM/INF.8B2 and WHC/17/44.COM/INF.8B2, which contain relevant analyses.

The current inscribed site is also to be considered in relation to State of Conservation issues under item 7B of the agenda of the same Committee meeting at which this minor boundary modification proposal is tabled.

The relevant documentation is available at <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1133/documents/>.

2. SUMMARY OF PROPOSED BOUNDARY MODIFICATION

Austria and Croatia submitted a minor boundary modification proposing a change of boundaries of three existing component parts located in two different areas (see maps 1-3).

Firstly, Austria proposes to enlarge the *Dürrenstein* component part by adding *Lassingtal*, doubling the size of the component part from 1,867.45 ha to 3,685.27 ha and its buffer zone from 1,545.05 ha to 3,089.78 ha. *Dürrenstein* is located in the Northern Limestone Alps, on a mountain ridge stretching from southwest to northeast, enlarging the component part to include the south and south-eastern facing slopes of the ridge.

Secondly, Croatia proposes to merge the component parts of *Paklenica National Park – Suva draga-Klimenta* and *Paklenica National Park – Oglavinovac-Javornik* to become one single component called *Paklenica National Park*. Currently, the two component parts total 2,031.78 ha with two separate buffer zones of 810.11 ha. The area of the consolidated component part would slightly increase to 2,036.81 ha with a buffer zone of 824.86 ha.

The intention to revise these boundaries was forecast by the State Party reporting on the state of conservation of the property in 2018 and 2019, and noted by the Committee in its Decision 43 COM 7B.

3. IMPACT ON OUTSTANDING UNIVERSAL VALUE

Regarding the enlargement of the *Dürrenstein* component part (Austria), IUCN notes that the newly proposed area in *Lassingtal* would add further ecological values and ecotypes of Beech Forest, which are not represented within the current boundaries. This includes especially dry beech forest communities from the phytosociological order of the *Cephalanthero-Fagion*. The proposed area would also cover the ecological gradient from the mountain ridge to the streams of *Lassingbach* and *Salza*, extending over an altitudinal range from 600 m a.s.l. to 1,800 m a.s.l. Around half of the forest stands are older than 180 years, which is rare on the European continent. Avalanche disturbance on the south-facing slopes plays an important role in the newly proposed area. The disturbance regime is different from the north-facing slopes within the current boundaries.

The proposed addition is located within the wider Wildalpener Salztal Nature Reserve (IUCN Category V) and within a Natura 2000 site. A strict non-intervention regime applies inside the proposed enlarged component part, which is designated as Wilderness Area. Both the component part and buffer zone are subject to an IUCN Category Ib protection regime. While *Lassingtal* is located in a different federal state (Styria), the management body responsible for *Dürrenstein* will also be managing the proposed *Lassingtal* area.

The buffer zone is designed according to a zonation approach that is being progressively implemented across the entire transnational property. A mostly narrow zone of strict protection (non-intervention regime) borders the nominated area. The remaining

part of the buffer zone has no active management and natural processes are enabled in more than 75% of this zone, according to the nomination dossier. However, limited traditional use rights exist for timber in the buffer zone, however the nomination dossier notes that these rights are only rarely being used and the use for timber is generally retreating. As all parts of the buffer zone serve as an important corridor given the curved shape of the nominated component part, IUCN recommends that the phasing-out of timber use in the buffer zone should be formalised in the near future.

Overall, IUCN considers that the significant extension across the ridge to also include the south-facing slopes clearly adds value to the existing area improving its integrity and being subject to the same protection regime.

Regarding the modification of the two component parts located in *Paklenica National Park* (Croatia), IUCN notes that the proposed modification would combine the *Suva draga-Klimenta* and *Oglavinovac-Javornik* by connecting them likewise across a ridge line. This proposal is intended to improve connectivity and thereby strengthen the integrity of the merged component part. Furthermore, the boundary change is intended to correct the current buffer zone, which includes areas outside the national park, and thereby achieve more accurate zoning. The mismatch between the current buffer zone and the national park boundaries is due to different spatial references used in the 2017 extension nomination.

The proposed modification of the boundaries would ensure that not only the component area but also the entire buffer zone is subject to the protection regime of the wider *Paklenica National Park* (IUCN Category II) area and the overlapping Natura 2000 site. A strict non-intervention regime would be applied in the component area, ensured by the same management body, i.e. *Paklenica National Park Public Institution*. The modification would also result in an excision of small areas from the property and buffer zone, in order to exclude a mountain hamlet. This hamlet is being used to accommodate tourists. As these used areas are located in the vicinity of the component area, IUCN recommends the State Party of Croatia ensure that the areas excluded from the current component areas and buffer zone are not be subject to increased use, especially if such use results in a negative impact on the Outstanding Universal Value of the transnational serial property.

The proposed buffer zone would envelop the consolidated component part at a width of at least 150m. The entire buffer zone would be subject to the same non-intervention regime as the component part itself. In addition, IUCN notes that the entire area of the national park is not subject to forest management. The proposed component part would thus benefit from more than 6,500 ha of strict protection surrounding the component part. Therefore, IUCN recommends considering an extension of the buffer zone to align with the boundaries of the national park.

Overall, IUCN considers that merging the currently separate component parts of *Paklenica National Park* –

Suva draga-Klimenta and *Paklenica National Park – Oglavinovac-Javornik* would clearly improve connectivity and hence the integrity of the component area whilst remaining subject to the same protection regime.

In conclusion, IUCN considers that the minor boundary modification would appear to result in positive outcomes for the protection of the OUV of the transnational serial property, adding values and enhancing the property's integrity. Therefore, this minor boundary modification would also address some of the existing property's shortcomings identified by IUCN in its 2017 evaluation report (see document WHC/17/41.COM/INF.8B2) in the case of two component parts. While welcoming this proposed improvement of the existing property, IUCN recommends that the protection of the modified component parts would be further strengthened by (a) phasing-out completely any remaining use of timber in the *Dürrenstein-Lassingtal* (Austria) buffer zone to fully leverage the corridor function of the entire buffer zone; (b) ensuring that the small areas excised from the current component parts and buffer zones in *Paklenica National Park* (Croatia) will not be subject to increased use, especially not if such use could have a negative impact on the Outstanding Universal Value of the transnational serial property; and by (c) considering an extension of the buffer zone to align with the boundaries of *Paklenica National Park* (Croatia). Based on this, IUCN recommends that the State Party is requested to submit further information on these three points by 1 December 2023 as part of the State Party state of conservation report.

4. RECOMMENDATION

IUCN recommends that the World Heritage Committee adopts the following draft decision:

The World Heritage Committee,

1. Having examined documents WHC/22/45.COM/8B.ADD and WHC/22/45.COM/INF.8B2.ADD,

2. Recalling Decision **31 COM 8B.16**, **35 COM 8B.13**, **41 COM 8B.7**, **44 COM 7B.99**, **44 COM 8B.32**, adopted at its 31st (Christchurch, 2007), 35th (UNESCO, Paris, 2011), 41st (Kraków, 2017) and 44th (Fuzhou/online, 2021) sessions respectively,

3. Approves the proposed minor boundary modification for the **Ancient and Primeval Beech Forests of the Carpathians and Other Regions of Europe, Albania, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czechia, France, Germany, Italy, North Macedonia, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Switzerland, Ukraine**, enlarging the *Dürrenstein* component part (Austria) to become *Dürrenstein-Lassingtal*, and merging the component parts *Paklenica National Park – Suva draga-Klimenta* and *Paklenica National Park – Oglavinovac-Javornik* (Croatia) to become *Paklenica National Park* component part;

4. Recommends the State Party of Austria to further strengthen the protection of the enlarged component part of *Dürrenstein-Lassingtal* by phasing-out completely any remaining use of timber in the buffer zone to optimize the corridor function of the entire buffer zone;

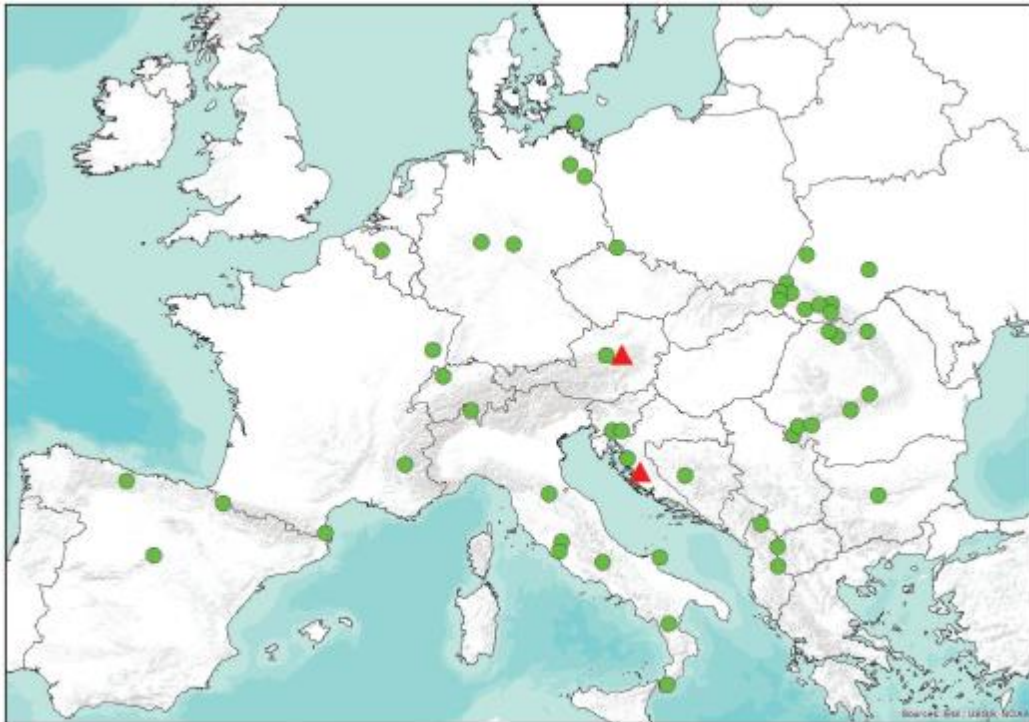
5. Also recommends the State Party of Croatia to

- a) ensure that the small areas excised from the component parts and buffer zones in *Paklenica National Park* will not be subject to increased use, especially if such use could result in a

negative impact on the Outstanding Universal Value of the transnational serial property, and
b) consider an extension of the buffer zone to align with the boundaries of *Paklenica National Park*.

5. Requests the States Parties of Austria and Croatia to submit further information to the World Heritage Centre in response to above recommendations by **1 December 2024** as part of the State Party state of conservation report.

Maps 1-3: World Heritage property and proposed minor boundary modification



Overview of the Ancient and Primeval Beech Forests of the Carpathians and Other Regions of Europe; green=existing sites, red=suggested minor boundary modifications

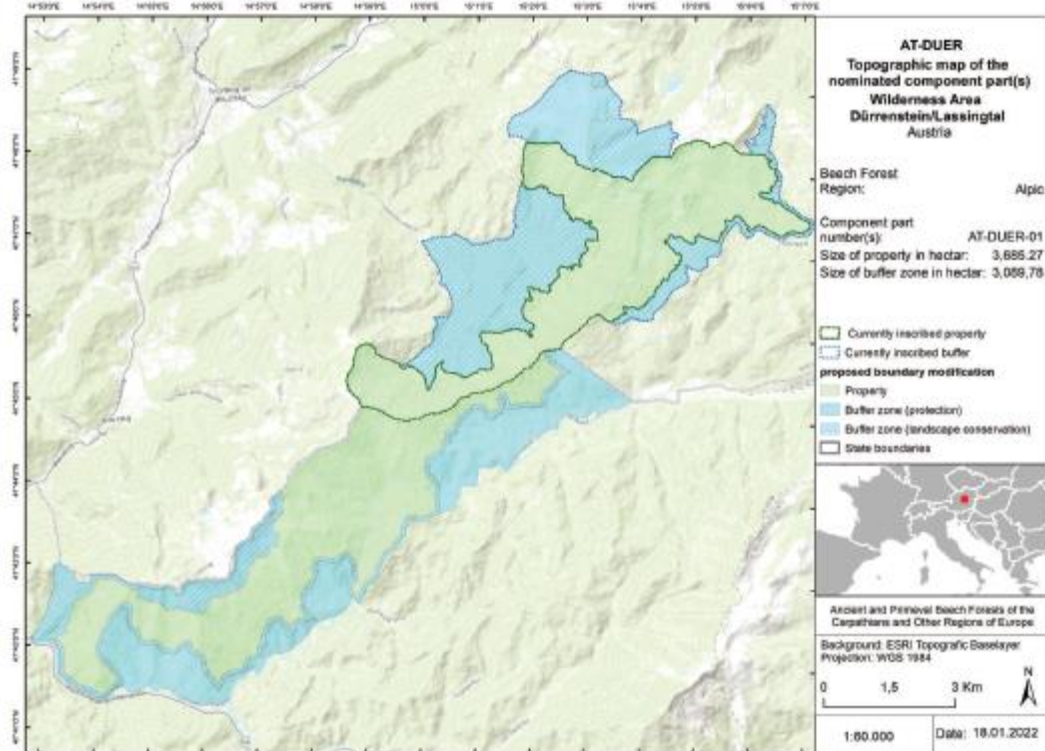


Figure 2: Original and proposed revision of the delimitations of component part and buffer zones of the Dürrenstein-Lassingtal Wilderness Area (AT)

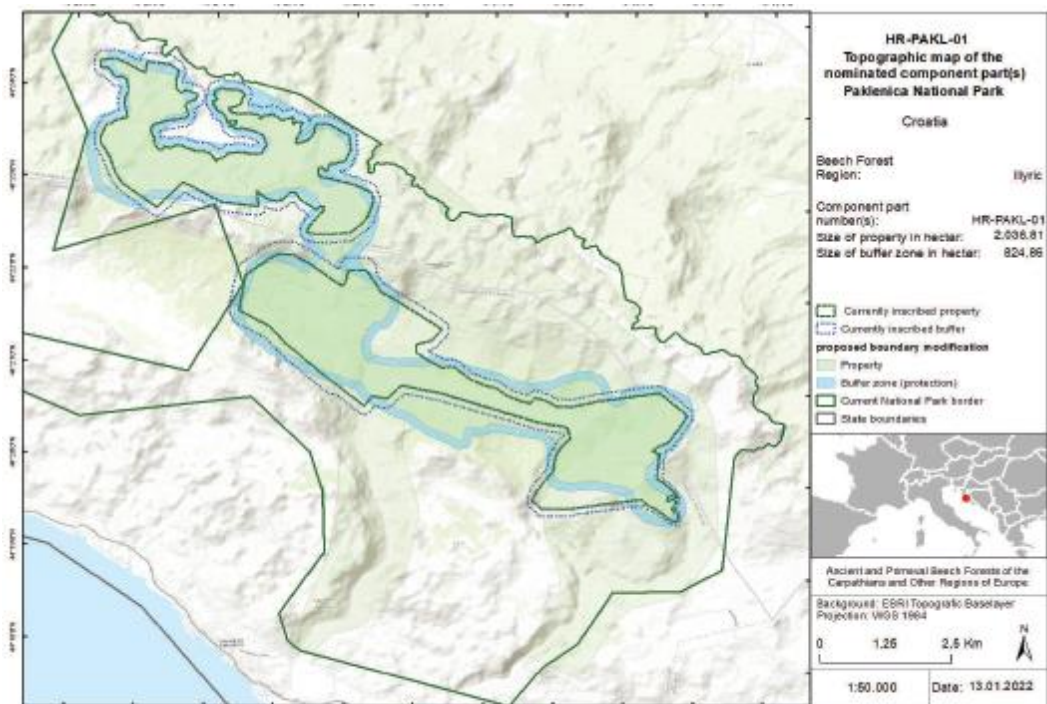


Figure 4: Original and proposed revision of the delimitations of component part and buffer zones of the Dürrenstein-Lassingtal Wilderness Area (AT)