

# CLIMATE-RESILIENT FOREST MANAGEMENT MODEL FOR OWNERS OF FORESTS THAT FULFIL AN IMPORTANT SOCIAL FUNCTION

### Climate crisis

We are facing an uncertain future because the effects induced by climate crisis have a profound effect on our forests. Tending forests with due diligence, attentively observing what happens in them and their successful management and use are becoming increasingly important<sup>1</sup>. The atmosphere's temperature is rising, heavy rainfall is more frequent, outbreaks of bark beetles are on the rise and new diseases of forest trees are emerging. The scope of sanitary felling is increasing. Since 2015, around 20 million m<sup>3</sup> of tree volume has been damaged. Even though the current conditions demand shouldering responsibility and taking initiative, many small forest owners do not actively manage their forests. Therefore, a correct implementation of silvicultural and forest protection work should be fostered. The principles of Climate-Resilient Forest Management Model (CRFMM) should be followed by forest owners in their management and use of forests, whilst these principles apply also to professional and general public who is involved in using forests.

<sup>1</sup> In practice, the term "forest management" applies mostly to production functions which only forest owners can avail themselves of. The term "forest use" refers to environmental and social functions that also people who are not forest owners can benefit from.

*Forests cover almost 60% of Slovenia's land area and they are owned by around 450,000 owners. Many forest properties are small and fragmented (an average parcel area is around 2.9 ha; 66% of owners hold only 1 ha of forest.*

### The demand for forests to fulfil their social functions is growing

Many mountain and thematic paths lead through forests. More and more people visit forests, also contributing to a growing negative impact on them.

### The purpose of CRFMM

- To encourage forest owners to actively manage and use their forests, as well as to carry out quality forestry work that takes into account all the functions and roles of forests in a time of climate crisis.
- To contribute, with the help of forest owners, to raising awareness of the general public and forest visitors about the appropriate conduct in forests that is in line with the recommendations on nature and property protection.

### Recommendations on the management of forests (that fulfil a strong social function) for forest owners

#### → The principle of nature-friendly development

- Forest owners and other forest users alike should treat forests as ecosystems. The main characteristic of an ecosystem is biodiversity. In developing forests, we promote adequate variety as regards the composition of tree species and their genetic diversity,

as well as their mosaic structure. From the forest use viewpoint, we take into consideration all living and non-living ecosystem components. We leave a certain number of naturally dying trees in a forest to ensure the biodiversity of organisms and trees which are suitable for cavity nesters.

- Forests are primarily reforested naturally. The priority is given to tree species that are adapted to certain habitats. When restoring forests with planting, we plant seedlings cultivated from seeds from a suitable source.
- We do not do clear-cuts, we do not use fertilisers, crop sprays or other agents that are not allowed to be used in forests.
- We take appropriate measures as regards invasive species, shrubs and other species in a forest.

#### → The principle of versatility

- We take into account all the functions and roles of forests, according to their importance. We also adapt the use, tending and restoration of forests.
- Forest owners can get involved in social functions of their forests, for example they can perform visitor tours, construct thematic paths, raise awareness of visitors, prepare materials and also control inappropriate behaviour. The management of thematic paths also includes taking care of visitors' safety.
- We integrate new insights about the impact of forests on the well-being and health of people into our management.
- If the local community issues a decree on a forest with special purpose, the community becomes the manager of this forest and should arrange its ownership, preferably by purchasing it.

#### → The principle of sustainability

By benefiting from all forest functions in a suitable manner and by adapting the tending of forest, we ensure the sustainability of its existence and use.

#### → The principle of planning

- We manage forests systematically, on the basis of forest management and silvicultural plans prepared by the Slovenia Forest Service (web portal). A forest property plan facilitates forest management for the owner. The owner prepares it together with a trained professional.
- A forest property plan should include recommendations aligned with the CRFMM, findings about the important functions and roles of a forest, the state of forest resources (surface area, growing stock, increment), tending needs, possible amount of felling, chosen forestry work provider, management goals, tending implementation, financial structure etc.
- Owners cooperate constructively with the district forester of the Slovenia Forest Service. They are guided by the following questions: what do they want, what should they do and what are they allowed to do?

#### → The principle of tending and due diligence

- Tending basically refers to silvicultural measures in a forest, from the developmental stage of seedling and saplings to forest renewal, and encompasses all forest functions. Tending underpins quality and healthy forests.
- In a broader sense, the principle of tending comprises all aspects of forest management and is embodied in the slogan "Taking care of our forests". It follows all principles of CRFMM and requires constant responsibility of owners towards their forests.

#### → The principle of safety at work in forests

- Forest owners are responsible to carry out work in their forests. Forest owners who are not adequately equipped or skilled for work, contract trained providers (for example at Moj gozdar (My Forester) web portal).
- Protective equipment, suitable tools, machines and safe work techniques should be used for all work performed in a forest. Owners should attend suitable training for all of the above.

#### → The principle of life-long learning, cooperation and training

- Conscientious forest owners constantly acquire new knowledge and attend trainings in the field of forest management. They seize all opportunities, particularly the lectures and courses offered by the Slovenia Forest Service, cooperate with the district forester, regularly explore, ask questions, compare and use new insights in practice.
- Forest owners also connect with other forest owners (e.g. through Forest Owners Association of Slovenia, agricultural communities etc.).

#### → The principle of monitoring, observing, recording and keeping data

- Owners implement principles of CRFMM by regularly observing their forests and recording the effects, phenomena and implementation of measures in them.
- All forest owners keep their own journal of forest management and of everything that happens in their forest, including supporting photographs (e.g. damage, flowering, bearing, disease, other special characteristics).
- Owners often visit their forests.

