Expert input sheet

Conservation and management of Continental Woodland and forest in Germany

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Habitat(s):
9110 - Luzulo-Fagetum beech forests

Biogeographical region:
Continental

Member state:
Germany

Region(s) (if applicable):
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Issues and pressures
Beech forests would cover a large proportion (estimated around 35-65%) of Germany’s forests under present conditions as the climax vegetation. The habitat is self-sustaining in regards to beech, but needs human intervention to protect admixed species that are outcompeted by beech under normal circumstances.

Major issues, pressures and threats are:
• Extensive harvest of old deciduous trees / beech trees
• Harvest of big treetops as regeneration measures
• Forestation with species that are not typical for the habitat type
• Wood harvest between spring and fall (before leaf cast)
• Distances between extraction lines that are smaller than 40 m
• Absence of natural regeneration as a consequence of dense populations of hoofed game
• Eutrophication and acidification due to atmospheric deposition

Conservation requirements
• Since beech is highly shade tolerant, several silvicultural systems can be used. Regeneration is not a problem under almost all circumstances.
• Close-to-nature silviculture should be accepted as a management measure and should be supported financially
• The threshold for a favourable conservation status should be raised to 6 habitat trees and 50 m3 dead wood per hectare
• To prevent deterioration of the typical species stock it should be prohibited to bring in alien species
• It is necessary to define more precisely which age structure (measured by trunk diameter) is preferable for a favourable conservation status. A minimum of 50% of the area should be remaining in the terminal phase.
• Distances between extraction lines should be at least 40 m.
• No wood harvest between spring and fall.
• Shortening of production periods in case of non-typical tree species (felling before maturity)
• Large scale abandonment of production in favour of habitat groves and mature stands. Establishment of forest refugiums
• Sufficient admixture of other native tree species must be ensured silviculturally (regeneration only with typical species for the habitat type)

Conservation management
• Extension of production periods (natural regeneration over longer periods, aiming at a larger trunk diameter before felling)
• Selective abandonment of production in favour of dead wood and habitat trees. Sufficient levels of deadwood need to be ensured, particularly in regions where firewood is in strong demand.
• Development towards permanent forests
• Conservation or increase of the percentage of habitat trees
• Marking of habitat trees
• Close-to-nature silviculture
• Femel felling or single stem felling
• Promotion of natural regeneration over longer periods

Species specific management:
No

Rosalia alpina (*1087) (only in alpine areas)
Barbastella barbastellus (1308)
Myotis bechsteinii (1323)
Lucanus cervus (1083)
Osmoderma eremita (1084*)
Dicranum viride (1381)
Picus canus (A 234)
Dendrocopos medius (A 238)
Dryocopus martius (A 236)
Ciconia nigra (A 030)
Aegolius funereus (A 223)
Columba oenas (A 207)

Barriers and bottlenecks
• Insufficient acceptance of Natura 2000 among forest owners
• Lack of management planning
• Missing participation of forest owners in the development of management plans
• Indefinite management planning (which management measure should be implemented on which site?)
• Insufficient and bureaucratic financial funding
• Thresholds for a favourable conservation status are to low
• Forest administrations often don’t have separate management measures for sites of Community
importance (forest management inside and outside of sites of Community importance is partly the same).

Solutions and opportunities
Increase common awareness that some beech forests need general, strict protection (i.e. virgin forests,
stands with endemic species etc.) and that some forests benefit from or at least are not harmed by near
to nature forestry.

Private owned forests: the acceptance of Natura 2000 is closely linked to financial compensations for
shortfalls due to nature conservation measures. It is important that forest owners get easy and non-
bureaucratic access to financial support.

Decision makers should be provided with more information on natural processes in beech forests. Some
thresholds in the evaluation scheme should be adjusted (microhabitats / special structures, amount of
dead wood, habitat trees).

Cross cutting issues
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Lessons learned / best practice
The most commendable evaluation scheme for the conservation status is being used in Brandenburg
(one of Germany’s federal states)


Opportunities for joint action
Activities directed at an increased common awareness that some beech forests need general, strict
protection (i.e. virgin forests, stands with endemic species etc.) and that some forests benefit from or at
least are not harmed by near to nature forestry.

References
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