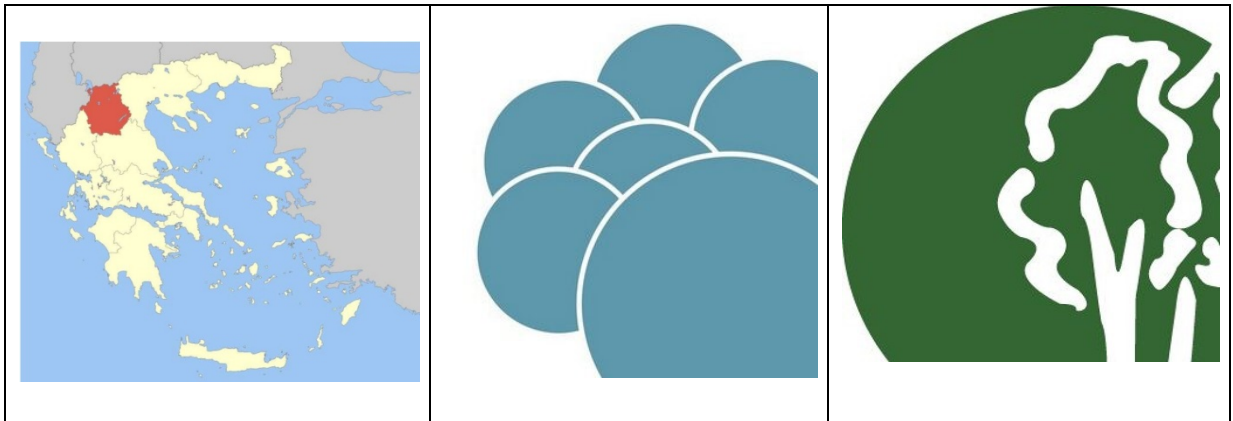


WESTERN MACEDONIA MODEL FOREST



STRATEGIC PLAN

2023-2027



INTRODUCTION

The Western Macedonia Model Forest is a collaborative effort of the public and private bodies of the Region of Western Macedonia, for the promotion of sustainable development in the region where the forest has a crucial role and the protection of the environment is a high priority.

The Western Macedonia Model Forest is defined as a new and original tool of territorial governance in view of sustainable development of the Region of Western Macedonia, with main feature the forests and having the support of all stakeholders and businesses operating in it.

For a better understanding of the Model Forest, we must understand it as a 'voluntary cooperation throughout individuals and groups representing a diversity of values, working together towards a common vision of sustainable development of a region in which the forest is the main feature'.

This corporate aims to manage its own natural resources in the most optimal way taking into account history, financial situation and cultural identity in a way that will not affect future generations.

Each model forest is UNIQUE.

However, all share the same objectives. On the basis of these objectives, created dynamic workplaces and develop standards of cooperation among members.

A key element that governs the operation of a Model Forest is continuous and uninterrupted effort to mitigate problems and contradictions that exist in one geographical area between agencies and companies with conflicting interests and aspirations, with a common view of the sustainable development and environmental protection.

The Region of Western Macedonia is the first region of Greece that will be soon in the Charter of Model Forests in the Mediterranean and the world. The steps and actions for its creation, by the region of Western Macedonia are in the final stage in cooperation with the Secretary of the Mediterranean Model Forest Network.

The next steps to be taken is the development of an integrated strategy for the Model Forest with specific measures and timetables, the legal establishment of the institution with the best recommendation and administration structure, and fund raising for the activities foreseen and classified based on their importance for the Western Macedonia Model Forest.

This strategic plan will record all actions and actions proposed for implementation from the members of Western Macedonia Model Forest, initiatives undertaken by its partners and cooperative bodies and all information relevant to the forest resources and the natural environment of the area.

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PART I

1. General Description

The Western Macedonia Model Forest is defined as a voluntary association of individuals or groups which represent a diversity of values and working together towards a common vision of a viable and sustainable development of a region where the forest is a key feature and common denominator of all the parties involved in that. The Model Forest has a legal form and a strategic plan in which the objectives and aspirations of the Model Forest are recorded with clarity and detail, as well as the means and actions to implement it. It is the main tool and the basis of the Forest Model based on a plan (3 or 5years) built up strategic priorities and actions or projects per axle with a detailed timetable and financing proposals.ls

The implementation of the strategic plan is detailed for each year with an annual plan of actions with a specific timetable and a planned budget. The partners cooperate to achieve the action plan, anyone with his means and capabilities, while retaining his independence and the possibility of selfdetermination (business activity outside the body of the Model Forest. (rights and obligations).

2. About the Model Forest

2.1. What is a Model Forest?

The Model Forests are based on an approach that combines the economic, social and cultural needs of local communities with the long-term viability of broad regions where forests are a key feature. By designing them are voluntary, wide dimension initiatives involving forestry, research, agriculture, mining, and recreation, with other values and interests within a given landscape.

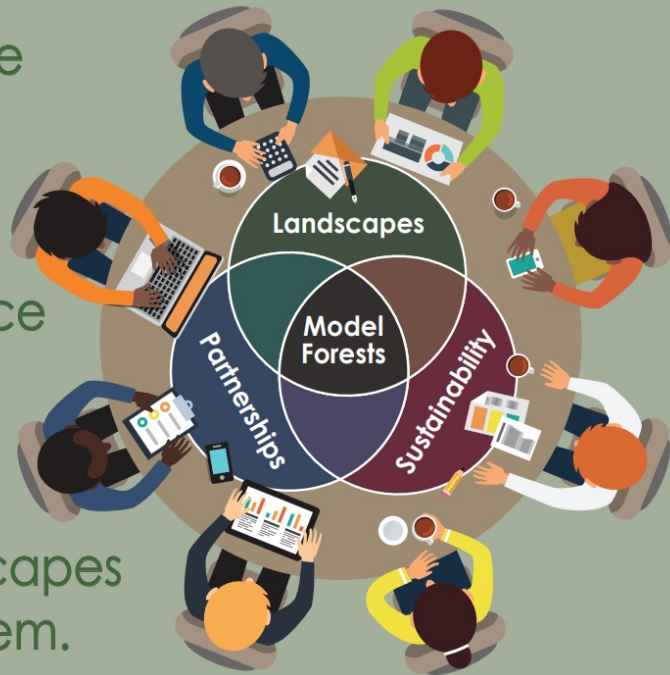
The enterprise scheme determines what sustainability means in their own environment; develop a common goal, the governance structure and the strategic plan and work collectively to achieve the objectives set out in this draft.

They usually try to harmonize their economic and non-economic priorities and focus, for example, in education, in research or in the development of indicators at the local level, to monitor progress towards sustainability in the area of Model Forest. In addition, partnerships of a Model Forest is particularly effective in identifying economic opportunities that do not rely exclusively on wood. In this respect, a Model Forest is realized as a long-term process, rather than a specific project from the beginning to the end.

The Model Forests are unique in several ways: in the completeness of their approach, the size of their action, the width of their membership structure, the level of the policy to be affected and the importance given to networking.

Geographically, the Model Forest should represent a wide range of uses and values into practice within a particular landscape, as the route follows the water in a water Department.

Model Forests are a proven multi-stakeholder platform for good governance and shared stewardship of forests and the larger landscapes that surround them.



Each Model Forest is unique but all are governed by the same principles of **trust**, **transparency** and **collaborative decision making**.

2.2. Partnerships of the Model Forest

The Forests are spending significant time and effort in building a multilateral and participatory partnership base. This ongoing confidence building exercise is an essential element in the success of the Model Forest. Partnerships of Model Forests are a voluntary, neutral forum where interested parties, especially those who have been traditionally excluded from the decision-making process, have a voice at the table when decisions affecting them are discussed.

Interested parties tend to include communities, indigenous groups, women's groups and young people, industry/crafts, NGOs, universities and researchers, landowners, environmental groups, and others. The role of the Government and of local authorities is crucial because this requires the political will to work. As custodians of public land or political force and regulatory powers, are key factors in the region.

Although usually is not exercise authorization in decision-making regarding the area, a Model Forest will include in the partnership those who have legal possession or jurisdiction over the territory. Their participation signals a willingness to review new and innovative approaches to entrepreneurship and good management.

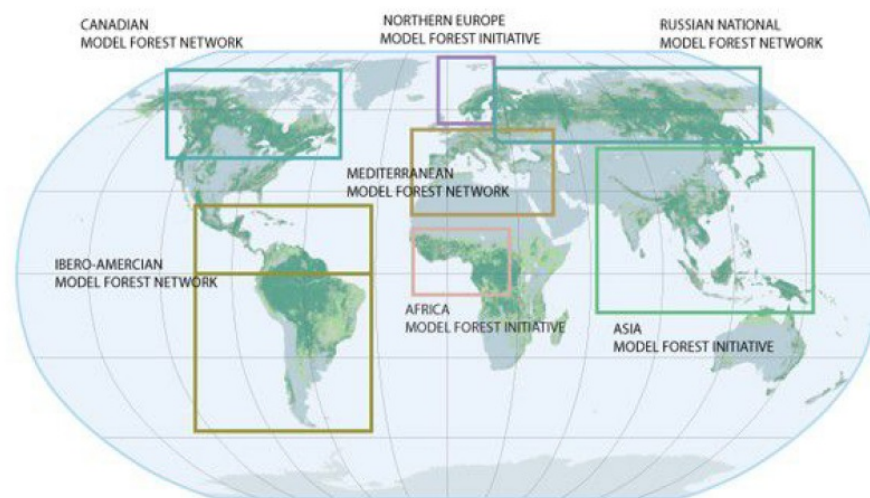
2.3. Principles and characteristics of the Model Forest

During the IMFN Global Forum (global network of Model Forests) by 2008, Member States unanimously agreed to approve the framework of principles and characteristics of Model Forest containing the guiding principles for the development of Model Forests and their functioning. Although two standards Forests are not identical, these guiding principles and characteristics provide a common line to unite the different sites across the network.

The framework includes the following six principles: 1) a broad-based partnership, 2) a large territorial area, 3) sustainability commitment 4) good governance, 5) a wide programme of activities that reflect the values of the stakeholders and 6) a commitment to knowledge-sharing, capacity development and networking.

2.4. Standards of Forests worldwide

The IMFN is active in Africa, Asia, North America, South America, Europe and Russia. The strong growth of the network, necessitating the debate about how the members will participate more effectively in the governance, funding, program planning and strengthening of the activities in the network. The creation of regional networks was seen as the best way to achieve this goal.



The primary purpose of regional networks of the IMFN is to define, to articulate and manage a regional programme of work related to the sustainable management of forest-based landscapes that reflect the priorities, strengths and opportunities that are unique to the region. Also facilitate regional communications and the exchange of knowledge, development of skills and funding opportunities for the existing standards of forests, as well as those who are expected to join the network.

3. A few words about the Region of Western Macedonia

3.1. Geographic location

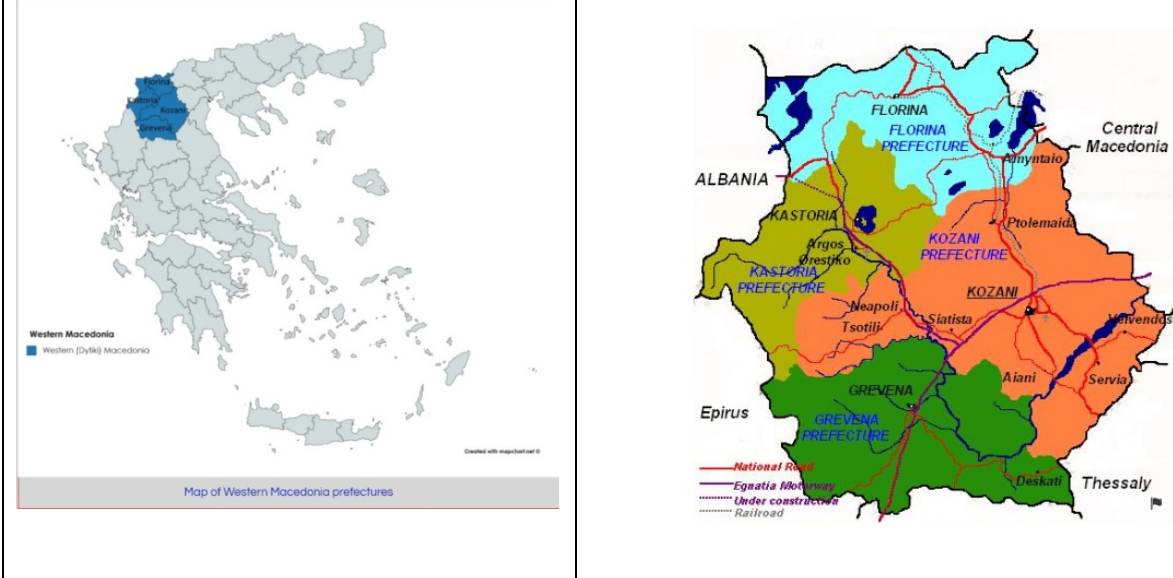
The Region of Western Macedonia covers a total surface of 945,100 Ha, 7.2% of country's total. The nature of the region is mountainous, while Aliakmonas travels down through it. The Region of Western Macedonia is situated in the northern part of Greece and borders with Albania and North Macedonia. It is the only region without sea coast. Western Macedonia is divided into the regional units of Grevena, Kastoria, Kozani and Florina.

The Region of Western Macedonia claimed its current form when the “Kallikratis Programme”, regarding New Architecture of Self-governing Entities and Deconcentrated Administration, officially entered into force (Law 3852/2010, Government Gazette 87/06.07.2010). Since then it consists of the Regional Units of Grevena, Kastoria, Kozani and Florina. The Region's geographical boundaries are displayed on the following image. According to the 2011 census, the Regional Units' population is the following:

Region	Permanent Population	Men	Women	Density SQKM
Region of West Macedonia	282120	141260	140860	29,85
Regional Unit of Kozani	149270	74610	74660	42,46
Municipality of Kozani	70420	35340	35080	65,74
Municipality of Voio	18510	9220	9290	18,37
Municipality of Eordea	45450	22620	22830	64,12
Municipality of Servia-Velvendo	14890	7430	7460	20,45
Regional Unit of Grevena	31490	16270	15220	13,75
Municipality of Grevena	25620	13330	12290	13,78
Municipality of Deskati	5870	2940	2930	13,6
Regional Unit of Kastoria	50280	25120	25160	29,23
Municipality of Kastoria	35830	17840	17990	46,94
Municipality of Nestorio	2630	1350	1280	4,27
Municipality of Orestiada	11820	5930	5890	34,69
Regional Unit of Florina	51080	25260	25820	26,54
Municipality of Florina	32620	15910	16710	39,8
Municipality of Aminteo	16890	8570	8320	28,66
Municipality of Prespes	1570	780	790	3,05

Provisional data from the census released by ELLSTAT in 2011

Map of Western Macedonia Region



3.2. Forest Ownership

According to 2008 data the forest ownership status in the region of Western Macedonia is as follows:

Forest district GREVENA	
Forest ownership classes	ha
Public	48.899,55
Local authority	16.490,00
Church	600,00
Joint ownership	6.788,00
Private	5.273,00
Com munal	
TOTAL	78.050,55

Forest district KASTORIA	
Forest ownership classes	ha
Public	55.326,80
Local authority	12.200,20
Church	222,20
Joint ownership	495,40
Private	140,20
Com munal	
TOTAL	68.384,80

Forest district FLORINA	
Forest ownership classes	ha
Public	20.015,00
Local authority	18.270,00
Church	5,00
Joint ownership	6.046,00
Private	2.559,00
Com munal	
TOTAL	46.895,00

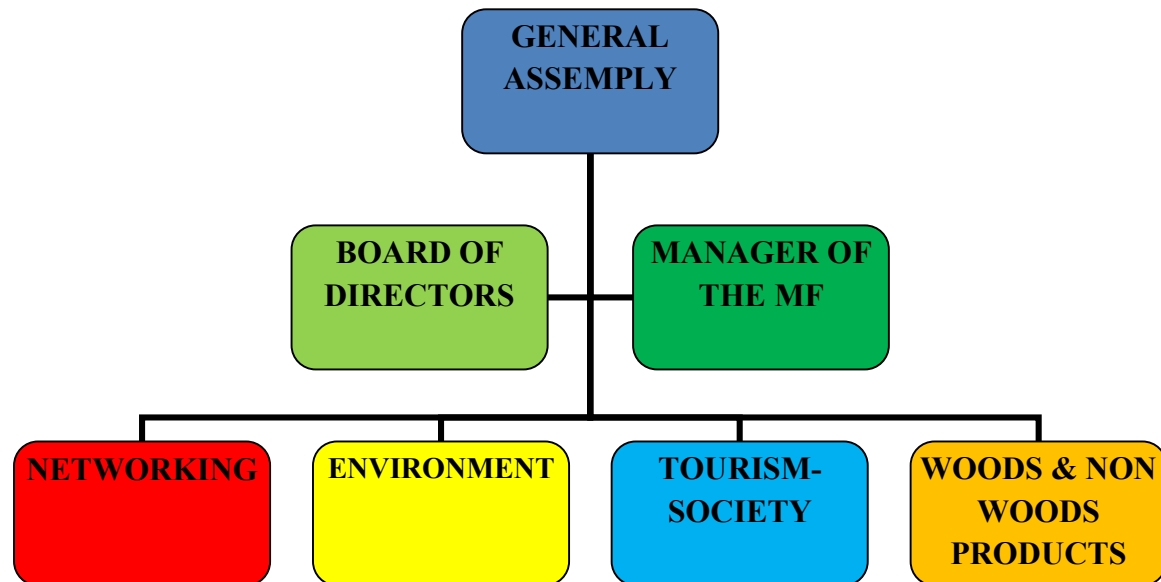
Forest district KOZANI	
Forest ownership classes	ha
Public	11.018,00
Local authority	5.006,40
Church	70,00
Joint ownership	3.421,00
Private	3.704,60
Com munal	
TOTAL	23.220,00

Forest district TSOTYLI	
Forest ownership classes	ha
Public	7.569,50
Local authority	2.854,30
Church	36,70
Joint ownership	885,50
Private	282,20
Com munal	1.376,80
TOTAL	13.005,00

4. Organizational structure of the Western Macedonia Model Forest

The Western Macedonia Model Forest Partnership, was set up to ensure the active participation of stakeholders and management in accordance with the principles of the International Network of Model Forests.

The organizational structure of the Western Macedonia Model Forest it is as follows:



4.1. General Assembly

The General Assembly of members is the highest decision-making body, it has the authority to decide on every matter under its jurisdiction and consists of the registered members of the Model Forest.

The General Assembly is convened by the Manager and meets at the company's headquarters at least once in each business year. The managers are entitled for a special reason and whenever they consider it is necessary to convene an extraordinary General Assembly meeting.

The members of the General Assembly of the NGO are notified at least five (5) days before the General Assembly meeting in any way, such as written invitations or email.

If at least 2/3 of the members of the General Assembly participate in the meeting it has a legal quorum. Otherwise if the quorum is not reached, a repeat General Assembly is convened within seven (7) days, with the presence of at least 1/2 of the members. If the quorum is not reached again, a repeat General Assembly Meeting will take place within seven (7) days, as many members as are present.

The decisions of the General Assembly Meetings are taken by a majority of at least 1/2 of the members are present that have paid the annual fee, unless a greater majority is required by the statute or the law.

In particular, for adopting a decision concerning the amendment of the provisions articles of the NGO, the dissolution of the NGO, the liquidation, the appointment of liquidators and the disposal of its property, a quorum of three quarters (3/4) of the financially settled members is required and a majority of two thirds (2/3) of those present. In case a quorum is not reached, a repeat General Assembly meeting is reconvened within seven (7) days, which is in a quorum with the presence of at least 2/3 of the members and a decision by by a majority of at least 1/2 of the members are present.

The General Assembly is presided over by the managers of the NGO. At meetings minutes of the General Assembly meetings are kept by a special secretary appointed by the managers.

The tasks of the General Assembly are as follows:

1. The approval of the annual report and the financial report of the managers,
2. The control of the proper functioning of the Model Forest bodies,
3. The decision on the amendment of the articles of NGO, the dissolution of the company, the liquidation, the appointment of the liquidators and the disposal of its property,
4. Election of the different bodies of the Model Forest ,
5. Change/ update of the Model Forest constitution,
6. Check and validate the proposed budget by the Board of Directors or make some configuration changes.
7. Make considerations on other issues and take decisions on those matters.

The General Assembly takes a final decision on the acceptance or release of any Member from the membership. As the highest authorized body of Model Forest, performs tasks that do not have assigned to another entity of the Association and shall exercise its principles.

4.2. Board of Directors

The Board of Directors consists of five permanent and five deputy members elected by the General Assembly. The permanent members are: the President, the Vice President, the General Secretary, the Treasurer and a member.

The mandate of the Board is three years.

The three-year term begins after the elections and the constitution of the Board of Directors. in body. The members of the Board of Directors after their election convene in a meeting within five days and elect from among their members the President, the Vice-President, the General Secretary, the Treasurer and the member of the NGO. The election takes place by secret vote and the members are elected by an majority of the members of the Board of Directors (three positive votes).

The Board of Directors could meet at any time following an invitation signed by the President and the General Secretary, provided that they have notified the topics in all members. The Board of Directors can also meet extraordinary, when an issue arises or when requested by at least three (3) members of the Board of Directors or after a request of the Manager. The topics to be discussed must be stated in the application. The Board of Directors is in a quorum as long as at least three (3) members are present at the meeting. Decisions are taken with the absolute majority of the whole number of the members participating at the meeting.

In the event that a vacancy occurs among the permanent members of the Board of Directors, due to resignation or of any other reason, shall be replaced by the first alternate member in accordance with the order of ranking of candidates emerged during the General Assembly and following a vote of the Board of Directors (e.g. If Vice President resigns the four (4) members of the Board of Directors with the 1st alternate member meet and elect the new Vice-President and therefore the new Board of Directors).

4.3. The duties of the Board

The duties of the Board of Directors are the following:

1. Elects the Manager or the Managers,
 2. It is carrying out the procedures relating to the revenues and expenditures, the preparation of the budget of the following year and its submission to the General Assembly.
 3. Formulation of committees, study groups and advisory committees, when it is necessary.
 4. Ensure that the budget was implemented.
 5. It takes the decisions on the matters concerning the acceptance of the Model Forest or the rejection of membership.
1. It has the responsibility for the process and execution of any decision on the Model Forest purpose.

4.4. Manager of the Model Forest

The NGO is represented and managed by the Manager.

The Manager of the NGO is a natural person and is elected by the Board of Directors by an absolute majority, following the proposal of the President or the members of the Board of Directors.

The Manager is designated as the representative of the NGO.

Managers of the NGO can be appointed more than one person, if this is deemed necessary, who act either jointly or separately each other.

The Manager is recalled by unanimous decision of the Board of Directors.

The temporary management and representation of the NGO until the election of a Manager by the Board of Directors is entrusted to Anastasios Tsimplinas.

Generally, the Manager handles all the affairs of the NGO, which are mentioned indicative and not restrictive as follows:

- informs and proposes to the General Assembly on all issues related to the achievement of corporate goals,
- controls the management of the NGO's property,

- decides on all issues related to the achievement of corporate goals, except those that belong to the responsibilities of the General Assembly,
- represents the company, signing under the corporate name, vis-à-vis third parties in Greece or abroad and performs any management act related to the purpose and object of the NGO,
- signs and binds the NGO against third parties and collects from any natural or legal person, Public Fund, Organization etc. money, receives things, give receipts and checks in the context of the management of corporate affairs,
- represents the company judicially and extrajudicially. Contracts with partners or suppliers in the name and on behalf of the NGO. He represents the company, signing under the corporate name, against any authority, natural or legal person of private or public law and invests its property.

The Manager could be represented by a third party with his written authorization, in case of inability to perform a specific administrative act, which will only be valid for the specific act.

The Manager will be accountable to the General Assembly for the management of the NGO and will undertake the execution of the decisions of the General Assembly.

The Manager convenes the General Assembly, directs the meetings and informs the members about the progress of the NGO's affairs in writing or orally.

4.5 Audit Committee

It is elected every three years and consists of 3 (three) members.

The members of the Board of Directors cannot be members of the Audit Committee, which controls, supervises and monitors the financial management of the NGO.

4.6 Evaluation Committee

The Evaluation Committee constitutes of a member of the General Assembly and two experts selected by the Board of Directors. These are responsible for the evaluation of projects and activities developed by the working groups; after the evaluation informs the Board of Directors.

4.7. The particular elements of a Model Forest

The characteristics of Western Macedonia Model Forest can be summarized in the following:

1. In defining and implementing concrete actions to address local challenges for sustainable management of forests.
2. In discussions about the Management of Model Forests and sustainable land use in your area.
3. To benefit from the support and experience of other Model Forests in the Mediterranean and international networks on issues of common interest.
4. Participation in Western Macedonia Model Forest is voluntary and does not question the competence of the participants; everyone retains all rights and obligations.

4.8. Benefits of local society by creating a Model Forest

The benefits of local society can be summarized in the following:

- Development sustainability actions in the selected range.
- The protection and enhancement of the environment;
- The use of local products;
- The tourist promotion of the region;
- The emergence of our cultural heritage;
- Cooperation between the institutions that make up the Model Forest for their common interest;
- Promotion of the selection area at national and international level;
- Integration of the region into an international network and transfer of good practices by the members of the network;
- Publicize of " Western Macedonia Model Forest" as unique in the country;
- Use the Model Forest as a vehicle for the promotion of local producers and tourist product at national and international level;
- Funds rising from national and European organizations for financing the activities of the body, soft interventions and actions to promote and display;
- Organization of international congresses of the Mediterranean and an International network of Model Forests.

4.9. Key questions for development/participation in Forest

Have you moved towards the elaboration of a common vision among the partners on the future Model Forest?

- How do you intend to organize it? What method/process will you follow, are you going to work together?
- How you will actively involve key-operators in this?
- More specifically, how do you involve the local authorities?
- Do you have a specific problem/question/method or success story to share with your partners in relation to the involvement of local actors?

OVERVIEW OF CHARACTERISTICS OF WESTERN MACEDONIA MODEL FOREST

AREA	945,100 Ha (7.2% of country's total)
NUMBER OF INHABITANTS	283, 689 (2.6% of country's total)
REGIONAL UNITS	Grevena, Kastoria, Kozani and Florina
UNEMPLOYMENT RATE	27%
FOREST OWNERSHIP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Public : 62% -Municipal : 24% -Church : 0.4% -Joint Public & Private : 7.7% -Private : 5.2% -Communal : 0.6%
LAND COVER AND USE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agricultural land, 22.3% • Mixed forests, 3.45% • Coniferous forests, 4.52% • Broad-leaved forests, 16.95% • Transitional woodland / shrub, 21.89% • Lakes, 65% of country's total • Pastures, 11.64% • 24 NATURA 2000 areas
NO. OF STAKEHOLDERS	13 groups + 53 individuals
TYPES OF STAKEHOLDERS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Region authority -Communities & municipalities -NGOs -Industries -Private sector (forestry)/ Forest Cooperatives -Chambers -Associations (Mountaineering, Cultural-Folklore)
GOVERNANCE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •General Assembly •Board of Directors (10 persons/5 permanent and 5 deputy members) •Evaluation Committee •Working groups •Dedicated staff

PART II

1. Structure of the Strategic Plan

The Strategic Plan for the Model Forest is structured as described below according to the partnerships that are already in place and that will be developed in the future.

As mentioned in the previous section, Model Forest activities generally fall into a few program areas. Because a Model Forest is a long-term initiative, it is important to maintain the interest and contribution of its stakeholders. This requires vision, patience, reliability, viability and the constant and public advocacy of the Model Forest's supporters. Experience shows that three factors are critical to encourage and expand stakeholder interest and involvement:

- ✓ Networking between professionals and Model Forests
- ✓ Collaborative projects
- ✓ Involvement in the broader international dialogue on sustainable development policy

2. Areas

During the elaboration phase of this strategic plan, four working areas were identified: Networking, Environment, Tourism/Society, Management and promotion of woods and non woods forest products.

For each area, a commission is set up to coordinate the work on that topic. The commissions are usually coordinated by a councilor and can be equipped with temporary working groups that work on specific topics that are completed over time (projects, events, etc.).

3. Objectives

For each field of action, we have seen above, a series of long period objectives that the Model Forest has set itself have come out during the work of the groups and, for each objective, specific actions have been identified to be carried out for the period 2023-2027, which will allow this objective to be achieved.

- I. Promoting the planning and the sustainable management of forests with the aim of:
 - improve the ability of forests to mitigate the climate change and its consequences and reduce the risk of fires;
 - recover and conserve the biodiversity associated with this landscape.
- II. To encourage innovative projects aimed at promoting economic, cultural and environmental opportunities linked to forests and to promote the valorisation of eco-systemic services;
- III. Development of forest use and the forest wood field and increasing the commercial value of timber from sustainable forest management.
- IV. Growth and consolidation of the agricultural and forest products marketing for internal and external trade through associative consortium or cooperatives forms aiming at the largest profit of the producers.
- V. Utilization for excursions, sports and cultural activities in the forest area.
- VI. Preserving landscape and nature, as the interests of operators are linked to their quality and sustainable management of the environment. Range of integrated, quality tourist, cultural, excursion, recreational and sporting offerances. Increase the possibility of using the landscape and historical/architectural' assets and recover cultural and gastronomic traditions, in favour of the tourist file.
- VII. Communication, information, dissemination, growth of knowledge and expertise, networking.
- VIII. Seeking funding opportunities both for the Association's institutional activities and for promoting projects owned by members (municipalities, agricultural companies, other associations, etc.). Seeking international partnerships, especially with other Model Forests, to promote shared projects and find the funds to finance them.
- IX. Promoting training actions for members and for local people and businesses.

4. Proposed Actions

- **Silviculture**
 1. biomass and sustainable wood production (strengthen sustainable wood value chains)
 2. pruning to stop pathogens' spreading
 3. certification of sustainable forest management (FSC or PEFC)
 4. forest landscape restoration (increase afforestation and reforestation)
 5. agroforestry
 6. non-wood products(mushroom, medicinal plants, wild fruits, and beekeeping)

- **Satellite monitoring**
 1. remote control of the forest state
 2. timely response to deviations
 3. tracking tree growth
 4. track changes and receive regular problem area alerts
 5. detect and report illegal logging with satellite-based deforestation maps
 6. control forest regrowth
 7. geographic information systems

- **Rural tourism**
 1. communication and outreach activities
 2. raise environmental awareness / forest education
 3. design and implementation of regional projects that use Model Forests as a learning platform
 4. pilot projects and information and knowledge sharing workshops
 5. operational activities
 6. carry out regional festivals which celebrate and increase awareness of local biodiversity

- **Impact and adapt to climate change**
 1. environmental projection
 2. protect freshwater
 3. generate carbon offsets
 4. action project on carbon accounting
 5. action project on land use changes

4.1. Non-wood forest products

According to Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO, 1999) Non-Wood Forest Products (NWFPs) are products of biological origin, not mentioned by wood and derived from forests and similar land uses. Mushrooms, truffles, products from tree bark such as cork, fruits such as chestnuts and acorns, aromatic plants, nuts, honey, forest herbs, fruits jelly, livestock products, plant and animal products are some non-wood forest products.

Non-wood forest products, such as cork, mushrooms, pine nuts, oaks, resins, medicinal plants and wild grasses, among others, provide significant commercial activities in forest areas around the world (FAO, 1998). Many of the non-wood forest products contributes significantly to the economy, locally and nationally, due to their commercial value. In some Mediterranean areas, some non-wood forest products such as cork, mushrooms and pine cones are more profitable exploitation than timber (Calama et al., 2010).

Thus, the utilization of non-wood forest products should be one of the main goals of forest management. As concerned the harvesting, there are differences between wood and non-wood forest products. In contrast to timber, the harvest period of non-wood forest products is usually short and many of the products are lost after this period is over (Calama et al., 2010). Moreover, in many cases their harvest is done illegally and uncontrollably, creating negative effects on both the populations of these species and the forest ecosystem (Calama et al., 2010).

Their role in the rural economy has been widely recognized, especially in developing countries (Lowe et al., 2002). However, official data on their contribution to the agricultural economy in Greece is limited.

Non-wood forest products in Greece can be an additional source of income, especially in areas where there is a relative tradition of collecting them. The amateur collection of non-wood forest products is a pleasant activity which is used by the people who want to enrich their diet. In urban areas, it is difficult to carry out any activity related to the collection of these products but it can be carried out in the form of education or recreation, and at the same time to contribute to the acquaintance of people with the forest and consequently with its products.

Authentication/Certification is an integral part of the products marketing. In the case of non-wood forest products in particular, the certifications which applied are below:

- Certification of origin (Protected Geographical Indication, Protected Designation of

Origin, Traditional speciality guaranteed)

- Organic farming/production (IFOAM)
- Fairtrade authentication for supply chain control from the point of production to point of sale
- FSC and PEFC authentication.

Aromatic and pharmaceutical plants

Recently, the spread of a consumer who is more aware of a healthy lifestyle and is closer to traditional knowledge is evident. This has led to a growing worldwide interest in aromatic and medicinal plants as natural remedies, which is reflected in the growing demand for aromatic and medicinal products in European markets.

Today's perspective requires innovative research and development in aromatics-medicinal plants to increase productivity, quality and potential for recovery.

Wild mushrooms - truffles

The benefits which are associated with wild mushroom picking, a growing activity in European forests, can be multiple and include a range of levels, involvement and practices ranging from recreational (e.g. occasional collectors) to commercial (e.g. mushroom traders), as well as activities in the tertiary sector (eg mycotourism, leisure activities, educational initiatives). In addition, the demand for truffles is increasing due to new consumer standards, showing high growth potential.

Wild fruits and forest jelly

The most emblematic and valuable gourmet fruits of the Mediterranean are pine cones, but since antiquity edible fruits or berries have played an important role in this field. The pine cone harvest has already been significantly mechanized - reducing costs and labor risks - and this, with innovative forest genetics research, is help to modernize the value chain for these Non-Wood Forest Products.

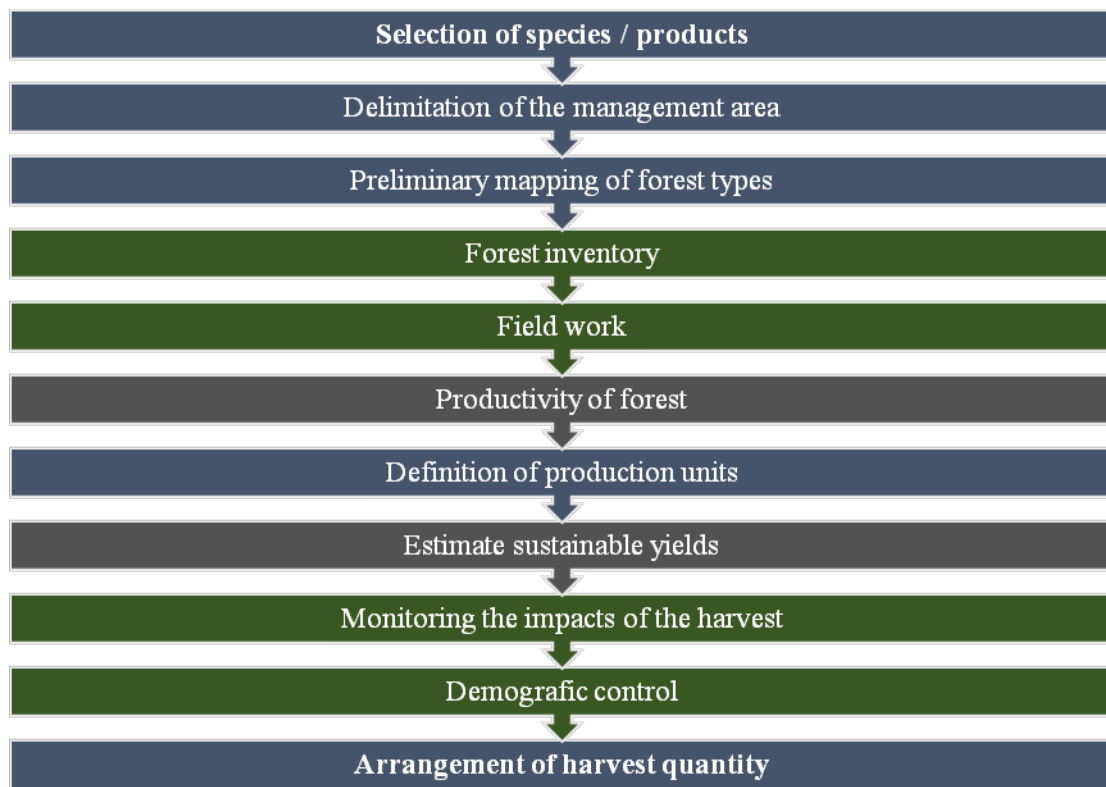
Despite the insect infestations, diseases and crop destruction are our main concern, and in addition to adopting new forms of forest management, taking into account adaptation to climate change, we emphasize the need to guarantee new business opportunities, traceability and quality of specific products throughout the value chain.

Goals

- Recording and mapping non-wood forest products at a local and regional level.
- Organizing technical seminars in order to inform and educate the public/stakeholders for the proper harvesting and processing of non-wood products.
- As in the case of forest biomass management, it is considered necessary to organize a supply chain, in order to sustainably utilize non-wood forest products and cover the market requirements.
- Establishment and operation of a nursery to product aromatic and medicinal propagating material in order to preserve the rare flora of the area, but also to create jobs via the sustainable development of forests.
- It is important to listen the consumers and take into consideration their expectations about aromatic herbs, and to develop marketing strategies that focus on issues such as production processes (traceability, product development), product development and internationalization of the sector.
- Create an innovation network (iNet), to facilitate business, design innovative solutions, generate ideas, adopt the exchange and dissemination of good practices and successful cases, and identify knowledge gaps.
- Accelerate the flow of information and the acquisition of knowledge in order to support innovation for non-wood forest products.

For the wider dissemination of knowledge and information, it is essential to maintain close links with actors, networks such as the European Innovation Partnership (EIP), Agricultural Knowledge Innovation Systems (AKIS), advisory services (and innovation) in forestry issues across Europe and the Mediterranean, forest-related professionals, forest owners and NGOs.

The flow chart below shows the process that should be followed for the recovery of non-wood products.



Field work

Statistical analysis

Any management plan for non-wood forest products should include the steps that are presented in the above flow chart.

STANDARD OBJECTIVE	FORM OF IMPLEMENTATION	NECESSARY RESOURCES	TYPE OF SUBJECTS	SUBJECTS INVOLVED
II	To be defined	Financial and organisational	Public Administration, Forest land owners, farms, forest businesses, experts, institutions	Region of Western Macedonia, Municipality of Voio, Forest research institute of Thessaloniki

Aimed at: Municipality of Voio

Time objective: three years

Financial resources available: € 200,000.00

Achievements: Introducing additional economic resources for the benefit of the public and private owners. Identification of sustainable forest management methods to increase and exploit non wood forest products.

4.2. Environmental Education

The continuing deterioration of the environment has shown that no environmental protection measure and no legislation can contribute to its improvement and protection, and also it's not sufficient to achieve sustainability, without the citizen's awareness about environment. The citizens should be participate in actions for the protection and preservation of the environment and also the improvement of their quality of live based on the principles of sustainability.

Environmental Education refers to organized efforts to teach how natural environments function, and particularly, how human beings can manage behavior and ecosystems to live sustainably. It is a multi-disciplinary field integrating disciplines such as biology, chemistry, physics, ecology, earth science, atmospheric science, mathematics, and geography.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) states that EE is vital in imparting an inherent respect for nature among society and in enhancing public environmental awareness. UNESCO emphasizes the role of Environmental Education in safeguarding future global developments of societal quality of life, through the protection of the environment, eradication of poverty, minimization of inequalities and insurance of sustainable development.

Environmental Education also helps citizens and students to understand how their decisions and actions affect the environment, builds knowledge and skills necessary to address complex environmental issues, as well as ways to keep the environment healthy and sustainable for the future.

The first reference between sustainable development and education was made in the report of the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED, 1987) "Our Common Future", also known as the Brundtland report. With this report, the term Sustainable Development was nurtured, as the development that meets the needs of the current generation, without jeopardizing the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. This text mentions for the first time the important role of education on the road to the Sustainable Development of societies.

The United Nations Global Action Plan for Sustainable Development (New York, 2015) has 17 development goals and 169 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for the period after 2015. These goals are dominated by education.

Objective 4: To ensure the quality of inclusive education that will promote lifelong

learning opportunities.

Target 4.7: By 2030 the citizens and especially the students must acquire the knowledge and environmental skills via their Education in Sustainable Development, including sustainable living goals, human rights, equality, the promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, the cultivation of global citizenship and the appreciation of cultural diversity and the contribution of culture to sustainable development. (United Nations, 2015, UNESCO, 2015).

Benefits of Environmental Education

- Imagination and enthusiasm are heightened
- Learning transcends the classroom
- Critical and creative thinking skills are enhanced
- Tolerance and understanding are supported
- Healthy lifestyles are encouraged
- Communities are strengthened
- Responsible action is taken to better the environment
- Students and teachers are empowered

The Global Action Plan (GAP / UNESCO (2015-2020) for Sustainable Development places considers that Education for Sustainable Development gives to people the opportunity to acquire knowledge, values, skills and attitudes in order to promote sustainable development in all aspects of human activity.

Education for Sustainable Development is reflected in three interrelated axes concerning the environment, society and the economy. It includes formal, non-formal and informal education, lifelong learning, training and informing the public on issues. Global Action Plan includes all activities related to Environmental Education, Sustainability Education, Global Education, Development Education, etc.) (UNESCO, 2015).

Environmental Education in Schools

The acquaintance of the students with environmental issues and the information about the relation of man with starts among young people (e.g. primary school) and is achieved by experiential working methods.

An important parameter of Environmental Education are the short-term environmental awareness activities of students during the school year. The students become more active, creative, collaborative and also they respect more the environment via Environmental Education.

According to researches on adolescent students, their participation in Environmental Education programs enhances students' interest in learning and helps them to improve their performance in school. At the same time, it lets them to express their feelings and opinions without fear. The contact of school children with the natural environment through playing will increase their environmental awareness and imagination, self-action and cooperation.

In the framework of the "*sustainable school*", the global program "*Green ecological schoolyards*" encourages children to participate in the design and management of the school environment. In Greece, programs have been implemented aimed at shaping the interior of the school, where in the backyard, students created a school garden with a pond, wooden and built flower beds, educational garden and a special composting area. Each student is responsible for his own square, where he learns important things about growing plants.

Goals-Proposals:

- ✓ The main goal is to support the institution of environmental education through Environmental Education Centers and schools, in order to increase student's awareness about environment, so they will be environmentally responsible, able to build societies with ethics by respecting nature. This could be achieved by the actions below:
- ✓ The implementation of Environmental Education programs to the levels of education (primary, secondary, higher education etc.) and the support of the respective school programs, in collaboration with the responsible of Environmental Education.
- ✓ Creation of "*Green ecological schoolyards*" which encourages children to participate in the design and management of the school environment.

- ✓ School excursion-environmental visits to the forests of the Region, will give them the opportunity to combine theory and practice, to learn about their culture and their local products by improving their mental health and well-being at the same time.
- ✓ The production of educational - support material.
- ✓ The organization of events and actions for the environment.
- ✓ The promotion of research in the field of Environmental Education.
- ✓ Organization of thematic walks in forest areas that addressed to all of the citizens.
- ✓ Actions for biodiversity.
- ✓ Afforestation actions.
- ✓ Incentives for the creation of school vegetable gardens.
- ✓ Creation of bicycle path.
- ✓ Lifelong learning programs for professors and citizens.
- ✓ Good practices to reduce our carbon footprint.
- ✓ Upgrade Environmental Education Centers.
- ✓ Organization of seminars and conferences locally and nationally.
- ✓ Dissemination of the actions.
- ✓ Cooperation with students and citizens of Europe through various programs.
- ✓ Collaborations with local associations or NGOs to activate local communities in matters of environmental sensitivity, ecological awareness and familiarity with the natural environment.
- ✓ Creation of a summer school and organization of environmental programs addressed to students and citizens in order to develop ecological awareness, through these programs.
- ✓ The formation of a culture of environmental protection, which will include daily practices for the protection of our natural environment, is not only possible, but also necessary to preserve the quality of life of the next generation. Also, one of the most important goals is to increase citizens and students environmental and ecological awareness.

STANDARD OBJECTIVE	FORM OF IMPLEMENTATION	NECESSARY RESOURCES	TYPE OF SUBJECTS	SUBJECTS INVOLVED
II, IX	To be defined	Scientific, technical, financial and organisational	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Schools -teachers, - Environmental Education Centers - experts in environmental issues - students - volunteers - environmental associations 	Ministry of Education, Region of Western Macedonia,

Aimed at: Schools in the Region of Western Macedonia

Time objective: three years

Financial resources available: € 250,000.00

Achievements: The main goal is to support the institution of environmental education through Environmental Education Centers and schools, in order to increase student's awareness about environment, so they will be environmentally responsible, able to build societies with ethics by respecting nature.

4.3. Forestation and creation of forest areas

Since 1992, the European Union (EU) has played a prominent role in finding solutions to climate change, biodiversity loss and deforestation. The adoption of the European Green Deal in 2019 is a representative action by the EU to set the protection and restoration of European ecosystems first.

Forests in the European Union make up nearly 30 percent of the Natura 2000 network and already make a significant contribution to climate protection. Climate-Smart Forestry (CSF) is an amazing endeavor (Zikouli et al. 2021) that focuses on increasing the effectiveness of carbon removals and enhance forest resilience. CSF has three mutually reinforcing components (Verkerk, et al., 2020):

- Increasing carbon storage in forests and wood products, in conjunction with the provisioning of other ecosystem services
- Enhancing health and resilience through adaptive forest management
- Using wood resources sustainably to substitute non-renewable, carbon-intensive materials.

Indeed, forests and forest areas are actively involved in climate change by sequestering carbon dioxide (CO₂) (Nabuurs et al., 2018). This can be promoted by forestations. Forestation, which includes actions like forest restoration, reforestation, and afforestation, is the process of not only restoring damaged forests but also growing forests on unforested land. In fact, forestation is often counted as a form of carbon removal and can provide many ecological benefits by increasing biodiversity (Institute for Carbon Removal Law and Policy, 2020), hosting wildlife, reducing soil erosion and increase underground water resources.

Forestation and creation of forest areas will contribute to the increase of carbon storage in the aboveground part of the plants as well as in the underground soil of the forested areas. Main aim of the action is the mitigation of the climate changes.

Forest restoration focuses on helping degraded forestland recover both its forest structure, biodiversity, and former ecological processes. Especially, reforestation concerns environmental actions through planting trees or allowing trees to regrow present land that had recently been covered with forest. On the other hand, afforestation represents planting trees in areas with different land use that have not recently been covered with forest. (Institute for Carbon Removal Law and Policy, 2020)

Both above actions promote environmental protection, since forest lands remove carbon dioxide (CO₂) from the atmosphere as trees grow and can potentially store that carbon

for long periods of time.

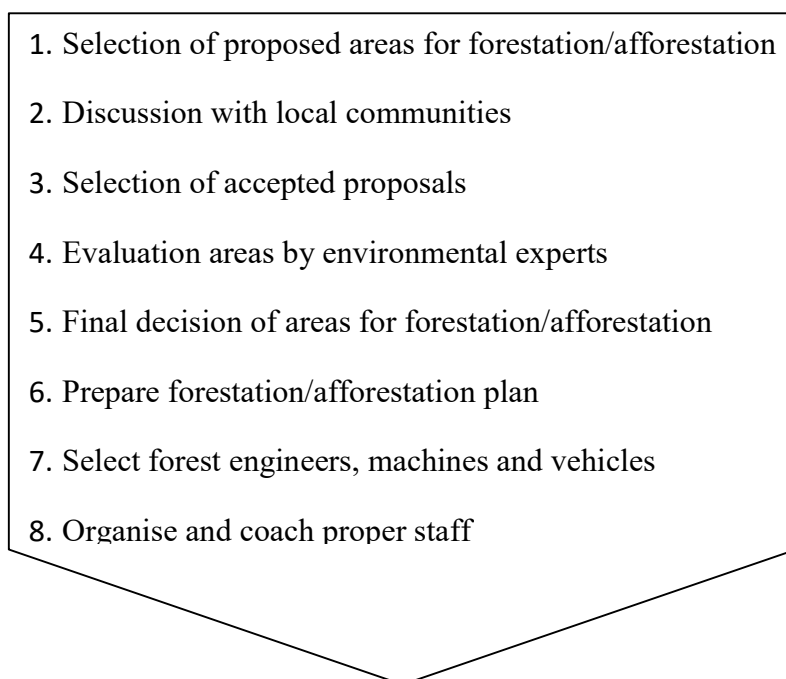
Our vision is to enhance the integrated development and sustainable competitiveness of rural areas in the Region of Western Macedonia by both promoting the multifunctional role of rural areas and protecting the environment.

However, forestation and afforestation actions have to be properly organised by valuing some important facts (selection of species and land use) and by proposing appropriate projects that will not cause other community or environmental problems. Firstly, it is proposed to avoid monoculture plantations although some species have the potential to maximize carbon removal, because this could threaten biodiversity and land would remain more vulnerable to reversal than natural forests. Secondly, it is essential to program plantations in areas that will not affect local community and wildlife. Indeed, forestation at large scales may cause several objections by local communities especially if land for forestation competes with other uses of land, such as agriculture. The selected areas should be selected by common decisions and after ecological evaluation. Plus it is necessary to protect new forest areas because if they are disturbed or destroyed, whether by humans or by climate changes, stored carbon would be released. Lastly, we cannot forget that new forest areas will cease to absorb more carbon, on balance once they reach maturity after decades or centuries of the plantation.

Goals

- ✓ Enhancing biodiversity by restoring or growing forests with diverse native species and functioning ecological processes
- ✓ Improving soil health
- ✓ Promoting flood and erosion control
- ✓ Protecting and managing natural resources and biodiversity, as well as the mitigation and adaptation to climate change.
- ✓ Creating viable and multifunctional rural areas
- ✓ Promoting sustainability of the rural areas
- ✓ Providing basic services and improving the quality of life in the countryside.
- ✓ Fostering social cohesion in rural areas and the rural diversification.

The flow chart below shows the process that should be followed for the agri-environmental actions.



The proposed actions for the rural development of Model Forest presented below includes agri-environmental action (Pillar II) and can be financed through the Common Agricultural Policy for the period 2023-2027.

STANDARD OBJECTIVE	FORM OF IMPLEMENTATION	NECESSARY RESOURCES	TYPE OF SUBJECTS	SUBJECTS INVOLVED
I, II, III, V, VI, IX	To be defined	Scientific, technical, financial and organisational	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Public Administration - Forest land owners - forest businesses - forest experts - institutions - volunteers - environmental associations 	Ministry of Agriculture (Common Agricultural Policy), Region of Western Macedonia

Aimed at: Damaged and degraded areas in the Region of Western Macedonia

Time objective: three years

Financial resources available: € 70,720,588

Aid amount: € 279 per hectare and year.

Achievements: The main goal is to protect and promote biodiversity of plants and animals, plus improve local soil conditions.

4.4. Agritourism

Agritourism can be defined as a commercial enterprise that connects the agricultural productive sector with tourism. The main aim of agritourism is to attract visitors. A visit to a farm, a processing plant or any other form of agricultural enterprise can offer to the visitor alternative ways of entertainment, leisure, environmental education and an acquaintance with agricultural production. On the other hand, agritourism offers to the farmer-producer (host) the opportunity to increase the agricultural income through the development of parallel activities.

In modern times, the alternatives forms of tourism play an important role. Western Macedonia shows a significant potential to the development of alternative forms of tourism, especially the agritourism. The visitor's acquaintance with alternative and traditional crops and his participation in the processes of planting and monitoring of crops, as well as in the processes of harvesting and processing of raw material for the production of final agricultural products, can cover his needs in entertainment, recreation, education, transportation technology and knowledge. On the other hand, the farmers of the area have the opportunity to increase their agricultural income, to develop a new philosophy in the way that their businesses can operate and also to create innovative and smart infrastructures for the better service of tourists.

The development of agritourism is expected to add another character to the region and to stimulate local and regional development by opening new jobs and conditions for the revitalization of the countryside.

SWOT analysis

The strong and weakest points that are associated with the development of agritourism in Western Macedonia, as well as the opportunities and threats that may arise are presented below. SWOT analysis is a useful tool for the design of strategy and for the tourism marketing development. The results of this analysis are presented in the following table.

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • natural beauty (mountains, forests, Aliakmonas river, lakes) • cultural heritage (archaeological and Byzantine finds) • traditional settlements of special architecture • organization of cultural events • strong processing activity in specific sectors (safran, rose, lavender, tea etc.) • PDO Agricultural products • operation and intense action of cooperatives • increase youth employment in the agricultural sector • Natura 2000 • areas of special beauty 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • low participation of the agricultural sector in the GDP of Western Macedonia • lack of tourist infrastructure • Lack of strategic marketing for agritourism • Lack of tourism education • lack of promotion of the tourist product • high taxes • high levels of unemployment • weakening of the countryside
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • upgrade of the road network • utilization of rural development programs e.g. Leader • participation in European and national programs for the development of pilot applications • utilization of financial tools • utilization of the regional and private bodies of the Region. (Directorate of Rural Development, Tourism Company, ANKO etc) • increase of agricultural income 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • high competition with other neighboring tourist destinations • causing effects on the environment due to the increase in the volume of tourists and the use of unfriendly interventions • health and safety issues

Proposals

- Preparation of a plan for the alternative forms of tourism, taking into account the protection of the environment, the preserving of the natural and cultural heritage and restraining the population.
- Mapping of special and alternative forms of tourism in Western Macedonia and a final export of a centralized map where all possible destinations will be displayed with separate markings and special information. The use of new telecommunication applications is considered to an important tool for the better information and service of the visitor.
- Organization of a thematic conference in PDM in order to highlight and promote the sights of the area, the exchange of knowledge and good practices.
- Coordination and organization of actions (ecotourism, walking tourism, etc.) in order to attract alternative tourists, to highlight and promote the local characteristics, in combination with the utilization of non-wood products.
- Creation of a network (cluster) between institutions (eg owners of accommodation / hotel units, travel agencies, nature clubs, companies that specialize in rural activities) for the creation of "tourism packages" of alternative tourism in the PDM.
- Upgrading the website www.visitwesternmacedonia.gr, in order to create a common basis for promotion and improve the extroversion and also increase the competitiveness of the tourist destinations of the Region.
- Organizing events, in collaboration with cultural, sports and nature associations, to highlight the local characteristics and to attract tourists.
- Utilization of financial tools for the upgrading of infrastructure (road network, hotel units, environmental training centers) to improve the quality of the "tourist product" and to improve the carrying capacity of tourist destinations.
- Certification of hotel units/ tourist accommodation according to environmental criteria (Greenkey, Ecolabel, GreenGlobe) to improve extroversion and increase competitiveness.

Financial tools

- Green Fund (<http://www.prasinotameio.gr>)
- Rural Development Program (<http://www.agrotikianaptixi.gr>)
- Fisheries and Maritime Program (<http://www.alieia.gr>)
- Competitiveness, Entrepreneurship and Innovation Program (<http://www.antagonistikotita.gr>)
- Transport Infrastructure, Environment and Sustainable Development Program (<http://www.ymeperaa.gr>)
- Human Resources Development, Education and Lifelong Learning Program (<http://www.epanad.gov.gr>)
- Regional Operational Programs (www.espa.gr)
- Territorial cooperation programs (<http://www.interreg.gr/el/>)
- LIFE Program (<https://ec.europa.eu/environment>)
- HORIZON 2020 Program (<https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/horizon2020>)

Targets

- Retention of rural population in the countryside
- Increase of agricultural income
- Preservation of the natural, cultural and cultural heritage
- Environmental Protection
- Support for local and regional development
- Improvement and distribution of local products
- Creating new jobs

The support from the local taxes (Directorate of Rural Development, Tourism Company of Western Macedonia, ANKO, OPEKEPE etc), also the participation in research programs for the development of innovative pilot applications and the use of the available financial tools can assist in this direction.

STANDARD OBJECTIVE	FORM OF IMPLEMENTATION	NECESSARY RESOURCES	TYPE OF SUBJECTS	SUBJECTS INVOLVED
II, V, VI, IX	To be defined	Scientific, administrative, technical, financial and organisational	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Public Administration - experts in environmental & tourist issues - environmental associations - tour Agencies - Cultural-Folklore Associations 	To be defined

Aimed at: Municipalities in the Region of Western Macedonia

Time objective: three years

Financial resources available: € 300,000.00

Achievements: The growth of agrotourism will increase the local and regional development by creating new jobs in the countryside and preserving natural and cultural heritage.

4.5. Urban food

The Plan

- Plant fruit trees of varying species on the unused space in our suburb, with wide pathways between the trees to allow and encourage public access for community members to see the trees and learn about them.
- Plant native species to encourage biodiversity, and other species (celtis australis, acer, bushes) to create a green space between the trees.
- Install irrigation system so that the site will have water access in summer (no water means no trees).

Our Vision:

- **Community:**
 - to provide a space for collaboration, learning, volunteering and sharing;
 - to encourage residents to learn more about growing food and have access to locally grown fruit.
- **Environment:**
 - to increase tree coverage, canopy cover and greenery;
 - to increase biodiversity and provide habitat for birds.

Goals

- ✓ Create a welcoming and shady community space by planting trees, and to provide access for residents to locally grown fruit.
- ✓ Provide learning opportunities for interested residents on growing their own food and looking after fruit trees, and to provide volunteering opportunities.
- ✓ Promote lifelong healthy eating habits.
- ✓ Support vulnerable groups providing them food.
- ✓ Provide a demonstration project and framework that other volunteer groups can take to their local council to plant more trees on under utilised spaces in their urban environment.
- ✓ A main goal in this project is to bring more, and more diverse young people's perspectives into the framing, development and exploitation of nature-based innovation ecosystems, particularly.

STANDARD OBJECTIVE	FORM OF IMPLEMENTATION	NECESSARY RESOURCES	TYPE OF SUBJECTS	SUBJECTS INVOLVED
II, VI, IX	To be defined	Scientific, administrative, technical, financial and organisational	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Public Administration - experts in environmental issues - volunteers - environmental associations 	Municipalities, Local communities

Aimed at: Municipalities in the Region of Western Macedonia

Time objective: two years

Financial resources available: € 150,000.00

Achievements: Plant fruit trees of varying species on the unused space in our suburb, with wide pathways between the trees to allow and encourage public access for community members to see the trees and learn about them.

4.6. Nature-based solutions for climate change adaptation and mitigation

In nature-based climate change mitigation, ecosystem services are used to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and to conserve and expand carbon sinks.

In nature-based climate adaptation, the goal is to preserve ecosystem services that are necessary for human life in the face of climate change and to reduce the impact of anticipated negative effects of climate change (eg. more intense rainfall, more frequent floods as well as heat waves and droughts). Both approaches seek to increase the resilience of ecosystems and thereby to stabilize the provisioning of important services. An important requirement for this is the stabilisation and strengthening of the functional relationships within the ecosystem and between species to increase their resilience. This can be achieved through various measures, eg. with sustainable use alongside the protection and regeneration of ecosystems.

Of special interest in nature-based climate change mitigation are the greenhouse gases that are stored in vegetation and soils. The goal in this approach is to prevent the release of carbon or other greenhouse gases in the long-term (eg. through the conservation of forests, intact peatlands, and permanent grasslands).

Atmospheric carbon can also be sequestered by planting native vegetation and trees or establishing urban green spaces. Many measures which reduce greenhouse gas emissions from land use or land use change are also considered to be nature-based approaches. This includes both direct measures (eg. climate friendly tillage, and the application of green manure in agriculture) and indirect measures (eg. the expansion of bicycle routes for local transportation and ecotourism, which reduce car use).

Through such measures, not only are greenhouse gas emissions reduced, but animal and plant species are protected and the health and recreation functions of our landscape are improved. For certain sectors such as tourism, conservation management, and agriculture and forestry, a nature-based approach can create new income opportunities.

Goals

- ✓ planting native vegetation and trees or establishing urban green spaces
- ✓ climate friendly tillage
- ✓ the application of green manure in agriculture
- ✓ the expansion of bicycle routes for local transportation and ecotourism

STANDARD OBJECTIVE	FORM OF IMPLEMENTATION	NECESSARY RESOURCES	TYPE OF SUBJECTS	SUBJECTS INVOLVED
IV , V, VI, IX	To be defined	Scientific, administrative, technical, financial and organisational	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Public Administration - experts in environmental issues - volunteers - environmental associations 	Municipalities, Local communities

Aimed at: Municipalities in the Region of Western Macedonia

Time objective: three years

Financial resources available: € 250,000.00

Achievements: The goal is to preserve ecosystem services that are necessary for human life in the face of climate change and to reduce the impact of anticipated negative effects of climate change them.

4.7. Rebuild animal habitats, restore soil and critical watersheds

Agroforestry is considered a sustainable form of land management that optimizes the use of natural resources (nutrients, radiation, water). Agroforestry is defined as the deliberate integration of woody vegetation with agricultural activities in the lower story. It provides a higher biomass production per unit of land, while providing more ecosystem services than woody-less agricultural lands, such as the reduction of soil erosion and nitrogen leaching and increase carbon sequestration and landscape biodiversity. (Santiago-Freijanes et. al, 2018)

Our visions are firstly to promote agroforestry practices in former agricultural or forest lands and secondly to Promote sustainability of the agri-food system and rural areas. Through agroforestry local communities will be benefit because the proposed actions can enhance competitiveness and agri-food system productivity by enhancing the added value of agricultural products.

We will work to rebuild animal habitats, restore soil and critical watersheds, and improve the lives of the communities who most rely on the forests. Our organization will educate farmers on the benefits of agroforestry, providing communities with sustainable sources of food, firewood, and income.

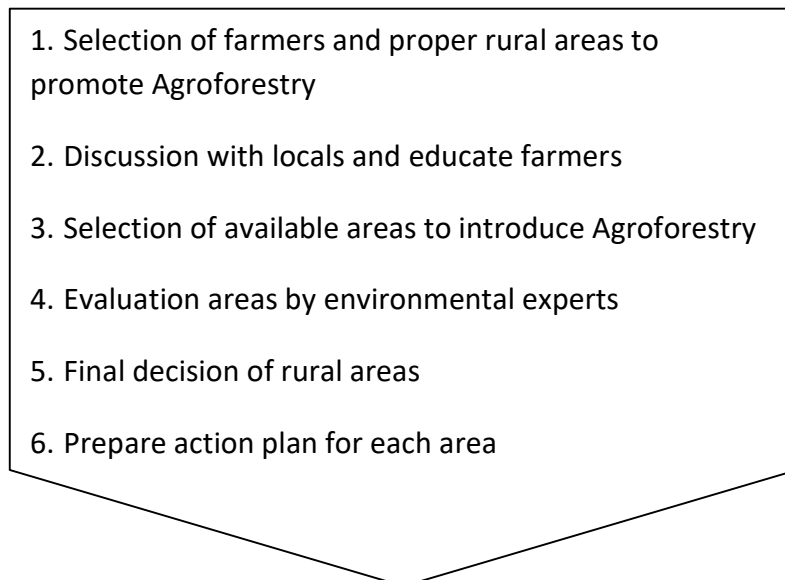
The main aim is to enhance the competitiveness of the agri-food sector by implementing conservation of agroforestry ecosystems rich in landscape elements. This action represents systematic care of trees, in the cessation of use of plant protection products with the treatment of problems with integrated plant protection methods. Accordingly, it is essential to improve the environmental situation of grazing land in areas at risk of desertification due to erosion. Therefore, we program to set important obligations of the producers in this action are either the suspension of the grazing in grazing areas that face degradation problems or the movement in mountainous grazing lands.

The proposed actions for the conservation of agroforestry ecosystems rich in landscape elements of Model Forest include environmental action to improve the environmental situation of grazing land in areas at risk of desertification due to erosion.

Goals

- Providing learning opportunities for farmers
- Promoting training actions for members and for local people and businesses
- Recovering and conserving the biodiversity associated with this landscape.
- To encourage innovative projects aimed at promoting economic, cultural and environmental opportunities linked to forests
- Promoting the planning and the sustainable management of forests
- Promoting the valorisation of eco-systemic services
- Providing basic services and improving the quality of life in the countryside.
- Fostering social cohesion in rural areas and the rural diversification
- To recover cultural and gastronomic traditions, in favour of the tourist file.
- Creating a strong, competitive and viable agri-food system
- Promoting sustainability of the agri-food system and rural areas
- Creating viable and multifunctional rural areas

The flow chart below shows the process that should be followed for promoting Agroforestry actions.



The proposed actions for the conservation of agroforestry ecosystems rich in landscape elements can be financed through the Common Agricultural Policy (Ecoschemes - Pillar I) for the period 2023-2027.

STANDARD OBJECTIVE	FORM OF IMPLEMENTATION	NECESSARY RESOURCES	TYPE OF SUBJECTS	SUBJECTS INVOLVED
I, II, IV , VI, VII, IX	To be defined	Scientific, administrative, technical, financial and organisational	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Public Administration - Universities - experts in environmental issues - volunteers - environmental associations 	Ministry of Agriculture (Common Agricultural Policy), Forest property owners, farms, forest companies, experts

Aimed at: Rural communities in the Region of Western Macedonia

Time objective: three years

Financial resources available: € 200,000.00

Achievements: The goal is to rebuild animal habitats, restore soil and critical watersheds, and improve the lives of the communities who most rely on the forests.

4.8. Interventions in forests to prevent fires, and develop the multifunctional use of forests.

Forest fires

Forest fires are one of the most important disorders that threaten the natural environment and forests worldwide and especially in Greece, due to the Mediterranean climate (prolonged droughts and strong winds) and the many anthropogenic effects on terrestrial ecosystems (deforestation, overgrazing, urban development). The Mediterranean forests are particularly prone to fires and Greece, has the most devastating forest fires of all the countries of the European Union. Also, a problem that humanity has to face is climate change. Climate change affects forest fires both directly through the weather conditions that affect fire ignition and propagation, and indirectly through its effects on vegetation and fuels.

Forest fires are one of the biggest enemies of forest conservation and productivity. It is a factor that damages the forests ecosystems. Whether these changes lead to the final destruction of forests depends to a large extent on their post-silviculture management by humans. Although fires are a natural phenomenon, according to a study conducted in the Mediterranean countries for the period 2006-2010, it turned out that only 4.7% of fires with depended to a natural phenomenon. The 55.8% was due to a deliberate act, the 33.5% was due to negligence and the 6.1% was due to an accident. Therefore, the main cause that provokes fires are anthropogenic effects. In fact, in Mediterranean countries, the percentage of human responsibility exceeds to 90%. Lightning has a much lower rate of responsibility for fires in Mediterranean countries, however lightning fires can be particularly be dangerous, as they are likely to be caused in inaccessible locations where extinguishing conditions are particularly difficult. For this reason, the areas burned due to lightning fire can be particularly large. For example, about the 80% of burned land in Canada has been caused by lightning.

In recent decades, the main factor that, overall, has disturbed the natural balance of Greece is the extensive forest fires. Over the last 100 years, the rate of forest cover has been reduced by less than half.

The national, environmental and economic damage caused by forest fires is incalculable and the need for a national strategy to protect against this danger is more urgent than ever.

Climate change is recognised as an unprecedented universal challenge and the basic factor that has contributed to the increase of damage from wind and fires in the European forests during the last 40 years. (Zikouli and Andreopoulou, 2019; EFI, 2014)

Forest fire prevention constitutes a basic element of overall fire management, which contains (prevention, suppression and post-fire rehabilitation). Therefore each action for enhancing resilience in fires has to be addressed as the whole spectrum of forest fire management. (Fria, 2022)

According to the Common Agricultural Policy (Pillar II) for the period 2023-2027, there is available funding for:

i. Action to prevent damage to forests

This action focus on preventing damage to forests due to forest fires, natural disasters, and catastrophic events (damage to forests against biotic and abiotic threats such as fires, pathogens and floods).

ii. Action to repair forest damage

This action aims to repair forest damage due to forest fires, natural disasters and catastrophic events (damage to forests against biotic and abiotic threats such as fires, pathogens and floods).

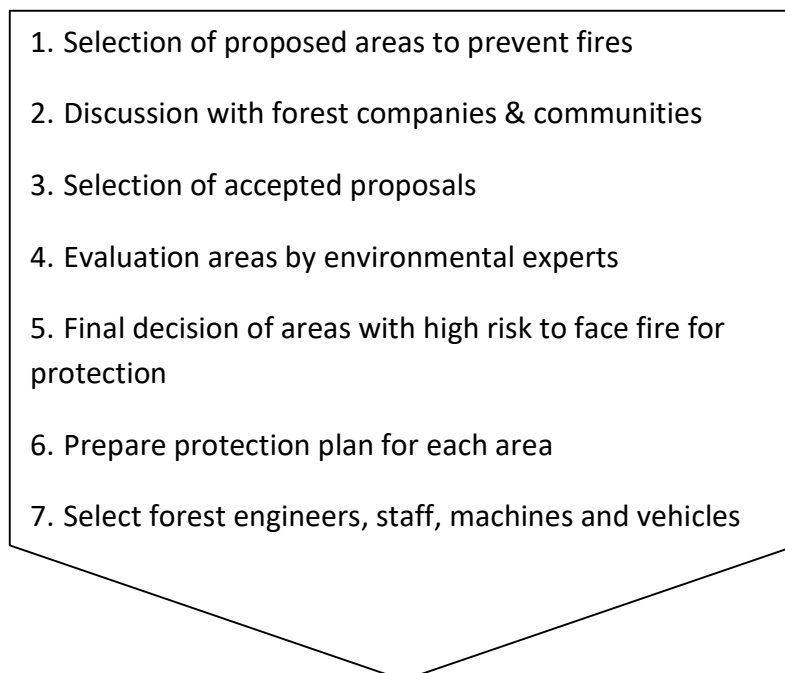
Also, it is necessary to organize the protection and management of burned areas and promote their rehabilitation. In these actions we should consider not only the costs involved, but also which land resistance changes may improve the regenerating forest.

Forest fires prevention- Goals

- ✓ Increase the awareness of the citizens for the protection of forests via seminars
- ✓ Promoting lifelong environmental habits (hiking and volunteer cleaning)
- ✓ Providing basic services and improving the quality of life in the countryside
- ✓ Technical measures (elimination of causes, reduction of disasters)
- ✓ Legislative measures (such as land ownership and land uses)

- ✓ Appropriate forest management
- ✓ Precautionary (fireproof) design
- ✓ Precautionary measures (roads, reservoirs, heliports, fire zones)
- ✓ Preparedness- risk assessment system
- ✓ Ground patrols in the forest and personal contacts
- ✓ Detection of fires from the ground or air
- ✓ Fostering social cohesion in rural areas and the rural diversification.
- ✓ Creation of Smart forest (cameras, forest detectors, drones)
- ✓ Strict implementation of the removal of branches during logging and supervision of the implementation of this rule by the forest authorities
- ✓ Prevention of off-plan construction with a complete ban in NATURA areas
- ✓ Volunteering of citizens- Creation of voluntary associations as they can contribute to the planning of prevention in collaboration with government agencies and local government.
- ✓ Incorporate fire-resistant plants (indigenous species)

The flow chart below shows the process that should be followed for the environmental actions in order to prevent forest fires.



The proposed actions to prevent damage to forests, including actions to repair forest damage, of Model Forest can be financed through the Common Agricultural Policy (Pillar II) for the period 2023-2027.

STANDARD OBJECTIVE	FORM OF IMPLEMENTATION	NECESSARY RESOURCES	TYPE OF SUBJECTS	SUBJECTS INVOLVED
I, II, IV, VI, IX	To be defined	Scientific, administrative, technical, financial and organisational	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Public Administration - Universities - experts in environmental issues - volunteers - environmental associations 	Ministry of Agriculture (Common Agricultural Policy), Forest property owners, farms, forest companies, experts

Aimed at: Forest and rural areas in the Region of Western Macedonia

Time objective: three years

Financial resources available: € 60,364,706

Aid amount: € 650,000 per project

Achievements: The goal is to prevent damage to forests and in case of forest fires to organize actions to repair forest damage.

4.9. Identification and testing of efficient measures for reducing damage from fauna

The project deals with the recorded increase in the incidents of human and bears and wild pigs interaction in the Region of Western Macedonia. The population is high, due to successful protection and natural growth of the habitats. Damages to agriculture is very frequent, producing many problems to the farmers.

This "interaction" creates problems that have been known for many years, such as damages to rural economic activities (livestock farming, beekeeping, crops), as well as others that have been observed relatively recently at a remarkable intensity, such as the approach of bears and wild pigs to settlements or the increase of the number of road accidents involving bears and wild pigs.

The objectives may be summarized as follows:

- Improvement of the tolerance level of specific target groups regarding their coexistence with the targeted species.
- Monitoring: size and characteristics of the populations were being monitored and report of fauna incidents in the areas post hoc.
- Improvement of the awareness level on the added values of the targeted species in relation to the attractiveness of the area targeted by the project.
- Sound acquisition of know-how by the personnel of local competent authorities on specific and concrete management techniques.
- Continuation of operation of auto-sustainable mechanisms supporting on a long term basis certain types of preventive measures.

STANDARD OBJECTIVE	FORM OF IMPLEMENTATION	NECESSARY RESOURCES	TYPE OF SUBJECTS	SUBJECTS INVOLVED
VI and VII	-Pilot project with fieldwork and validation of results -Training on experimental methods	Financial and organisational	- Public Administration - experts in environmental issues - volunteers - environmental associations	Municipalities Local communities

Aimed at: Region of Western Macedonia

Time objective: three years

Financial resources available: € 300,000.00

Achievements: The reduction of negative interactions as well as the enhancement and diffusion of socio-economic benefits, which implies the presence and coexistence of the bear and wild pigs with humans in the area.

4.10. Local products catalogue

Creation of a catalogue of the Western Macedonia Model Forest products. The catalogue will present the companies, the territory and the cultivation methods in an organic, descriptive and narrative way. It will begin with the Municipality of Voio.

STANDARD OBJECTIVE	FORM OF IMPLEMENTATION	NECESSARY RESOURCES	TYPE OF SUBJECTS	SUBJECTS INVOLVED
VII and VIII	Creation of a catalogue of the Western Macedonia Model Forest products to be used as a tool for increase sales.	Financial and organisational	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Public Administration- farms- local business- Cooperatives- forest companies	Municipalities, Local communities

Aimed at: Local business in the Region of Western Macedonia

Time objective: two years

Financial resources available: € 100,000.00

Achievements: To increase sales of the products, identification of the products with a specific geographical area (product and quality area), increased visibility of the territory.

4.11. Natural field boundaries

The natural field boundaries, margins and hedgerows with natural vegetation are linear structures often consisting of thorny tree and shrub species. The fragmentation of the natural landscape for agricultural use, has led to the limitation of natural forms of vegetation in many areas. Nevertheless, the tradition of preserving some natural structures at the borders of the fields was maintained. These natural structures usually served the demarcation of properties, provided food and shelter for livestock as well as fuel for households. Modern agricultural practices, however, tend to eliminate this element of the rural environment. From the middle of the 15th century to the beginning of the 20th century field boundaries consisting mainly of hedgerows as well as stone walls were dramatically scaled-out. With the redefining of the landscapes of Europe, as well as other historical changes, field boundaries hedgerows gave rise to new and different uses of the land uses, such as sporting and recreational activities. This is analogous to the potential co-benefits that are aspired to within the nature-based solution approach of today. Therefore, these prototype nature-based solutions spread throughout European landscapes. In some countries, for example France, the UK and The Netherlands, where hedgerows were extensively removed from the 1950s onwards hedgerows are now being replanted again as a nature-based solution, though this time they are addressing newly recognized problems such as crop and animal exposure, poor soil stabilization, decline in pollinator repositories, and spray drift.

The vegetation of the field borders consists mainly of shrubs, individual trees of usually old age which are remnants of old forests (usually oaks), but also a variety of herbaceous vegetation. All these forms of vegetation, through ecosystem functions, offer multiple benefits to the natural environment and to humans. Some of the co-benefits that have emerged with the advent of increased and concerted research being carried out and into the values that nature has for society are:

1. Engineered solutions for:

- Providing shelter and shade to livestock from sun and exposure (Staley et al. 2012)
- Providing shelter and shade to livestock from wind and rain (Brown et

al. 2004)

- Improving microclimate (Sánchez & McCollin 2015)
- Intercepting particulates (Tiwary et al. 2006)
- Improving soil drainage (Miñarro & Prida 2013)
- Intercepting agricultural spray drift (Lazzaro et al. 2008)
- Reducing soil blow (Greaves & Marshall 1987b)
- Buffering flood and soil erosion (Greaves & Marshall 1987b)
- Prevention of wetland pollution from runoff (Thomas and Abbott 2018)
- Limiting evapotranspiration (An Taisce 2000)

2. Ecological solutions, such as:

- Providing general wildlife corridors and habitat linkages (Krewenka et al. 2011, Dondina et al. 2016)
- Biodiversity repositories / wildlife habitat provision (Staley et al. 2015)
- Habitats for reptiles and amphibians (Lecq et al. 2017)
- Habitats for mammals (Michel et al. 2007, Lacoecilhe et al. 2016)
- Habitats for birds / migratory birds (Heath et al. 2017)
- Repositories for vascular plants (Vanneste et al. 2020)
- Seed reserves and genetic heritage (Wilkerson 2014)
- Supporting pollinating invertebrates (Miñarro & Prida 2013)
- Shelter for overwintering and predator invertebrates (Miñarro and Prida 2013)
- Supporting other invertebrates (Lacoecilhe et al. 2016)
- Fungi reserves (Dowdeswell 1987)

3. Benefits for humans, such as:

- Amenity, foraging and hunting (Nozedar 2012)
- Food and fuel for human use (Nozedar 2012)
- Screening buildings (An Taisce 2000)
- Generating a cultural link to past and folk memory (Dowdeswell 1987)
- Marking political and social boundaries in the landscape (An Taisce 2000)
- Producing healing plants (Dowdeswell 1987)
- Creating cultural distinctiveness (Baudry et al. 2000a)
- Screening human activities (An Taisce 2000)
- Dividing soil types / cropping patterns (Dowdeswell 1987)
- Providing craft materials (Baudry et al. 2000a)

Goals

- Mapping and recording of natural vegetation strips in rural areas
- Co-operation with farmers to maintain natural boundaries
- Seminars and information on the benefits of preserving natural vegetation types
- Quality assurance of agricultural production
- Limiting practices that limit biodiversity
- Utilization of native wild plants for product production
- Encouraging agrotourism development
- Protection of elements with special historical / cultural value
- Monitoring the state of conservation of natural boundaries

Application process



STANDARD OBJECTIVE	FORM OF IMPLEMENTATION	NECESSARY RESOURCES	TYPE OF SUBJECTS	SUBJECTS INVOLVED
II, IV	Defined to the sections: Goals & Application process.	Technical, Financial and organisational	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Public Administration - farmers - Cooperatives - experts in environmental issues 	Local communities

Aimed at: Local communities and farmers in the Region of Western Macedonia

Time objective: two years

Financial resources available: € 150,000.00

Achievements: Defined to the sections: Goals & Application process.

4.12. Connecting religious tourism with nature

Orthodox Christianity is a religion deeply connected to nature. All living creatures, animals and plants, but also the whole natural environment is considered sanctified and perfect as creations of God. In Greece, Christianity assimilated old traditions of the ancient Greeks, creating a huge cultural wealth.

One such tradition associated with the natural environment is the preservation of sacred trees and small groves near temples. These trees are considered sacred and their cutting is prohibited. Hundreds of years old trees have therefore survived. These are remnants of ancient forests, usually oak forests, which disappeared from the lower altitudes for the sake of agriculture and the use of wood.

Western Macedonia is full of such sacred trees which are associated with local traditions and the church near them. Their protection is based not only on their cultural significance but also on their ecological significance. As mentioned above, these trees are the last of the old oak forests and have special ecological characteristics. They are also home to many species of wildlife as they offer places for nesting, shelter and food.

The aim of this program is to record and create a network of religious and environmental tourist interest, recording the locations, the age of the trees, their ecological characteristics, the history of the churches and the traditions of the place.

Goals

- Identification of points of interest
- Recording and numbering of trees
- Recording of flora and fauna at points of interest
- Dating of trees
- Creation of a network of religious tourism in combination with the natural environment
- Tourist promotion of churches and their cultural wealth

STANDARD OBJECTIVE	FORM OF IMPLEMENTATION	NECESSARY RESOURCES	TYPE OF SUBJECTS	SUBJECTS INVOLVED
II, IV	Defined to the Goals .	Technical, Financial and organisational	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Public Administration - experts in environmental issues - volunteers - environmental associations 	Municipalities, Local communities

Aimed at: Municipalities and Local communities in the Region of Western Macedonia

Time objective: two years

Financial resources available: € 130,000.00

Achievements: to record and create a network of religious and environmental tourist interest, recording the locations, the age of the trees, their ecological characteristics, the history of the churches and the traditions of the place.

4.13. The digital recording of the quantity and quality of urban green areas

Green spaces in Municipalities play a crucial role in climate change. The digital recording of the quantity and quality of urban green areas, as well as their proper management, contributes to the improvement of the air quality, the regulation of the microclimate, the change of the temperature (increase during the cold months, decrease during the hot ones), the reduction of noise pollution and to their use as places of leisure and sports for the citizens.

Environmental benefits:

- Reduction of air pollution
- Effect on microclimate conditions
- Enrichment of aquifer
- Wind protection
- Soil retention
- Noise reduction
- Biodiversity protection
- Aesthetic improvement

Indicative Functions

- ✓ Recording of data of the Municipalities for each green space with the possibility of selecting a detailed description of each element of vegetation and infrastructure.
- ✓ Manage processes such as planning maintenance, adding or replacing trees, and calculating corresponding costs.
- ✓ Export of environmental data (oxygen emission, CO₂ capture) and calculation of the impact of urban green on the reduction of air pollution.
- ✓ Calculation of the percentage of green participation in the total area of each Municipality and correlation of the green with population data (ratio of green per inhabitant).
- ✓ Extension of functionality in an application for mobile devices.

STANDARD OBJECTIVE	FORM OF IMPLEMENTATION	NECESSARY RESOURCES	TYPE OF SUBJECTS	SUBJECTS INVOLVED
VI, VII	Defined to Indicative Functions	Scientific, administrative, Technical, Financial and organisational	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Public Administration - experts in environmental issues - environmental associations 	Municipalities, Local communities

Aimed at: Municipalities and Local communities in the Region of Western Macedonia

Time objective: two years

Financial resources available: € 150,000.00

Achievements: Defined to Indicative Functions

4.14. Mapping and protection of large trees and old-growth forests

Old forests containing ancient trees are essential ecosystems for life on earth. Old forests fix large quantities of atmospheric CO₂, produce oxygen, create micro-climates and irreplaceable habitats, in sharp contrast to young forests and monoculture forests.

It was found that old forests continue to sequester carbon and fix nitrogen. Old trees control below-ground conditions that are essential for tree regeneration. Old forests create micro-climates that slow global warming and are irreplaceable habitats for many endangered species. Old trees produce phytochemicals with many biomedical properties. Old trees also host particular fungi with untapped medicinal potential, including the Agarikon, *Fomitopsis officinalis*, which is currently being tested against the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). Large old trees are an important part of our combined cultural heritage, providing people with aesthetic, symbolic, religious, and historical cues. Bringing their numerous environmental, oceanic, ecological, therapeutic, and socio-cultural benefits to the fore, and learning to appreciate old trees in a holistic manner could contribute to halting the worldwide decline of old-growth forests (Melinda

Gilhen-Baker et al. 2022).

This project provides a knowledge base contributing to the process of developing guidelines for the definition, mapping, monitoring and strictly protecting all the remaining large trees and old-growth forests of the Region of Western Macedonia.

The protection of these trees and forests represents a win-win solution for biodiversity conservation and climate change mitigation.

The protection of large trees and old-growth forests is an urgent priority requiring robust and up-to-date spatially-explicit data, and an efficient monitoring system for safeguarding their integrity. This will be possible through a strong partnership with all the parties involved, including land owners, nature conservation organizations, local and regional authorities, and the local communities.

Goals

- ✓ Creating a data set of old-growth forests in the Region of Western Macedonia.
- ✓ Identification of large trees in the Region of Western Macedonia.
- ✓ Data set mapping unprotected state forest areas with high considerable natural value in the Region of Western Macedonia.

These maps will be created using remote sensing and GIS techniques.

STANDARD OBJECTIVE	FORM OF IMPLEMENTATION	NECESSARY RESOURCES	TYPE OF SUBJECTS	SUBJECTS INVOLVED
VI, VII	Defined to the Goals	Scientific, administrative, Technical, Financial and organisational	- Public Administration - experts in environmental issues - volunteers	Old-growth forests & large trees in the Region of Western Macedonia

Aimed at: Old-growth forests & large trees in the Region of Western Macedonia

Time objective: three years

Financial resources available: € 250,000.00

Achievements: Mapping and protection of large trees and old-growth forests in the Region of Western Macedonia.

4. Legal Status

To establish a non-governmental organization in accordance with the provisions of articles 741 et seq. of the Civil Code, and under the following specific terms and agreements.

The name of the Company is PROTYPO DASOS DYTIKHS MAKEDONIAS with a distinctive title WESTERN MACEDONIA MODEL FOREST (W.M.M.F.) The headquarters of the company is defined in the local community of Mikrocastro and the Municipality of Voio. By decision of the members of the company, branches can be relocated to other cities in Greece and abroad. The company can change its address, within the limits of its registered office without amending its articles of organization.

The company is an integral part of society and the social and solidarity economy and operates as a non-profit, non-governmental organization, aiming to contribute to the formation of a comprehensive alternative system of production, labor, consumption and life in a way that promotes the "collective interest" and redefines the concept of the common good to ultimately meet the needs and strengthen social cohesion while serving general social purposes related to solidarity, and the environment.

PART III

The following authorities, associations and individual people participated in and contributed to the preparation of the Strategic Plan for the Model Forest:

Current Partnerships

Groups (Authorities- associations- cooperatives)

1. Municipality of Voio
2. Regional Development Fund of Western Macedonia
3. Local community of Eratyra
4. Local community of Mikrokastró
5. Forest Cooperative of Pentalofos –Zonis Voioú R.U of Kozani
6. Forest Cooperative of Saint Kyriaki –Palaiogratsanou-Elati
7. Forest Cooperative of Kypselis “Saint of Paraskevi” R.U of Kastoria
8. Forest Cooperative of Pefkou Nestoriou R.U of Kastoria
9. Mountaineering Association Siatistas «Mpourinos»
10. Cultural-Folklore Association of Kozani “Koziani”
11. Cultural Association of Mikrokastró
12. Aromatic plants Cooperative of Voio Chliapas S.A – Industrial and Commercial
13. Chliapas S.A – Industrial and Commercial Timber Company

Individuals

1. Dimitrios Tsimplinas
2. Christos Papaioannou
3. Maria Pavlina Kordista
4. Nikoleta Martou
5. Dimitra Papagiannopoulou
6. Athina Zikouli
7. Anastasia Petsi
8. Christos Papadelis
9. Georgios Vliagkoftis
10. Anastasios Tsimplinas
11. Thomai Zarkodimou
12. Ekaterini Dadamogia

13. Vasileios Ambas
14. Christina Ioanna Piti
15. Rigas Giannopoulos
16. Anastasios Planos
17. Zoi Mavropoulou
18. Stylianos Koliass
19. Dimitrios Manolopoulos
20. Nikolaos Lysaridis
21. Apostolos Dianelos
22. Athanasios Tsimtsios
23. Vasiliki Tsiami
24. Ioannis Kosmidis
25. Theodoros Tsimplinas
26. Theodoros Siogkas
27. Evagelia Florou
28. Eleftheria Takiropoulou
29. Stylianos Tsimplinas
30. Aristeidis Papadopoulos
31. Styliani Tzatzani
32. Elissavet Tzatzani
33. Anisa Alexandra Naska
34. Paraskevi Gkoni
35. Elissavet Katsidi
36. Vasiliki Rousopoulou
37. Nikoleta Papastamkou
38. Alexandros Polyzos
39. Dionysios Roftsiass
40. Konstantinos Tsipos
41. Anna Ververoudi
42. Grigoris Papaioannou
43. Konstantinos Kalogeropoulos
44. Thomai Kordista
45. Athanasios Papachristos
46. Maria Panonidou

47. Anastasios Pataris
48. Thomas Manos
49. Vaitsa Manou
50. Charalampos Karataglidis
51. Diana Dolgopolova
52. Velissarios Papadopoulos
53. Efrosyni Ntio

Potential Partnerships

Municipalities

Universities

Wood Industries

Forest Cooperatives

Chambers

Associations

Individuals