

# **Integrative Science for Integrative Management in Massua Forest in central Israel**

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The development of Massua Forest (Britania Park) is part of the continuing struggle to preserve open spaces in the centre of Israel, an area given to constant development and construction pressures. The forest is already well on its way to becoming a “green reserve” surrounded on all sides by the national highway network, the expanding city of Beith Shemesh and few little rural communities. Both a planning concept as well as a work protocol were developed jointly by universities and foresters designed to guide the often complex process of integrating a host of different organizations and disciplines. This approach is aimed at providing the operational branch of the forest with information about ecological, cultural and economical components. Activities comprise research and evaluation of the ecological values and their impact on the forest as a whole, as well applying the scientific understanding of the forest ecosystem and of relations with its rural and urban surroundings. Obtaining scientific information for ecological management was an important purpose of this research. Yet, the interest of the community and the opportunities for environmental educational were seen as equally important. The city of Beith Shemesh and the communities bordering the forest are considered to be of low status and have a poor self image.

The project, which has enjoyed Israeli media coverage and brought numerous outsiders to the area, created a feeling of hope and pride among residents. They felt they were no longer living in a place that had failed. Now they understand that their area is an ecological melting pot, and therefore the demand to protect the high quality of Massua forest will grow. Astounding to KKL (the institution responsible for forest management) is the response of public and community members and the turnout of people wishing to participate in the field research through the KKL’s community activities.