

FINAL REPORT

**Salzburg,
Austria,
24-26
April
2006**

EUROPEAN FORESTRY COMMISSION

Working Party on the Management of Mountain Watersheds

Twenty-fifth session

EUROPEAN FORESTRY COMMISSION

**WORKING PARTY ON THE
MANAGEMENT OF MOUNTAIN WATERSHEDS**

TWENTY-FIFTH SESSION

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24 - 26 April 2006

FINAL REPORT

**FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS
Rome, 2006**

INTRODUCTION

1. The Twenty-fifth Session of the European Forestry Commission's Working Party on the Management of Mountain Watersheds was held in Salzburg, Austria from 24 to 26 April 2006. On 26 April the Service for Avalanche and Torrent Control of the Austrian Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Environment and Water Management organized a study tour to the Lake Chamber district (Salzkammergut) where examples of watershed management, forest management and environmental protection were demonstrated and discussed.
2. The session was attended by 29 delegates and observers from the following countries: Austria, the Czech Republic, Finland, France, Germany, Japan, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Spain and the United States of America.
3. The twenty-fifth session was opened by Mr Gernot Fiebiger, who welcomed all participants and introduced the session Chairperson, Mr Antoine Hurand (France), the Vice-Chairperson, Ms Maria Patek (Austria) and the Secretary of the Working Party, Mr Thomas Hofer (FAO).
4. In his welcoming address, Mr Hurand explained that this year's session would be held in English only. He thanked Ms Patek and the Austrian government for hosting the session, and FAO for its continuous support. Mr Hurand introduced the new Secretary of the Working Party, Mr Hofer, and thanked the former Secretary, Mr Douglas McGuire, for his efforts and support over the past years. He noted with regret that the Chairperson of the twenty-fourth session, Mr Peter Greminger from Switzerland, was unable to attend the meeting. He noted with appreciation the increasing participation of Eastern European countries in the Working Party. Mr Hurand reminded the participants of Mr Greminger's statement at the twenty-fourth session about the need to make the most of the rich diversity of expertise in the Working Party to solve issues in mountain watershed management.
5. Mr Hofer welcomed participants to the twenty-fifth session on behalf of the Director-General of FAO. He was very happy to see so many experts from Eastern European countries. He thanked the Austrian hosts for organizing the meeting in Salzburg, and conveyed best regards from Mr McGuire, who is now the coordinator of the Mountain Partnership Secretariat, hosted by FAO in Rome. Mr Hofer mentioned that this had been the first time that invitations to the session were sent out by the head of the FAO Forestry Department and not by the Director-General. This had allowed for a significant reduction in administration. He also stated that because of major budget cuts at FAO, simultaneous interpretation would not be possible during the twenty-fifth session. Mr Hofer listed important events that had taken place since the last session: the International Year of Mountains (2002) and the International Year of Freshwater (2003) had triggered much follow-up in the areas of watershed management and sustainable mountain development; FAO was in the process of completing the global watershed management review that it had initiated in 2002; the North American Forestry Commission (Canada, the United States and Mexico) had created a Working Party on Mountain Watersheds; the International Consortium on Landslides had launched an International Programme on Landslides in January 2006; and the country section of the Working Party Web site was online and ready to be filled with material. Mr Hofer stressed that the growing challenges related to ecosystem management, climate change impacts, institutional development and increasing hazards were making the Working Party increasingly important. He expressed the hope that countries that had been active in the Working Party in the past would be reactivated and that the Web site would serve as a platform for increased inter-sessional participation and initiatives among members.
6. On behalf of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Environment and Water Management, Ms Patek welcomed everyone to Salzburg and to the Twenty-fifth Session of the European Forestry Commission's Working Party on the Management of Mountain Watersheds. As Director-General of the Austrian Federal Service of Torrent and Avalanche Control it was an honour for her to open this meeting. She thanked the Chairperson Mr Hurand, the Secretary Mr Hofer, and Mr Gernot Fiebiger for their efforts in bringing this meeting about. Ms Patek mentioned how recent natural catastrophes, such as the Indian Ocean tsunami, had been a loud wake-up call about the need to reduce risks and improve

the management of natural hazards. She highlighted the importance of watershed management in this context. Ms Patek described how the Austrian Forest Service of Torrent and Avalanche Control was almost 125 years old, and stressed how its concept of protection was based on sustainable forest management. She highlighted the importance of the Working Party, which was demonstrated by the fact that this was its twenty-fifth session. She reminded participants of the Working Party's objectives, as formulated by Mr Greminger during the last meeting in Cracow, Poland: "To adopt an integrated approach to environmental protection and to adopt clear and effective procedures for serving the European Forestry Commission and the countries of Europe". Ms Patek thanked Mr Fiebiger, who would retire at the end of the year, for his outstanding efforts in representing the Federal Service of Torrent and Avalanche Control in the international scene. Ms Patek concluded by remarking that this meeting provided the Working Group and experts with an opportunity to discuss the mandate and future activities of the Working Party in an open way and to reach consensus for the future.

7. Mr Fiebiger delivered a welcome address on behalf of the International Union of Forestry Research Organizations (IUFRO), mentioning the more than 55 years of fruitful collaboration between IUFRO and the Working Party. Mr Fiebiger stressed the need to support modern integrated watershed management in order to achieve sustainable development in mountain areas and watersheds, which are under increasing pressure. He emphasized FAO's leading role in sustainable mountain development and in the management of fragile ecosystems, and gratefully acknowledged the cooperation with IUFRO.

8. A press conference was held with the local newspaper *Salzburger Volkszeitung*. Mr Hofer, Mr Hurand, Ms Patek and Mr Fiebiger introduced the concept of watershed management and the Working Party's role, stressing the soundness and appropriateness of the approaches to participatory watershed management that are practised in the Salzburg region.

WORKSHOP: WATERSHED MANAGEMENT – AN INTEGRATED APPROACH TO ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION

First session

State of and perspective on mountain watershed management

9. On behalf of Mr Piercarlo Zingari of the European Observatory of Mountain Forests, who was unable to participate, Mr Hofer introduced the background paper "Watershed management – an integrated approach to environmental protection". The paper was largely based on information received through questionnaires sent to 32 members in 2003. It presented an overview of watershed management concepts, developments and practices in relation to environmental protection, discussed national approaches and specific case studies from selected countries, and drew conclusions for the future.

10. Mr Hofer presented a paper entitled "Towards a new generation of watershed management programmes and projects", which was about an FAO-led global review of watershed management experiences. The review had resulted in four case studies and five volumes of proceedings from four regional workshops and a final conference. Mr Hofer's presentation focused on the main outcomes of the review, including new concepts for future watershed management projects. He concluded with a brief presentation of two FAO watershed management projects – in Tajikistan and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea – to which some of the recommendations for the new generation of watershed management programmes had already been applied.

11. Dr William Fleming, a hydrologist and Associate Professor at the University of New Mexico, the United States, discussed land and water degradation issues in New Mexico. He also reported on his recent field work in the Phewa Tal watershed near Pokhara, Nepal. This watershed had been the site of an FAO watershed management project in the late 1970s, in which Dr Fleming had been involved. During a recent visit, Dr Fleming had compared the predictions made in 1978 with the real situation in

2006. Following measures taken by the Government of Nepal – which had in effect handed over the responsibility for common forest lands to local forest user groups – open grazing had ceased, forest harvesting was being regulated for sustainability and the land had largely recovered. His presentation was illustrated by photographs taken in 1978 and 2006 by his wife, journalist Jeanie Puleston Fleming.

Second session

Soil and water and environmental conservation in mountain watersheds

12. Mr Josef Krecek of the Department of Hydrology at the Czech Technical University in Prague introduced his paper on “Soil and water conservation in small headwater catchments and lakes in the High Tatra Mountains”, which dealt with hydrological investigations in high catchment lakes. It reported on a detailed hydrological study that had been started in 2000 using automatic weather stations, where runoff genesis was investigated by means of chemical tracers. The main environmental problems in distant alpine catchment areas were air pollution, acid atmospheric deposition and the acidification of both terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems. It was noted that global climate change causes uncertainty in the prediction of biological characteristics.

13. Mr Petr Punčochář from the same university presented a paper on “Risk assessment of soil erosion in the watershed of the Josefův Důl reservoir”, located in the north of the Czech Republic. The aim of this study was to look at the effects of forest decline and reforestation on soil erosion processes and sedimentation in the catchment areas of the Jizera mountains.

14. Mr Zlota Ionut of the National Forest Administration of Romania presented the Romanian national report, which discussed the issue of degradation caused by erosion and landslides. These processes could be attributed mainly to the natural conditions of topography, lithology and climate, together with inadequate management of land resources and pollution over recent decades. In order to prevent and mitigate the torrential phenomena and reduce the intensity of land degradation, work needed to be done to improve existing torrent corrections, especially in the watersheds where damage by natural disasters had affected inhabited areas.

15. Mr Dusan Huska of the Slovak Agricultural University in Nitra presented a paper on “Integrated watershed management in Slovak Carpathian region – protection, tourism, and water”. He described the situation in the Carpathian area, which had recently been increasingly affected by tourism. The specific example of the lower Tatras was used to demonstrate how, in a small area that had been developed as a downhill skiing site with an inflow of tourists, the ecological balance (mainly water) could change drastically. In particular, there had been a strong demand to produce artificial snow, and the paper examined the consequences of this development.

16. After the presentations, an interesting open discussion was triggered by Dr Fleming’s question as to whether countries in Europe had a legal allotment of water for nature. The discussion focused on the importance of water for nature, on ecological flows of water and on whether there should be a legal allotment of water for nature. Contributions to this discussion evidenced the diversity of realities related to this issue within Europe: for example, Austria mentioned that the high mountains contained plenty of water, so there was no need to put controls on its use. In Spain, owing to significant water scarcity, water regulation had a long tradition; the ecological level had to comply to a minimum flow in rivers, reservoirs, etc. Its ecological function was water’s second priority after its function for human use and domestic consumption.

Third session

Forest and water management in the environment of mountain watersheds

17. Professor Hideaki Marui of the Research Institute for Hazards in Snow Areas, Niigata University, Japan presented a paper on “Risk management for mitigation of landslide disaster in Asian orogenic zone”, which discussed the slope displacements induced by earthquakes. The paper looked at examples from Japan and Pakistan, and classified landslides according to different categories: shallow

slope failures on steep slopes near ridges; shallow slope failures along river channels; reactivated landslides on relatively gentle hill slopes; and landslide dams formed by the soil masses displaced by the other three categories. Hazard mapping was becoming an increasingly important tool for predicting the landslides related to the next possible earthquake and for mitigating the impacts of subsequent disasters.

18. Mr Anton Loipersberger of the Bavarian Environment Agency talked about a Europe-sponsored project on the Disaster Information System of Alpine Regions (DIS ALPS), which aimed to improve the documentation of natural hazards by sharing bilateral knowledge to develop interdisciplinary results in three time frames: the short term, for transnational information exchange among experts of different disciplines; the medium term, for creation of a public information platform about natural hazards; and the long term, for the standardization and homogenization of documentation related to natural hazards in the whole Alpine area. This system could then be applied to other European mountain regions, thereby enabling the exchange of disaster information across national borders.

19. Mr Markus Moser of the Austrian Service for Torrent and Avalanche Control presented a paper on "Runoff erosion and snow-generated debris flows and snow avalanches from affected areas of the winter storm 2002". This presentation looked at problems encountered and technical measures taken, such as the construction of rock fall barriers to protect villages and roads. The presentation also elaborated longer-term plans for the future, in which protection against rock fall and gliding snow would be extended in order to reduce snow movement and allow reforestation.

20. Mr Franz Zaunbauer, Director-General of Salzburg State Forests, presented a paper on the reforestation programme that followed the windbreak disaster of November 2002 in the mountain regions of Salzburg. Remote sensing techniques were identified as a very useful tool in the management of disasters and the analysis of affected areas. Mr Zaunbauer emphasized that it was crucial that forests be managed successfully before the next disaster took place!

Fourth session

Integrated watershed management in the environment

21. Mr Eero Kubin of the Finnish Forest Research Institute talked about the protection of water courses, forest management, sustainable development and watershed protection methods in Finland. Recent environmental information on how to carry out practical work in forests had been published in a booklet.

22. Mr Hubert Siegel of the Torrent and Avalanche Control Service presented the Integrated Land-Use Planning (ILUP) project. He discussed the goals of implementing this integrated river basin management project as an instrument for planning and improving the Danube basin. These goals included the identification of future risk scenarios and floods. The project included a transnational dimension, which would bring improvements through close cooperation among countries in the eastern part of the Danube basin.

23. Mr Pavel Vesely of the Department of Hydrology at the Czech Technical University presented a research study he had undertaken in the Dolomites of northern Italy. The study looked at environmental conservation, debris flow and the challenges of environmental conservation and management. Mr Pavel mentioned the need to establish a centralized monitoring, measuring and warning system, which could be based on an expansion of the existing network of meteorological stations. Historical investigations had demonstrated that debris flows were still putting settlements at risk.

24. Mr Fritz Singer of the Torrent and Avalanche Control Service was responsible for forest land use planning in Austria. In his talk, Mr Singer discussed the planning of sustainable forestry and forest

function in Austria and presented an overview of the main functions of forests in increasing afforestation, timber production, welfare, recreation and protection.

25. The moderator Mr Fiebiger and the panellists Mr Hurand, Mr Hofer and Ms Patek were involved in the concluding panel, which generated discussions on forestry and the multifunctionality of forests. Communities should learn to integrate the functions and benefits of forests with other issues relevant to watershed management. In each country, forests had an important function, especially in watershed management and the control of natural hazards, but forests alone could not resolve all problems. Ms Patek stressed the importance of exchanging experience and knowledge. There was much experience among the members of the Working Party, particularly because it combined expertise from research, policy and practice and because of the diversity of realities found in European countries. This knowledge needed to be used to improve future policy-making. Both Mr Hofer and Mr Fiebiger stressed the importance of the Working Party's function in disseminating knowledge and experiences to countries outside the Working Party, especially developing countries.

REPORT ON THE INTER-SESSIONAL ACTIVITIES FOLLOWING THE TWENTY-FOURTH SESSION OF THE WORKING PARTY

26. Three activities were highlighted under this agenda item:

- the change of Working Party Secretary from Mr McGuire to Mr Hofer;
- analysis of the questionnaires distributed in 2003, and presentation of this analysis in the background paper for the twenty-fifth session;
- the setting up of a country section on the Working Party Web site with the objective of collecting information relevant to Working Party sessions (Power Point presentations, documentation, national reports, new findings relevant to watershed management research, etc). The country page section should become a tool and a platform for sharing interesting and relevant information, launching discussions and drafting laws and regulations. All countries involved in the Working Party would have access to the country pages. The Web site could be found in the Forestry section of the FAO Web site (www.fao.org) and documentation could be sent directly to Mr Hofer (thomas.hofer@fao.org). All member countries were encouraged to feed the country pages with information. The country section would evolve in its design, structure, tools (e.g., search function), etc., based on the type of contents that it received.

PROGRESS IN INTEGRATED WATERSHED AND ENVIRONMENT MANAGEMENT AND SUSTAINABLE MOUNTAIN DEVELOPMENT

National reports

27. Ms Maria Patek presented the Austrian national report, which discussed the measures needed to improve the way in which society would deal with future natural disasters. The security measures to be applied required the cooperation of experts from various technical disciplines and from both public and private organizations. Stakeholders and individual citizens would have to participate actively in developing the necessary precautionary measures. Communication was gaining importance in efforts to mitigate natural hazards. Learning from past natural disasters constituted an important basis for improving society's preparedness for future events.

28. Mr Anton Loipersberger presented the Bavarian national report, which focused on evaluating the floods in the Munich area in August 2005. The financial consequences of this event had been less severe than those of the 1999 flood, proving that the preventive measures taken after the 1999 event had been successful. A detailed action programme for the period up to 2020 was described; this included natural retention, technical measures and flood prevention.

29. In the Czech national report, Mr Josef Krecek discussed the meteorological situation in the Czech Republic and recent problems facing mountain watersheds. Mr Krecek mentioned several

challenges and priorities: increasing the percentage of deciduous tree species, returning to traditional forest practices, pursuing integrated environmental control, rehabilitating acidified ecosystems and headwater wetlands, and recultivating mismanaged catchment areas. The aim was to apply the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA, 244/1992) to the system of watersheds and to undertake a watershed programme for the new civic society (including public awareness, better quality of life and innovative planning).

30. Mr Eero Kubin presented the Finnish national report, which highlighted that Finland was considered a land of forests, lakes and rivers. He described recent developments and challenges that had occurred in Finland's forestry sector. There had been numerous forest programmes since the 1960s, the most recent of which emphasized economic, ecological and social sustainability. Mr Kubin discussed the main results of recent forest programmes, which had been positive, and mentioned the main challenges to the National Forest Programme of 2010, including the value of exports in the wood industry, the implementation of nature conservation programmes, and the future of METSO. He concluded by saying that by the end of the 1990s all forestry organizations had renewed their management approaches and guidelines in order to promote sustainable forestry.

31. The French national report was presented by Mr Antoine Hurand. He talked about the current main priorities in watershed management in France, which included issues of erosion and natural risks, as well as the multifunctionality of forests in sustainable development. The prevention of natural risks implied collaboration among different ministerial departments and necessitated a degree of decentralization. Mr Hurand stressed the need for more public information, and talked about prevention strategies, research and its impacts. CEMAGREF was one of the largest research institutes in France to specialize in mountain watershed management research and undertake activities related to the management of mountain forests. In France, the main challenge to watershed management was the diversity of actors: too many people and institutions were involved, making it difficult to reach agreement at both the national and local levels.

32. Mr Edward Piergalzki presented the Polish national report, which provided basic data on the current state of Polish mountains and forests. Water resources in Poland were relatively small, and there was a deficit of water on more than one-third of the country's area, especially during the vegetation period. The water retaining properties of forests played a key role in regulating water resources and combating droughts and floods. To stop the gradual depletion of water resources and to restrain the frequent overdrying of habitats, the surface water retention in forest areas needed to be increased. A programme to this effect was being implemented in Poland on the basis of agreements made in 1995 and 2003 between the Minister of Environmental Protection, Natural Resources and Forestry and the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development. Implementation of the Programme of Small-Scale Water Retention in Poland (up to 2015) was expected to improve water balance and the water condition of natural environments significantly. One of the most important priorities for the management of mountain forests and watersheds in Poland was the involvement of private forestry in afforestation efforts on former agricultural land.

33. Mr Lubos Jurik presented the Slovakian national report, which focused on progress made in integrated watershed management and sustainable mountain development since the Working Party session in Cracow, with particular reference to changes in legislation. The report also referred to the Carpathian Convention and its member countries. The policies that were being pursued aimed to achieve the sustainable management of surface and groundwater resources, particularly by ensuring an adequate supply of good-quality water. The report also gave a detailed account of the flood in 2004 and its consequences.

34. Mr Leopoldo Rojo Serrano described the Spanish Ministry of Environment's watershed management activities of the previous two years. Several forest and hydrological restoration activities had been undertaken with State funding. The current situation in Spain was described, including the correction works to stabilize Mediterranean torrents. Figures of expenditures for emergency actions

(such as restoration of fire damage) and for assistance to the sustainable management of forest areas were given in detail.

PROGRAMME OF THE WORKING PARTY 2006 TO 2010

35. Deliberations on this topic were lively and constructive. The Secretary, Mr Hofer, launched the discussion by presenting some elements that in his view had emerged from the deliberations of the twenty-fifth session so far: making the Web site a useful, dynamic and interactive tool; making the Working Party a lobby group for watershed management in the context of the European Union (EU) and other international processes; compiling information, experiences and approaches to burning topics such as climate change, natural hazards and education; and providing technical, institutional and research support to countries outside Europe. These ideas were generally endorsed by the participants. The uniqueness of the Working Party compared with other groups active in Europe was reiterated (the coming together of people with experiences from different sectors and realities). In order to make full use of this comparative advantage and niche, however, more countries needed to participate actively in the Working Party. There was a need to develop an attractive information document about the Working Party to facilitate awareness rising about the group within countries.

36. Decisions regarding the main inter-sessional activities following the twenty-fifth session can be summarized as follows:

- Develop further the country pages on the Working Party Web site. Thematic sections might be developed. The Secretariat would send all member countries a list of information categories and a calendar for submissions.
- Summarize the background paper of the twenty-fifth session to a maximum of two pages for in-country dissemination and lobbying for the Working Party at the EU level.
- Revitalize member countries that had been active in the past, such as the United Kingdom, Italy, Greece, Sweden, Norway and Balkan countries.
- Report on the outcomes of the session to the forthcoming meeting of the European Forestry Commission in Slovakia.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS OF THE WORKING PARTY

37. The Twenty-fifth Session of the Working Party elected Ms Maria Patek (Austria) as Chairperson, and Mr Edward Pierzgaliski (Poland) and Mr Eero Kubin (Finland) as Vice-Chairpersons.

DATE AND PLACE OF THE TWENTY-SIXTH SESSION

38. Finland offered to host the Twenty-sixth Session of the Working Party in late August 2008 in Oulu. Slovakia expressed an interest in hosting the twenty-seventh session.

CLOSING OF THE TWENTY-FIFTH SESSION OF THE WORKING PARTY

39. Mr Hurand took the floor to make closing remarks, thanking the Austrian hosts for their fine organization of the session and FAO for its support. There were special thanks to all participants, delegates and observers for a job well done.

AGENDA

1. Opening of the Session
2. Adoption of the Agenda
3. Seminar on: *Watershed Management - an Integrated Approach to Environmental Protection*

Session 1: *State and perspective of mountain watersheds management in environmental protection*
Session 2: *Soil and water and environmental conservation in mountain areas*
session 3: *Forest and water management in the environment of mountain watersheds*
Session 4: *Integrated watershed management in the environment*
4. Report on inter-sessional activities following the 24th Session of the Working Party (Cracow Session)
5. Progress in Integrated Watershed and Environment Management and Sustainable Mountain Development
 - a. Presentation of National Reports
 - b. Presentation of Observer Reports
 - c. Discussion
6. Programme of the Working Party until 2010 – defining long term programme, inter-sessional activities and recommendations to European Forestry Commission
7. Election of officers of the Working Party
8. Date and place of the 26th Session
9. Any other matters
10. Adoption of the report
11. Closing of the session

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**FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS/
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 ALIMENTACION**

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PROGRAMME OF STUDY TOUR**Wednesday, 26 April 2006****Examples of watershed management and forest management considering environmental protection in the Lake Chamber District (Salzkammergut)**

08:00		Departure from Salzburg (Heffterhof)
08:30	Mondsee	Meeting point with the Colleagues of the Austrian Service for Torrent and Avalanche Control, Department Upper Austria; Mr Wolfgang Gasperl (Head of Department): short introduction to the excursion sites of the 26 th April (Salzkammergut)
09:00	Weißbach/ Attersee	Visit to the “educational path” for the topic: protective forests
10:00	Ebensee	Visit to the <u>protective forests</u> (by decree) <u>Brentenkogel, Wimmersberg and Gstättenberg</u> : restoration and tending of protective forests
12:00	Bad Ischl (Former Summer Residence of the Austrian Emperor)	Lunch
13:30	Weißbach/ Bad Goisern	Visit to the <u>torrent “Weißbach”</u> : “Chorinsky-Klause” (historic timber floating facility); torrent dam made of steel cables
15:00	Hallstatt (UNESCO world heritage site)	<u>Avalanche catching dams</u> (road protection): experiences in “avalanche” winter 2004/5; <u>protective forests</u> (by decree) of <u>Hallstatt</u> : avalanche and rock-fall protection measures; restoration and tending of protective forests
16:00		Visit to the <u>historic centre of Hallstatt</u> (salt mining, 7000 years of human settlement – since “bronze” age)
17:00		Departure to Salzburg

The study trip is free of charge. Transportation and meals are funded by the Austrian Service for Avalanche and Torrent Control in the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Environment and Water Management.

MEDIA COVERAGE

Forestry experts learn from experiences in Salzburg (*Salzburger Volkszeitung*, 25 April 2006)

Climate change and the increasing incidence of natural catastrophes are giving forestry experts a hard time. A working group of the European Forestry Commission, which focuses mainly on mountain watersheds, is currently deliberating at the Heffterhof about the impacts. 31 European countries are members of the group. Salzburg is in a position to offer them a “speciality”: cooperation between the authorities and the population, “with water and forestry associations that provide financial support in order to reduce the burden on the public administration a bit” emphasizes torrent and avalanche control expert, organizer and host, Gernot Fiebiger. Based on such cooperation, the population accepts the measures. Items for discussion at the meeting include Salzburg’s experiences related to the storm catastrophe of 2002: in areas where forest was damaged by the storm, the discharge after heavy rainfall events has significantly increased and avalanche and rock fall hazards on the steep slopes have intensified. Projects on area management are being presented.

Significant problems are resulting from the upward movement of permafrost in high mountain areas as a consequence of climate change, which destabilizes the slopes, as well as the changed water regime resulting from the retreat of glaciers. A field excursion will be organized for participants to the Salzkammergut to visit areas of rock fall and torrents in the vicinity of the Atter Lake, as well as the protective forest of Hallstatt.