



Italian Forest Service - CONECOFOR Service

Corpo Forestale dello Stato



**LIFE+ project FutMon
Action C1-GV-15 IT**



**UN-ECE CLRTAP
ICP Forests**

Expert Panel Biodiversity and Ground Vegetation

Roma (Italy) – Wednesday, 22 April 2009

DRAFT MINUTES

The meeting was opened by the co-Chairman of the Expert Panel, Bruno Petriccione who also welcomed the participants to Rome. Pat Neville invited the participants to adopt the agenda, where the timing of some items was amended to suit departure times of participants.

Pat Neville invited the Expert Panel to confirm the joint chairmanship of himself and Bruno Petriccione for the Expert Panel which was duly ratified.

Bruno Petriccione invited the countries to outline their proposed approach to vegetation monitoring as required under LIFE+ project FutMon. Each country outlined their intentions accordingly. Turkey made a short presentation on the establishment of a monitoring network in their country.

The Expert Panel recommended, as far as possible, that countries should attempt to conduct their survey work under FutMon during 2009. However, it was also recognized that future opportunities to streamline and fully harmonise vegetation sampling assessment might be captured under future phases of the FutMon project. The issue of increasing sampling frequency versus the importance of sampling synchronization was discussed in detail. It was recommended to connect sampling frequency with the main drivers of biodiversity change in European forests.

Pat Neville invited the Expert Panel to consider the sampling protocol proposed for nutrient sampling of the ground vegetation community by the Expert Panel on Foliage. A great deal of concern was expressed from the Panel regarding the proposed sampling approach which removes the upper layer of vegetation. This is highly problematic in terms of secondary succession, aggravation of the seed bank and the introduction and spread of invasive species; all of which may compromise the results of future vegetation surveys. It was recommended that such sampling occur outside of the plot, in areas representative of the plot but no closer than 10m from the buffer zone. Estimates of biomass measured in a given species could be

expanded to plot level through the use of the vegetation data set, which gives cover abundance estimates for all species. The height of the species is also important for biomass estimates and it was recommended that the height of the 5 most abundant vascular species be recorded in the sampling frame. This could be supported through the introduction of broad classes of visual height estimates from the common sampling area of 400m². Finally, photos of the sampling frames make a useful record of the vegetation present.

The species code list was discussed in detail. At present seven different lists exist, but one final Excel based list is nearly available through the efforts of Roberto Canullo, Franz Starlinger and Oliver Granke. It was agreed that new species or species codes could be sent bilaterally to Franz Starlinger. The Panel will look into the implementation of one species list.

The addition of a biodiversity component to the ICP Forests manual was discussed. As the ForestBiota project is now fully completed and recently published it was agreed to adopt this approach for a manual most suited for intensively monitored plots. Following the investigation of the results of the BioSoil project it is envisaged to adopt this approach as a manual for extensive networks of plots.

The ground vegetation manual needs to be amended to include elements of quality control and quality assurance. Rather than rush this revision ahead of the Task Force 2009, it was agreed to revise the manual after the field exercise on quality control planned in NE Alps (Italy) for July 2009 and incorporate the findings. A questionnaire has been prepared by the Italian team (CONECOFOR), as implementation of FutMon Action C1-GV-15IT, to demonstrate sources of variability and potential errors and recommend best practice and inform changes to the manual. This questionnaire, adopted by the Panel, will be circulated between all FutMon partners and ICP Forests NFCs, to be filled by the end of May, 2009.

Details of the trans-national training and intercalibration course were presented by the Italian team (CONECOFOR), who outlined the importance of this as a first approach to achieve a level of harmonization across the countries. The approach of the training course was given in detail. One major aim will be to adopt a common assessment method to be used on at least a sub-set of plots in addition to the national assessments.

Bruno Petriccione outlined the response from the Joint Research Centre of the European Commission to the evaluation of the BioSoil project results. A meeting on this topic is foreseen for the Autumn of 2009. Bruno then informed the Panel of some other closely related initiatives such as the LIFE + Project FACTS, INFORDIV a new COST Action project and LifeWatch. The joint chairmen, Bruno and Pat then thanked the participants for a productive meeting and declared the meeting closed.

The EP chairmen
Pat Neville
Bruno Petriccione