

Organizational and personal factors influencing forestry planners' biodiversity conservation practices

Eeva Primmer

Senior Researcher, Finnish Environment Institute, Research Programme for Environmental Policy, Helsinki, Finland, eeva.primmer@ymparisto.fi

The recent movement towards more diverse objectives in forest policy and management raises needs for understanding the constraints and incentives shaping professional foresters' planning practice. An example of a rather recent, already institutionalized, policy objective is that of forest biodiversity conservation. To operationalize this, the Finnish forest sector has developed methods for integrating biodiversity conservation in commercial forestry. One such operationalization is habitat conservation in connection with forestry operations. This presentation is based on empirical analysis of survey data of a cross-section of forestry planners in public, private and associational (collective) forestry organizations in Finland. The analysis addresses the decision to delineate valuable habitats outside forestry operations as well as those organizational and personal factors which shape this decision. While organizations provide the planners with resources, the individuals also apply their own contacts and knowledge base as well as personal values when making decisions. An important additional influencing factor is that of search for legitimacy, i.e. willingness to conform to expectations of various stakeholders. As forestry planners in forestry organizations make a great share of operational decisions and, consequently, also biodiversity conservation decisions, knowing their practices is essential for informed policy development. Even more so, policy design should rely on understanding about what lies between objectives and implementation.