

EFC – Working Party on the Management of Mountain Watersheds



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations



Working Group 3 “Protective Functions of Forests”

Strategy Paper (24/Apr/2020)

Working Group 3 “Protective Functions of Forests” was proposed in 2019 at the thirty-second session of the Working Party on the Management of Mountain Watersheds (WPMMW) to work on interlinkages between protective functions of forests, ecosystem services, and related challenges and impacts of climate change. The establishment of WG3 was revised and agreed by WPMMW members.

This Working Group concept paper builds on the discussion at the 32nd session of the WPMMW on 25 September 2019 in Innsbruck, Austria.

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I. Critical topics

Working Group 3 (WG3) “Protective Functions of Forests” concentrates its work and activities initially on important protective functions of forests in mountain areas. Policy issues relating specifically to protective functions, and more generally to forest ecosystem services, focus on challenges of global developments and climate change in particular. The group further works on adaption strategies to address these climatic and societal changes by appropriate policy and management responses. EFC member countries face similar challenges and opportunities regarding protective forests and the impacts of climate change. Strengthening exchange and knowledge transfer provides benefits for all participants. In particular, the activities should concentrate on forests in mountain watersheds.

Within this backdrop and context, critical topics and issues addressed by WG3 include:

- Climate change impacts and adaptation governance in protective forests
- Climate-related risks for protective forests, including forest fires, storm, drought and bark beetle - as well as other risks such as avalanches, mass-movements, ice sleet, humus loss, and soil erosion
- Management and policy of mountain forest fire and interrelated risks

- Ecosystem services of forests in mountain areas, their social significance and supporting services as a contribution to climate change mitigation
- Synergies and conflicts concerning the protective function to other policy issues such as development planning and land use, nature conservation, forest economy, hunting, tourism and recreational use. Work on the governance of multiple functions
- Policy issues in the interlinkage of spatial planning, urbanization, socio-economic development and forestry ownership
- Knowledge transfer of theory and practice in protective forest management and maintenance: training, academic education programs
- Raising public awareness on the role of the protective functions of forests and on the related management activities

II. Products and services of WG3

Building a network of multidisciplinary experts from government, research, science, forest management, civil society, municipalities and regions, the WG3 partners outline, develop and offer different products and services to the European Forestry Commission, its member countries and partners:

- **Training programme** for the EFC network focusing on current and future challenges as well as on maintenance and management of protective forests. Network development of European Training Centers
- **Baseline publications**, such as the 2020 report “Protective Functions of Forests: International Survey”
- **Academic Education:** transnational network development concerning academic education and research in mountain/protective forest management
- Identification and coordination of joint **research initiatives and activities** and related network projects
- Serve as **knowledge hub** and information access gateway
- Exchange and transfer of **governance processes** and best practices, leading to policy advice and arrangement of expert consultations related to protective forests and ecosystem services, and novel challenges such as mountain forest fires
- Exchange and development of protective forest **management plans**, standards and best practices, especially for game and hunting
- Establishment of an **international policy network** for the issue of protective functions of forests
- Close cooperation to other networks concerning the issue of mountain forests, such as EUSALP AG 8, FAO Mountain Forest Program, IUFRO as well as academic cooperation's (Forest research institutes, universities)

III. Leading countries and partners

To be determined.

The WG is open to all EFC member countries and partners, who can propose own activities for the WG or participate in planned activities.

The following partner countries have indicated interest to participate:

Austria, Slovenia, Germany/Bavaria, France, Italy, Norway, Slovakia, Greece, Switzerland, Bulgaria

WG III shall act as a gate-opener to attract other partner countries to actively join, such as Serbia, Croatia, Montenegro, Albania, Georgia, Armenia, Canada, Spain, Sweden, Portugal and Russia.

IV. Potential partner organizations

Potential collaboration partners on the topic protective forests are:

– Forest Europe	-UNFF	-EU Commission
– Universities	-Research Institutes	-Municipalities and regions
– Alpine Convention	- WWF	
– EFI MOUNTFOR	-IUFRO	

V. Work plan

The work plan will be developed at the constituent meeting of WG3 and reflect the thematic priorities and issue areas.

A first activity is the publication of the FAO/EFC baseline publication on “Protective Functions of Forests in a Changing Climate”.

Consecutive activities could include:

- European White Paper on Protective Forest Governance
- Pilot Training Programme and Exchange in Protective Forest Management
- Exchange on mountain forest fire management and prevention strategies
- Network Project on Climate Adaptation Governance for Mountain Forests and Climate related Risks

VI. Potential resources and funding

- WG activities are supported under the general commitment of the EFC and EFC-WPMMW member countries. WPMMW representatives and WG3 partners should therefore liaise with the EFC representative and other national authorities as appropriate.
- Lead countries and active partners offer the organisation and facilitation of activities and products.
- Travel and accommodation costs must be covered by delegates and sending institutions.
- Innovative funding mechanisms and joint funding proposals for activities to third parties is considered

International funding programs such as COST, Interreg and LIFE are considered for sustainable funding sources.