

EDITORIAL

THE ANNIVERSARY OF AN UNPRECEDENTED STORM IN THE REPUBLIC OF CROATIA

In last year's Editorial of the Forestry Journal No. 7-8, we analysed the consequences of the storm that hit a wide continental area of the Republic of Croatia on 19 July 2023. Forest damages were at that time estimated at around 1.5 million m³ of wood volume. A year later, according to new data from Croatian Forests Ltd., the damage in state forests so far was estimated at about 4 million m³. The biggest damage was recorded in Vinkovci Forest Administration with 2.7 million m³, which amounts to two thirds of the total damage. Significant damage was also recorded in the area of Nova Gradiška Forest Administration with 450 thousand m³, Bjelovar Forest Administration with 260 thousand m³, Zagreb Forest Administration with 250 thousand m³, and Požega Forest Administration with 210 thousand m³. Apart from the continental forest administrations of Osijek and Koprivnica, forest administrations in the karst area, namely Buzet, Senj and Gospić, were also affected by minor damage. The forests of Croatia's most valuable tree species, pedunculate oak, suffered the most damage, in the amount of 1.9 million m³. The financial damage was estimated at around 163 million euros. The exceptional situation required exceptional measures, and therefore the Government of the Republic of Croatia on 31 August 2023 passed the Regulation on the amendments to the Forest Law according to which *the minister can, in the event of a natural disaster, issue a decree prohibiting the implementation of certain forest management works prescribed by forest management plans, in accordance with the principles of sustainable forest management*. Based on the Regulation, the Ministry

of Agriculture passed a Decree which *prohibits the work of extracting forest wood products prescribed by forest management plans, namely the execution of the main and previous allowable cut, until the end of the validity of the forest management plan* in 14 state forest management units. Croatian Forests Ltd. employed the capacities of its own employees and machinery, as well as those of external contractors, for the immediate recovery of the resulting damage. By the end of 2023, almost 20% of the affected stands have been recovered, and total recovery is expected by the end of 2024. In the future, the main problems resulting from such storms will include forest regeneration and soil protection against weeds on large areas, but also market placement of the current huge stocks of wood assortments due to market saturation and the crisis on foreign markets. It is questionable how many seeds will be needed in the future for natural regeneration, but also for the production of seedlings in nurseries. Another concern are the required manpower and funds for all the necessary regeneration and protection of the damaged stands. Finally, due to climate change and increasingly frequent extreme weather events, the remaining damaged and undamaged forests might be affected by new major damages. Forests, which are expected to help reduce the impact of climate change, are a victim of climate change themselves. Can forestry science and profession, as well as the state and the society, through their actions help forests more so that they can help us?

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