



## Challenges

In order to continue offering technical assistance and policy guidance to different groups of stakeholders, including private sector, foresters, farmers, local authorities and government technicians, the Working Party must constantly cope with emerging issues of global importance. This is the case of climate change and increased hazards in mountain watersheds. Global warming is affecting vital mountain resources and in turn will negatively impact on the socio-economic situation of mountain people. The Working Party is engaged in raising awareness on this issue, by assessing and disseminating state-of-the-art knowledge and strategies of adaptation to climate change.

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For more information see:

<http://www.fao.org/forestry/37705/en/>

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**EUROPEAN  
FORESTRY COMMISSION**



Photo: Saana fell in Enontekiö, Finland. M Ketonen



Photo: A Mountain watershed in the Swiss Alps. T Hofer

**Working Party  
on the Management  
of Mountain Watersheds**



## What can the Working Party offer?

For more than five decades the main objectives, areas of consideration and core concerns of the Working Party have progressively included:



Photo: Mazurskie forest in Poland. P Ceci

- Soil rehabilitation and conservation through rational use of water resources within basins;
- Protection against avalanches and torrent control, risk zoning and mapping, and early warning systems;
- Socio-economic and agricultural aspects;
- Watershed management and sustainable development, an integrated approach to environmental protection;
- Improved mountain livelihood systems and conservation of mountain ecosystems;
- Collection of information and documentation of technologies;
- Monitoring of evolution of practices and policies related to forest and water management and exchange of experiences;
- Forests, water and climate change in high altitude and high latitude watersheds;
- Global development priorities in an exchange with countries beyond Europe.

## What is the Working Party?

The core mission of the Working Party is to bring together member countries of the European Forestry Commission (EFC) in order to exchange information on water policies, watershed and risk management practices, to fill knowledge gaps and to follow-up on progress made.



Photo: Kiutaköngäs rapids in Finland. E Kubin

The Working Party meets every two years in a host member country of the EFC. Its Steering Committee is chaired on a rotational biennial basis by a member country, while the Secretariat is provided by the Forestry Department of FAO. Through the reports and presentations submitted for each session of the Working Party, the member countries and the external observers from different regions and organizations contribute to a flow of information on watershed-related issues. A number of inter-session activities ensure that communication and exchange of information between countries continue on a regular basis.

## The Working Party has a long tradition

The Working Party was established by the European Forestry Commission on the occasion of its third session on 1 September 1950.

The Working Party has played an important role in the following processes:

- Chapter 13 of Agenda 21 (mountain ecosystems);
- International Year of Mountains (2002);
- International Year of Freshwater (2003);
- FAO-led global review of the current status of watershed management (Since 2002);
- Warsaw Resolution 2 “Forests and Water” (2007) of the Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe (FOREST EUROPE).

## The Working Party in partnerships

Besides working together with the member countries of the European Forestry Commission, the Working Party collaborates with many international organizations and processes, such as:



Photo: Kilpisjärvi lake in Finland. T Aspegren

- FOREST EUROPE;
- UNECE Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes;
- EU Water Framework Directive (WFD);
- International Union of Forest Research Organizations (IUFRO);
- UNESCO-IHP-HELP;
- Mountain Partnership;
- Mediterranean Regional Office of the European Forest Institute (EFIMED);
- International Consortium on Landslides (ICL);
- UN Water;
- UN Forum on Forests (UNFF);
- UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC); and
- UN Convention on Biological Diversity (UNCBD).