

-State Party Report

on the State of Conservation of the Ancient and Primeval Beech Forests of the Carpathians and Other Regions of Europe

submitted by Belgium on behalf of the States Parties

Albania, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czechia, France, Germany, Italy,
North Macedonia, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Switzerland, and Ukraine,

Reference Number: 1133ter

in response to World Heritage Committee Decision **45 COM 7B.20** and to World Heritage Committee
Decision **45 COM 8B.56**

[for submission by 1st December 2024]

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1. Executive summary of the report

This State of Conservation Report is submitted by Belgium and was prepared by the States Parties Albania, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czechia, France, Germany, Italy, North Macedonia, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Switzerland, and Ukraine as requested by UNESCO in the World Heritage Committee Decision 45 COM 7B.20¹ and Decision 45 COM 8B.56². The report also provides an update on the implementation of the recommendations of the 2019 joint Reactive Monitoring mission and provides feedback on certain articles of Decision 45 COM 7.2.

Concerns regarding forestry interventions in buffer zones have prompted **Spain, Italy, and Germany** to take action, while all States Parties have made progress on the finalized **Guidance Document for buffer zone management**. **Romania** is working on the management plan for Domogled–Valea Cernei National Park, expected to be approved in 2025, and exploring alternative options for the National Road 66A to mitigate impacts on its Outstanding Universal Value (OUV). The ongoing Cerna-Belareca hydropower facility has raised concerns, but Romania assures no new hydropower projects are planned, and that existing works will not lead to deforestation. In this regard, an official notification will be sent to the World Heritage Centre containing further information on the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA). **Italy** reported a wildfire in the Valle Infernale component of Aspromonte National Park, while **Belgium's** Environmental Impact Assessments for road upgrades in the buffer zone concluded no significant effects on UNESCO values. **Albania** has reinforced strict protections in two components and their buffer zones, with no reported deforestation or illegal logging incidents in 2024. A monitoring program for the "Drita" hydropower plant showed no adverse impacts on the Gashi River's old beech forests. Efforts to close access roads to buffer zones are ongoing, but challenges remain from local economic and cultural activities. Romania is developing a specific forest management regime for buffer zones, prioritizing natural processes, and limiting interventions. Amendments to **Albania's** Law No 81/2017 "On Protected Areas" align with EU environmental standards. In **Austria**, ADX holds a gas exploration license near **Kalkalpen National Park**. Although initial drilling did not yield clear results, current activities are not expected to impact national parks or World Heritage sites. A wildfire on July 18, 2024, in **Bulgaria's** Central Balkan National Park burned 85 hectares, primarily in the buffer zone, while a fire near **Slovenia's** Virgin Forest Krokav spread to 34 hectares but did not affect the UNESCO site. **The management of the UNESCO Beech WHS** is now organised by a **permanent secretariat**. This permanent secretariat is funded and staffed by the States Parties of Austria, Belgium and Slovakia and started in 2024. The collaboration between the three States Parties was formalised in the "Agreement". The collaboration between the Permanent secretariat and the JMC (joint management committee) was formalised in the "rules of engagement". The UNESCO Beech WHS worked on the improvement of its governance (**Cfr annex 7.5**). An analysis was made by the JMC using the method of "**enhancing our heritage toolkit 2.0**." This analysis will be used as base to develop the **multi-annual strategy** of UNESCO Beech WHS.

¹ **Decision: 45 COM 7B.20** -12. Finally requests the States Parties to submit to the World Heritage Centre, by 1 December 2024, a joint updated report on the state of conservation of the property and the implementation of the above, including a response to the Committee's requests in Decision 44 COM 8B.32 to all States Parties concerned with this transnational serial property, and an update on the implementation of the recommendations of the 2019 joint Reactive Monitoring mission, for examination by the World Heritage Committee at its 47th session

² **Decision 45 COM 8B.56** -6 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 of conservation report.

2. Response to the Decisions of the World Heritage Committee

The following chapters address the requests raised by UNESCO in World Heritage Committee **Decision 45 COM 7B.20**³ in paragraph 3 to 11, and in World Heritage Committee **Decision 45 COM 8B.56**⁴ in paragraph 4 and 5 and an update on the implementation of the **recommendations of the 2019 joint Reactive Monitoring mission**. The following paragraphs of **Decision 45 COM 7.2** are also included in this report :28,29,30, and 44.

- A) In **Decision 45 COM 7B.20-12**, the Committee requested to include in this SOC report a **response to the Committee's requests in Decision 44 COM 8B.32** to all States Parties concerned with this transnational serial property. This information can be found in the **SOC report which was sent in November 2023**.

B) Decision: 45 COM 7B.20

3 Notes with satisfaction that, further to relevant decisions, the joint Reactive Monitoring mission in 2014, the joint Advisory mission in 2018, and the modification of the boundaries of the component parts in Slovakia approved at its extended 44th session, the protection regime of the Slovak component parts is now in line with the requirements of the Operational Guidelines, thanks the **State Party of Slovakia** for its continuous work and cooperation to address these issues and requests the State Party of Slovakia to continue implementing any pending recommendations from the 2014 and 2018 missions, and to report on any new developments in line with Paragraph 172 of the Operational Guidelines;

4 Notes with serious concern that, in several buffer zones, it remains possible to conduct impactful forestry interventions such as shelterwood cuts and clear-cuts, and requests furthermore **the States Parties of Italy and Spain** to consider adapting intervention regimes to favour a natural transition towards more resilient natural beech forests, and the **State Party of Germany** to consider immediately banning any clear-cuts and significantly expanding the area of non-intervention in the buffer zone of the Grumsin component;

5 Welcomes the significant progress made by all States Parties in developing the **"Guidance document on buffer zone management and buffer zone zonation"** of the transnational property, and also requests the States Parties to finalise the document in line with the recommendations of the IUCN review, in order to ensure its effectiveness, in particular by developing a specific mechanism to ensure that areas of strict protection are significantly increased and that the use of interventions within the buffer zones is minimised beyond the minimum standard outlined in the Guidance document;

6 Commends the **State Party of Ukraine** for legislative changes ensuring that no logging and sanitary cuts are permitted in the buffer zones of the Ukrainian component parts, also commends **the State Party of Romania** for its plan to significantly expand to 75% the area subject to a non-intervention regime in Domogled – Valea Cernei National Park and further requests the State Party of Romania to provide more details on the timeline to reach this target and the areas that shall benefit from the

³ **Decision: 45 COM 7B.20 -12**. Finally requests the States Parties to submit to the World Heritage Centre, by 1 December 2024, a joint updated report on the state of conservation of the property and the implementation of the above, including a response to the Committee's requests in Decision 44 COM 8B.32 to all States Parties concerned with this transnational serial property, and an update on the implementation of the recommendations of the 2019 joint Reactive Monitoring mission, for examination by the World Heritage Committee at its 47th session

⁴ **Decision 45 COM 8B.56 -6** 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 of conservation report.

non-intervention regime in the future whilst ensuring that no impactful interventions take place in proximity of the respective component parts;

7 Welcomes that the potential widening and paving of a forest track crossing the property and its buffer zone (National Road 66A) in Romania has been temporarily put on hold, also notes that the **State Party of Romania** is working to identify the best option in order to safeguard the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the property and urges it to consider an appropriate alternative route to avoid any negative impacts on the OUV of the property;

8 Recalls its clear position that the construction of dams with large reservoirs within the boundaries of World Heritage properties is incompatible with their World Heritage status, and requests moreover the **State Party of Romania** to provide the World Heritage Centre with detailed information on the Cerna-Belareca hydropower facility and to submit the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), undertaken in accordance with the Guidance and Toolkit for Impact Assessments in a World Heritage Context, once available, to the World Heritage Centre for review by IUCN, as required by Paragraph 118bis of the Operational Guidelines;

9 Further notes that a forest fire affected a part of the Valle Infernale component in Italy, and requests moreover the **State Party of Italy** to detail the cause of the fire, the exact amount of old-growth forest affected, if any, and provide a map of the affected area.

10. Takes note of the plans of the **State Party of Belgium** to undertake a Strategic Environmental Assessment and individual EIAs for the road upgrade programme located in the buffer zone of the property, and requests moreover the State Party of Belgium to ensure that these impact assessments are undertaken in accordance with the Guidance and Toolkit for Impact Assessments in a World Heritage Context and submitted to the World Heritage Centre for review by IUCN, before final decisions on the project are taken that would be difficult to reverse;

11 Notes furthermore the efforts of the **State Party of Belgium** to expand and consolidate the protected areas that comprise component parts of the property and encourages the State Party to pursue options towards a boundary modification that would enhance the OUV of the property consistent with the integrity requirements of the Operational Guidelines.

C) World Heritage Committee Decision 45 COM 8B.56

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;

D) Recommendations of the 2019 joint Reactive Monitoring mission

Recommendations for the Albanian and Romanian components

The mission recommends the State Party of Albania to:

1. continue to ensure the strict protection of the two Albanian components and their buffer zones through rigorous enforcement of the relevant forest laws and regulations in both national parks and to ensure the prevention of illegal logging in their whole territories.
2. develop a specific monitoring program on the potential ecological effects of the existing hydropower facility in the buffer zone of the Lumi i Gashit component part and to report the results

of such programme to the World Heritage Centre (WHC) through the state of conservation reporting process and, if concluded necessary, develop appropriate measures to minimize and manage those effects.

3. strengthen the operational fire-fighting capacities and equipment of the local public services, in order to best prevent and combat fire in the beech forest ecosystems, especially in the two components.
4. physically close the entrance of the roads in the buffer zones of both components and limit access exclusively to the public services and property owners and users.
5. improve marking of the components and buffer zone boundaries on the ground.
6. enhance technical, human, and financial resources of the park management to strengthen significantly the management capacities for the two Albanian components of the property.
7. work further on a potential extension of the existing Lumi I Gashit component, with a view to strengthening the whole property's OUV and improving the long-term preservation and integrity of the component.
8. consult the WHC and IUCN on potential future modifications of the legal regime for the protection of species and/or hunting regulation and management, which may have deleterious effects on the property's components in Albania, prior to taking any decision on this matter.

The mission recommends the State party of Romania to:

9. define a forest management regime specific to the buffer zones that would be in keeping with the aim to ensure consistency and coordination across all buffer zones within the property, and that would promote the natural and unimpeded, progressive aging of the beech forest ecosystems present in the buffer zones. This regime should ensure an ecological transition between the component parts and the surrounding forest ecosystems of high ecological value, including those located in the buffer zones and, in case of Romania, the virgin and quasi-virgin forests listed in the "National Catalogue of Virgin Forests." This regime should prioritize natural processes and be based on "pro-forestation" efforts and clear guidelines on appropriate intervention activities and limits, in the sense of Decision 43 COM 7B.13 of the World Heritage Committee. It could include the establishment of a functional network of "aging" and "senescence" patches of forest, in the buffer zones, aiming to contribute to strengthening and extending the ancient and primeval beech forest ecosystems, and supporting the natural processes leading to their conservation and naturalness over time:

- "pro-forestation" efforts should be interpreted as all forest management activities seeking to promote natural tree reproduction and development; o "aging patches" should be interpreted as forest areas managed in such a way as leaving the trees growing beyond their usual rotation age, up to twice this duration (200-240 years in case of Romania).
- "Senescence patches" should be interpreted as forest areas deliberately abandoned to a spontaneous evolution of natural processes, until the complete collapse of the trees and resumption of the silvigenetic cycle (forest cycle).

10. combat and prosecute any illegal logging activities in the two national parks in which the components of the property are located, as they may negatively impact on natural processes in beech forest ecosystems and thus on the property's OUV.

11. abandon plans to upgrade the national road 66A, due to the potential impact of this project on the property's integrity and its OUV.

12. In order to resolve the discrepancies between the reported and actual size of the Cheile Nerei-Beușnița component part, submit to the WHC an official letter, including a map, specifying the exact area of this component as inscribed in 2017 and as covered by the boundary polygons regardless of different land uses.

13. inform the WHC, in line with Paragraph 172 of the OG of any proposal to extend or upgrade hydropower facilities within the property's components and their buffer zones, before any decision is taken.

14. strictly protect all ancient and primeval beech forest ecosystems that have not been included in the property, in order to foster the long-term preservation of those exceptional ecosystems; priority should be given to those located in proximity of the components visited by the mission, to enhance connectivity.

Recommendations for the transnational property as a whole

The mission recommends that the States Parties of the transnational property:

15. conduct on-the-ground assessments in the buffer zones and component parts where impactful forestry interventions such as clear-cuts and shelterwood cutting have been permitted, to ascertain the extent to which the effective protection of the respective components might be compromised and the OUV negatively affected.

16. enhance the connective and protective functions of the buffer zones and strengthen the integrity of the property by minimizing the use of forestry interventions.

17. ensure that any interventions avoid interference with the natural processes of the beech forest ecosystem taking into account the natural expansion of their surface and to strengthen their resilience.

18. support undisturbed natural processes in all components and their buffer zones through natural regeneration, pro-forestation, aging of forest stands beyond conventional rotation ages, and to not take any decision that may affect the dynamics of such processes after external natural or anthropogenic events, such as fire, within or near the property's components.

E) Decision 45 COM 7.2

Infrastructure development

28. Strongly urges all States Parties, development proponents and financiers to incorporate the Guidance and Toolkit for Impact Assessments in a World Heritage Context into planning and decision-making processes to contribute to safeguarding the OUV of World Heritage properties, in line with Paragraph 3 above.

29. Requests all States Parties to:

1. Inform the World Heritage Centre of any planned developments located within a World Heritage property, its buffer zone or in its wider setting that may impact on its OUV, prior to making any decision that would be difficult to reverse, in conformity with Paragraph 172 of the Operational Guidelines,
2. Ensure that the potential impacts of developments on the OUV are appropriately assessed, in line with Paragraph 3 above,
3. Ensure that no proposed developments proceed that would negatively impact on the OUV,

4. Ensure that no deliberate measures are taken, which might damage directly or indirectly the inscribed properties situated on the territory of other States Parties to the Convention, in conformity with Article 6 of the World Heritage Convention.

Corporate Sector and the World Heritage 'no-go' commitment

30. Welcomes the launch of the UNESCO Guidance for the World Heritage 'No-Go' Commitment: *Global standards for corporate sustainability* as a means to assist the corporate sector to develop or update their policies and strategies to safeguard World Heritage, and thanks the Government of Flanders (Belgium) for its financial support.

Earth observation and spatial data for World Heritage conservation

44. Invites States Parties to contribute to the above-mentioned platforms and tools with already available GIS data, complementary narrative and visual analysis, expertise, networks, and financial resources.

2.1.Slovakia (response to 45 COM 7B.20 .3)

3 Notes with satisfaction that, further to relevant decisions, the joint Reactive Monitoring mission in 2014, the joint Advisory mission in 2018, and the modification of the boundaries of the component parts in Slovakia approved at its extended 44th session, the protection regime of the Slovak component parts is now in line with the requirements of the Operational Guidelines, thanks the State Party of Slovakia for its continuous work and cooperation to address these issues and requests the State Party of Slovakia to continue implementing any pending recommendations from the 2014 and 2018 missions, and to report on any new developments in line with Paragraph 172 of the Operational Guidelines;

The state party Slovakia continues implementing any pending recommendations from the 2014 and 2018 missions. In conformity with recommendation 2 (R2) from the 2014 mission, in line with recommendations 5, 8, 14, 16 and 17 from the 2018 mission and Decision 41 COM 7B.4 (paragraph 4) * (also Decision 39 COM 7B.19), Slovakia would like to announce that the Integrated Management Plan (IMP) for the Slovak components of the property cannot be approved yet.

Its approval by the Government of the Slovak Republic is possible only after the approval of the zonation of the Poloniny National Park, to which it is a continuation.

The zonation of the Poloniny National Park is currently underway and is planned to be completed in 2025.

This zonation of the national park will have as main specific objective to ensure that all current and future commercial activities in and around the WH property are regulated and adapted in order to be fully compatible with the conservation objectives of these areas, and the protection of OUV. Slovakia has updated and harmonised the Forest Management Plans, with the non-intervention management regime in the core zones of World Heritage components.

Slovakia has established a national steering group which follows the structure of the Integrated Site Management System. At the local level, a participatory process for the management of the UNESCO World Heritage Site has been established with the involvement of local stakeholders. This will be ensured by panels of local representatives. Panels represent an important specific level of governance of the national steering group of the site, which includes stakeholders, i.e. owners/users

of the land, municipalities, representatives of organisations that have a legal relationship with the site, also research organisations, tourism organisations, NGOs, managers of neighbouring and bordering areas and municipalities. The role of the Poloniny NP Panel is to address local interests, activities and development and rights to the World Heritage Site. The coordination of the Panel is the responsibility of NP Poloniny, the first meeting of the Poloniny NP Panel took place at the 5th meeting of the Poloniny National Park Council held on 16 May 2024 in Snina.⁵

2.2. Spain, Italy, and Germany (response to 45 COM 7B.20 .4)

4 Notes with serious concern that, in several buffer zones, it remains possible to conduct impactful forestry interventions such as shelterwood cuts and clear-cuts, and requests furthermore the States Parties of Italy and Spain to consider adapting intervention regimes to favour a natural transition towards more resilient natural beech forests, and the State Party of Germany to consider immediately banning any clear-cuts and significantly expanding the area of non-intervention in the buffer zone of the Grumsin component;

Italy

The UNESCO World Heritage Forests in the Casentino Forests, Monte Falterona, and Campigna National Park. The ancient beech forests of the National Park were included in the UNESCO World Heritage list following a decision in July 2017, which extended the recognition already granted to the beech forests of the Carpathians to those in 10 other European countries. The site is now called “Primeval Beech Forests of the Carpathians and Other Regions of Europe.”

The designated area for the National Park includes **the Sasso Fratino Integral Reserve**, the first Integral Reserve established in Italy in 1959, covering a total of approximately 782 hectares (core area) and a vast surrounding area of about 6,942 hectares (buffer zone), totalling approximately 7,724.28 hectares. This is the largest site designated in Italy and one of the most extensive ancient forest complexes in Europe.

Through the instrument of “**Nulla Osta**” (formal approval) of the Forest Management Plan prepared by the managing bodies, the Park Authority has outlined a strategy for the “UNESCO Buffer Zone.” (See the original “Nulla Osta” of the Forest Management Plan attached in **annex 7.1**. The relevant part has been highlighted)

Considering its high ecological-environmental and cultural value, the plan aims to promote and enhance a general increase in the aging levels of forest formations by refraining from any silvicultural intervention across the entire surface of the Regional Forest Estate within it.

This choice is driven by the desire to provide the buffer area with a strengthened protective function for the “core area,” to be achieved through increased naturalness levels, biological functionality of ecosystems, and exceptionally low anthropogenic disturbance (a conservation objective indicated for most Sites of Community Importance).

In partial derogation of the previous point, for the same forest parcels, the possibility of limited silvicultural interventions aimed at maintaining existing infrastructure, such as roads, natural engineering works, hydraulic forest arrangements, securing the trail network, and those related to the containment and/or restoration of gravitational phenomena, is preserved.

⁵ <https://www.nppoloniny.sk/5-zasadnutie-rady-np/>

For the aforementioned interventions, however, it is still necessary to define beforehand, through appropriate verification and comparison inspections, the actual operational needs to be established and authorized on a case-by-case basis.

The above-described direction and decisions established in the Nulla Osta (which therefore has prescriptive value) have, however, been previously agreed upon at the political level with the Managing Authority, which has positively accepted the prescription, sharing its premises and goals.

Thus, it is not merely an imposition by the Park Authority but a strategy that has been agreed upon and formalized through mandatory administrative acts.

The objectives intended to be achieved with the presented prescriptive framework are to enhance the provisions and biological and ecological complexities of these forest systems, through an action of addition and accumulation, within which the different biotic and abiotic components can increasingly structure, branch out, and interconnect, allowing energy and mineral flows to produce incremental effects. In this way, organization, diversity, and stability will increasingly be created; the deep alterations in species composition, structural arrangements, levels of organic biomass richness, and every profile of diversity will be progressively corrected and compensated within temporal horizons whose duration is not that of classical silvicultural cycles, but rather linked to the average longevity typical of the tree species characterizing forest populations.

Finally, it should be noted that the non-intervention areas included in the UNESCO buffer zone possess all the characteristics to be identified as “preferred areas” for the identification of “strictly protected areas,” as provided for by the “EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030” and the “National Biodiversity Strategy 2030.”

Spain

The State Party of Spain acknowledges the concern regarding forestry interventions in buffer zones and is actively addressing the issue. Shelterwood cutting is currently conducted in only one of the three clusters included in the World Heritage property, namely Hayedos de Navarra. This intervention impacts on less than one percent of the area on a yearly basis; each cutting is limited to less than 5 hectares, and it is done ensuring the preservation of habitat trees and deadwood in order to promote biodiversity. Also, thinning on *Pinus sylvestris* afforestation is being carried out in the buffer zone of Hayedos de Ayllón. These actions are part of a gradual strategy to transition conifer stands into young beech forests and finally into old-growth beech forests. In the cluster Hayedos de Picos de Europa, no shelterwood cuts take place, but just limited fostering for firewood near the villages. In the designated protection subzone, no interventions will be permitted in any of the three clusters. Efforts are underway to limit the impact of interventions, and Spain is progressively considering its forest management system towards a selection-based approach in buffer zones, in line with the objective of fostering a natural transition to more resilient beech forests.

Germany

The State Party Germany thanks the World Heritage Committee for its request.

The State Party Germany wants to emphasize and reiterate that there is no use in the inscribed “Grumsin” sub-area of the World Heritage Site, i.e. the core zone.

The buffer zone is also largely free of use, either because use is already prohibited by law or because the landowners have made enforceable voluntary commitments to the public authorities.

It is still the primary goal of the public sector to gradually transfer ownership of the buffer zone and thus permanently discontinue its use. However, around half of the Grumsin buffer zone has a diverse

ownership structure with a large number of small forest owners. The discontinuation of use can therefore not be achieved by a change in the law. The process of negotiating the purchase of land by the public sector will continue to take time.

Germany thanks the World Heritage Committee for the renewed mentioning in the status report. The mentioning supports the high prioritization of this process in the evaluation of this task by the public sector. For example, the right of first refusal provided for in the German Nature Conservation Act for land in the buffer zone is exercised without exception at every available opportunity.

The biosphere reserve administration also conducts intensive negotiations with private forest owners with the aim of acquiring ownership.

The use of the buffer zone, where it is still permitted, must already comply with the strict requirements of the Natura 2000 management plan for extensive use. According to the current FFH management plan for this FFH area from 2015, which refers to the "Best Practice Handbook - Nature Conservation in Lowland Beech Forests used for Timber" (Winter et al. 2015), only selective cutting (individual trees and group felling) is permitted. Accordingly, shelterwood felling is not permitted.

According to the Ordinance on the Schorfheide-Chorin Biosphere Reserve (§5 Para. 1 No. 13 NatSGSchorfhV), forestry management of the forests in the biosphere reserve must be based on the maintenance and development plans. The current FFH management plan for the Grumsiner Forst/Redernswalde FFH area provides for a maximum of permanent forest management with single-stem and group use in accordance with the "Praxishandbuch - Naturschutz im Buchenwald" (Winter et al, 2015). This excludes clear-cutting and umbrella felling. The forestry management of the buffer zone is in accordance with the guidance on buffer zone management (DOI:10.13140/RG.2.2.35883.00801).

With regard to the data, there are no changes for the buffer zone of the Grumsin sub-area compared to the data submitted in response to the status report 44 COM 8B.32 on December 01, 2023.

2.3.Guidance document on buffer zone management and buffer zone zonation (response to 45 COM 7B.20 .5)

5 Welcomes the significant progress made by all States Parties in developing the "Guidance document on buffer zone management and buffer zone zonation" of the transnational property, and also requests the States Parties to finalise the document in line with the recommendations of the IUCN review, in order to ensure its effectiveness, in particular by developing a specific mechanism to ensure that areas of strict protection are significantly increased and that the use of interventions within the buffer zones is minimised beyond the minimum standard outlined in the Guidance document;

The Guidance document on buffer zone management and buffer zone zonation⁶ was finalised after the feedback from the workshop with IUCN and WHCentre in April 23. The document was approved by all State Parties during the JMC-meeting of the 24th of May 2023. The document was published in research gate, Cfr link at the bottom of the page.

⁶ DOI:[10.13140/RG.2.2.35883.00801](https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.35883.00801)

2.4. Romania (response to 45 COM 7B.20 .6)

6 Commends the State Party of Ukraine for legislative changes ensuring that no logging and sanitary cuts are permitted in the buffer zones of the Ukrainian component parts, also commends the State Party of Romania for its plan to significantly expand to 75% the area subject to a non-intervention regime in Domogled – Valea Cernei National Park and further requests the State Party of Romania to provide more details on the timeline to reach this target and the areas that shall benefit from the non-intervention regime in the future whilst ensuring that no impactful interventions take place in proximity of the respective component parts;

The State Party of Ukraine currently has no additional information to provide on the following: the recent commendation for its legislative amendments prohibiting logging and sanitary cuts within the buffer zones of Ukrainian component parts.

The State Part of Romania informs that the **management plan** of the Domogled-Valea Cernei National Park is currently under the approval procedure according to Romanian legislation.

As part of the elaboration process of the national park management plan and after organizing several public debates with the relevant stakeholders, the non-intervention level was proposed to increase to approx. 74%, including also managed forests in the past, both state-owned and private properties.

The Ministerial Order for approving the national park management plan is envisaged to be issued in 2025.

Meanwhile, all the forestry interventions in the proposed non-intervention areas are banned.

For the rest of 26% of the remaining area (national park buffer zone and sustainable development zone), the State Party of Romania is assessing the possibility of a boundary modification proposal, by joining the State Parties of France, Montenegro, and Serbia on their process to inscribe new WH components.

The State Party of Romania is evaluating the forestry management plans in relation to the impact of WHS components. In this regard, the Environment Impact Assessment procedure covers also the formal notification of the WHC concerning the latest approvals of forestry management plans or other projects. Furthermore, in 2024 the State Party of Romania is undergoing a process to notify the following projects:

- ✓ Additions to the Environmental Report and the Adequate Assessment Study for the Forestry Management Plan of the Baia de Aramă Forest Unit' through a special chapter dedicated to the impact on UNESCO World Heritage for the Ciucevele Cernei component included in the Domogled-Valea Cernei site. The information mentioned above is available online: <https://www.mmediu.ro/articol/amenajamentul-silvic-al-ocolului-silvic-baia-de-arama/7351>
- ✓ 'Environmental impact report for the "Project on increasing the share of electricity production from renewable sources by completing the works and ensuring permanent monitoring of the environmental impact of the Cerna - Belareca hydropower plant" - continuation of the remaining works to be executed at the Cerna - Belareca hydroelectric plant' through a special chapter dedicated to the impact on UNESCO World Heritage for the cluster Domogled-Valea Cernei. The information mentioned above is available online: <https://www.mmediu.ro/articol/environmental-impact-report-for-the-project-on-increasing-the-share-of-electricity-production-from-renewable-sources-by-completing-the-works-and-ensuring-permanent-monitoring-of-the-environmental-impact-of-the-cerna-belareca-hydropower-plant/7482>

2.5. Romania (response to 45 COM 7B.20 .7)

7 Welcomes that the potential widening and paving of a forest track crossing the property and its buffer zone (National Road 66A) in Romania has been temporarily put on hold, also notes that the State Party of Romania is working to identify the best option in order to safeguard the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the property and urges it to consider an appropriate alternative route to avoid any negative impacts on the OUV of the property;

As regards **National Road 66A**, in 1999, through Government Decision No. 856, the forest road along the Valea Cernei, which connects the city of Petroșani to National Road 67D, was reclassified as a National Road with the designation DN 66A.

This decision officially upgraded the road's status from a forest road to a national road, which typically means it became part of the national main road infrastructure, subject to different maintenance and development standards.

The Romanian State Party take into consideration the boundary modification to exclude the existing national road from the UNESCO property and to enlarge the existing components in Domogled with over 8,500 ha of primeval beech forests included in the National Catalogue of Virgine and Cvasivirgine Forests.

The possibility of an alternative route of the DN 66A has been analysed by the technical experts in charge with road construction.

Thus, the experts found that the terrain profile for this alternative road solution is unfavourable for construction due to a height difference of about 245 meters over a distance of approximately 1 kilometre.

The need for upgrading the technical condition of the national road 66A is arising from the following aspects:

- The destruction of the road embankment on certain sections.
- Deterioration of the gravel layer, presence of numerous potholes, bumps, and edge breakages.
- Lack of safety barriers for road traffic, considering that the road has a mixed profile with slopes ranging from 10 to 40 meters high.
- The radii of the curves and switchbacks are inadequate.
- Lack of drainage ditches along approximately 90% of the route.
- The area crossed by DN 66A is characterized by significant precipitation and even by the occurrence of floods in the area of watercourses and torrents.
- The area crossed by DN 66A falls into areas with a high potential for landslides, there is already a landslide between km 59+000-km 60+000, the area where access is almost impossible.
- The presence of calamities in the previous period (2010, 2011), as well as the occurrence of extreme weather phenomena will lead to an impassable road that will make access to residential areas almost impossible.
- The crossing of the Cerna River by this road sector is done with a bridge at km 63+825 which does not correspond from a technical point of view, and the number of bridges is insufficient for the discharge of floodwaters and does not ensure the takeover of the flow during large floods.

The direct beneficiaries of the modernisation of DN 66 A are the residents of the city of Tismana (7.839 inhabitants) and the commune of Padeș, the villages of Padeș, Apa Neagră, Văieni, Călugăreni, Orzești, Motru-Sec, Cerna-Sat (4632 inhabitants). In addition to them, the modernisation of the road will ensure the reduction of the distance for a vast number of people transiting the Jiului Valley. In this regard, the affected local authorities sent numerous requests to the Romanian Government demanding the completion of the works on this road due to its economic and tourist importance for the communities from Jiului Valley.

The Romanian National Infrastructure Company (CNAIR) mentioned several times that the status of the road does not allow easy access in case of medical emergencies or fires. The modernization of the road will facilitate the access of emergency vans. This fact could have an indirect positive impact including on the UNESCO World Heritage and the UNESCO beech forests considering the devastating effects that fires can have on forest areas where access is difficult / not allowed.

As part of environmental studies, measures will be established to protect biodiversity and ensure the integrity of protected natural areas. These solutions may include sound-absorbing panels, eco-ducts, underpasses for mammals, restricting access for certain categories of vehicles, and more.

Additionally, as outlined in the development strategy for the Jiu Valley, consultations will be held with environmental protection authorities, representatives of the Domogled – Valea Cernei National Park, and environmental NGOs. Measures to ensure the integrity of the protected areas designated in the area (including the WHS) will be imposed within the approval issued by the Domogled – Valea Cernei National Park Administration.

For the moment, the National Road 66A project is stopped. The State Party of Romania is assessing the possibility of advancing a boundary modification that might also solve the issue of Cheile Nerei-Beușnița component part that needs minor modifications regarding polygon in GIS. The area in the table of the nomination dossier is only forest, while the polygon in GIS is compact, covering forests, and other land use types, where the local community applies traditional activities.

All the ancient and primeval beech forest ecosystems that have fulfilled the national criteria were inscribed in the National Catalogue of Virgine and Cvasi-Virgine Forests of Romania and are strictly protected.

2.6. Romania (response to 45 COM 7B.20 .8)

8 Recalls its clear position that the construction of dams with large reservoirs within the boundaries of World Heritage properties is incompatible with their World Heritage status, and requests moreover the State Party of Romania to provide the World Heritage Centre with detailed information on the Cerna-Belareca hydropower facility and to submit the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), undertaken in accordance with the Guidance and Toolkit for Impact Assessments in a World Heritage Context, once available, to the World Heritage Centre for review by IUCN, as required by Paragraph 118bis of the Operational Guidelines;

The State Party of Romania underline that no new **hydropower facilities** are envisaged in the WHS.

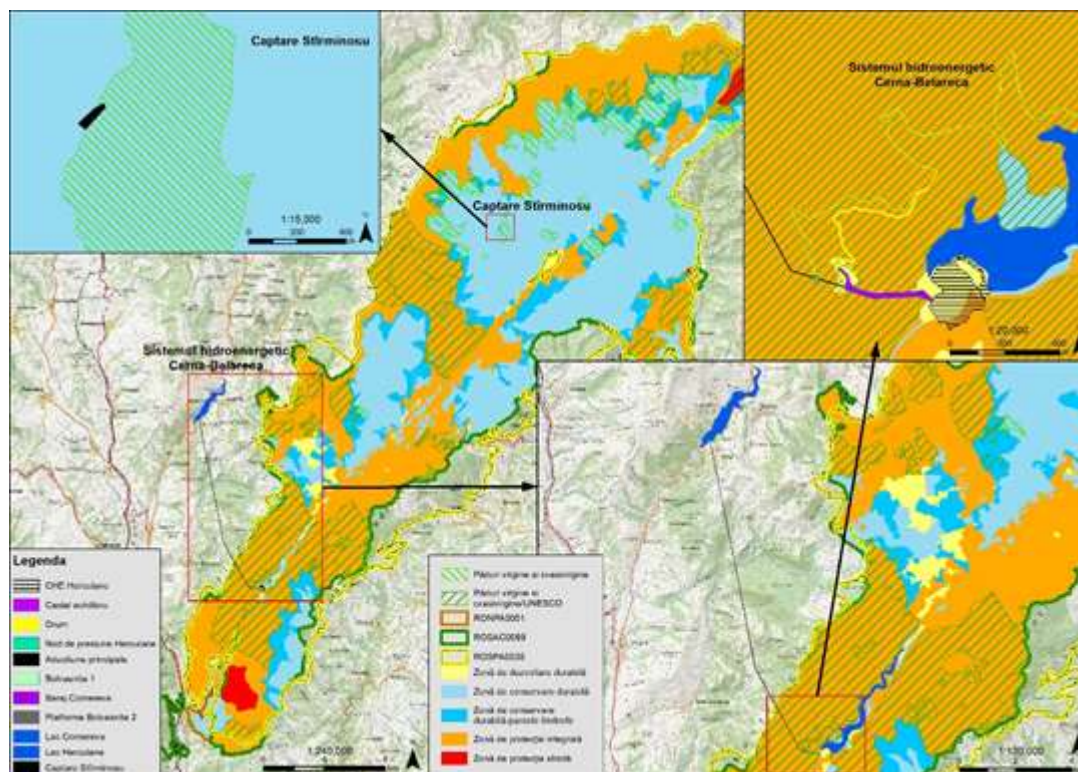
The Cerna-Belareca hydropower development already existed during the nomination process. This project consists of Herculane Hydropower Plant, which is overlapping with Domogled-Cerna Valley UNESCO WHS and Cornereva Hydropower Plant which is located outside the WHS See the below map).

In the case of Herculane Hydropower Plant the associated land areas have already been affected, with a total area of 17,647 sqm removed from the forest fund at the start of the project through Decree 351/1979 and Transmission Order No. 41/1984. By 2014, deforestation work had already been completed. The remaining works include the full construction of the butterfly valve house on the existing platform, the completion of the balance tower without expanding onto new land, and the finalization of the penstock along the already established route. More specifically, the remaining works are:

- Pressure Node – 70% completed. It represents an assembly of structures and consists of the balance tower, the butterfly valve house, the penstock, and the forced conduit.
- Equipment of the hydropower plant (underground works).
- Connecting the Herculane Power Plant to the National Energy System.

Based on the conclusions of the environmental impact assessment studies conducted during the regulatory procedure for issuing the environmental permit (which will be sent to UNESCO, according to the Operational Guideline and the UNESCO Decision), it is determined that the completion and commissioning of the Cerna- Belareca hydropower facility development does not pose a threat to the Natura 2000 site ROSAC0069 Domogled Valea Cernei and, consequently, will not have a negative impact on the integrity of the UNESCO site no. 044 Domogled Coronini Bedina, nor on the outstanding universal value for which it was designated.

The State Party of Romania is emphasising again that for the completion of the remaining works in Cerna-Belareca, no additional land will be occupied, and no deforestation will be conducted.



2.7. Italy (response to 45 COM 7B.20 .9)

9 Further notes that a forest fire affected a part of the Valle Infernale component in Italy, and requests moreover the State Party of Italy to detail the cause of the fire, the exact amount of old-growth forest affected, if any, and provide a map of the affected area.

Fire in the Valle Infernale Beech Forest

Overview of the Incident

In August 2021, a significant wildfire broke out across multiple fronts, affecting approximately 5,600 hectares of protected territory within the Aspromonte National Park. Notably, a fire front was ignited outside the site of the "Ancient and Primeval Beech Forests of the Carpathians and Other Regions of Europe," particularly in the northeastern area on August 6, 2021, covering around 700 hectares.

The cause of the fire has not been definitively determined, but it is suspected to be of arson origin. The geographical conditions of the area, characterized by steep slopes and difficult accessibility, combined with extremely favourable climatic conditions for fire propagation, made it particularly challenging to contain the blaze. The successful management of the firefighting operations was ensured through the collaborative efforts of the Calabria Region, park volunteers, and personnel from the Biodiversity Department of the Carabinieri Forestali of Reggio Calabria, who manage the Valle Infernale site as part of the "Alto Aspromonte" State Forest.

Post-Incident Assessments

Following the wildfire, a series of inspections were conducted to qualitatively assess the affected forest areas. The evaluations indicated that the areas burned, which include both the core area and the buffer area, were extremely limited. The fire primarily impacted mixed formations in dynamic interaction with the beech forest, which were not severely affected, as they experienced surface fires. Aerial interventions using freshwater were employed to mitigate impacts from salt accumulation in the soil. Resilience dynamics have already been observed within the affected areas, with signs of recovery from the fire evident in the response of scorched plants and the natural regeneration process. Areas characterized by high structural complexity, typical of ancient forest formations, were not impacted by the fire. To better understand the ongoing dynamics, surveys were conducted in collaboration with the Mediterranean University of Reggio Calabria and the University of Tuscia in Viterbo, alongside the Biodiversity Department of the Carabinieri Forestali of Reggio Calabria. These efforts will continue with specific monitoring protocols aimed at quantifying the ecosystem's response in the coming years.

Forest Habitat Impact Assessment

The following tables summarize the forest habitats affected by the fire, categorized by core area and buffer area, based on the habitat map from the Park Plan.

Core Area		
Habitat 92/43/CEE	Forest Type	Area (Hectares)
9210* Apennine beech forests with <i>Taxus</i> and <i>Ilex</i>	Bosco di faggio con caglio peloso	2.725

	Bosco di faggio con caglio peloso frammisto a pinete di pino calabro	4.454
9340 Quercus ilex and Q. rotundifolia forests	Bosco di leccio con camedrio siciliano frammisto ad aspetti di degradazione	0.058
9530 *Submediterranean pine forests - Calabrian laricio pine forests	Pineta naturale di pino calabro	1.994
	Pineta naturale di pino calabro frammista ad aspetti di degradazione	14.895
Total		24.126
Buffer Area		
Habitat 92/43/CEE	Forest Type	Area (Hectares)
9210* Apennine beech forests with Taxus and Ilex	Beech forest with hairy cap	0.879
	Bosco di faggio con caglio peloso frammisto a pinete di pino calabro	2.353
9340 Quercus ilex and Q. rotundifolia forests	Bosco di leccio con camedrio siciliano	10.056
	Bosco di leccio con camedrio siciliano frammisto ad aspetti di degradazione	23.677
	Bosco misto di leccio e farnetto frammisto ad aspetti di degradazione	7.183
9530 *Submediterranean pine forests - Calabrian laricio pine forests	Pineta naturale di pino calabro	62.123
	Pineta naturale di pino calabro frammista ad aspetti di degradazione	37.781
Total		144.052

From the above tables, it is evident that the area of beech forest affected by the fire is extremely limited, amounting to approximately 7 hectares in the Core Area and about 3 hectares in the Buffer Area, which extend for approximately 320 hectares and 2,000 hectares, respectively.

Severity of the Fire

The severity of the fire, as determined through direct observations, is corroborated by the mapping of the Normalized Burned Index (NBR), which indicates that the impact within the site was extremely limited. Observations from the ground revealed that portions of the forest within the core area, although indicated by satellite data as having been affected by fire, were primarily subjected to elevated temperatures at the canopy level, resulting in apical leaf desiccation that was promptly compensated for during the subsequent growing season. This finding was further confirmed by the 2023 satellite imagery from Google Earth.

Conclusion

Since the events of 2021, no further incidents related to wildfires have been reported affecting the Ancient Forest and its habitats. The Aspromonte National Park remains available for any additional information or clarifications needed by the scientific community.

More information (including a map of the affected area) can be found in **annex 7.2**.

2.8. Belgium (response to 45 COM 7B.20 .10)

10. Takes note of the plans of the State Party of Belgium to undertake a Strategic Environmental Assessment and individual EIAs for the road upgrade programme located in the buffer zone of the property, and requests moreover the State Party of Belgium to ensure that these impact assessments are undertaken in accordance with the Guidance and Toolkit for Impact Assessments in a World Heritage Context and submitted to the World Heritage Centre for review by IUCN, before final decisions on the project are taken that would be difficult to reverse;

The Heritage Impact Assessment for Groenendaal, Vierarmen and Jezus Eik junctions has been sent to the WHCentre.

Three of the four junctions are (partly) located within the (connecting) buffer zone of the UNESCO World Heritage Site “Ancient and Primeval Beech Forests of the Carpathians and other Regions of Europe”.

The conclusion of this HIA is as followed:

Based on the current plan proposal and the assessment in the Environmental Impact Assessment plan, no cumulative or network effects are expected with regard to the UNESCO components located in Flanders or in the Brussels-Capital Region. It can therefore be concluded that the characteristic values underlying the recognition of the Sonian Forest as a UNESCO World Heritage Site (known as the ‘Outstanding Universal Values’) will not be affected in such a way that they could be compromised.

The interventions are not located at the network level, but locally at the junctions themselves. By the way, the interventions taking place at network level mostly benefit the ecological connectivity of the landscape (including ecoducts and the realisation of forest enhancement and forest connections). The characteristic functions of the connecting buffer zone are not compromised. This applies to the connectivity function with respect to the ‘component parts’ as well as to surrounding ecosystems and to the function of landscape conservation Management in the buffer zone, which is required to ensure that the micro and mesoclimate in the forests of the component parts are not disturbed by human activities outside these components, will not be compromised. Forest expansion will increase the size of areas that can play a role as mesoclimatic buffers.

2.9. Belgium (response to 45 COM 7B.20 .11)

11 Notes furthermore the efforts of the State Party of Belgium to expand and consolidate the protected areas that comprise component parts of the property and encourages the State Party to pursue options towards a boundary modification that would enhance the OUV of the property consistent with the integrity requirements of the Operational Guidelines.

The Walloon region has elaborated an updated management plan of the Walloon part of the Sonian forest in order to enlarge and connect the existing component parts Ticton A and Ticton B.

A public enquiry has been taken place. Based on the public enquiry a political decision could formalize the extension of the forest reserve that includes and connects Ticton A and Ticton B.

Brussels capital region is preparing a proposal for the extension of the forest reserve Grippensdelle B as well as the construction of the green bridge between Grippensdelle A and B.

Both extensions will form part of a minor boundary modification that will be presented once the political decisions are in place regarding the protection status.

2.10. Austria (response to 45 COM 8B.56-4)

*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.*

The State Party of Austria acknowledges the recommendation to strengthen the protection of the enlarged component of Dürrenstein-Lassingtal.

We are actively working toward this goal by phasing out the remaining use-rights related to timber within the buffer zone.

One use-right has already been redeemed, which has positively influenced the remaining holders, most of whom are now willing to collaborate on a solution.

While discussions are ongoing, the process will take time to ensure a mutually satisfactory outcome.

2.11. Croatia (response to 45 COM 8B.56-5)

*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;*

Small areas excised from the component parts and buffer zones in Paklenica National Park are still a part of the Paklenica National Park (IUCN II) and thus protected on national level. Protection is also strengthened with the new Management Plan that ensures that National Park is managed in a way that natural processes are ensured.

An extension of the buffer zone to align with the boundaries of Paklenica National Park is not needed at the moment because the whole area is protected on national level as national park. Legal protection of a national park is established through the Nature Protection Law (NN 80/13, 15/18, 14/19, 127/19, 155/23) which defines the protected area category of a national park, its functions, restrictions, rules and regulations as well as the management of the protected area.

2.12. Albania (response to reactive monitoring recommendation 1 to 8)

The mission recommends the State Party of Albania to:

1. continue to ensure the strict protection of the two Albanian components and their buffer zones through rigorous enforcement of the relevant forest laws and regulations in both national parks and to ensure the prevention of illegal logging in their whole territories.

Regarding the protection of beech forests in the Gashi River during 2024, in the massif of old beech forests and in the buffer zone, we did not have any damage in terms of deforestation. There have also been no fires in this area, which creates the conditions for better protection. A ranger and a management specialist have been appointed for the area, coordinated, and supported by the head of the monitoring sector. This conservation and protection will continue in the future to ensure the best possible protection for the entire area of the Gashi River, and in particular the strict area of old beech forests, part of the UNESCO World Heritage.

Regarding illegal logging in the Rrajca beech forests, RAPA Elbasan has taken the following measures.

- The year 2023: 8 cases of illegal felling of forests for 142 pieces of wood in the buffer zone were processed and sent to the Public Prosecutor's Office.
- The year 2024: There were no cases of illegal logging in the buffer zone.

2. develop a specific monitoring program on the potential ecological effects of the existing hydropower facility in the buffer zone of the Lumi i Gashit component part and to report the results of such programme to the World Heritage Centre (WHC) through the state of conservation reporting process and, if concluded necessary, develop appropriate measures to minimize and manage those effects.

The "Drita" hydropower plant on the Gashi River has no impact on the old beech forests and the buffer zone, as the entire length of the hydropower plant, from the intake deed, the pressure basin, the pipeline layout and the hydropower plant building, is outside the buffer zone of the Gashi River, as well as outside the border of the protected area of the National Park of the Albanian Alps, within which the buffer zone of the Gashi River is located.

3. strengthen the operational fire-fighting capacities and equipment of the local public services, in order to best prevent and combat fire in the beech forest ecosystems, especially in the two components.

During this period, RAPA Kukes did not have any cases of fire in the area of the Gashi River, but it should be noted that in case of fire, the terrain is very difficult and the distance from the town of Bajram Curri in Tropoja to the Gashi River is very large, which makes it difficult to catch in time in case of fire and to notify, as the area is not covered by telephone waves, in order to make the organisation and intervention as efficient as possible. The most efficient intervention in these areas, considering the terrain, remains only the intervention from the air.

The PONT project (Prespa Ohrid Nature Trust), the association "Alb Nature", has provided Rrajca with materials such as: working clothes, working boots, raincoats, field shoes, working vests, shovels, boots, torches, etc.

4. physically close the entrance of the roads in the buffer zones of both components and limit access exclusively to the public services and property owners and users.

At present, there are three roads in the Gashi River that connect the town of Bajram Curri with the Gashi River:

- 1- Road Bajram Curri - Çerem - Dobërdol - Gashi River
- 2- Road Bajram Curri - Sulbicë - Dobërdol - Gashi River
- 3- Road Bajram Curri - Begaj - Dretovë - Gashi River

All these roads are directly connected to the buffer zone of the Gashi River, as well as several other forest roads that lead to the beech forest area of the Gashi River.

It is difficult to close these roads because they are used by visitors, local people who spend their summers in the mountains, etc., and if this happens, we may have an increase in the pressure of damage and deliberate arson by these people.

For the beech forests of Rajca, this recommendation was not fully implemented due to the fact that there are economic and cultural activities in the place called "Shesh Dardhë" and "Gravatec". RAPA Elbasan is in contact with the Municipality of Prrenjas in order to minimise these activities and block the roads.

5. improve marking of the components and buffer zone boundaries on the ground.

Currently, the buffer zone and the old beech forest area of the Gashi River do not have clear boundaries. The buffer zone of the Gashi River has a clear land boundary such as a ridge, hill, and stream, while the boundary of the beech forest area, which is part of UNESCO, has no clear boundaries. For this reason, in the following period, work will be conducted with its placement and marking with paint to make the separation between the strict and the buffer zone with reference to the map and the vectorial border located on the map when the approval and acceptance in UNESCO was made. This was not possible for the Rajca beech forests because the buffer zone is very large and there are no financial means to mark it on the ground.

6. enhance technical, human, and financial resources of the park management to strengthen significantly the management capacities for the two Albanian components of the property.

Currently, 1 management specialist and 1 ranger work on the Gashi River, supported by the head of the monitoring sector and other RAPA Kukes staff. During the summer period, we also have 2 seasonal employees who take care of the protection, observation and monitoring of wild fauna and prevention of possible threats from illegal activities.

For the beech forests of Rajca:

In 2023, three employees were trained by the European Union in forest fire prevention and protection. The PPNEA association conducted two trainings on "Bear Monitoring Protocol and BET Operation" for three employees of RAPA Elbasan.

During the year 2024 The AOS association conducted a two-day training on "Investigation of crimes against wildlife in Albania" for three RAPA Elbasan employees.

The Albnatyra Association has trained a group of volunteer monitors from the local population and has trained young people as junior rangers, with the support of PONT and CEPF.

7. work further on a potential extension of the existing Lumi I Gashit component, with a view to strengthening the whole property's OUV and improving the long-term preservation and integrity of the component.

The staff of RAPA Kukës is working and preparing a map with the new boundaries of the strict zone, in order to extend it, since the area with old beech forests of exceptional value is larger. We are also thinking of reducing the buffer zone, since it is an extremely large area in relation to the area of the strict zone, which seems unnecessary considering the threats, damage, etc., which have been minimal throughout the period from 2017 until now.

8. consult the WHC and IUCN on potential future modifications of the legal regime for the protection of species and/or hunting regulation and management, which may have deleterious effects on the property's components in Albania, prior to taking any decision on this matter.

Pursuant to Law No. 81/2017 "On Protected Areas", as amended, hunting is prohibited within the network of protected areas. Consequently, no hunting activity is allowed in this area, except for

sporadic cases, which will be punished according to the legislation in force. In this area, any type of hunting is prohibited, and the monitoring of the area is conducted on the basis of the list of species monitored according to the IUCN classification.

Additional information regarding Rrajca and Ganshi river is in the 7.6 Annex SOC_SP_report format_Gashi River and 7.7 Annex SOC_SP_report_format_Rrajca.

2.13. Romania (response to reactive monitoring recommendation 9 to 14)

The mission recommends the State party of Romania to:

9. define a forest management regime specific to the buffer zones that would be in keeping with the aim to ensure consistency and coordination across all buffer zones within the property, and that would promote the natural and unimpeded, progressive aging of the beech forest ecosystems present in the buffer zones. This regime should ensure an ecological transition between the component parts and the surrounding forest ecosystems of high ecological value, including those located in the buffer zones and, in case of Romania, the virgin and quasi-virgin forests listed in the “National Catalogue of Virgin Forests.” This regime should prioritize natural processes and be based on “pro-forestation” efforts and clear guidelines on appropriate intervention activities and limits, in the sense of Decision 43 COM 7B.13 of the World Heritage Committee. It could include the establishment of a functional network of “aging” and “senescence” patches of forest, in the buffer zones, aiming to contribute to strengthening and extending the ancient and primeval beech forest ecosystems, and supporting the natural processes leading to their conservation and naturalness over time:

o “pro-forestation” efforts should be interpreted as all forest management activities seeking to promote natural tree reproduction and development.

o “aging patches” should be interpreted as forest areas managed in such a way as leaving the trees growing beyond their usual rotation age, up to twice this duration (200-240 years in case of Romania).

o “senescence patches” should be interpreted as forest areas deliberately abandoned to a spontaneous evolution of natural processes, until the complete collapse of the trees and resumption of the silvigenetic cycle (forest cycle).

As regards the **forest management regime** specific to the buffer zones, the State Party of Romania have taken important steps to limit the forestry interventions in the buffer zones. According to the Buffer Zone Management Guideline, the first 100 meters are established as a protective buffer zone, where timber extraction is prohibited. The width of the 100-meter strip is based on studies in the specialized literature, which demonstrate that the impact of openings in the forest stand extends up to 100 meters. In the rest of the buffer zone, the shelterwood operations were banned, the only forestry operations that can be applied are the ones limited to a maximum of 10% of the volume per decade (special conservation works that have as the main goal forest conservation, not the timber production).

10. combat and prosecute any illegal logging activities in the two national parks in which the components of the property are located, as they may negatively impact on natural processes in beech forest ecosystems and thus on the property’s OUV.

In the **Romanian components**, there are **no illegal logging activities**. In the buffer zones, in exceptional cases single-tree illegal extraction might be registered, close to local communities, but these cases becoming increasingly rare.

11. abandon plans to upgrade the national road 66A, due to the potential impact of this project on the property's integrity and its OUV.

Cfr above **chapter 2.5**

12. In order to resolve the discrepancies between the reported and actual size of the Cheile Nerei-Beuşniţa component part, submit to the WHC an official letter, including a map, specifying the exact area of this component as inscribed in 2017 and as covered by the boundary polygons regardless of different land uses.

In the case of the property of Cheile Nerei, the total area inscribed in the nomination dossier is 4292.27 ha. It consists of 4054.9 ha of forests, 196.7 ha of enclaves (pastures, orchards, small agricultural plots), 36.23 ha of Nera River and 4.44 ha represents existing forest roads.

In the selection process of the areas to be included in the WHS property only the forest plots were selected (4054, 9 ha), but in the nomination dossier and the attached GIS polygon were included other land use types (237,37 ha).

The State Party of Romania highlights that the main issue is with the 237.37 ha area where the local community that still carries out traditional activities. In this regard, we would like to preserve these traditional activities and to include the area in the buffer zone if the ongoing activities are not in line with the WHS property.

For this specific request, the State Party of Romania will inform accordingly the WHC the requested letter until the end of February 2025.

13. inform the WHC, in line with Paragraph 172 of the OG of any proposal to extend or upgrade hydropower facilities within the property's components and their buffer zones, before any decision is taken.

Cfr above **chapter 2.6**

14. strictly protect all ancient and primeval beech forest ecosystems that have not been included in the property, in order to foster the long-term preservation of those exceptional ecosystems; priority should be given to those located in proximity of the components visited by the mission, to enhance connectivity.

All the ancient and primeval beech forest ecosystems that have fulfilled the national criteria were inscribed in the National Catalogue of Virgine and Cvasi-Virgine Forests of Romania and are strictly protected.

The State Party of Romania is constantly engaged in **incorporating the Guidance and Toolkit for Impact Assessments in a World Heritage Context into planning and decision-making processes**. Thus, the Ministry of Environment, Waters and Forests published the IUCN guideline for assessing the environmental impact concerning WH components. More details:

<https://www.mmediu.ro/categorie/ghiduri-ale-uniunii-internationale-pentru-conservarea-naturii-iucn/436>

Furthermore, the State Party of Romania is engaged in promoting an integrated system management across all the WH components. More details:

<https://www.mmediu.ro/articol/ghid-privind-managementul-si-delimitarea-zonei-tampon-pentru-situl-din-patrimoniul-mondial-unesco-padurile-primare-si-seculare-de-fag-din-carpati-si-alte-regiuni-ale-europei/7387>

2.14. Transnational property response to reactive monitoring recommendation 15 to 18)

Recommendations for the transnational property as a whole

The mission recommends that the States Parties of the transnational property:

15. conduct on-the-ground assessments in the buffer zones and component parts where impactful forestry interventions such as clear-cuts and shelterwood cutting have been permitted, to ascertain the extent to which the effective protection of the respective components might be compromised and the OUV negatively affected.

The States Parties of the transnational property acknowledge the recommendation to conduct on-the-ground and/or remote sensing assessments in the buffer zones and component parts where impactful forestry interventions, such as clear-cuts and shelterwood cutting, have been permitted.

We are committed to ascertaining the extent to which the effective protection of these components may be compromised and whether the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) is negatively affected. To this end, a comprehensive assessment plan is being developed to evaluate the impacts of forestry interventions within the designated areas. This plan will include continuous monitoring efforts and the implementation of advanced technologies to ensure accurate data collection.

In conjunction with these assessments, the States Parties will collaborate to share findings and enhance management practices to uphold the integrity of the transnational property.

16. enhance the connective and protective functions of the buffer zones and strengthen the integrity of the property by minimizing the use of forestry interventions.

This issue is described in Guidance document on buffer zones under the Buffer Zones section. This section outlines the three main functions of buffer zones: protection, connection, and landscape conservation, and emphasizes the importance of effective management to maximize the protection of the values of the protected area and enhance connectivity with other natural lands.

The specific pages in the document that deal with enhancing the connective and protective functions of buffer zones, while minimizing forestry interventions, can be found as follows:

- Page 8: This page introduces the concept of buffer zones and outlines their three main functions: protection, connection, and landscape conservation.
- Page 10: This section discusses the protection buffer subzone, detailing how its management aims to minimize human influence and enhance the protective functions of the buffer zones.
- Page 13: Here, the landscape conservation buffer subzone is described, focusing on its role in maintaining ecological connectivity and conservation practices.
- Page 15: This page outlines management regulations that emphasize the importance of minimizing interventions in buffer zones to protect the integrity of the property.
- Page 18: Table 1 provides recommended minimum regulations for activities in buffer zones, focusing on enhancing their protective and connective roles.

These pages collectively address the management strategies intended to enhance the ecological integrity of the property while minimizing human impact through forestry practices.

17. ensure that any interventions avoid interference with the natural processes of the beech forest ecosystem taking into account the natural expansion of their surface and to strengthen their resilience.

The references to ensuring that any interventions avoid interference with the natural processes of the beech forest ecosystem, considering their natural expansion and strengthening resilience, can be found on the following pages of the document:

- Page 3: The introduction highlights the importance of supporting undisturbed natural processes, including the management of dead and decaying wood.
- Page 10: This page discusses the Protection Buffer Subzone, emphasizing regulations that aim to avoid interference with natural processes.
- Page 13: The Landscape Conservation Buffer Subzone section focuses on maintaining ecological integrity and resilience in forest ecosystems, addressing the need for minimal human impact.
- Page 18: Table 1 outlines recommended minimum regulations that include considerations for natural processes and ecosystem resilience.

These sections collectively emphasize the necessity of allowing natural processes to occur while managing interventions in a way that supports the health and resilience of beech forest ecosystems.

18. support undisturbed natural processes in all components and their buffer zones through natural regeneration, pro-forestation, aging of forest stands beyond conventional rotation ages, and to not take any decision that may affect the dynamics of such processes after external natural or anthropogenic events, such as fire, within or near the property's components.

This topic can be also found in “Guidance document of buffer zone management and buffer zone zonation for UNESCO Heritage Site Ancient and Primeval Beech Forests of the Carpathians and Other Regions of Europe.” The references to supporting undisturbed natural processes in all components and their buffer zones, including aspects like natural regeneration, pro-forestation, and aging of forest stands, can be found on the following pages of the document:

- Page 3: The introduction mentions the need for special emphasis on supporting undisturbed natural processes, particularly regarding dead and decaying wood.
- Page 10: The section on the Protection Buffer Subzone discusses management practices that prioritize natural processes and regeneration, avoiding interventions that could disrupt these dynamics.
- Page 13: In the Landscape Conservation Buffer Subzone, there is a focus on maintaining ecological integrity and resilience, with recommendations for allowing natural processes to occur without interference.
- Page 15: This page outlines management regulations that advocate for decisions that do not affect the dynamics of natural processes, especially following external events like fires.

These sections collectively emphasize the importance of allowing natural processes to thrive and avoiding actions that could interfere with the ecological balance of the beech forest ecosystem.

2.15. Transnational property response to decision 45 COM 7.2 -28-29

28 Strongly urges all States Parties, development proponents and financiers to incorporate the Guidance and Toolkit for Impact Assessments in a World Heritage Context into planning and decision-

making processes to contribute to safeguarding the OUV of World Heritage properties, in line with Paragraph 3 above.

Guidance document of buffer zone management and buffer zone zonation for UNESCO Heritage Site Ancient and Primeval Beech Forests of the Carpathians and Other Regions of Europe declares that actions in buffer zone or core are forbidden in general or they should be done through Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) process which is further described at:

- Page 15: This page discusses management regulations that include considerations for conducting EIAs as part of the decision-making process for any interventions that may impact the buffer zones and the property.
- Page 18: Table 1 outlines recommended minimum regulations, which mention the requirement for EIAs to evaluate potential impacts on the natural environment before proceeding with any activities that could interfere with the ecological integrity of the beech forest ecosystems.

These sections emphasize the importance of integrating the EIA process into management practices to ensure that interventions do not adversely affect the natural processes within the buffer zones and surrounding areas.

29 Requests all States Parties to:

2. *Inform the World Heritage Centre of any planned developments located within a World Heritage property, its buffer zone or in its wider setting that may impact on its OUV, prior to making any decision that would be difficult to reverse, in conformity with Paragraph 172 of the Operational Guidelines,*
3. *Ensure that the potential impacts of developments on the OUV are appropriately assessed, in line with Paragraph 3 above,*
4. *Ensure that no proposed developments proceed that would negatively impact on the OUV,*
5. *Ensure that no deliberate measures are taken, which might damage directly or indirectly the inscribed properties situated on the territory of other States Parties to the Convention, in conformity with Article 6 of the World Heritage Convention.*

As stated in the Guidance document on buffer zone management and buffer zone zonation⁷ the UNESCO Beech WHS implements the above-mentioned decision. The details on how these decisions can be found on page 21 (construction of new infrastructure). The construction of new infrastructure is not allowed in the component part. In the landscape buffer zone, some construction is allowed, only with positive ESIA and special permission.

2.16. Transnational property response to decision 45 COM 7.2 -30

Welcomes the launch of the UNESCO Guidance for the World Heritage 'No-Go' Commitment: Global standards for corporate sustainability as a means to assist the corporate sector to develop or update their policies and strategies to safeguard World Heritage, and thanks the Government of Flanders (Belgium) for its financial support.

The States Parties welcome the launch of the UNESCO Guidance for the World Heritage 'No-Go' Commitment: Global Standards for Corporate Sustainability. This initiative serves as a valuable

⁷ DOI:[10.13140/RG.2.2.35883.00801](https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.35883.00801)

resource to assist the corporate sector in developing or updating their policies and strategies aimed at safeguarding World Heritage sites.

We also extend our gratitude to the Government of Flanders (Belgium) for its financial support in this endeavour. Communication regarding this development was shared with the members of the Joint Monitoring Committee (JMC) during the meeting held in November 2023

2.17. Transnational property response to decision 45 COM 7.2 -44

Invites States Parties to contribute to the above-mentioned platforms and tools with already available GIS data, complementary narrative and visual analysis, expertise, networks, and financial resources.

The UNESCO Beech World Heritage Site (WHS) welcomes this initiative, and we would like to confirm that the relevant information for all component parts has already been communicated to the World Heritage Centre

3. Other current conservation issues identified by the State(s) Party(ies) which may have an impact on the property's Outstanding Universal Value

3.1. Albania (changes in the legislation)

The amendments to Law No 81/2017 “On Protected Areas”

The amendments to Law No 81/2017 “On Protected Areas” have been carefully designed to align with EU acquis requirements, ensuring sustainability and enhancing the implementation of conservation efforts. These changes are part of a broader strategy to balance environmental protection with the socio-economic development needs of Albania. Regarding the received complaints please find below the explanations for amendments occurred.

The inclusion of the National Territory Council (NTC), chaired by the Prime Minister, ensures that decisions regarding protected areas receive the highest level of governmental oversight. This centralized authority allows for a more coordinated and strategic approach to national development while maintaining environmental standards.

Any proposed development within protected areas must comply with rigorous Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs) and meet stringent criteria that align with EU environmental standards. This process ensures that any development is sustainable and does not compromise biodiversity or ecological integrity.

The NTC's role is to balance conservation efforts with necessary infrastructure development, ensuring that any economic growth is achieved without sacrificing environmental values. This approach supports Albania's sustainable development goals and long-term ecological health.

The adjustments to subzones and buffer zones were made following extensive scientific studies and environmental assessments. These modifications aim to optimize conservation strategies and address contemporary needs, without compromising the overall protection of these areas.

The amendments allow for sustainable use and development within protected areas, ensuring that economic activities are compatible with conservation goals. This adaptive approach ensures that protected areas continue to thrive while supporting local communities.

The government has committed to continuous monitoring of the impact of these amendments. This adaptive management approach allows for adjustments to be made as needed, ensuring that conservation objectives are met and that protected areas remain resilient against ecological threats.

The amendments to the law have been crafted to align with EU directives on nature and biodiversity. This includes adherence to the Habitats Directive, the Birds Directive, and the Water Framework Directive, ensuring that Albania's legal framework meets or exceeds EU environmental standards.

The adoption of these amendments represents a proactive step in strengthening Albania's legal framework for environmental protection. This move enhances the country's ability to safeguard its natural heritage while fostering sustainable development.

The government is committed to completing the legal framework with necessary bylaws derived from the law's implementation. This ensures a comprehensive and cohesive approach to conservation and sustainable use of protected areas.

In this way, the amendments to the law seek to integrate sustainable development principles into national policies, aligning with the EU requirements related to nature and biodiversity. The goal is to achieve a harmonious balance between conservation efforts and necessary infrastructural development to support Albania's socio-economic growth.

The concerns regarding the potential dilution of protection status for certain categories of protected areas are understandable. However, it is important to note that the amendments were made with a focus on optimizing the management and conservation strategies for these areas. The intention is not to diminish their protection but to adapt the legal framework to contemporary conservation needs and realities.

For National Monuments (Category III – IUCN) and Protected Landscapes (Category V – IUCN), the adjustments to subzones and buffer zones were made following detailed scientific and environmental studies. These studies assessed the ecological, social, and economic factors to ensure that the new boundaries and regulations still offer robust protection while allowing for sustainable use and development where appropriate.

The amendments emphasize the necessity for all developments within these areas to comply with strict environmental regulations and guidelines. This includes mandatory environmental impact assessments (EIAs), public consultations, and adherence to international conservation standards. These measures ensure that any development is carefully monitored and controlled to prevent ecological degradation.

Moreover, the government is committed to ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the impact of these amendments. If necessary, further adjustments will be made to enhance the protection and management of Albania's biodiversity and natural heritage. This adaptive management approach ensures that the conservation objectives are met while also accommodating sustainable development needs.

3.2. Austria (Gas drilling in Molln in the surroundings of Kalkalpen National Park)

Status: 27/09/2024

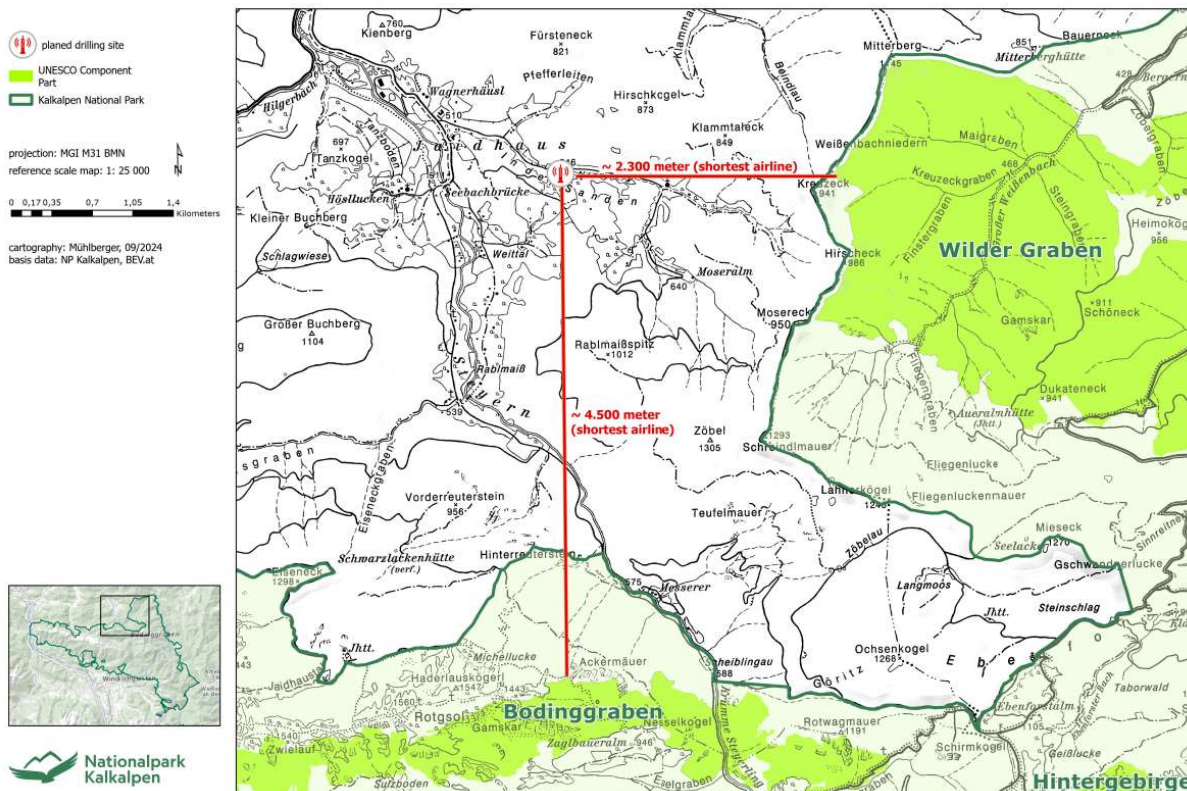
The company ADX, which has held the exploration licence from the Republic of Austria since 2021, expects the gas field in Molln to be 22 billion cubic metres in size (3 times Austria's annual supply). A nature reserve is located ten metres from the planned drilling point and the national park, and one of the four world heritage sites (Weissenbach) begin around 2 kilometres away. These are assumptions that are not secured. A geologist from the Montan Universität Leoben believes that the probability of the assumed quantity is only 0-20%. He cannot recognise any danger to the National Park.

Initial test drilling, which had to be discontinued on 31 March 2024 in accordance with the decision, did not yield any clear results: 'We have confirmation of a large deposit, but unfortunately no clear evidence of the exact nature and quantity of the gas reservoir. We now lack the time for a more precise assessment, which is limited to 31 March 2024 due to the nature conservation permit. The open drilling section will therefore be cased in the next few days and the borehole sealed for further test work in autumn,' reports ADX Austria CEO Alan Reingruber (Tips, 25.3.2024)

There is currently no information on the reissue of a nature conservation licence that has been applied for in the meantime for the continuation of the test drilling.

The test drillings are not expected to have any impact on Kalkalpen National Park and the World Natural Heritage Beech Forests.

Distance planed drilling site to UNESCO Component Part



3.3. Bulgaria (fire in national park)

On July 18, 2024, a fire broke out on the territory of the Central Balkan National Park, park section Karlovo, the place Dzhufar dere, part of the Steneto reserve (in the reserve zone according to functional zoning of the CBNP). The signal was given around 3 p.m. Groups have been organized to put it out according to the established Fire-fighting activities Plan of the Central Balkan NP. Within 30 minutes, the first three people who started extinguishing the fire reached the hard-to-reach place of the fire. Within three hours, more than 50 people were on the place - employees of the Central Balkan NP, firefighters, forestry employees, animal breeders and volunteers from the region. Due to the extremely inaccessible terrain, firefighting was also implemented by helicopter, hampered by the extremely elevated temperatures and low water in the dams near the fire site. Firefighters' efforts have had varying degrees of success. It was finally extinguished on July 21, in the afternoon, when torrential rain fell in the area.

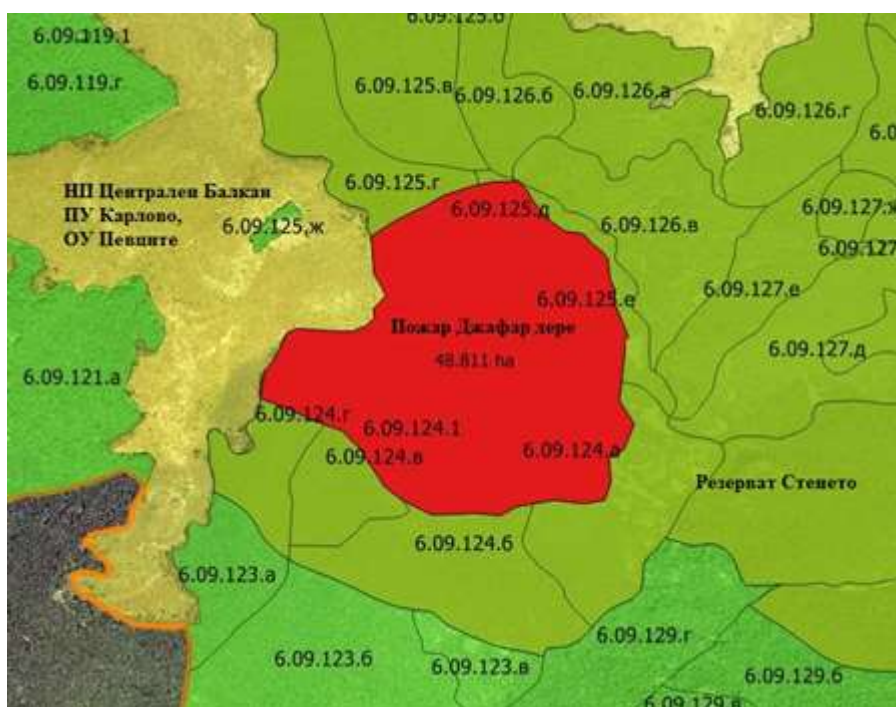
The affected area amounts to 85 ha, of which 48.81 ha have completely burnt vegetation. The affected habitats according to the Habitats Directive and the mapping of the Natura 2000 site Central Balkan (BG0000494) are 91BA, 9150, 9170, 91WO, 62D0 and 4060.

There is no component from the serial WHP affected! The 85 ha from the buffer are affected. The closest component part (Steneto) is 2.5 km as the crow flies.

Tree vegetation of beech (*Fagus sylvatica*), European hop-hornbeam (*Ostrya carpinifolia*), oriental hornbeam (*Carpinus orientalis*), common hornbeam (*Carpinus betulus*), black pine (*Pinus nigra*), winter oak (*Quercus petraea*), common sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*), mountain ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*), maple (*Acer campestre*), manna ash (*Fraxinus ornus*), silver fir (*Abies alba*), mountain

maple (*Acer heldreichii*) – ground and top fire in 8 forest subunits. Potentially and effectively occupied brown bear (*Ursus arctos*) and Balkan chamois (*Rupicapra rupicapra subsp. balkanica*) habitats affected.

A monitoring program is to be implemented in the next 5 years. It is expected that the dying of the affected forests will begin in the places with the most intensively burning fire. The start of a succession process to restore the forest ecosystems is also expected in the first years. Human intervention is not foreseen. Such intervention is possible in the case of damage in a reserve only after an assessment by the supreme expert ecological council (SEEC) decision. SEEC is convened by the Minister of Environment and Water if necessary.



3.4 Slovakia (letter of WWF)

During JMC (joint management committee) meeting of the UNESCO Beech WHS, which was held in Slovakia on the 16th of September 2024, WWF Slovakia send an official letter regarding zonation process of national park Poloniny.

A copy of the letter can be found in **annex 7.3**.

The reply of the JMC can be found in **annex 7.4**.

The letter of the JMC was send to the delegation of Slovakia for UNESCO in Paris.

3.5 Slovenia (Krokar fire)

In Slovenia there was a forest fire that allegedly started on 14th of August 2024, as a result of a lightning strike in the protection forest that is located in the surrounding area near UNESCO component part Virgin Forest Krokar and its buffer zone Forest reserve Borovec.

The fire started on the steep, inaccessible slope of the Kolpska dolina, at an altitude of about 1.000 m, below the peak of Krokár, outside of the component part. The fire covered 0.3 ha and was officially extinguished on 15th of August 2024. On 16th of August 2024 the fire reappeared. Firefighters managed to contain it with aircraft, helicopters, and ground teams, but did not completely extinguish it. It was extinguished only by heavy rainfall on 19th and 20th of August 2024.

It was a ground fire, partly also an underground fire, which only in places covered individual adult trees, especially the lower part of the trunks. In some places, the canopies have turned brown from the effects of the fire. It is estimated that it burned in an area of 34 ha and around half of this area burned up. The forest is damaged, but not destroyed, so the restoration of the forest will not be necessary, and forest will recover and rejuvenate in a natural way, without any human help. The fire only went over the edge of the steep slopes in two or three places, but the firefighters successfully stopped it. Close field terrain inspection showed up, that where was no fire in the surrounding forest reserves, certainly not in the UNESCO component part Virgin Forest Krokár and its buffer zone Forest reserve Borovec. The fire and related activities to extinguish it did not affect component part Virgin Forest Krokár and its OUV in any way.

3.5 Ukraine (War and border modification)

On the territory of Ukraine there are fifteen component parts of the world natural heritage site "Ancient and primeval beech forests of the Carpathians and other regions of Europe", which are protected within seven protected areas. Today, all protected areas are functioning, but in a complicated regime. This complicated regime is explained by Russian aggression, which creates a number of direct and indirect threats both to the protected areas and to the component parts located there. In particular, part of the employees of protected areas, mainly representatives of the state protection service (ranger service), are mobilized to the armed forces of Ukraine, which weakens the protection of property and the buffer zones. At the same time, there is a threat of growing pressure from the local population, which will potentially need more local resources, including from protected areas, to survive in wartime conditions.

The most difficult situation is in the component part "Roztochya" from the nature reserve of the same name. Its territory directly borders with a large military training ground (polygon), which is actively used for training of the Ukrainian soldiers. Accordingly, this polygon is subjected to regular missile attacks from Russia, which puts both the component part and the employees of the nature reserve under direct threat. In addition, access to this territory, which includes the western part of the "Roztochya" property together with the buffer zone, is limited, in particular also for employees of the protected area, which creates certain challenges for its protection. Nearby is located a small settlement, whose residents may be interested in the resources of this property, in particular firewood.

Another problematic area is the component part of "Stuzhytsia-Uzhok" from the territory of the Uzhanskyi National Nature Park, which is located along the state border with Poland and the Slovak Republic. On December 7, 2023, Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine No. 1292 approved amendments to Resolution No. 1147 of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine dated July 27, 1998. They provide for the transfer of land plots 30-50 meters wide along the state border line on land for permanent use by the military departments of the State Border Service for the construction, arrangement and maintenance of engineering-technical and fortification constructions, fences, border signs, border crossings, and communications. These changes directly affect the interests of the Stuzhytsia-Uzhok component, as the transfer of 50 m of the strip to the State Border Service will

entail a reduction in the area of the component by approximately fifty hectares and its buffer zone by one hundred hectares.

Another problem of this component part is the significant discrepancy between the property area documented in the nomination file, together with its buffer zone, and the relevant cartographic materials. The area of "Stuzhytsia-Uzhok" is 2,532 hectares, and its buffer zone is 3,615 hectares, while the map shows only a third of these areas.

In general, all maps of the "old" Ukrainian component parts, which became part of the heritage site in 2007, need significant clarifications. In total, there are six such components: Chornohora, Kuziy-Trybushany, Maramarosh, Svydovets, Uholka-Shyrokyi Luh (all in Carpathian Biosphere Reserve) and Stuzhytsia-Uzhok (Uzhanskyi National Nature Park). The problem is as follows: at the time of preparation of the maps of the Ukrainian part of the nomination dossier in 2004-2005, there were no high-quality layers of the topographic base, borders of territories and satellite images. The mapping software was also outdated. Therefore, map drafts were made for the purpose of printing them on small paper formats, and not for further use as digital data (including in GIS). Later, these "drafts" were refined in 2005 by Slovak colleagues, who made a "compilation" of the final version of the maps and other materials. This caused significant inaccuracies in the digital representation of the boundaries of the component parts and the buffer zone, although the total areas that were selected during field research and the processing of forest-taxation materials were correct. Therefore, in most of the component parts, it is proposed to clarify the boundaries on cartographic materials without changing their area.

Some Ukrainian component parts may require minor border modifications. First of all, this concerns "Uholka-Shyrokyi Luh". This component part has an area of 11,860ha with a buffer zone of 3,301 ha. There are some small parts of the property situated near the settlements which encounter pressure from local firewood harvesting. To avoid potential conflicts, we propose to move approximately 350 ha from the property to the buffer zone. This will not lead to a change in the area of the component part, as it will be increased due to the beech primeval forests that became part of the reserve after the extension of its territory in 2022.



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



Ancient and Primeval Beech Forests of
the Carpathians and Other Regions of Europe
inscribed on the World Heritage List in 2017



4. In conformity with Paragraph 172 of the Operation Guidelines, describe any potential major restorations, alterations and/or new construction(s) intended within the property, the buffer zone(s) and/or corridors or other areas, where such developments may affect the Outstanding Universal Value of the property, including authenticity and integrity.

5. Public access to the state of conservation report

[Note: this report will be uploaded for public access on the World Heritage Centre's State of conservation Information System (<http://whc.unesco.org/en/soc>). Should your State Party request that the full report should not be uploaded, only the one-page executive summary provided in point (1) above will be uploaded for public access]

Country	agree to full public access	refuse public access
Albania	yes	no
Austria	yes	no
Belgium	yes	no
Bosnia-Herzegovina	yes	no
Bulgaria	yes	no
Croatia	yes	no
Czechia	yes	no
France	yes	no
Germany	yes	no
Italy	yes	no
North Macedonia	yes	no
Poland	yes	no
Romania	yes	no
Slovakia	yes	no
Slovenia	yes	no
Spain	yes	no
Switzerland	yes	no
Ukraine	yes	no

6. Signature of the submitting authority

For the permanent secretariat of the WHS based on the authorization letter off the involved State Parties.

Goedele Van der Spiegel
Administrator General
Agency for Nature and Forests – Flanders Belgium

7. Annexes

7.1. Annex Italy Forestry operations.



Forestry operations
Foreste Casentinesi.pc

7.2. Annex Italy Report Fire Valle Infernale Aspromonte



Italy Report Fire
Valle Infernale Aspron

7.3 Annex: Letter of WWF Slovakia



JMC_letter (1).pdf

7.4 Annex Reply of the JMC of the UNESCO Beech WHS to the letter of WWF Slovakia



statement of
JMC_letterWWF_SK

7.5 Annex AGREEMENT on the establishment of the Permanent Secretariat of the UNESCO World Heritage Property “Ancient and Primeval Beech Forests of the Carpathians and Other Regions of Europe”



2023_09_Agreement
FIN.pdf

7.6 Annex SOC_SP_report format_Gashi River



SOC SP report
format_Gashi River.r

7.7 Annex SOC_SP_report_format_Rrajca



SOC SP report
format_Rrajca.pdf

Re: 45 COM 7B.20 .4

The UNESCO World Heritage Forests in the Casentino Forests, Monte Falterona, and Campigna National Park.

The ancient beech forests of the National Park were included in the UNESCO World Heritage list following a decision in July 2017, which extended the recognition already granted to the beech forests of the Carpathians to those in 10 other European countries.

The site is now called “Primeval Beech Forests of the Carpathians and Other Regions of Europe.”

The designated area for the National Park includes the Sasso Fratino Integral Reserve, the first Integral Reserve established in Italy in 1959, covering a total of approximately 782 hectares (core area) and a vast surrounding area of about 6,942 hectares (buffer zone), totaling approximately 7,724.28 hectares. This is the largest site designated in Italy and one of the most extensive ancient forest complexes in Europe.

Through the instrument of “Nulla Osta” (formal approval) of the Forest Management Plan prepared by the managing bodies, the Park Authority has outlined a strategy for the “UNESCO Buffer Zone.” (See the original “Nulla Osta” of the Forest Management Plan attached. The relevant part has been highlighted)

Considering its high ecological-environmental and cultural value, the plan aims to promote and enhance a general increase in the aging levels of forest formations by refraining from any silvicultural intervention across the entire surface of the Regional Forest Estate within it.

This choice is driven by the desire to provide the buffer area with a strengthened protective function for the “core area,” to be achieved through increased naturalness levels, biological functionality of ecosystems, and very low anthropogenic disturbance (a conservation objective indicated for most Sites of Community Importance).

In partial derogation of the previous point, for the same forest parcels, the possibility of limited silvicultural interventions aimed at maintaining existing infrastructure, such as roads, natural engineering works, hydraulic-forest arrangements, securing the trail network, and those related to the containment and/or restoration of gravitational phenomena, is preserved. For the aforementioned interventions, however, it is still necessary to define beforehand, through appropriate verification and comparison inspections, the actual operational needs to be established and authorized on a case-by-case basis.

The above-described direction and decisions established in the Nulla Osta (which therefore has prescriptive value) have, however, been previously agreed upon at the political level with the Managing Authority, which has positively accepted the prescription, sharing its premises and goals. Thus, it is not merely an imposition by the Park Authority but a strategy that has been agreed upon and formalized through mandatory administrative acts.

The objectives intended to be achieved with the presented prescriptive framework are to enhance the provisions and biological and ecological complexities of these forest systems, through an action of addition and accumulation, within which the different biotic and abiotic components can increasingly structure, branch out, and interconnect, allowing energy and mineral flows to produce incremental effects. In this way, organization, diversity, and stability will increasingly be created; the deep alterations in species composition, structural arrangements, levels of organic biomass richness, and every profile of diversity will be progressively corrected and compensated within temporal horizons whose duration is not that of classical silvicultural cycles, but rather linked to the average longevity typical of the tree species characterizing forest populations.

Finally, it should be noted that the non-intervention areas included in the UNESCO buffer zone possess all the characteristics to be identified as “preferred areas” for the identification of “strictly protected areas,” as provided for by the “EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030” and the “National Biodiversity Strategy 2030.”

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Pratovecchio,

Spett. Unione dei Comuni Montani del Casentino
VIA PEC

e p.c. Al Reparto Carabinieri Parco

Rilascio Nulla Osta n° 166_20

Oggetto: "Piano di gestione del Complesso Forestale Regionale Foreste Casentinesi per il quindicennio 2021-2035", nei Comuni di Chiusi della Verna, Bibbiena, Poppi e Pratovecchio Stia (AR). Istanza Unione dei Comuni Montani del Casentino

Ai sensi dell'art. 13 della Legge 06/12/1991 n° 394 "Legge quadro sulle Aree Protette"

IL DIRETTORE

In esito all'istanza trasmessa dall' Unione dei Comuni Montani del Casentino, concernente l'argomento specificato in oggetto, registrata al protocollo dell'Ente al n. 7398 in data 25/11/20;

- VISTA la Legge 06/12/1991 n° 394 "Legge quadro sulle Aree Protette";
- VISTO il D.P.R. del 12/07/1993 "Istituzione dell'Ente Parco Nazionale delle Foreste Casentinesi";
- VISTO il Piano per il Parco, come approvato dalle Regioni Toscana ed Emilia Romagna rispettivamente con le Delibere Consiliari n° 86 e n° 267 del 2009;
- VISTI i D.P.R. 357 del 08/09/1997 e 120 del 12/03/2003 e la L.R. 30/2015 e ss.mm.ii. di recepimento delle Direttive Europee 147/09/CEE e 43/92/CEE;
- RICHIAMATA la Legge Regionale Toscana n.30 del 19 marzo 2015 e ss.mm.ii. ;
- VISTA la nota prot. n. 293 in data 19/01/2021, con la quale questo Ente Parco ha provveduto a richiedere specifiche integrazioni alla documentazione trasmessa procedendo contestualmente a sospendere i termini per il rilascio del nulla osta in oggetto;
- VISTA la nota prot. n. 738 in data 08/02/2021, con la quale l'Unione dei Comuni Montani del Casentino ha provveduto a trasmettere le integrazioni richieste;
- VISTA l'istruttoria del Reparto Carabinieri Parco e dei Tecnici del Servizio Pianificazione e Gestione delle Risorse da cui emerge quanto segue: *la pratica in esame riguarda l'approvazione del Piano di Gestione del complesso Forestale Regionale "Foreste Casentinesi" che contiene l'insieme degli interventi previsti e pianificati per 15 anni nel periodo compreso tra il 2021 e il 2035. La superficie complessivamente pianificata è di 5867,1 ha dei quali, circa 5258 ha, ricadono entro i confini del Parco Nazionale nei suoi diversi ambiti di zonizzazione. Dal punto di vista forestale la quasi totalità del complesso è costituita da fustaie e da fustaie transitorie derivanti da precedenti interventi di avviamento ad alto fusto o invecchiamento del ceduo. Il Piano interessa un contesto naturalistico di assoluta eccellenza caratterizzato dai seguenti "livelli" di protezione: Parco Nazionale delle Foreste Casentinesi, 5 Zone di Conservazione Speciale (ZSC) e 1 Zona di Protezione Speciale (ZPS), nell'ambito della Rete Europea "Natura 2000" ed infine il Sito Unesco "Faggete Vetuste".*

Tutta l'impostazione pianificatoria del documento in esame parte dalla rilevazione di due principali criticità definite, dalla Relazione di Piano stesso, come "non modificabili": il carico elevato di ungulati (soprattutto il cervo) che impedisce la rinnovazione naturale delle foreste e il cambiamento climatico in atto con il verificarsi di eventi meteorici estremi (es. tempesta di vento del 2015).

Per quanto riguarda la fauna, senza voler disconoscere la serietà e, in parte, la fondatezza delle problematiche rilevate, i Tecnici del Servizio Pianificazione del Parco e del Reparto Carabinieri Parco, nel loro approfondimento istruttorio, hanno evidenziato come gli attuali livelli di "densità" di ungulati potrebbero, più opportunamente, essere considerati come semplici fasi di una naturale "dinamica" delle popolazioni che, tra l'altro, sta registrando anche una netta, contemporanea, espansione dei predatori naturali (lupo). Senza tralasciare la necessità di un'adeguata

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valutazione del valore ecologico e di "attrattiva" turistica proprio delle componenti faunistiche il cui pregio, e relativo "peso economico", non può essere comunque trascurato.

Per quanto riguarda invece il cambiamento climatico pur non negando la gravità e la sussistenza dei cambiamenti in atto e il verificarsi sempre più frequente di fenomeni di instabilità dei popolamenti forestali, soprattutto conifere, si ritengono gli scenari descritti dalla relazione di Piano come eccessivamente "catastrofici" e soprattutto non evidentemente correlati ai livelli di danno effettivamente registrati. Anche in questo caso occorre chiedersi se tali fenomeni non possano considerarsi, almeno in parte, come "disturbi" naturali, correlati all'età dei soprassuoli, in grado di innescare e promuovere ulteriori processi evolutivi. Anche in riferimento alle faggete, che rappresentano la formazione forestale più estesa, occorre chiedersi se il verificarsi di iniziali "disturbi" (come descritti dal Piano) non siano inquadrabili in una fisiologica "fase evolutiva" di una compresa che, con i suoi 92 anni di età media, ha raggiunto solo 1/5 delle sue potenziali "aspettative di vita". Ci si interroga inoltre se, in sede di analisi e valutazione, non si siano sottovalutati gli effetti "positivi" correlati ad una diminuzione dei livelli di "disturbo" causati dagli interventi forestali (es. vedasi abetine storiche). In altre parole se, in taluni contesti, continuando a proporre interventi intercalari (diradamenti) di considerevole intensità e frequenza non si corra il rischio di "forzare" eccessivamente i processi successionali in atto andando ad alterare le naturali dinamiche evolutive con esiti incerti sia sul patrimonio genetico intraspecifico dei popolamenti, sia sulla loro conseguente capacità di resilienza e di resistenza sia, infine, per gli inevitabili riflessi su tutte le altre componenti ambientali (suolo, biodiversità, microclima ecc.). Sullo stesso tema anche l'obiettivo, prioritario, di un incremento dei livelli di "stabilità" individuale delle piante, pare far sottovalutare ai redattori del Piano la necessità di salvaguardia e mantenimento dei livelli di stabilità complessiva "a livello di popolamento".

L'incidenza dei disturbi naturali abiotici potrebbe essere sicuramente in incremento in conseguenza degli effetti del cambiamento climatico, ma gli elementi condizionanti tali cambiamenti variano considerevolmente a livello locale e nessun parametro analizzato a livello dei più recenti studi scientifici ha portato ad identificare correlazioni statistiche strette e prevedibili oltre a sottolineare la rilevanza dei fattori topografici. Tali disturbi sono comunque una componente naturale fondamentale dei meccanismi di cambiamento degli ecosistemi forestali: nel corso del dodicennio 2007-2018 la superficie soggetta a schianti sarebbe risultata pari al 14,3 % dell'intera superficie che, come detto in precedenza, può essere ricondotta ad una logica di "fisiologico" regime di disturbo. Tale assunto appare tanto più vero se si considera la tipologia dei soprassuoli maggiormente colpiti, caratterizzati dall'averne un'età compresa fra i 40 ed i 60 anni, con aspetti di spiccata artificialità ed in genere caratterizzati da una densità eccessiva. L'obiettivo di rendere maggiormente resilienti tali popolamenti boscati rispetto all'azione del vento e degli altri fattori meteorologici che possono avere un'incidenza negativa sulla loro stabilità meccanica e bioecologica, deve però essere soddisfatto dal mantenimento di un regime di tagli di diradamento dal basso, cauti e di grado moderato. Eseguiti in modo tale da modificare gli aspetti strutturali e compositivi, evitando ulteriori destabilizzazioni.

Anche i proposti interventi di trattamento di selvicoltura d'albero, per i loro presupposti esecutivi e l'eccessiva incidenza di prelievo, di grado forte nell'intorno delle piante obiettivo, non sono ritenuti adeguati a garantire una maturazione bioecologica dei popolamenti forestali coerente con la complessa ricchezza di attributi di naturalità che dovrebbe essere invece propria dei boschi ubicati in un'area protetta. La selezione negativa esercitata con l'eliminazione dei competitori delle piante obiettivo scelte infatti, pur favorendo la diversità compositiva del popolamento attraverso la creazione di maggiori spazi biologici a favore delle specie sporadiche, tende a semplificare i processi naturali di auto-organizzazione dei popolamenti oggetto di intervento. Generando strutture verticali meno complesse, con inevitabili ripercussioni sui rapporti di competizione fra gli individui arborei e sulle interconnessioni fra loro esistenti. E soprattutto, costituendo ostacolo all'evoluzione naturale dei popolamenti, con asportazioni troppo incisive e semplicistiche delle biomasse in stoccaggio ecologico. Evoluzioni che, seppur indirizzate, in un orizzonte di medio periodo, verso la costituzione di compagini prevalentemente pure per specie quali ad esempio il faggio, guidano gli attributi degli ecosistemi boschivi poco disturbati verso stadi di maturazione complessa non altrimenti surrogabili con degli interventi antropici. Il successivo innesco di meccanismi di disturbo legati a fattori naturali (vento, neve, fuoco, fitopatie e pullulazioni di insetti), ricostituisce poi, se si prende in considerazione un ambito cronologico di adeguata ampiezza, coerente con la durata dei cicli vitali delle piante forestali, il regime secondo cui gli ecosistemi boschivi in esame conservano la propria stabilità e la propria diversità biologica.

Nei documenti presentati vengono esposti ben 9 obiettivi specifici perseguiti dal Piano di gestione, tutti afferenti alla nutrizione casistica dei "Servizi Ecosistemici". Il conseguimento di tali obiettivi viene inoltre corredato dal lodevole proposito di ridurre al "minimo sostenibile il disturbo arrecato dagli interventi e ogni altra azione antropica". Si rileva purtroppo come nella realtà tale pregevole intenzione di sostenibilità si scontri nei fatti con una previsione di intervento di circa 3000,5 ha, pari al 57% dell'intero complesso, nel periodo di validità del Piano (15 anni).

Un ulteriore elemento di riflessione è dato dalla percentuale di superficie utilizzata in rapporto alla superficie complessiva del complesso "Demanio Regionale Foreste Casentinesi" ricadente all'interno dei confini del Parco Nazionale. Mediamente si arriva ad un "tasso di utilizzazione annuo" del 3,8 % della superficie del Demanio Regionale, quando "gli interventi di natura prettamente selvicolturale realizzati nel Patrimonio Agricolo Forestale Regionale (PAFR), hanno riguardato mediamente l'1,35% della superficie del patrimonio" (dato riportato a pag. 82 del "Rapporto sullo stato delle foreste in Toscana - anno 2019"). La cosa appare tanto più incomprensibile se si considera il particolare regime di tutela (Parco Nazionale, Sito Unesco, ZSC) che caratterizza il complesso "Foreste Casentinesi". Si aggiunga inoltre che la "provvigione media" del Complesso Foreste Casentinesi viene indicata, per le fustaie, in 402 m³/ha e quindi nettamente superiore alla provvigione media regionale 251 m³/ha e, ancor più, a quella nazionale 235 m³/ha. In altre parole siamo in presenza di boschi "ricchi" di provvigione.

Un ulteriore elemento istruttorio emerge dal confronto "tra incremento legnoso e saggio di utilizzazione", ossia tra quanto "cresce il bosco" e "quanto viene utilizzato". Una sia pur "grossolana" elaborazione dei dati forniti individua nell'1,4% la media degli incrementi medi percentuali delle diverse comprese forestali (quanto crescono). Ebbene, a fronte del dato ora espresso, la media dei "saggi di utilizzazione massimi" (quanto si taglia) si attesta sul valore di 1,14% dei volumi esistenti. Pertanto, se è vero quanto espresso dal Piano, che "la ripresa legnosa ritraibile è contenuta entro i valori dell'incremento di volume", ossia che teoricamente si taglia meno di quanto la foresta non riesca a rigenerare, appare comunque evidente come i due valori siano molto vicini e come ciò significhi nei fatti "bloccare" o "cristallizzare" la crescita del complesso per i prossimi 15 anni.

Preoccupante appare infine il dato, riportato nella Relazione di Piano, relativo al volume annuo di legname complessivamente utilizzato. Tale valore viene complessivamente stimato, nei 15 anni di validità del Piano, tra i 254.070 m3 (al netto delle aree non esboscabili) e i 285.465 m3 (stima totale). Il dato preoccupa soprattutto per la sua entità e consistenza soprattutto se raffrontato con il dato, ricavabile dalle integrazioni fornite dalla stessa Unione dei Comuni Montani del Casentino, relativo al precedente Piano di gestione che in 13 anni ha fatto registrare un prelievo di 124.701 m3 (tra ripresa ordinaria e ripresa accidentale). Viene pertanto proposto un dato di ripresa pressoché doppio.

Come elemento istruttorio complementare si propone infine una specifica considerazione dell'area buffer del sito Unesco "Faggete vetuste". Il piano prevede infatti di intervenire su circa 445 ha all'interno dello stesso sito. Si consideri che la maggior parte delle particelle interessate ricadono in Zona B del Piano del Parco per la quale, le Norme Tecniche di Attuazione (NTA), prevedono che: "le caratteristiche naturali devono essere conservate nello stato più indisturbato possibile... destinazioni d'uso, di norma, pubbliche.... Nei boschi di elevato valore naturalistico e paesaggistico gli interventi saranno prevalentemente motivati da ragioni fitosanitarie oppure da ragioni di tutela e conservazione e difesa idrogeologica". Si evidenziano pertanto dubbi sull'opportunità di pianificare interventi su circa il 53,3% della superficie interna all'area buffer Unesco, pari allo 0,8% del Demanio Forestale Regionale Toscano. Si consideri che il riferimento è a un'area considerata e riconosciuta come "Patrimonio dell'Umanità", ossia ad un contesto ambientale di assoluta eccellenza, per la quale si ritiene che la connotazione produttivistica degli interventi debba essere assolutamente secondaria rispetto ai valori e alle funzioni di tutela e di salvaguardia di un patrimonio naturale unico ed importante.

A fronte di tutte le considerazioni ora espresse, con riferimento ai livelli di zonizzazione previsti dalle Norme Tecniche di Attuazione, nonché agli altri ambiti di tutela vigenti (ZSC, ZPS, Area Unesco) nel territorio del complesso Forestale regionale "Foreste Casentinesi", si ritiene di dover procedere ad una generale riduzione delle entità di prelievo previste Piano di gestione in approvazione. Tale riduzione, il cui dettaglio viene evidenziato nel quadro prescrittivo di seguito espresso, viene dettata sia in riferimento alle superfici annualmente percorse dagli interventi, sia soprattutto all'entità di massa legnosa annualmente prelevata (% di prelievo previste dai moduli). Tale rimodulazione trova la sua giustificazione sia nella necessità di ridurre le azioni di "disturbo" antropico a livelli assolutamente fisiologici per il contesto e comunque tali da non compromettere le caratteristiche di robustezza, resistenza e resilienza dei popolamenti forestali, sia per ricondurre il prelievo entro i limiti sostenibilità che dovranno essere in linea con i dati delle utilizzazioni pregresse.

- ATTESO che dall'istruttoria emerge la conformità dell'intervento al Piano del Parco;
- CONSIDERATO che gli interventi previsti nel Piano di gestione in oggetto ricadono nelle seguenti ZSC (Zone Speciale di Conservazione) e ZPS (Zona di Protezione Speciale):

ZSC IT 5180002 Foreste Alto Bacino dell'Arno
ZSC IT 5180001 Crinale Monte Falterona, Monte Falco e Monte Gabrendo
ZSC IT 5180003 Monte Faggiolo Giogo Seccheta
ZSC IT 5180005 Alta Vallesanta
ZSC IT 5180008 Foreste di Camaldoli e Badia Prataglia
ZPS IT 5180004 Camaldoli, Scodella, Campigna e Badia Prataglia

e che per le stesse questo Ente ha provveduto a trasmettere, con nota prot. 1576 del 11/03/21, alla Regione Toscana – Settore Tutela della Natura e del Mare il parere relativo agli esiti sulla Valutazione di Incidenza Ecologica;

- RITENUTO di dover condividere i contenuti dell'istruttoria e di procedere quindi al rilascio del Nulla Osta in oggetto;
- VISTO il Regolamento per il rilascio del nulla osta, approvato con Delib. del Consiglio Direttivo n°122 del 19/10/00;

RILASCIA

il presente Nulla Osta, per quanto di competenza, subordinandolo al rispetto delle seguenti prescrizioni:

Per necessità connesse ad un chiaro inquadramento degli interventi proposti, il quadro prescrittivo farà riferimento alle singole "comprese" indicate nel Piano di Gestione, analizzando il dettaglio dei Moduli d'intervento approntati per le diverse tipologie di soprassuolo secondo lo schema seguente:

Compresa Abetine

Modulo D.AB: diradamento di fustaie di abete bianco (richiesti 215.1 ha + 69.3 ha in ripetizione)

Prescrizione:

- Si ritiene ammissibile un diradamento svolto con criteri prudenziali a carico dei soli soggetti dominati e solo eccezionalmente codominanti con un prelievo max del **20% del numero di piante**;
- Tra un intervento e quello previsto in ripetizione, dovrà essere trascorso un periodo di tempo non inferiore a 10 anni. L'eventuale ripetizione dovrà essere subordinata a verifica dei livelli di evoluzione e di stabilità del soprassuolo avendo come riferimento anche la ricostituzione della continuità del contatto fra le chiome del popolamento. La percentuale di prelievo riferita all'intervento in ripetizione non dovrà superare il **15% del numero di piante**;
- Non sono inoltre consentiti i previsti interventi puntuali di selvicoltura d'albero.

Modulo D.AS: diradamento di fustaie storiche di abete bianco (richiesti 129.5 ha)

Prescrizione:

- Si ritiene ammissibile il solo intervento fitosanitario a carico dei soggetti in evidente stato di deperimento come descritti dal modulo, con un prelievo max del **10% del numero di piante** senza inoltre consentire l'ulteriore prudente diradamento sulle piante indicate come "di scarsa funzionalità biologica";
- Non sono inoltre consentiti i previsti interventi puntuali di selvicoltura d'albero.

Modulo D.LO: diradamenti localizzati di fustaie di conifere fortemente interessate da schianti (richiesti 77,3 ha + 6,7 ha in ripetizione)

Prescrizione:

- Si ritiene ammissibile un diradamento svolto con criteri prudenziali a carico dei soli soggetti dominati e solo eccezionalmente codominanti, nelle sole "Porzioni di bosco residue poco danneggiate - A", con un prelievo max del **20% del numero di piante**;
- Tra un intervento e quello previsto in ripetizione dovrà essere trascorso un periodo di tempo non inferiore a 10 anni. L'eventuale ripetizione dovrà essere subordinata a verifica dei livelli di evoluzione e di stabilità del soprassuolo avendo come riferimento anche la ricostituzione della continuità del contatto fra le chiome del popolamento. La percentuale di prelievo riferita agli interventi in ripetizione non dovrà superare il **15% del numero di piante**;
- Non sono inoltre consentiti i previsti interventi puntuali di selvicoltura d'albero;
- Relativamente alle "Nuove aree compromesse da schianti e sradicamenti - B", è impossibile giungere ad un'adeguata valutazione preventiva. La stessa potrà essere effettuata, previa verifica congiunta, solo in coincidenza dell'eventuale evento in relazione all'estensione e all'entità dello stesso.

Modulo CIM: cure colturali in giovani impianti (richiesti 5,6 ha)

Prescrizione:

- Eventuali materiali estranei all'ambiente, quali plastiche, reti metalliche, provenienti dalle opere di smantellamento delle protezioni delle piantine messe a dimora, dovranno essere immediatamente raccolti, recuperati e smaltiti.

Compresa Boschi misti di conifere e boschi misti di conifere-latifoglie

Modulo D.AF: diradamento di formazioni miste di abete bianco e faggio (richiesti 77,4 ha + 11,8 ha in ripetizione)

Prescrizione:

- Si ritiene ammissibile un diradamento prevalentemente dal basso, eccezionalmente esteso al piano codominante, con un prelievo max del **20% del numero di piante**;
- Tra un intervento e quello previsto in ripetizione dovrà essere trascorso un periodo di tempo non inferiore a 10 anni. L'eventuale ripetizione dovrà essere subordinata a verifica dei livelli di evoluzione e di stabilità del soprassuolo avendo come riferimento anche la ricostituzione della continuità del contatto fra le chiome del popolamento. La percentuale di prelievo riferita agli interventi in ripetizione non dovrà superare il **15% del numero di piante**;
- Non sono inoltre consentiti i previsti interventi puntuali di selvicoltura d'albero;
- La previsione di aumentare l'entità del prelievo in presenza di "occasionali nuclei di rinnovazione promettente" dev'essere preventivamente verificata e concordata mediante verifica congiunta con il personale tecnico dell'Ente Parco.

Modulo D.CL: diradamento di formazioni miste di conifere e latifoglie (richiesti 158,1 ha + 21,1 ha in ripetizione)

Prescrizione:

- Si ritiene ammissibile un diradamento misto a carico dei soggetti sottoposti o in precarie condizioni vegetative, favorendo le specie autoctone, con un prelievo max del **20% del numero di piante**;
- Tra un intervento e quello previsto in ripetizione dovrà essere trascorso un periodo di tempo non inferiore a 10 anni. L'eventuale ripetizione dovrà essere subordinata a verifica dei livelli di evoluzione e di stabilità del soprassuolo avendo come riferimento anche la ricostituzione della continuità del contatto fra le chiome del popolamento. La percentuale di prelievo riferita agli interventi in ripetizione non dovrà superare il **15% del numero di piante**;
- Non sono inoltre consentiti i previsti interventi puntuali di selvicoltura d'albero;
- La previsione di aumentare l'entità del prelievo in presenza di "occasional nuclei di rinnovazione promettente" dev'essere preventivamente verificata e concordata mediante verifica congiunta con il personale tecnico dell'Ente Parco.

Modulo D.LO: diradamenti localizzati di fustaie di conifere fortemente interessate da schianti (richiesti 93,6 ha + 22,9 ha in ripetizione)

Prescrizione:

- Si ritiene ammissibile un diradamento svolto con criteri prudenziali a carico dei soli soggetti dominati e solo eccezionalmente codominanti, nelle sole "Porzioni di bosco residue poco danneggiate - A", con un prelievo max del **20% del numero di piante**;
- Tra un intervento e quello previsto in ripetizione dovrà essere trascorso un periodo di tempo non inferiore a 10 anni. L'eventuale ripetizione dovrà essere subordinata a verifica dei livelli di evoluzione e di stabilità del soprassuolo avendo come riferimento anche la ricostituzione della continuità del contatto fra le chiome del popolamento. La percentuale di prelievo riferita agli interventi in ripetizione non dovrà superare il **15% del numero di piante**;
- Non sono inoltre consentiti i previsti interventi puntuali di selvicoltura d'albero;
- Relativamente alle "Nuove aree compromesse da schianti e sradicamenti - B", è impossibile giungere ad un'adeguata valutazione preventiva. La stessa potrà essere effettuata, previa verifica congiunta, solo in coincidenza dell'eventuale evento in relazione all'estensione e all'entità dello stesso.

Modulo D.MC: diradamento di formazioni miste di conifere (richiesti 100,0 ha + 37,6 ha in ripetizione)

Prescrizione:

- Si ritiene ammissibile un diradamento misto a carico dei soggetti sottoposti o in precarie condizioni vegetative, favorendo le specie autoctone, con un prelievo max del **20% del numero di piante**;
- Tra un intervento e quello previsto in ripetizione dovrà essere trascorso un periodo di tempo non inferiore a 10 anni. L'eventuale ripetizione dovrà essere subordinata a verifica dei livelli di evoluzione e di stabilità del soprassuolo avendo come riferimento anche la ricostituzione della continuità del contatto fra le chiome del popolamento. La percentuale di prelievo riferita agli interventi in ripetizione non dovrà superare il **15% del numero di piante**;
- Non sono inoltre consentiti i previsti interventi puntuali di selvicoltura d'albero;
- La previsione di aumentare l'entità del prelievo in presenza di "occasional nuclei di rinnovazione promettente" dev'essere preventivamente verificata e concordata mediante verifica congiunta con il personale tecnico dell'Ente Parco.

Modulo UAF: diradamento di formazioni miste di abete bianco e faggio in area buffer UNESCO (richiesti 66,4 ha + 21,2 ha in ripetizione)

Prescrizione:

- In considerazione dell'alto pregio culturale ed ambientale dell'area Unesco si ritiene di dover promuovere e favorire un generale aumento dei livelli di complessità bioecologica tramite l'ulteriore invecchiamento delle formazioni di faggio astenendosi da qualsiasi intervento selvicolturale. Tale scelta è dettata dalla volontà di conferire all'area buffer una potenziata funzione di protezione della "core area", da attuarsi attraverso l'incremento dei livelli di naturalità, di funzionalità biologica degli ecosistemi e di bassissimo disturbo antropico (obiettivo di conservazione indicato per la maggior parte delle ZSC).

Non sono pertanto autorizzati i previsti interventi all'interno dell' "Area Buffer Unesco"

- Sono autorizzati gli interventi di taglio, connessi ad eventuali necessità di messa in sicurezza di particolari aree o infrastrutture, valutati e concordati mediante la preventiva individuazione congiunta, con il personale tecnico dell'Ente Parco, dei soggetti arborei da abbattere.

Modulo CIM: cure colturali in giovani impianti (richiesti 3,3 ha)

Prescrizione:

- Eventuali materiali estranei all'ambiente, quali plastiche, reti metalliche, provenienti dalle opere di smantellamento delle protezioni delle piantine messe a dimora, dovranno essere immediatamente raccolti, recuperati e smaltiti.

N.B. Per la presente compresa, i previsti interventi di diradamento con "descrizione specifica", circa 9 ha, sono autorizzati solo se preventivamente valutati e concordati mediante martellata congiunta con il personale tecnico dell'Ente Parco;

Compresa boschi di faggio

Modulo ALA: diradamento di fustaie transitorie da invecchiamento del ceduo (richiesti 23,1 ha)

Prescrizione:

- Nel condividere le previsioni di intervento previste nella descrizione del Modulo si indica il limite di prelievo in **max 40% del numero di piante.**

Modulo D.FA: diradamento faggete (richiesti 690,3 ha + 41,3 ha in ripetizione)

Prescrizione:

- Si ritiene ammissibile un diradamento misto a carico dei soggetti sottoposti o in precarie condizioni vegetative con un prelievo max del **20% del numero di piante;**
- Tra un intervento e quello previsto in ripetizione dovrà essere trascorso un periodo di tempo non inferiore a 10 anni. L'eventuale ripetizione dovrà essere subordinata a verifica dei livelli di evoluzione e di stabilità del soprassuolo avendo come riferimento anche la ricostituzione della continuità del contatto fra le chiome del popolamento. La percentuale di prelievo riferita all'intervento in ripetizione non dovrà superare il **15% del numero di piante;**
- Non sono inoltre consentiti i previsti interventi puntuali di selvicoltura d'albero.

Modulo UFA: diradamento faggete in area buffer UNESCO (richiesti 206,1 ha + 29,3 ha in ripetizione)

Prescrizione:

- In considerazione dell'alto pregio culturale ed ambientale dell'area Unesco si ritiene di dover promuovere e favorire un generale aumento dei livelli di complessità bioecologica tramite l'ulteriore invecchiamento delle formazioni di faggio astenendosi da qualsiasi intervento selvicolturale. Tale scelta è dettata dalla volontà di conferire all'area buffer una potenziata funzione di protezione della "core area", da attuarsi attraverso l'incremento dei livelli di naturalità, di funzionalità biologica degli ecosistemi e di bassissimo disturbo antropico (obiettivo di conservazione indicato per la maggior parte delle ZSC).
Non sono pertanto autorizzati i previsti interventi all'interno dell' "Area Buffer Unesco"
- Sono autorizzati gli interventi di taglio, connessi ad eventuali necessità di messa in sicurezza di particolari aree o infrastrutture, valutati e concordati mediante la preventiva individuazione congiunta, con il personale tecnico dell'Ente Parco, dei soggetti arborei da abbattere.

Compresa Boschi in successione

Modulo D.LS: diradamento di fustaie di latifoglie eliofile in successione (richiesti 78,0 ha)

Prescrizione:

- Si ritiene opportuno favorire la naturale selezione del popolamento, salvaguardando i nuclei di rinnovazione presenti, attraverso l'attuazione di un diradamento misto a carico dei soggetti sottoposti o in precarie condizioni vegetative del piano dominato e codominante. Il limite massimo di prelievo viene individuato nel **20% del numero di piante** degli esemplari presenti;
- La previsione di una maggiore incidenza del prelievo di piante in presenza di "nuclei di giovani piante o corpi densi e vigorosi di rinnovazione affermata" dev'essere verificata mediante la preventiva individuazione dei soggetti arborei da abbattere congiuntamente con il personale tecnico dell'Ente Parco.

Modulo D.PS: diradamento di fustaie di pino nero in successione (richiesti 49,3 ha + 8,6 ha in ripetizione)

Prescrizione:

- Si ritiene ammissibile un diradamento misto a carico dei soggetti sottoposti o in precarie condizioni vegetative, favorendo le specie autoctone, con un prelievo max del **30% del numero di piante**;
- Tra un intervento e quello previsto in ripetizione dovrà essere trascorso un periodo di tempo non inferiore a 10 anni. L'eventuale ripetizione dovrà essere subordinata a verifica dei livelli di evoluzione e di stabilità del soprassuolo avendo come riferimento anche la ricostituzione della continuità del contatto fra le chiome del popolamento. La percentuale di prelievo riferita all'intervento in ripetizione non dovrà superare il **15% del numero di piante**;
- Non sono inoltre consentiti i previsti interventi puntuali di selvicoltura d'albero.

N.B. Per la presente compresa, i previsti interventi di diradamento con "descrizione specifica", circa 26,5 ha ripetuti su 9,6 ha, sono autorizzati solo se preventivamente valutati e concordati mediante martellata congiunta con il personale tecnico dell'Ente Parco;

Compresa Fustaie di douglasia

Modulo D.DO: diradamento di fustaie di douglasia (richiesti 51,8 ha + 22,8 ha in ripetizione)

Prescrizione:

- Si ritiene ammissibile un diradamento misto a carico dei soggetti sottoposti o in precarie condizioni vegetative, con un prelievo max del **30% del numero di piante**;
- Tra un intervento e quello previsto in ripetizione dovrà essere trascorso un periodo di tempo non inferiore a 10 anni. L'eventuale ripetizione dovrà essere subordinata a verifica dei livelli di evoluzione e di stabilità del soprassuolo avendo come riferimento anche la ricostituzione della continuità del contatto fra le chiome del popolamento. La percentuale di prelievo riferita all'intervento in ripetizione non dovrà superare il **15% del numero di piante**;
- Non sono inoltre consentiti i previsti interventi puntuali di selvicoltura d'albero.

Modulo D.LO: diradamenti localizzati di fustaie di conifere fortemente interessate da schianti (richiesti 127,6 ha + 27,3 ha in ripetizione)

Prescrizione:

- Si ritiene ammissibile un diradamento svolto con criteri prudenziali a carico dei soli soggetti dominati e solo eccezionalmente codominanti, nelle sole "Porzioni di bosco residue poco danneggiate - A", con un prelievo max del **20% del numero di piante**;
- Tra un intervento e quello previsto in ripetizione dovrà essere trascorso un periodo di tempo non inferiore a 10 anni. L'eventuale ripetizione dovrà essere subordinata a verifica dei livelli di evoluzione e di stabilità del soprassuolo avendo come riferimento anche la ricostituzione della continuità del contatto fra le chiome del popolamento. La percentuale di prelievo riferita agli interventi in ripetizione non dovrà superare il **15% del numero di piante**;
- Non sono inoltre consentiti i previsti interventi puntuali di selvicoltura d'albero;
- Relativamente alle "Nuove aree compromesse da schianti e sradicamenti - B", è impossibile giungere ad un'adeguata valutazione preventiva. La stessa potrà essere effettuata, previa verifica congiunta, solo in coincidenza dell'eventuale evento in relazione all'estensione e all'entità dello stesso.

N.B. Per la presente compresa, i previsti interventi di diradamento con "descrizione specifica", circa 3,8 ha, sono autorizzati solo se preventivamente valutati e concordati mediante martellata congiunta con il personale tecnico dell'Ente Parco;

Compresa Fustaie di Pino nero

Modulo D.PN: diradamento di fustaie di pino nero (richiesti 124,4 ha + 32,3 ha in ripetizione)

Prescrizione:

- Si ritiene ammissibile un diradamento misto a carico dei soggetti sottoposti o in precarie condizioni vegetative, favorendo le specie autoctone, con un prelievo max del **30% del numero di piante**;
- Tra un intervento e quello previsto in ripetizione dovrà essere trascorso un periodo di tempo non inferiore a 10 anni. L'eventuale ripetizione dovrà essere subordinata a verifica dei livelli di evoluzione e di stabilità del soprassuolo avendo come riferimento anche la ricostituzione della continuità del contatto fra le chiome del popolamento. La percentuale di prelievo riferita all'intervento in ripetizione non dovrà superare il **15% del numero di piante**;
- Non sono inoltre consentiti i previsti interventi puntuali di selvicoltura d'albero.

Modulo D.LO: diradamenti localizzati di fustaie di conifere fortemente interessate da schianti (richiesti 57,0 ha + 2,5 ha in ripetizione)

Prescrizione:

- Si ritiene ammissibile un diradamento svolto con criteri prudenziali a carico dei soli soggetti dominati e solo eccezionalmente codominanti, nelle sole "Porzioni di bosco residue poco danneggiate - A", con un prelievo max del **20% del numero di piante**;
- Tra un intervento e quello previsto in ripetizione dovrà essere trascorso un periodo di tempo non inferiore a 10 anni. L'eventuale ripetizione dovrà essere subordinata a verifica dei livelli di evoluzione e di stabilità del soprassuolo avendo come riferimento anche la ricostituzione della continuità del contatto fra le chiome del popolamento. La percentuale di prelievo riferita agli interventi in ripetizione non dovrà superare il **15% del numero di piante**;
- Non sono inoltre consentiti i previsti interventi puntuali di selvicoltura d'albero;
- Relativamente alle "Nuove aree compromesse da schianti e sradicamenti - B", è impossibile giungere ad un'adeguata valutazione preventiva. La stessa potrà essere effettuata, previa verifica congiunta, solo in coincidenza dell'eventuale evento in relazione all'estensione e all'entità dello stesso.

Compresa cerrete

Modulo D.LA: diradamento di fustaie transitorie di latifoglie eliofile (richiesti 356,2 ha + 11,0 ha in ripetizione)

Prescrizione:

- Si ritiene ammissibile un diradamento misto a carico dei soggetti sottoposti o in precarie condizioni vegetative con un prelievo max del **20% del numero di piante**;
- Tra un intervento e quello previsto in ripetizione dovrà essere trascorso un periodo di tempo non inferiore a 10 anni. L'eventuale ripetizione dovrà essere subordinata a verifica dei livelli di evoluzione e di stabilità del soprassuolo avendo come riferimento anche la ricostituzione della continuità del contatto fra le chiome del popolamento. La percentuale di prelievo riferita all'intervento in ripetizione non dovrà superare il **15% del numero di piante**;
- Non sono inoltre consentiti i previsti interventi puntuali di selvicoltura d'albero.

Modulo ALA: diradamento di fustaie transitorie da invecchiamento del ceduo (richiesti 19,2 ha + 1,8 ha in ripetizione)

Prescrizione:

- Nel condividere le previsioni di intervento previste nella descrizione del Modulo si indica il limite di prelievo in **max 40% del numero**.

Compresa boschi misti di latifoglie

Modulo D.LA: diradamento di fustaie transitorie di latifoglie eliofile (richiesti 85,9 ha)

Prescrizione:

- Si ritiene ammissibile un diradamento misto a carico dei soggetti sottoposti o in precarie condizioni vegetative con un prelievo max del **20% del numero di piante**;
- Non sono inoltre consentiti i previsti interventi puntuali di selvicoltura d'albero.

Modulo ALA: diradamento di fustaie transitorie da invecchiamento del ceduo (richiesti 36,3 ha)

Prescrizione:

- Nel condividere le previsioni di intervento previste nella descrizione del Modulo si indica il limite di prelievo in **max 40% del numero di piante**.

N.B. Per la presente compresa, i previsti interventi di diradamento con "descrizione specifica", circa 1,6 ha, sono autorizzati solo se preventivamente valutati e concordati mediante martellata congiunta con il personale tecnico dell'Ente Parco;

Compresa castagneti

Modulo MCA interventi di recupero e/o miglioramento (richiesti 53,0 ha)

Prescrizioni:

1. Il recupero di castagneti da frutto abbandonati è ritenuto possibile dove il piano dominante delle chiome è ancora costituito per oltre il 70 % da esemplari di castagno che vegetino in condizioni fitosanitarie sufficienti.

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- Non sono invece consentiti interventi di recupero di popolamenti misti ormai affermati o dei popolamenti, che pur a dominanza di castagno, presentino un grado accentuato di senescenza e di diffusione di fitopatologie. L'effettiva possibilità di recupero di castagneti da frutto abbandonati dovrà pertanto essere valutata, in sede di preventivo sopralluogo congiunto, nel momento in cui si intendesse rendere effettivamente esecutivi gli interventi in relazione al grado di evoluzione vegetazionale del popolamento;
2. Le azioni di recupero dovranno essere effettuate in aree servite da viabilità forestale esistente. Il recupero dovrà tendere anche a ricostituire gradualmente il carattere monumentale e paesaggistico delle grandi piante da frutto, rispettandone anche le caratteristiche di naturalità correlate alla presenza di piante morte e deperienti;
 3. Eventuali reimpianti dovranno essere effettuati con varietà da frutto locali.

Modulo OCA cure ordinarie a castagneti da frutto (richiesti 75.8 ha)

Prescrizioni:

Visto il considerevole significato ecologico, quali potenziali "alberi habitat", dei vecchi soggetti di castagno da frutto, ancorché completamente secchi, il loro taglio ed allontanamento dovrà essere preventivamente concordato. Sono fatte salve eventuali necessità connesse alla messa in sicurezza o per motivi di difesa fitosanitaria.

Compresa boschi protettivi (protezione diretta)

- La valutazione, programmata su base annuale, circa le necessità di "abbattimento controllato degli individui che siano giudicati pericolosi per la pubblica incolumità di cose e persone", dovrà essere effettuata mediante verifica congiunta con il personale tecnico dell'Ente Parco o del Reparto Carabinieri Parco.

Compresa Pascoli, coltivati ed altre aree aperte

- Con riferimento alla corretta gestione delle aree pascolive del complesso "Foreste Casentinesi", ordinariamente assegnate in concessione ad allevatori privati, i relativi disciplinari dovranno contenere le specifiche indicazioni e gli obblighi dettagliati nel documento integrativo (punto 8) trasmesso all'Ente Parco (prot. EP 738 del 08/02/21) dall'Unione dei Comuni Montani del Casentino;

Modulo MPA miglioramento di pascoli e prati pascoli (richiesti 54.4 ha)

Prescrizioni:

Su tale tipologia non si riscontrano nelle norme previste dal Piano per il Parco particolari limitazioni.

Modulo OPA ordinaria coltura di pascoli e prati pascoli (richiesti 100.6 ha)

Prescrizioni:

Su tale tipologia non si riscontrano nelle norme previste dal Piano per il Parco particolari limitazioni.

Modulo I.SS Interventi speciali di salvaguardia di aree aperte (richiesti 25,9 ha)

Prescrizioni:

- Le ipotesi di recupero delle aree mediante la riapertura degli spazi in via di rinaturalizzazione dovranno essere valutate congiuntamente mediante l'effettuazione di specifici sopralluoghi di verifica;
- A seguito della valutazione di cui al punto precedente dovrà essere evidenziata l'eventuale necessità di produrre specifici elaborati progettuali, suscettibili di ulteriori atti autorizzativi, incentrati su preminenti considerazioni di carattere naturalistico ambientale circa l'opportunità degli interventi proposti.

Compresa arbusteti

- Non si rilevano dall'analisi di Piano particolari indicazioni gestionali. Eventuali ipotesi di intervento che dovessero sopraggiungere nel corso del periodo di validità del Piano dovranno essere valutate congiuntamente con questo Ente Parco anche al fine di evidenziare l'eventuale necessità di produrre specifici elaborati progettuali, suscettibili di ulteriori atti autorizzativi.

Compresa "altre superfici"

- Per quanto attiene i previsti interventi a carico dei fabbricati, aree di sosta, campeggi, impianti di arboricoltura sono assentiti esclusivamente in riferimento al regime di manutenzione ordinaria da effettuarsi secondo gli specifici moduli laddove richiamati;
- Eventuali ulteriori necessità di intervento, che eccedano quanto previsto al punto precedente, dovranno essere dettagliate mediante la produzione di specifici elaborati progettuali, suscettibili di ulteriori atti autorizzativi.

Interventi particolari non codificati

- Pur rilevando il buon livello di dettaglio circa le aree e i contenuti tecnico-operativi indicati per i cosiddetti "interventi particolari non codificati", l'effettiva approvazione degli stessi potrà avvenire solo a seguito di condivisione e verifica congiunta con i tecnici di questo Ente Parco delle effettive ipotesi realizzative. Ciò al fine di evidenziare l'eventuale necessità, normativamente definita, di produrre specifici elaborati progettuali, suscettibili di ulteriori atti autorizzativi.

Interventi in "Area buffer Unesco"

- Nell'"Area Buffer Unesco", in considerazione del suo alto pregio ecologico-ambientale e culturale, si ritiene di dover promuovere e favorire un generale aumento dei livelli di invecchiamento delle formazioni forestali astenendosi da qualsiasi intervento selvicolturale sull'intera superficie di Demanio Forestale Regionale ricadente al suo interno. Tale scelta è dettata dalla volontà di conferire all'area buffer una potenziata funzione di protezione della "core area", da attuarsi attraverso l'incremento dei livelli di naturalità, di funzionalità biologica degli ecosistemi e di bassissimo disturbo antropico (obiettivo di conservazione indicato per la maggior parte delle ZSC);
- In parziale deroga a quanto previsto al punto precedente, sono autorizzati gli interventi di taglio, connessi ad eventuali necessità di messa in sicurezza di particolari aree o infrastrutture (sentieri, piste, aree di sosta, punti panoramici ecc.), valutati e concordati mediante la preventiva individuazione congiunta dei soggetti arborei da abbattere con il personale tecnico dell'Ente Parco.

PRESCRIZIONI GENERALI

1. Con riferimento alla definizione di "finestra temporale nel quale l'intervento selvicolturale può essere realizzato" (pag. 417 della Relazione) si prescrive che, laddove l'effettiva realizzazione avvenga oltre i due anni dall'anno di originaria previsione, l'Ente Parco potrà esprimersi sull'autorizzare o meno tale spostamento temporale. Ciò al fine di garantire il rispetto dei livelli di programmazione e corretta pianificazione e di evitare un'eventuale, eccessiva, concentrazione e sommatoria di superfici di intervento in poche annualità, con evidenti riflessi sui livelli di disturbo e di impatto complessivo sull'area;
2. Il recupero produttivo di piante morte in piedi, sradicate o atterrate a causa di eventi naturali non programmati contribuirà ai conteggi ai fini della determinazione delle percentuali di prelievo previste dai singoli moduli di intervento per le diverse comprese;
3. Per l'esecuzione di prelievi accidentali eccezionali l'Ente di gestione dovrà provvedere a richiedere specifico nulla osta all'Ente Parco in quanto che la tipologia e l'entità degli schianti e la relativa massa legnosa danneggiata, dovranno essere valutati nello specifico in relazione alle loro effettive estensioni ed entità;
4. Per l'esbosco del legname, nel condividere le modalità operative indicate nella relazione di piano, se ne rimanda l'effettiva applicazione con esclusivo riferimento a sistemi, macchinari e strumentazioni normalmente in uso per il territorio del Parco. Non sono consentiti tutti quei sistemi (es. allestimento ed esbosco con Harvester) la cui effettiva applicazione possa richiedere importanti interventi di adeguamento infrastrutturale o che possa determinare un aumento degli impatti sulle diverse componenti ambientali (compattazione del suolo, degrado dei sistemi di regimazione ecc.);
5. Per l'esbosco dei prodotti legnosi, da effettuarsi sempre in periodo asciutto o comunque in condizioni di sufficiente portanza del terreno, dovranno essere utilizzate le piste di smacchio effettivamente esistenti di cui è consentita la manutenzione ordinaria, evitando allargamenti ed adottando ogni cautela atta a prevenire danneggiamenti al suolo, alle ceppaie ed in genere alle piante che rimarranno in dote al bosco. Resta pertanto obbligo per i titolari dei cantieri forestali provvedere al pronto e immediato ripristino di situazioni negative in atto a carico dei terreni e dei tracciati utilizzati, qualificabili come fenomeni di erosione superficiale o altre forme di dissesto o danneggiamento dei suoli, anche prima dell'ultimazione delle operazioni di esbosco. In tale contesto, l'Ente Parco e/o il personale di vigilanza del Reparto Carabinieri Parco, potrà disporre l'immediata sospensione dei lavori di utilizzazione e di esbosco fino all'avvenuto ripristino dei contesti perturbati;
6. Nella sistemazione dei residui del taglio si dovrà evitare la formazione di ammassi e cumuli di materiale vegetale, salvo che gli stessi siano concordati in numero e disposizione con il personale del Reparto Carabinieri Parco al fine di costituire microhabitat favorevoli alla fauna. Nella norma i residui dovranno essere di norma accordonati oppure uniformemente distribuiti sulla superficie utilizzata, ricoprendo, a fine intervento,

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gli accessi usati temporaneamente per l'esbosco, lasciando comunque libera da tali materiali e da vegetazione infestante una fascia di mt. 20 dalle strade, dai sentieri presenti e dal bosco non utilizzato;

7. Le aree di imposto del legname relative ad ogni lotto di intervento dovranno essere preventivamente concordate con il personale del Parco o del Reparto Carabinieri Parco. Gli accatastamenti dovranno essere tutti opportunamente segnalati ed eseguiti a regola d'arte;
8. L'esbosco del legname derivante da interventi di taglio di qualsiasi genere dovrà avvenire entro 6 mesi dal taglio, anche al fine di tutelare le specie di xilofagi particolarmente protette dall'effetto trappola correlato all'esbosco di legna da questi utilizzata per la riproduzione. Possono essere assentite proroghe, giustificate da necessità oggettive, preventivamente richieste dall'Ente gestore e valutate da questo Ente Parco;
9. L'apertura di nuove piste, così come interventi di manutenzione straordinaria (Modulo MS.F) sono subordinate oltre che alla preventiva previsione di Piano alla effettiva progettazione di dettaglio da approvare con specifici atti autorizzativi;
10. Tutti i singoli lotti di intervento sono assoggettati all'obbligo, tramite l'indirizzo PEC protocolloforestecasentinesi@halleycert.it, delle seguenti comunicazioni:
 - Comunicazione da parte dell'Unione dei Comuni Montani del Casentino riferita all'effettiva avvenuta consegna del lotto;
 - Comunicazione da parte della Ditta, secondo il modello già trasmesso all'Unione dei Comuni, di inizio lavori. Detta comunicazione dovrà essere inviata almeno 20 giorni prima della data di effettivo inizio lavori.
11. In mancanza delle comunicazioni di cui al punto precedente l'intervento deve intendersi come non autorizzato;
12. Gli Uffici dell'Ente Parco o del personale di vigilanza del Reparto Carabinieri Parco potranno impartire ulteriori prescrizioni di dettaglio in relazione alla caratteristiche intrinseche di ogni area di intervento nei casi in cui emergano preminenti interessi di conservazione e salvaguardia ambientale (es. presenza siti di nidificazione, presenza di specie particolarmente protette) che non sia stato possibile valutare in sede di iter autorizzativo;
13. L'affidamento degli interventi selvicolturali all'interno del Parco Nazionale dovrà essere formalizzato all'assegnatario con la consegna in copia delle prescrizioni contenute nel presente nulla osta, da controfirmare per presa visione; l'assegnatario dovrà inoltre essere reso edotto di tutte le altre indicazioni derivanti dalle specifiche norme vigenti (anche su argomenti correlati agli interventi boschivi come quello dell'uso di fuochi all'aperto) ed alle particolari attenzioni operative che queste comportano;
14. Negli interventi sulla vegetazione presente nelle aree di impluvio dovrà essere preservata dal taglio una fascia di 10 metri di larghezza, per lato, lungo i fossi ed i torrenti. In questi casi l'intervento potrà essere eseguito per assicurare l'efficienza idraulica del corso d'acqua, previa verifica e indicazione dell'Ente Parco o del Comando Stazione Carabinieri Parco competente per territorio;
15. Nella scelta delle piante da abbattere nelle operazioni di diradamento e comunque nei casi in cui sia prevista una selezione dei soggetti da sottoporre al taglio, non dovrà essere valutato con sistematicità il criterio dell'aspetto esteriore della pianta, inteso come eventuale presenza di malformazioni che non influiscano comunque sulla capacità competitiva del soggetto stesso. Pur nel rispetto delle esigenze di qualità tecnologica degli assortimenti legnosi ritraibili, in occasione delle operazioni colturali dovranno dunque essere rilasciati in bosco, almeno in parte, anche soggetti fenotipicamente scadenti, non essendo attribuibile alla gestione forestale nell'Area Protetta un'azione sistematica di selezione fenotipica fine a se stessa. Tale criterio anche al fine di un arricchimento e diversificazione strutturale delle compagini forestali, spesso connessi al mantenimento di micro nicchie ecologiche e di situazioni estetiche d'interesse sia dal punto di vista socio-culturale che turistico;
16. Nei previsti cartelli di cantiere dovranno essere indicati oltre agli estremi dell'atto autorizzativo di questo Ente Parco anche informazioni per divulgare correttamente le informazioni di carattere ambientale, tecnico ed autorizzativo inerenti le attività previste dal Piano di Gestione. Su tale aspetto, questo Ente si rende disponibile ad una attiva collaborazione progettuale e comunicativa, al fine di attivare congiuntamente tutte le azioni che permettano di trasferire al pubblico le necessarie informazioni sulle valenze, sulle finalità e sulle compatibilità ambientali delle attività forestali;

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17. Nel caso in cui durante i lavori boschivi vengano individuati siti di riproduzione e nidificazione di specie di interesse comunitario o comunque meritevoli di prioritaria salvaguardia, dovranno essere attivate le necessarie misure di rispetto atte a garantire il mantenimento dell'efficacia dei siti stessi anche, se del caso, in collaborazione con il personale di questo Ente. Tale disposizione si applica anche ai nidi di rapaci o picidi eventualmente presenti su alberi oggetto di intervento, relativamente ai quali dovrà essere fatta particolare attenzione non solo in sede di martellata ma anche nell'imminenza dell'abbattimento degli alberi;
18. Qualora, nel corso delle attività di verifica e/o di vigilanza o anche a seguito di azioni di ricerca e monitoraggio, si appurasse che determinati interventi possano compromettere la salvaguardia di specie animali o vegetali, di associazioni vegetali o forestali, di singolarità geologiche, di formazioni paleontologiche, di comunità biologiche, di biotopi, di valori scenici e panoramici, di processi naturali, di equilibri idraulici e idrogeologici o di equilibri ecologici, questo Ente si riserva la possibilità di modificare motivatamente le prescrizioni impartite o, se del caso, di sospendere o vietare l'ulteriore applicazione degli interventi in questione.

Nota a margine: si condivide pienamente e si apprezza la proposta espressa nel Piano di gestione di intitolare la strada forestale n.66 alla memoria del collega ed amico Dott. Alfredo Bresciani, le cui qualità umane e professionali continuano ad essere un importante punto di riferimento per tutto il personale dell'Ente Parco!


Gli interessati potranno comunque impugnare il presente atto con ricorso al TAR competente entro 60 giorni o con ricorso straordinario al Presidente della Repubblica entro 120 giorni.

Responsabile del procedimento è il Dott. Andrea Gennai (andrea.gennai@parcoforestecasentinesi.it), referente della pratica è il Dott. Alessandro Fani (alessandro.fani@parcoforestecasentinesi.it).

Resta comunque inteso che dovranno essere acquisite tutte le altre eventuali autorizzazioni degli Enti competenti e sono fatti salvi eventuali diritti di terzi.

L'Ente Parco informa, che: il trattamento dei dati personali forniti nel corso dei rapporti con questo Ente o acquisiti per gli scopi istituzionali è finalizzato allo svolgimento delle procedure inerenti il presente procedimento amministrativo ed alle attività ad esso correlate; Il Parco può comunicare i dati acquisiti ad altri Enti competenti o soggetti terzi per le finalità di svolgimento del presente procedimento; Ulteriori informazioni sono consultabili nel sito Internet del Parco www.parcoforestecasentinesi.it alla sezione Privacy dove è indicato il responsabile del trattamento dati.

IL DIRETTORE
Alessandro Borgetti



COMUNICAZIONE PREVENTIVA DI INIZIO INTERVENTO

**All'Ente Parco Nazionale Foreste Casentinesi,
Monte Falterona, Campigna**

Da inviare, preventivamente all'esecuzione degli interventi, con una delle seguenti modalità:

- Consegna a mano presso il Comando Stazione Carabinieri Parco indicato in calce al nulla osta
- VIA e mail agli indirizzi indicati nel nulla osta

Il sottoscritto: _____

Ditta boschiva: _____

Telefono cellulare (referente per il taglio) _____

In qualità di esecutore materiale del taglio

COMUNICA LA REALIZZAZIONE DEGLI INTERVENTI FORESTALI, PREVISTI NEL

NULLA OSTA N. _____ PRATICA TAGLIO BOSCHI N. _____

Data di previsto inizio lavori _____

- La presente comunicazione non sostituisce altre comunicazioni da rendersi agli Enti territorialmente competenti

Data _____

FIRMA

L'Ente Parco informa, ai sensi dell'art. 13 D.Lgs. 196/2003, che: il trattamento dei dati personali forniti nel corso dei rapporti con questo Ente o acquisiti per gli scopi istituzionali è finalizzato allo svolgimento delle procedure inerenti il presente procedimento amministrativo ed alle attività ad esso correlate; Il Parco può comunicare i dati acquisiti ad altri Enti competenti o soggetti terzi per le finalità di svolgimento del presente procedimento; L'informativa completa è consultabile nel sito Internet del Parco www.parcoforestecasentinesi.it alla sezione trattamento dati personali dove è consultabile l'elenco aggiornato dei responsabili del trattamento dati se nominati e sono informazioni dettagliate anche in ordine al suo diritto di accesso.

La scansione della presente nota dovrà essere caricata a cura del Comando Stazione Carabinieri Parco alla sezione "Documenti allegati" del programma "Taglio boschi", provvedendo ad aggiornare lo stato della pratica a: "Verifiche interventi iniziata". Questa modalità è sufficiente ad assolvere l'invio al Parco come da indirizzo.

Report on the Impacts of the August 2021 Fire in the Valle Infernale Beech Forest (English Summary)

Introduction

This report addresses the impacts of the wildfire that occurred in August 2021 within the Aspromonte National Park, specifically focusing on the Valle Infernale beech forest.

Overview of the Incident

In August 2021, a significant wildfire broke out across multiple fronts, affecting approximately 5,600 hectares of protected territory within the Aspromonte National Park. Notably, a fire front was ignited outside the site of the "Ancient and Primeval Beech Forests of the Carpathians and Other Regions of Europe," particularly in the northeastern area on August 6, 2021, covering around 700 hectares. The cause of the fire has not been definitively determined, but it is suspected to be of arson origin.

The geographical conditions of the area, characterized by steep slopes and difficult accessibility, combined with extremely favorable climatic conditions for fire propagation, made it particularly challenging to contain the blaze. The successful management of the firefighting operations was ensured through the collaborative efforts of the Calabria Region, park volunteers, and personnel from the Biodiversity Department of the Carabinieri Forestali of Reggio Calabria, who manage the Valle Infernale site as part of the "Alto Aspromonte" State Forest.

Post-Incident Assessments

Following the wildfire, a series of inspections were conducted to qualitatively assess the affected forest areas. The evaluations indicated that the areas burned, which include both the core area and the buffer area, were extremely limited. The fire primarily impacted mixed formations in dynamic interaction with the beech forest, which were not severely affected, as they experienced mainly surface fires. Aerial interventions using freshwater were employed to mitigate impacts from salt accumulation in the soil.

Resilience dynamics have already been observed within the affected areas, with signs of recovery from the fire evident in the response of scorched plants and the natural regeneration process. Areas characterized by high structural complexity, typical of ancient forest formations, were not impacted by the fire.

To better understand the ongoing dynamics, surveys were conducted in collaboration with the Mediterranean University of Reggio Calabria and the University of Tuscia in Viterbo, alongside the Biodiversity Department of the Carabinieri Forestali of Reggio Calabria. These efforts will continue with specific monitoring protocols aimed at quantifying the ecosystem's response in the coming years.

Forest Habitat Impact Assessment

The following tables summarize the forest habitats affected by the fire, categorized by core area and buffer area, based on the habitat map from the Park Plan.

<i>Core Area</i>		
Habitat 92/43/CEE	Forest Type	Area (Hectares)
9210* Apennine beech forests with Taxus and Ilex	Bosco di faggio con caglio peloso	2,725
	Bosco di faggio con caglio peloso frammisto a pinete di pino calabro	4,454
9340 Quercus ilex and Q. rotundifolia forests	Bosco di leccio con camedrio siciliano frammisto ad aspetti di degradazione	0,058
9530 *Submediterranean pine forests - Calabrian laricio pine forests	Pineta naturale di pino calabro	1,994
	Pineta naturale di pino calabro frammista ad aspetti di degradazione	14,895
<i>Total</i>		24,126
<i>Buffer Area</i>		
Habitat 92/43/CEE	Forest Type	Area

		(Hectares)
9210* Apennine beech forests with Taxus and Ilex	Beech forest with hairy cap	0,879
	Bosco di faggio con caglio peloso frammisto a pinete di pino calabro	2,353
9340 Quercus ilex and Q. rotundifolia forests	Bosco di leccio con camedrio siciliano	10,056
	Bosco di leccio con camedrio siciliano frammisto ad aspetti di degradazione	23,677
	Bosco misto di leccio e farnetto frammisto ad aspetti di degradazione	7,183
9530 *Submediterranean pine forests - Calabrian laricio pine forests	Pineta naturale di pino calabro	62,123
	Pineta naturale di pino calabro frammista ad aspetti di degradazione	37,781
Total		144,052

From the above tables, it is evident that the area of beech forest affected by the fire is extremely limited, amounting to approximately 7 hectares in the Core Area and about 3 hectares in the Buffer Area, which extend for approximately 320 hectares and 2,000 hectares, respectively.

Severity of the Fire

The severity of the fire, as determined through direct observations, is corroborated by the mapping of the Normalized Burned Index (NBR), which indicates that the impact within the site was extremely limited. Observations from the ground revealed that portions of the forest within the core area, although indicated by satellite data as having been affected by fire, were primarily subjected to high temperatures at the canopy level, resulting in apical leaf desiccation that was promptly compensated for during the subsequent growing season. This finding was further confirmed by the 2023 satellite imagery from Google Earth.

Conclusion

Since the events of 2021, no further incidents related to wildfires have been reported affecting the Ancient Forest and its habitats. The Aspromonte National Park remains available for any additional information or clarifications needed by the scientific community.

Al Ministero dell'Ambiente e della Sicurezza Energetica

Direzione Generale Patrimonio Naturalistico e Mare

ex Divisione II – DG PNM - Gestione Aree Protette

Via Cristoforo Colombo, n. 44

00147 ROMA

Pec: TBM@pec.mase.gov.it

Rif. Carteggio: prot. n. 4817/2024

Oggetto: Informativa faggeta Valle Infernale: impatti dell'incendio di agosto 2021. **Riscontro.**

Facendo seguito alla Vs. nota prot. n. 152016 del 14.08.2024, in atti al prot. n. 4817 del 18.08.2024, si riscontra quanto segue:

nell'agosto 2021 un vasto incendio, sviluppatosi su più fronti, ha investito il territorio del Parco Nazionale dell'Aspromonte, interessando complessivamente circa 5.600 ettari di territorio protetto (fig. 1).

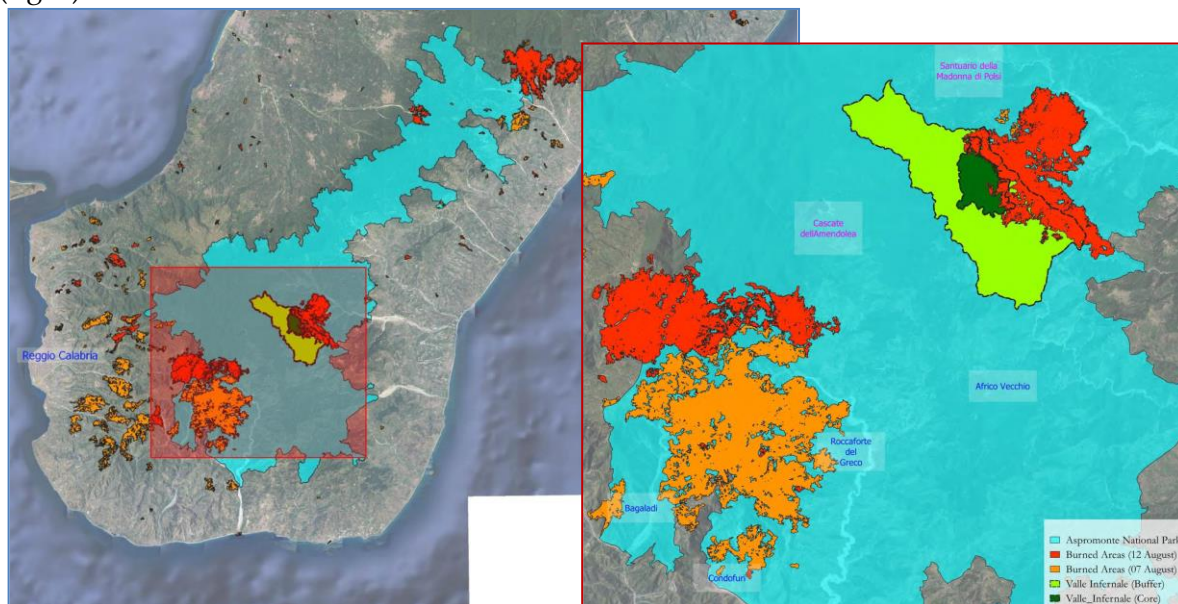


Figura 1. Inquadramento geografico incendi di agosto 2021.

L'area del sito seriale "Ancient and Primeval Beech Forests of the Carpathians and Other Regions of Europe" è stata interessata da un fronte innescato all'esterno del sito, in particolare nella zona posta a nord-est di esso in data 06.08.2021, dell'estensione di circa 700 ettari.

La causa dell'evento non è stata definitivamente accertata, ma si presume sia stata di origine dolosa.

Per le particolarmente difficili condizioni orografiche dell'area (pendenze elevate, difficile accessibilità), concomitanti con condizioni climatiche estremamente favorevoli per la propagazione del fuoco, è stato particolarmente difficile contenere l'evento. La riuscita delle operazioni è stata garantita grazie all'azione congiunta della Regione Calabria, dei volontari del Parco e di altre regioni e, non ultimo, grazie al personale del Reparto Biodiversità dei Carabinieri Forestali di Reggio Calabria, gestore del sito seriale di Valle Infernale, in quanto facente parte della Foresta Demaniale "Alto Aspromonte". Sia il personale dell'Ente Parco che del Calabria Reparto dei Carabinieri Forestali P.N. "Aspromonte" di Reggio Calabria ha contribuito attivamente per la migliore esecuzione delle operazioni di spegnimento.

Successivamente all'evento sono stati realizzati una serie di sopralluoghi che hanno permesso di accertare, dal punto di vista qualitativo, che le aree boscate percorse dal fuoco, ricomprese sia nella *core area* che nella *buffer area* sono estremamente limitate e interessano, principalmente, formazioni miste in dinamica con la faggeta, mai investite con estrema severità, essendo state interessate prevalentemente da fuoco radente, peraltro trattate con interventi aerei con acqua dolce, onde evitare impatti derivanti dall'accumulo di sale al suolo. All'interno di esse è già possibile osservare dinamiche di resilienza, con la risposta delle piante scottate dal fuoco e il pronto insediamento della rinnovazione naturale. Le aree caratterizzate da elevata complessità strutturale, tipiche della formazione vetusta, non sono state colpite.

Al fine di comprendere al meglio le dinamiche che si fanno innescando, sono stati realizzati dei rilievi congiuntamente alle Università *Mediterranea* di Reggio Calabria e della *Tuscia* di Viterbo, con la collaborazione del Reparto Biodiversità dei Carabinieri Forestali di Reggio Calabria, che proseguiranno con dei specifici protocolli di monitoraggio finalizzati a quantificare al meglio la risposta dell'ecosistema negli anni addivenire.

Per quanto concerne la quantità di foresta vetusta interessata, alla luce dei rilievi realizzati, si riportano, di seguito, le superfici interessate da habitat forestali percorse dal fuoco, distinte per *core area* e *buffer area* realizzate incrociando la mappa degli habitat del Piano del Parco:

Core Area		
Habitat 92/43/CEE	Tipologia forestale	Ettari
9210* Apennine beech forests with Taxus and Ilex	Bosco di faggio con caglio peloso	2,725
	Bosco di faggio con caglio peloso frammisto a pinete di pino calabro	4,454
9340 Quercus ilex and Q. rotundifolia forests	Bosco di leccio con camedrio siciliano frammisto ad aspetti di degradazione	0,058
9530 *Submediterranean pine forests - Calabrian laricio pine forests	Pineta naturale di pino calabro	1,994
	Pineta naturale di pino calabro frammista ad aspetti di degradazione	14,895
Totale complessivo		24,126

Tabella 1. Tipologie forestali e habitat forestali interessate dall'incendio. Area Core.

<i>Buffer Area</i>		
Habitat 92/43/CEE	Tipologia forestale	Ettari
9210* Apennine beech forests with Taxus and Ilex	Bosco di faggio con caglio peloso	0,879
	Bosco di faggio con caglio peloso frammisto a pinete di pino calabro	2,353
9340 Quercus ilex and Q. rotundifolia forests	Bosco di leccio con camedrio siciliano	10,056
	Bosco di leccio con camedrio siciliano frammisto ad aspetti di degradazione	23,677
	Bosco misto di leccio e farnetto frammisto ad aspetti di degradazione	7,183
9530 *Submediterranean pine forests - Calabrian laricio pine forests	Pineta naturale di pino calabro	62,123
	Pineta naturale di pino calabro frammista ad aspetti di degradazione	37,781
Totale complessivo		144,052

Tabella 2. Tipologie forestali e habitat forestali interessate dall'incendio. Area buffer.

Dalla lettura delle sopra riportate tabelle, è evidente che, anche in termini quantitativi, la superficie a faggeta interessata dall'incendio risulta estremamente limitata, ammontando a circa 7 ettari per l'Area Core a circa 3 ettari per l'Area Buffer, che si estendono, rispettivamente, per circa 320 ettari e 2.000 ettari.

La severità dell'incendio constatata tramite osservazioni dirette è testimoniata anche dalla mappatura dell'indice caratteristico NBR (Normalized Burned Index), dal quale si evince che è stata estremamente limitata all'interno del sito (Figura 2). È stato osservato inoltre da terra che porzioni di bosco all'interno della core area, sebbene risultassero dal dato derivato dalla scena satellitare interessate dal passaggio del fuoco, di fatto sono state solo colpite da elevate temperature a livello di chioma, con conseguenti disseccamenti fogliari apicali che sono stati prontamente compensati durante la successiva stagione vegetativa. Quanto rilevato è stato anche confermato dalla successiva scena satellitare di Google Earth del 2023 (figura 3).

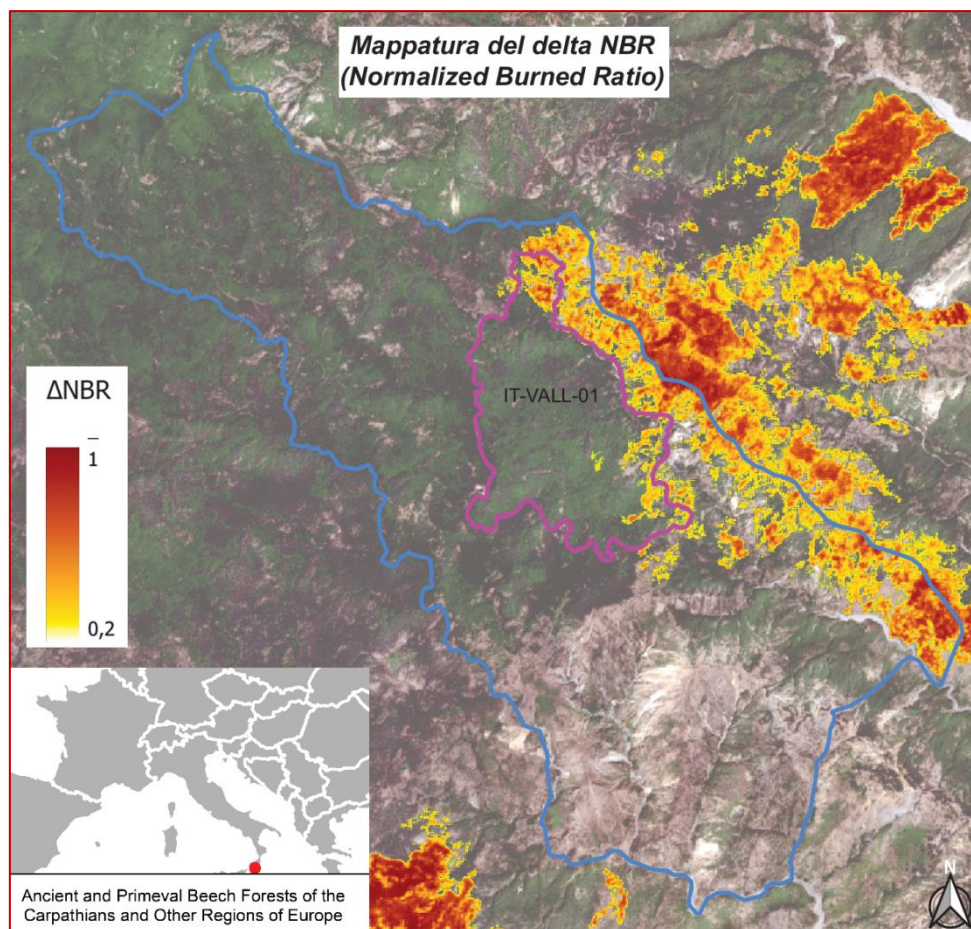


Figura 2. Mappa dell'area colpita dall'incendio con NBR index.

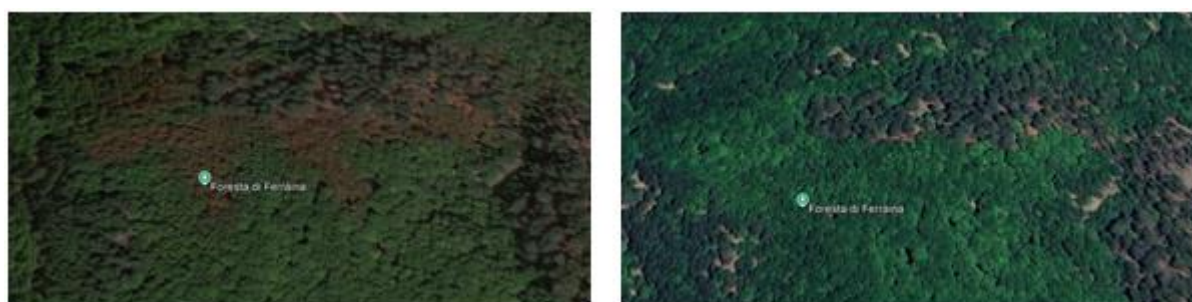


Figura 3. Scena satellitare settembre 2021 (a sinistra) e scena satellitare luglio 2023 (a destra).

Si rappresenta dopo gli eventi dell'anno 2021 a tutt'oggi non si sono verificati altre dinamiche relative alla problematica incendi che hanno interessato la Foresta Vestusta e i suoi Habitat. Questo Ente resta a disposizione per qualsiasi altra integrazione si rendesse necessaria per la Comunità scientifica.

Distinti saluti

Il Commissario Straordinario
Arch. Renato Carullo



WWF Slovensko

Medená 101/5
811 02 Bratislava

wwfsk.org
info@wwfsk.org

IČO: 52204430
DIČ: 2121339231

16th September, Bratislava

Dear JMC Member,

On the occasion of the Joint Management Committee (JMC) meeting of the UNESCO World Heritage Site Ancient and Primeval Beech Forests of the Carpathians and other Regions of Europe, which will take place on 16th – 19th September, 2024, in Humenné, Slovakia. WWF Slovakia is approaching you as we have serious concerns regarding a future development in the National Park Poloniny, which would cause negative consequences for an outstanding universal value the UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Slovakia went a long way since the first inscription of the site in 2007, including its own challenges related to correctly defined borders of the components, ensuring sufficient legal protection or setting up management provisions for the buffer zone of the site and their subsequent implementation, border adjustment and related negotiations both at the national and international level. Following the Analysis and Conclusion by the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies in 2023, a resulting boundary modification of the Slovak component parts was adopted by the Committee (Decision 44 COM 7B.99) and the protection regime of the Slovak component parts is now in line with the requirements of the Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention of the UNESCO.

WWF Slovakia actively participated in the process, which successfully led to such conclusions. Regrettably, we are currently deeply concerned by some local initiatives which might have a significant impact on the management and future conservation status of the National Park Poloniny and consequently on the 4 out of 5 Slovakia's component parts, which are located in this national park: Havešová, Rožok, Stužica – Bukovské vrchy and Udava.

So-called zonation process of the national park, as a key national tool for setting a required conservation status by zones, and at the same time clear rules, conditions and targets for management and tourism development within the national park for a period 10+ years is currently underway. As part of the ongoing discussions and negotiations, some private land owners are calling for a substantial reduction of the national park territory to just a one third of the current area. Unfortunately, the Council of the National Park Poloniny as an advisory body of the national park has recommended (on 16th May 2024) to take this proposal on board while finalizing the zonation proposal for the national park and its buffer zone. The final adoption of the Proposal for setting the National Park Poloniny and its buffer zone has to be adopted by the Slovak Government by the end of this year.

WWF Slovakia has already identified a long list of all possible negative consequences if such proposal will be adopted, as from the perspective of national and international commitments, legal framework, EU or national strategies, financial impacts, but mainly from the nature conservation and biodiversity protection point of view. Our deepest concerns relate to significant impacts on the management of



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siete organizácie WWF (World Wide Fund for Nature) a je zapísaná
v registri mimovládnych neziskových organizácií pod č. reg. č.
VVS/1-900/90-55843.



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the UNESCO site - Slovak's component parts and its buffer zone, threatening the connectivity and negating already established unified management of the area as a whole.

The total area of the above mentioned four component parts in the Poloniny National Park, as they are included in the UNESCO World Heritage List (including buffer zones), is more than 16,500 ha, i.e. more than 50% of the National Park area. Any changes in the territory size, reduction of the established protection or fragmentation of the management of this world heritage site, is in contrary to the conditions of UNESCO as well as the management of the entire site *Ancient and Primeval Beech Forests of the Carpathians and other Regions of Europe*.

Currently, on the territory of the National Park, outside the strictly protected parts, including UNESCO component parts and its buffer zones, only a close-to-nature forest management is allowed. If any part of this territory will be excluded from the national park this would lead to a crucial change in the forest management. As you are fully aware the most significant threats to the property are logging and habitat fragmentation. Logging activities in the vicinity of component parts can cause microclimatic changes effects, with negative impacts on the integrity of the property and can also lead to land use changes in the surrounding area resulting into increased habitat fragmentation, which would be of particular concern for smaller component parts. The integration of surrounding forest ecosystems' management to provide sufficient protection and connectivity, especially for small component parts is therefore crucial.

Following the available information, no sufficient opposition or even disagreement to above mentioned initiatives or proposals has been presented so far from the National Park Poloniny Administration neither from the Slovak Ministry of the Environment.

We believe, that the original proposal for zonation within the existing boundaries of the National Park will guarantee the required level of the protection and at the same time full accordance with the conditions of management and protection of the UNESCO World Natural Heritage Site.

WWF Slovakia supposes that the above mentioned information must be seriously taken into account and are relevant for your meeting.

We wish you a pleasant stay in Slovakia and fruitful discussions on the upcoming Joint Management Committee meeting.

Yours sincerely,

Miroslava Plassmann

CEO

WWF Slovakia



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VVS/1-900/90-55843.



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



Ancient and Primeval Beech Forests of
the Carpathians and Other Regions of Europe
inscribed on the World Heritage List in 2017



Hummené, Slovakia

September 19th, 2024

**Statement from the Joint Management Committee (JMC) of the Unesco World Heritage Site
"Ancient and Primeval Beech Forests of the Carpathians and Other Regions of Europe" to the
Permanent Representative of Slovakia to UNESCO**

Dear Ambassador Anna Plassat Muriňová,

On behalf of the Joint Management Committee (JMC) of the UNESCO World Heritage Site, *Ancient and Primeval Beech Forests of the Carpathians and other Regions of Europe*, we acknowledge the receipt of the letter dated 16th September 2024, from WWF Slovakia concerning the proposed reduction of the territory and/or protection status within the Poloniny National Park.

The JMC recognizes and deeply values the outstanding universal value (OUV) of the World Heritage Site, which encompasses not only its management of component parts, but also at the level of its buffer zone. It is imperative that all aspects of the site, including these areas, receive adequate protection to maintain the integrity and preservation of this serial site.

The JMC considers it crucial to avoid any actions that could fragment or weaken the existing protection framework, especially given the potential consequences of logging and habitat fragmentation on the OUV of the property.

In this regard the JMC likes to recall § 172 the *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention* and requests that any changes of World Heritage properties, including component parts or buffer zones, must be carefully evaluated to prevent detrimental impacts on the site's OUV.

The JMC is actively involved in promoting a coherent and harmonized approach as regards the management of buffer zones and the OUV across all the State Parties.

For this reason, the JMC recalls the regulations in the adopted guidance document on property and buffer zone managements and this document is fully reflected in the zonation and related legislation.

The JMC is concerned by the information presented in the letter and respectfully requests that the State Party of Slovakia provides additional information on the current discussions regarding the boundaries of Poloniny National Park. In particular, we seek further clarification on the steps being taken to ensure that the protection of the WH Slovak component parts and their buffer zones remains in line with the obligations outlined in the World Heritage Convention.

As this World Heritage Site is a serial transboundary property, the responsibility for its protection and management lies with all involved State Parties. The JMC stands open to engage in further dialogue and collaboration to ensure that the site's OUV is fully protected for future generations.

We look forward to receiving further information from the State Party of Slovakia to ensure we remain well-informed on this matter.

Sincerely,

Caroline Celis

Coordinator UNESCO World Heritage Site

Ancient and Primeval Beech Forests of the Carpathians and other Regions of Europe

DocuSigned by:

Caroline Celis

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AGREEMENT
on the establishment of the Permanent Secretariat
of the UNESCO World Heritage Property “Ancient and Primeval Beech Forests of the
Carpathians and Other Regions of Europe”

Preamble

The Federal Ministry for Climate Action, Environment, Energy, Mobility, Innovation and Technology of the Republic of Austria,
the Ministry of Environment of the Slovak Republic,
and the Regional Ministries of environment and heritage of Flanders, Wallonia and Brussels Capital Region,
(hereinafter referred to as the “Parties”) with the aim:

- To strengthen the protection of the outstanding value of the UNESCO World Heritage Property “Ancient and Primeval Beech Forests of the Carpathians and Other Regions of Europe”,
and
- To support sustainable implementation of the Joint Declaration of Intent concerning the Cooperation on the Protection and Management of the Joint World Heritage Property Ancient and Primeval Beech Forests of the Carpathians and Other Regions of Europe” (hereinafter „Joint Declaration of Intent”),

have agreed as follows:

Article 1

Aim

The aim of this Agreement is the establishment of the Permanent Secretariat for the UNESCO World Heritage Property “Ancient and Primeval Beech Forests of the Carpathians and Other Regions of Europe” (hereinafter referred to as the “Permanent Secretariat”) that shall effectively carry out the tasks set forth in accordance with the Rules of Procedure adopted by the Joint Management Committee.

Article 2

Basis

- (1) In matters referred to in Article 1 of this Agreement, the Parties will act jointly and through the Permanent Secretariat.
- (2) The Parties will act in accordance with this Agreement, the Rules of Procedure of the Permanent Secretariat (hereinafter referred to as the “Rules of Procedure”), which form

Annex I to this Agreement, the Joint Declaration of Intent and in accordance with general principles of international law and their national laws.

Article 3

Principles of cooperation

- (1) The Parties will be guided by the principles of transparency towards the Joint Management Committee, resilience of the Permanent Secretariat to political influence of individual Parties, sustainability of the Permanent Secretariat in the long-term and external and internal effective communication, while presenting the UNESCO World Natural Heritage Property externally and internally.
- (2) The Chairmanship of the Permanent Secretariat will be on a rotation basis. The method of rotation will be subject to a decision of the Joint Management Committee in accordance with the Rules of Procedure.
- (3) For the first eight years, the Parties agreed on the Chairmanship as follows:
 - i. Slovakia 2024 – 2027,
 - ii. Austria 2028 – 2031.

Article 4

Tasks

- (1) The Parties will perform the tasks set in the Rules of Procedure.
- (2) The specific description of tasks will be prepared in the annual work plan in accordance with Article 5 of the Rules of Procedure; the Parties shall fulfil this obligation for the first time in 2025.
- (3) The tasks of the Permanent Secretariat may be performed either by the Parties themselves or by third-party professionals; for this purpose, the Parties may entrust a third party expert to carry out the tasks.

Article 5

Decision-making

- (1) Decisions will be adopted by consensus. If one party abstains from the decision, the remaining Parties can decide by consensus.
- (2) The Director of the Permanent Secretariat will be selected by the Representatives of the Parties on the basis of a selection procedure.

Article 6
Financing

Each Party will be responsible for providing the adequate financial and material resources for its National Operational Unit.

Article 7
Transitional provision

The division of tasks and regional responsibilities of the Parties for the year of 2024 is listed in Annex II and Annex III.

Article 8
Final provisions

- (1) This Agreement will enter into force on 1 January 2024 and shall remain in force for an indefinite period.
- (2) Either Party may terminate its membership without consensus of the other Parties by giving twelve months' advance notice in writing to the remaining Parties and the Joint Management Committee.
- (3) Each Party of the Joint Declaration of Intent may request to join the Permanent Secretariat, according to its administrative and financial capacities. The admission of a new Party is subject to a decision of the Joint Management Committee.
- (4) The maximum number of the Members of the Permanent Secretariat is five.
- (5) Any amendments of this Agreement will be adopted by consensus and signed by all Parties.
- (6) The new Party will sign and adopt this Agreement.
- (7) This Agreement does not constitute an international treaty.

Done in Bratislava, on 26 September 2023 in English in three copies, one for each Party.

For the Federal Ministry for Climate Action, Environment, Energy, Mobility, Innovation and Technology of the Republic of Austria

Date and signature

For the Ministry of Environment of the Slovak Republic

Date and signature

For the Regional Ministries of environment and heritage of Flanders, Wallonia and Brussels Capital Region

Date and signature

Date and signature

Date and signature

Date and signature

Annex I

Rules of Procedure of the Permanent Secretariat for the UNESCO World Natural Heritage Site of the “Ancient and Primeval Beech Forests of the Carpathians and Other Regions of Europe”

Preamble

The State Parties of the UNESCO World Natural Heritage Site of the “Ancient and Primeval Beech Forests of the Carpathians and Other Regions of Europe”, with the aim:

- to strengthen the protection of the outstanding value of the Joint World Heritage Property “Ancient and Primeval Beech Forests of the Carpathians and Other Regions of Europe”,
- to support sustainable implementation of the Joint Declaration of Intent concerning the Cooperation on the Protection and Management of the Joint World Heritage Property “Ancient and Primeval Beech Forests of the Carpathians and Other Regions of Europe” (hereinafter “Joint Declaration of Intent”);

have adopted these Rules of Procedure of the Permanent Secretariat (hereafter “Rules of Procedure”).

The Rules of Procedure are based on the principles of respecting sovereignty of all involved States Parties, transparency towards the Joint Management Committee, resilience of the Permanent Secretariat to political influence of individual States Parties, sustainability of the Permanent Secretariat in the long-term, external and internal effective communication, while presenting the UNESCO World Natural Heritage Site externally and internally.

Article 1

Aim of cooperation of the Permanent Secretariat

- (a) The Permanent Secretariat, according to these “Rules of Procedure“, is a body serving as the Permanent Secretariat for the UNESCO World Natural Heritage Site of the Ancient and Primeval Beech Forests of the Carpathians and Other Regions of Europe (hereinafter “Permanent Secretariat”) in order to support cooperation on the protection and management of the Joint UNESCO World Heritage Property “Ancient and Primeval Beech Forests of the Carpathians and Other Regions of Europe”.
- (b) The Permanent Secretariat carries out its activities in a strict accordance with the Joint Declaration of Intent, decisions and outcomes of the Joint Management Committee and functions according to the Joint Declaration of Intent and these Rules of Procedure.
- (c) The Permanent Secretariat supports the annually rotating Joint Management Committee Presidency – State Party and the “troika“ – system for guarantying a close collaboration between the Previous Presidency, Actual Presidency, and Future Presidency.

Article 2

Members of the Permanent Secretariat

- (a) Each States Party providing a National Operational Unit and its funding for the Permanent Secretariat is a member of the Permanent Secretariat (hereinafter “Participating State Party”).
- (b) Each Participating State Party will be represented by one National Operational Unit. Each National Operational Unit can be composed by one or more organisational sub-units. Each National Operational Unit is represented by one vote at the Management Board.
- (c) The tasks of the Permanent Secretariat (cf. Art. 3, Art. 4) can be carried out either by the Participating State Parties themselves or by third-party professionals.
- (d) Each State Party of the Joint Declaration of Intent, may send its nomination proposal, including both, the administrative and financial capacities, and become a member of the Participating State Parties subject to decision of the Joint Management Committee.
- (e) The maximum number of the Participating State Parties as members of the Permanent Secretariat at the same time is five.
- (f) Termination of the Participating State Party shall be announced to the Management Board and the Joint Management Committee at least 18 months before the intended date of the termination.

Article 3

Purpose of the Permanent Secretariat

The Permanent Secretariat shall fulfil mainly the following roles:

- (a) to serve as a permanent administrative secretariat of the Joint Management Committee and to give support to the Joint Management Committee in the coordination of activities to be developed within the Integrated Management System under the Joint Declaration of Intent,
- (b) to serve as a Coordinator under Number 3.4 of the Joint Declaration of Intent, unless otherwise decided by the Joint Management Committee,
- (c) to raise public awareness of the UNESCO World Natural Heritage Site of the Ancient and Primeval Beech Forests of the Carpathians and Other Regions of Europe, using all available information channels to mobilize interest and support,
- (d) to follow up on the agreements made and ensure a smooth exchange of information between the participating state parties, UNESCO World Heritage Centre, and advisory bodies,
- (e) supporting knowledge and experiences management, making supervision and advisory, development of information channels to mobilize interest and support.

Article 4

Tasks

The Permanent Secretariat coordinates and supports the realization of the following tasks as defined in the Joint Declaration of Intent (lit. (a) to (j)) and Nomination Dossier to the UNESCO for the Inscription on the World Heritage List “Ancient and Primeval Beech Forests of the Carpathians and Other Regions of Europe” (2019) (lit. (k) to (o)):

- (a) Implementation of common principles and objectives based on the defined Outstanding Universal Value of the Serial Transnational World Heritage Property;
- (b) Establishment and effective implementation of the Integrated Management System for the World Heritage Property;
- (c) Establishment and implementation of cooperative and transnational monitoring plans in order to monitor and report on the transnational serial property as a whole;
- (d) Establishment and implementation of cooperative and transnational research programmes and projects (including inventories, research on natural forest ecosystems, anthropogenic impact assessments, response to climate change, etc.);
- (e) Training and capacity building (including training institutions, exchange among specialists, etc.);
- (f) Establishment of a common web-based information platform to inform the public and to exchange data among the managements of the component parts;
- (g) Identification, and possibly, securing adequate resources;
- (h) Communication, education, public awareness activities on the World Heritage Property, and local community engagement;
- (i) Sustainable development e.g. visitors’ management;
- (j) Preparation of a draft working program and implementation of a working program as adopted by the Joint Management Committee;
- (k) Contribute to the development of common standards for management planning, data collection, reporting;
- (l) Coordinate and support the elaboration of guidance documents;
- (m) Coordinate the research and monitoring of the serial property, the buffer zones and the connecting corridors/stepping stones;
- (n) Implement public relations work (including maintenance of a webpage for the World Heritage Property);
- (o) Develop and maintain its own GIS-aided database, containing all necessary layers pertaining to the World Natural Heritage status;
- (p) Preparing the Joint Management Committee meeting together with the Joint Management Committee Presidency;
- (q) Providing expertise and administrative support to the respective State Party preceding the Joint Management Committee;
- (r) Preparing and coordinating periodic and State of Conservation (SOC) reporting to UNESCO;

- (s) Establishing activities regarding public advocacy with public administration bodies, with organizations in the non-governmental sector, initiatives, and individual specialists working in the field of beech forests, as required at the international level;
- (t) Coordination of the different teams of the Permanent Secretariat.

Article 5

Division of tasks

- (a) The division of tasks will be prepared by the Participating State Parties and reported to the Joint Management Committee in the annual work plan.
- (b) An annual work plan will be developed by the Management Board of the Permanent Secretariat according to the tasks division as defined above. This annual work plan will give a clear share of responsibilities of each action described in the work plan and the allocated resources to each action from each National Operational Unit present in the Permanent Secretariat and, if necessary, of other States Parties co-operating either in expert groups or projects. The allocation of resources is based on the given budget framework of the National Operational Units and the voluntary contributions of other States Parties.

The annual work plan will be presented to the Joint Management Committee 4 weeks before the annual Joint Management Committee meeting. The annual work plan will be adopted by the Joint Management Committee for the upcoming period.

Article 6

Founding of the Permanent Secretariat

- (a) All Participating State Parties will confirm their financial contributions for the next year in September of the previous year.
- (b) All States Parties have the opportunity to support the activities of the National Operational Units of the Permanent Secretariat by voluntary contributions.

Article 7

Financing of the Permanent Secretariat

- (a) Each Participating State Party is responsible to provide the adequate resources for its National Operational Unit according to its capabilities.
- (b) The costs (expenditures) on the Permanent Secretariat administration include costs (expenditures) on:
 - i. operation of the Permanent Secretariat,
 - ii. promotion of the purpose of the Permanent Secretariat,
 - iii. remuneration of the Permanent Secretariat, staff wages and related payments, including compensations for the travel expenditures,

- iv. other expenditures on activities related to operating the Permanent Secretariat.
- (c) The costs of each National Operational Unit are covered by the respective Participating State Party.
- (d) The Management Board may discuss and decides on specific shares and purpose of each contribution (e.g. to cover wages of a particular position, particular task, etc.).
- (e) Other assets of the Permanent Secretariat may consist of private as well as public sources, both national and international, including voluntary contributions of other parties to the Joint Declaration of Intent.

Article 8

Bodies of the Permanent Secretariat

The bodies of the Permanent Secretariat are as follows:

- (a) National Operational Unit;
- (b) Management Board;
- (c) Director.

Article 9

National Operational Unit

- (a) The National Operational Unit is responsible for implementing the tasks of the annual work program.
- (b) Each Participating State Party has its own National Operational Unit.
- (c) The number of members of each National Operational Unit is not limited.

Article 10

Management board

- (a) The Management Board is the main body of the Permanent Secretariat.
- (b) The Management Board consists of the Director, and two members appointed by each of the Participating States Parties.
- (c) The Management Board decides upon all aspects of the operation of the Permanent Secretariat in a way stipulated by decisions of the Joint Management Committee, the Joint Declaration of Intent, and these Rules of Procedure.
- (d) The Management Board member carries out this function personally; proxy representation based on full powers is allowed.

- (e) The Management Board carries out the following tasks:
 - i. coordinates the activities between the National Operational Units,
 - ii. prepares the draft annual working program on a yearly basis which has to be approved by the Joint Management Committee,
 - iii. decides upon all aspects of the operation of the Permanent Secretariat Office.

Article 11

Director

- (a) The Permanent Secretariat has one Director who manages the Permanent Secretariat's activities and acts on its behalf.
- (b) The Director is the member of the Management Board appointed by the respective Member of the Secretariat for a period of 4 years on a rotating basis. Rotating order is a subject of an agreement among the Members of the Secretariat under Article 2, point b) of these Rules of Procedure.
- (c) The Director represents the Permanent Secretariat externally and acts as a main contact/focal point internally and externally.
- (d) The Director is a contact point to:
 - i. Joint Management Committee,
 - ii. States Parties,
 - iii. UNESCO WHC and Advisory Bodies,
 - iv. the third parties and public.

Article 12

Annual report

- (a) The Management Board of the Permanent Secretariat is obliged to elaborate an annual report for the Joint Management Committee after the end of a calendar year no later than April 30th of the calendar year following year which is covered by the annual report.
- (b) The annual report shall consist of:
 - i. an overview of activities, based on the yearly program, that took place during the reporting period of time with earmarking their relation to a publicly beneficial purpose of the Permanent Secretariat,
 - ii. an overview of the incomes according to their sources and origin and an overview of expenditures of the National Operational Units,
 - iii. any other data as determined by the Management Board or the Joint Management Committee.

Article 13

Starting date of the Permanent Secretariat operation

The Permanent Secretariat starts its operation on January 1st, 2024.

Article 14

Termination of the Permanent Secretariat

The Joint Management Committee is empowered to end the Permanent Secretariat.

Article 15

Final provisions

These Articles of the Permanent Secretariat shall only be amended or supplemented upon approval of any change and/or supplement by the Joint Management Committee.

Article 16

Duration

These Rules of Procedure will become effective when approved by the Joint Management Committee.

Effective Date Clause

These Rules of Procedure were approved by the Joint Management Committee meeting in Pescasseroli, and entered into force on 24 May 2023.

Annex II

Division of Tasks for 2024

Tasks	Responsible Party			Linked to director
	AT	BE	SK	
I. Joint Declaration of Intent				
(a) Implementation of common principles and objectives based on the defined Outstanding Universal Value of the Serial Transnational Site.	R	R	R	L
(b) Establishment and effective implementation of the Integrated Management System for the Joint World Heritage Property;	R	R	R	L
(c) Establishment and implementation of cooperative and transnational monitoring plans in order to monitor and report on the transnational serial property as a whole;	LR	R	R	
(d) Establishment and implementation of cooperative and transnational research programmes and projects (including inventories, research on natural forest ecosystems, anthropogenic impact assessments, response to climate change, etc.);	LR	R	R	
(e) Training and capacity building (including training institutions, exchange among specialists, etc.);	L			
(f) Establishment of a common web-based information platform to inform the public and to exchange data among the managements of the component parts;			L	
(g) Finding, and possibly, securing adequate resources;		L		
(h) Communication, education, public awareness activities on the World Heritage Property and local community engagement;			L	
(i) Sustainable development e.g.; visitors management;			L	
(j) Preparation of a draft working programme and implementation of a working programme as adopted by the JMC;				L

II. Nomination dossier 2020	AT	BE	SK	
(k) Contribute to the development of common standards for management planning, data collection, reporting;			L	
(l) Coordinate the elaboration of guidance documents;			L	
(m) Coordinate the research and monitoring of the serial property, the buffer zones and the connecting corridors/stepping stones;	L			
(n) Implement public relations work (including maintenance of a webpage for the World Heritage property);			L	
(o) Develop and maintain its own GIS-aided database, containing all necessary layers pertaining to the World Natural Heritage status;	L			
III. Additional task	AT	BE	SK	
(p) Preparing the Joint Management Committee meeting together with the Joint Management Committee presidency				L
(q) Providing expertise and administrative support to the respective State Party preceding the Joint Management Committee;				L
(r) Preparing and coordinating periodic and ad hoc reporting for UNESCO;				L
(s) Establishing activities regarding public advocacy with public administration bodies, with organisations in the non-governmental sector, initiatives, and individual specialists working in the field of beech forests, as required at the international level;	R	LR	R	
(t) Coordination of different teams of the Permanent Secretariat.				L
(u) Coordination of (re-)nomination and boundary modifications				L

Legend:

R = regionally divided

L = linked to the Director

LR = leading Party and regional division at the same time

Annex III

Regional responsibilities for 2024

State Party		<i>Austria</i>	<i>Belgium</i>	<i>Slovakia</i>
1.	<i>Albania</i>	X		
2.	<i>Austria</i>	X		
3.	<i>Belgium</i>		X	
4.	<i>Bosnia Herzegovina</i>	X		
5.	<i>Bulgaria</i>			X
6.	<i>Croatia</i>			X
7.	<i>Czech Republic</i>			X
8.	<i>France</i>		X	
9.	<i>Germany</i>		X	
10.	<i>Italy</i>	X		
11.	<i>North Macedonia</i>	X		
12.	<i>Poland</i>			X
13.	<i>Romania</i>			X
14.	<i>Slovakia</i>			X
15.	<i>Slovenia</i>			X
16.	<i>Spain</i>		X	
17.	<i>Switzerland</i>	X		
18.	<i>Ukraine</i>			X



**FORMAT FOR THE SUBMISSION OF
STATE OF CONSERVATION REPORTS
BY THE STATES PARTIES**

(in compliance with Paragraph 169 of the *Operational Guidelines*)

Name of World Heritage property (State(s) Party(ies)) (Identification number)

Ancient and Primeval Beech Forests of the Carpathians and Other Regions of Europe, ID: 1133bis
Old Beech Forests of Gashi River (Republic of Albania)

1. Executive Summary of the report

The Gashi River, located in the Albanian Alps, is one of Albania's most pristine and ecologically significant areas. It is part of the Tropojë Administrative Unit and is managed by the National Agency of Protected Areas through the Kukës Regional Administration. Initially designated as a "Strict Nature Reserve" (Category I) in 1996, it became part of the Albanian Alps National Park (Category II) in 2022, ensuring the highest level of legal protection under national and international frameworks.

*In 2017, the Gashi River was inscribed as part of the UNESCO World Heritage site "Ancient and Primeval Beech Forests of the Carpathians and Other Regions of Europe." The property includes 1,261.52 hectares of old-growth beech forests, surrounded by a 8,977.48-hectare buffer zone. These forests are globally significant, showcasing the natural processes and evolutionary history of the European Beech (*Fagus sylvatica*).*

The area supports a rich biodiversity and plays a crucial role in maintaining ecological balance. Conservation efforts focus on safeguarding its outstanding universal value through strict monitoring and collaboration with local and national authorities. Challenges such as wildfire risks and the presence of traditional livestock shelters in the buffer zone are actively managed to prevent any adverse impact on the site's integrity. The Gashi River remains a benchmark for natural heritage conservation in Albania and beyond.

2. Response to the Decision of the World Heritage Committee

The Gashi River is not listed as a World Heritage site in danger. Therefore, no immediate corrective measures are required. The site remains under strict protection, with no significant legal, ecological, or structural threats identified. Regular monitoring and joint inspections with law enforcement and environmental agencies ensure the area's conservation status remains intact.

If the property is inscribed on the List of World Heritage in Danger Please also provide detailed information on the following:

- a) Progress achieved in implementing the corrective measures adopted by the World Heritage Committee
- b) Is the timeframe for implementing the corrective measures suitable? If not, please propose an alternative timeframe and an explanation why this alternative timeframe is required.
- c) Progress achieved towards the Desired state of conservation for the removal of the property from the List of World Heritage in Danger (DSOCR)

3. Other current conservation issues identified by the State(s) Party(ies) which may have an impact on the property's Outstanding Universal Value

[Note: this includes conservation issues which are not mentioned in the Decision of the World Heritage Committee or in any information request from the World Heritage Centre]

Several conservation challenges and management activities are highlighted:

- Forest Protection and Wildlife Monitoring:

The area is under constant surveillance, with weekly patrols conducted by an environmental ranger and a monitoring specialist in collaboration with the State Police and the National Inspectorate for the Protection of Territory (IKMT). These patrols aim to prevent illegal logging, poaching, and unauthorized construction.

Illegal activities, such as unpermitted construction and logging, have been successfully mitigated, maintaining the integrity of the old-growth forests.

- Wildfire Risk and Prevention:

The site is particularly vulnerable to wildfires, especially during dry seasons. A comprehensive fire management strategy is in place, involving regular monitoring and rapid response capabilities in collaboration with the Civil Emergency Services of Tropojë Municipality.

- Buffer Zone Activities:

Within the buffer zone, traditional livestock shelters (stane) are used by local herders. These shelters do not pose a direct threat to the primary forest ecosystem. However, their presence is closely monitored to ensure compliance with conservation objectives.

4. In conformity with Paragraph 172 of the Operational Guidelines, describe any potential major restorations, alterations and/or new construction(s) intended within the property, the buffer zone(s) and/or corridors or other areas, where such developments may affect the Outstanding Universal Value of the property, including authenticity and integrity.

In compliance with Paragraph 172 of the Operational Guidelines, no major restorations, new constructions, or significant alterations have been undertaken or proposed within the property or its buffer zones. The integrity and authenticity of the site remain intact.

Any development proposals that could potentially impact the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the Gashi River will be carefully assessed. Currently, no restoration activities have been necessary due to the lack of significant damage within the site. Preventive measures are prioritized to avoid the need for future restoration.

5. Public access to the state of conservation report

[Note: this report will be uploaded for public access on the World Heritage Centre's State of conservation Information System (<http://whc.unesco.org/en/soc>). Should your State Party request that the full report should not be uploaded, only the 1-page executive summary provided in point (1.) above will be uploaded for public access].

If needed, The State of Conservation (SOC) report for the Gashi River will be made publicly available on the official website of the National Agency of Protected Areas (NAPA) and UNESCO's SOC Information System. Additionally, summaries will be shared with local communities and stakeholders to ensure broader awareness and engagement. Sensitive information, if any, will remain restricted, with only the executive summary published to maintain transparency while safeguarding the site's integrity.

6. Signature of the Authority



**FORMAT FOR THE SUBMISSION OF
STATE OF CONSERVATION REPORTS
BY THE STATES PARTIES**

(in compliance with Paragraph 169 of the *Operational Guidelines*)

Name of World Heritage property (State(s) Party(ies)) (Identification number)

Ancient and Primeval Beech Forests of the Carpathians and Other Regions of Europe, ID: 1133bis
Old Beech Forests of Rrajcë (Republic of Albania)

1. Executive Summary of the report

The Old Beech Forests of Rrajcë, located in Albania, are an integral part of the UNESCO World Heritage property "Ancient and Primeval Beech Forests of the Carpathians and Other Regions of Europe." These forests represent a unique ecological system, showcasing natural processes of undisturbed beech forest ecosystems that have persisted for millennia. They are home to diverse flora and fauna, some of which are endemic or endangered, contributing to the Outstanding Universal Value of the site.

The area is characterized by its pristine old-growth beech forests, which play a vital role in global biodiversity conservation and climate regulation. The forests also hold cultural significance for the local communities, who have historically coexisted with this environment, benefiting from its resources in a sustainable manner.

Public access to the site and its conservation status is facilitated by the municipality of Prrrenjas and several NGOs, with strong involvement from the local community. However, the area faces significant challenges, particularly illegal logging in the buffer zones, which threatens its integrity. Legal actions have been initiated against individuals involved in these activities, with cases referred to the Prosecutor's Office of the First Instance Court of Elbasan.

Efforts are ongoing to address these challenges through restoration activities, including reforestation and enhanced law enforcement. Awareness campaigns and educational programs are also being conducted to involve local stakeholders in conservation efforts.

This report emphasizes the need for sustained management and international collaboration to preserve the ecological and cultural value of the Old Beech Forests of Rrajcë. By addressing immediate threats and fostering community engagement, the long-term protection of this exceptional natural heritage can be ensured.

2. Response to the Decision of the World Heritage Committee

Based on the available information, the property is not included on the List of World Heritage in Danger. Therefore, no specific actions or measures related to World Heritage Committee decisions are applicable.

If the property is inscribed on the List of World Heritage in Danger Please also provide detailed information on the following:

- a) Progress achieved in implementing the corrective measures adopted by the World Heritage Committee
- b) Is the timeframe for implementing the corrective measures suitable? If not, please propose an alternative timeframe and an explanation why this alternative timeframe is required.
- c) Progress achieved towards the Desired state of conservation for the removal of the property from the List of World Heritage in Danger (DSOCR)

3. Other current conservation issues identified by the State(s) Party(ies) which may have an impact on the property's Outstanding Universal Value

[Note: this includes conservation issues which are not mentioned in the Decision of the World Heritage Committee or in any information request from the World Heritage Centre]

- Illegal Logging:

Despite legal actions against identified offenders, illegal logging remains a challenge, particularly in buffer zones. This threatens the ecological balance and requires stronger enforcement and community engagement.

- Community Engagement and Awareness:

Local communities play a crucial role in the conservation of the site. Awareness campaigns and capacity-building initiatives have been implemented to involve residents in preservation efforts. However, additional resources are needed to enhance these programs.

- Restoration Needs:

Restoration activities, including reforestation and the control of invasive species, are essential to ensure the long-term health of the ecosystem. These efforts require consistent funding and technical expertise.

4. In conformity with Paragraph 172 of the Operational Guidelines, describe any potential major restorations, alterations and/or new construction(s) intended within the property, the buffer zone(s) and/or corridors or other areas, where such developments may affect the Outstanding Universal Value of the property, including authenticity and integrity.

At present, no major restorations, alterations, or construction projects are planned within the property or its buffer zones. Regular monitoring is done regularly to prevent unauthorized developments that may compromise the site's Outstanding Universal Value.

5. Public access to the state of conservation report

[Note: this report will be uploaded for public access on the World Heritage Centre's State of conservation Information System (<http://whc.unesco.org/en/soc>). Should your State Party request that the full report should not be uploaded, only the 1-page executive summary provided in point (1.) above will be uploaded for public access].

If needed, The State of Conservation (SOC) report for the Gashi River will be made publicly available on the official website of the National Agency of Protected Areas (NAPA) and UNESCO's SOC Information System. Additionally, summaries will be shared with local communities and stakeholders to ensure broader awareness and engagement. Sensitive information, if any, will remain restricted, with only the executive summary published to maintain transparency while safeguarding the site's integrity.

6. Signature of the Authority