Protective Forests in Austria
Policy Framework and Challenges in the Future

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Austria – an alpine country

- 2/3 of the whole country Alpine
- 37% of area available for permanent settlement (esp. valleys and low land regions)
Forests protect against Natural Hazards
Avalanches, Rockfall, Land slides, Flood Retention, Debris flows,...
Austrian Forest Act 1975 §21f

- Regulates a differentiated use of the forest
- Defines the **Protective Forest** very precisely
  - Site protective forest
  - Object protective forest
  - Protective forest by regulatory decree
- Includes special treatment of the Protective Forest
- High public interest in the management of a stable, sustainable Protective Forest
Players in the Austrian Protective Forests

• Forest owners – Beneficiaries (houseowner, agriculture, municipality, road operators, infrastructure operators)

• District forestry authority

• State Forestry Directorate (9 federal states in Austria)

• Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Regions and Tourism – Department Torrent and Avalanche Control and Protective Forest Policy
  – Torrent and Avalanche Control as an executive body

• ALSO: Hunters, Tourism, Recreational,...
Challenges in the Protective Forest

• Structural overaging

• Missing regeneration

• Steep slopes, hard-to-reach locations

• High game levels → High susceptibility to game damage

• Missing economic incentives by forest owners

• Pressure on the forest from tourism and recreation → means great stress for the game

• CLIMATE CHANGE: increased temperature, wheater extremes, increased risk of forests fires, changing site conditions → changes in forest composition
Protective Forest Action Programme

4 target corridors, 10 flagship measures and 35 milestones

- Improve the Protective Function and Effect of Forests
- Consideration of i.e. climate change, demographics, land use, structural changes
- Nation-wide setting of measures
- Strengthen societal relevance, including tourism, hunters, municipalities etc.
- Awareness raising and Training
- Research focus on protective forests: forest genetics, climate dynamics, economy and ecology
Protective forest cover in Austria

- Forest with a direct protective function
- Forest with an indirect protective function
- Forest without a preeminent protective function

Source basic data: © BEV, 2019
Statistik Austria - data.statistik.gv.at
Source technical data: BMLRT
Layout & Design: LFRZ GmbH, 2019
Data analysis & design: BFW, LFD, BMLRT, Torrent and Avalanche Control, 2020
Land management projects

• Executed by the Federal Torrent and Avalanche Control
• Long-time projects (15-30 years)
• In forest areas with a high natural hazard potential
• Especially in Object-Protective Forests
• Financing by the public sector BUT also by contributions from interested parties (house owner, infrastructure operator)
• Combination of technical and biological measures
Thank you for your attention!

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