

European Forest Institute



EUROPEAN FOREST INSTITUTE

Georg Winkel, Agata Konczal, Małgorzata Blicharska and many more

Białowieża Science Initiative

Overview and PRELIMINARY findings

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17th April 2019

Poland approves large-scale logging in Europe's last primeval forest

Greenpeace accuses government of ignoring scientists over fate of Białowieża woodland, home to 20,000 animal species and Europe's tallest trees



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Will no one stop Poland destroying Europe's most precious forest?
Patrick Barkham



If the EU can't save Białowieża from the loggers, its protections are meaningless



Petitioning Environment Minister, Poland Jan Szyszko
Save Białowieża forest!

Save Białowieża forest



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211 needed to reach 1,000

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Save Białowieża forest!

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April 1, 2016 8:43 am

Warsaw uses spruce bark beetle threat to justify mass logging

Henry Foy in Białowieża and Piłta Clark in London

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Environment activists have protested Poland's plans of extensive logging in Europe's last primeval forest and have demanded full protection for the rare Białowieża woods





Press and Information

Court of Justice of the European Union

PRESS RELEASE No 122/17

Luxembourg, 20 November 2017

Order of the Court in Case C-441/17 R

Commission v Poland

Poland must immediately cease its active forest management operations in the Białowieża Forest, except in exceptional cases where they are strictly necessary to ensure public safety

If Poland is found to have infringed this order, the Court will order it to pay to the Commission a penalty payment of at least €100 000 per day

Białowieża Science Initiative

Objectives

- to review scientific knowledge in relation to the controversy about the Białowieża Forest (BF)
- to create a space for an open discussion based on scientific evidence regarding the current and future situation in the BF
- to identify consensus and dissent points from the perspective of science, and make different viewpoints visible based on best available scientific knowledge
- to draw lessons/conclusions from the BF case for other areas in Europe facing similar challenges

Organisation and funding

- Initialized and organized by the European Forest Institute
- InForMAr project funded by German BMEL (<https://informar.eu/>)

Białowieża Science Initiative (2)

Approach and time plan

- Ca. 20 scientists were selected based on
 - a) academic reputation in relation to the relevant topics
 - b) complementarity of expertise and perspectives.
- Workshop in Białowieża (July 30th-August 1st); discussion of points of scientific agreement and disagreement; Chatham House Rule
- 5 thematic areas: forest ecology; disturbances, (biodiversity) conservation and management, socio-economic importance, forest history, forest policy and governance
- Compilation of a multi-author-evidence paper (nearly ready) to be submitted for scientific peer-review
- Presentation of findings to policy makers and media (15.5.2019)

Białowieża Science Initiative – Participating scientists

1. Per Angelstam, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences
2. Małgorzata Blicharska, Uppsala University
3. Lukas Giessen, European Forest Institute
4. Jacek Hilszczański, Forest Research Institute
5. Jan Holeksa, Adam Mickiewicz University
6. Jette Bredahl Jacobsen, University of Copenhagen
7. Bogdan Jaroszewicz, Białowieża Geobotanical Station, University of Warsaw
8. Agata Konczal, European Forest Institute
9. Andrzej Konieczny, University of Life Science in Lublin
10. Grzegorz Mikusiński, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences
11. Zbigniew Mirek Polish Academy of Science
12. Bart Muys, KU Leuven
13. Frits Mohren, Wageningen University
14. Krzysztof Niedziałkowski, Polish Academy of Science in Warsaw
15. Metodi Sotirov, University of Freiburg
16. Krzysztof Stereńczak, Forest Research Institute
17. Jerzy Szwagrzyk, University of Agriculture in Cracow
18. Gordon Winder, Universität München
19. Georg Winkel, European Forest Institute
20. Zbigniew Witkowski, University School of Physical Education in Krakow
21. Rafał Zapłata, Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw

Preliminary results

Scientific agreement, disagreement and knowledge gaps

- Forest ecology, disturbances and management
- Forest history
- Socio-economic factors
- Forest policy and governance



Forest ecology, disturbances and management - consent

- Differences between BNP and BF under State Forest management
- Importance of “normal” natural dynamics and disturbance regimes to keep natural biodiversity
- Importance of specific human intervention regimes to keep some species (specifically light-demanding species)
- Effects of climate change on bark beetle dynamics and other disturbances



Forest ecology, disturbances and management – open questions

- Which species, habitat, processes should be prioritized in BF?
- Is the size of BF large enough to maintain natural dynamics?
- Should large scale disturbances such as bark beetle outbreak be managed or should the forest be left for natural development?
- Is sanitary cutting an efficient way to stop/mitigate bark beetle outbreaks?
- Should active or passive (conservation) management be preferred and how these two should be spatially distributed?



Forest history - consent

- Use of BF for many economic purposes for centuries
- Preserved conditions for natural regeneration of the forest and maintained continuity of forest cover despite the human activity



Forest history – open questions

- Did human activities significantly alter forest habitats before end of 18th century?
 - What the impact of 20th century forest management has been on natural stands (and biodiversity)?
- Is the BF a predominantly cultural or natural heritage?



Socio-economic factors - consent

- Small direct economic contribution of (local) forestry to the Polish economy
- (Perceived) dependence on local fuel-wood and non-wood products from BF by the local communities
- More prestigious jobs in the forest service compared to nature conservation
- High appreciation by the Polish people of BF as a place for nature based recreation
- High symbolic value of BF for (Polish) society (including forestry and nature conservation sectors)



Socio-economic factors – open questions

- What are the actual benefits from the BFM (wood harvest, non-wood forest products and tourism) to (local) people?
- What are the impacts of increased conservation or forest management on tourism and related benefits? Who benefits and who loses?
- What is the symbolic meaning of the BF and its use in terms of culture, religion and identity to different groups in society?
- Should the local, national or international (symbolic) value of BF be prioritized in making decisions about the BF?
- What have been/are the costs (reputation) of the ongoing controversy in the area?



Forest policy and governance - consent

- BF comprises lands allocated to different statutory categories
- BF controversy is driven by a power struggle between two opposing policy actor coalitions
- These coalitions have diverging world views (conservation versus sustainable forest use) that result in different management/conservation priorities for the BF
- Up to now a meaningful cross-coalitional participatory conflict resolution process has not been taken place/succeeded



Forest policy and governance – open questions

- What are the impacts of larger policy factors, e.g. Europeanisation and domestic politics, on the BF controversy?
- What are feasible policy solutions? “Win or lose” or participatory multi-actor dialogue process?



Conclusion and Outlook

- Possible to organize productive joint work between very different scientists
- Possible to distinguish consent and dissent/open questions based on scientific evidence
- Not possible to provide “one solution” to the controversy
- Outlook: Paper of the scientists is in its final phase; presentation of the findings in Brussels, May 15th (invitation will go out this week)
- Comments are very welcome!

Dziękuję Bardzo!



The BSI has been conducted under the framework of the INFORMAR project funded by the German Federal Ministry for Food and Agriculture (BMEL).

