

## UN-ECE ICP Forests & Forest Focus

### 1ST MEETING OF THE EXPERT PANEL ON FOREST BIODIVERSITY AND GROUND VEGETATION NICOSIA, CYPRUS, 19-21 NOVEMBER 2006

<http://www.icp-forests.org/EPbiodiv.htm>

#### Minutes

The meeting participants were welcomed and the meeting was formally opened by the Director of the Cyprus State Forest Service Mr Ioannou Aristides and the Assistant Director Mr Christodoulou Alexandros.

The Chairman Mr Pat Neville and co-chairman Mr Bruno Petriccione thanked the hosts and the meeting agenda was formally adopted. Pat Neville outlined the role of this new Expert Panel following the merging of the Expert Panel on ground Vegetation and the Working Group on biodiversity assessments.

Ms Annemarie Bastrup-Birk of the Joint Research Centre of the European Commission then updated the participants on the status of the new LIFE+ Regulation of the European Commission and gave more information on the role of the JRC in data handling and management of the Forest Focus Programme. Richard Fischer of ICP Forests then informed the participants on the position of ICP Forests with regard to the end of the Forest Focus Regulation and the implementation of LIFE+. He explained that ICP Forests will continue to support the work of the Expert Panel.

Bruno Petriccione presented an overview of biodiversity processes at the pan-European Level and demonstrated the important role that the new Expert Panel and the monitoring scheme can play in European Forest biodiversity assessments. Annemarie Bastrup-Birk then gave an overview of projects on forest biodiversity within the domain of the Forest Focus Regulation. It was agreed that this list of projects and associated information would be useful to include on a website.

Richard Fischer presented information on the first evaluation of the ForestBiota project results. More information on this project may be found at [www.forestbiota.org](http://www.forestbiota.org). The results demonstrate that a large monitoring programme may address new needs in a structured way.

Annemarie Bastrup-Birk then outlined the first results of the BioSoil biodiversity study based on a questionnaire circulated to the participating countries. The results outline that countries believe the approach to be feasible and valuable in terms of a large scale monitoring of European forest biodiversity. Further evaluations will be planned for 2007 and 2008. More information may be found at <http://projects-2006.jrc.ec.europa.eu/>.

Bruno Petriccione then outlined the first experiences of implementing the BioSoil project in Italy and some of the practical difficulties that may arise in the field. Such experiences will prove invaluable to updating the BioSoil manual on forest

biodiversity assessment. Mr Kyriacos Kyriacou outlined the unique biodiversity that is only found on the island of Cyprus and explained the main threats facing nature conservation in the area and in the Mediterranean. Maija Salemaa of Finland outlined some of the National biodiversity inventories that have been carried out in Finland since the 1950s and demonstrated the practical use of an indicator species, *Oxalis acetosella* in understanding climate change.

Roberto Canullo gave information on the HarmonVeg project which aims to identify a common minimum set of parameters and apply a common methodology at a given number of Level 2 plots in a given forest type to attempt to understand variations in assessments. This project did not receive funding initially, but the importance of the approach was emphasised by Norway and the whole issue of data QA / QC was recognised as being extremely important to the new Expert Panel.

Silvia Stofer from Switzerland presented results of epiphytic lichen monitoring in Europe, including the ForestBiota project and demonstrated the importance of this group in forest biodiversity. A European standard methodology of lichen monitoring would greatly increase our understanding on species frequency and distribution. Sonke Hardersen and Franco Mason presented invertebrate groups as bio-indicators and reminded the Expert Panel that different methods and approaches of monitoring measure different animal groups. A standard method would be required to give information relevant to the European scale. Silvia Stofer then presented information on arthropod monitoring in Switzerland using the Rapid Biodiversity Assessment approach. Sampling is best timed in the warmest weathers and Morpho-species groups may be used instead of actual species to simplify evaluations.

This session concluded with presentations from both Richard Fischer and Bruno Petriccione on the issue of naturalness. Different approaches may be used and various concepts of naturalness exist but the notion may be used to help with ecological interpretations of biodiversity survey results at the European Level.

The second day of the meeting commenced with information from Annemarie Bastrup-Birk on biodiversity assessments within the national forest inventories across Europe. The NFI approach may well be complimentary to the EU/ICP Forests monitoring and synergies should be investigated at different levels of forest monitoring. Pat Neville presented information on potential links and benefits from the different systems of European forest monitoring and stressed that synergies and co-ordination should be sought as much as possible to maximise value. Bruno Petriccione gave information on collaboration with ICP Integrated monitoring on biological data. The two ICPs monitor information at different levels, stand Vs catchment, but co-operation is seen as mutually beneficial.

Roberto Canullo outlined problems with species codes, particularly with national species, which has the potential to cause confusion and duplication of records. The overall goal is a harmonisation of species lists, which may be annually updated and available through the website of the Expert Panel. This requires more and regular contact between the Expert Panel and the PCC of ICP Forests but the problem of the species code list needs to be resolved soon. To address this a small group of international experts in this field agreed to work on this issue. Roberto Canullo, Dan Aamlid and Frans Starlinger agreed to participate.

A similar small group strategy could be used to investigate the possibility of using lichens and invertebrates for example as future indicators in our monitoring programme. These groups could present findings at the next Expert Panel Meeting scheduled for Spring 2007. Collaborations with the COST Action E43 and the national forest inventories will be explored further.

The Panel agreed that its next meeting should occur in Spring 2007, with perhaps Italy as a possible venue.