



Save Romania's Virgin Forests!

Costel BUCUR – Forest and
Protected Areas team leader
WWF DCP

Sofia, December 4, 2012



Overview

Romania

Total surface: 237,500 km² (50% state owned)

Forest cover: 64,500 km² (~27%)

Forest road density: 6 m/ha

Annual timber harvest: ~ 18 mil m³

Socio-economic framework:

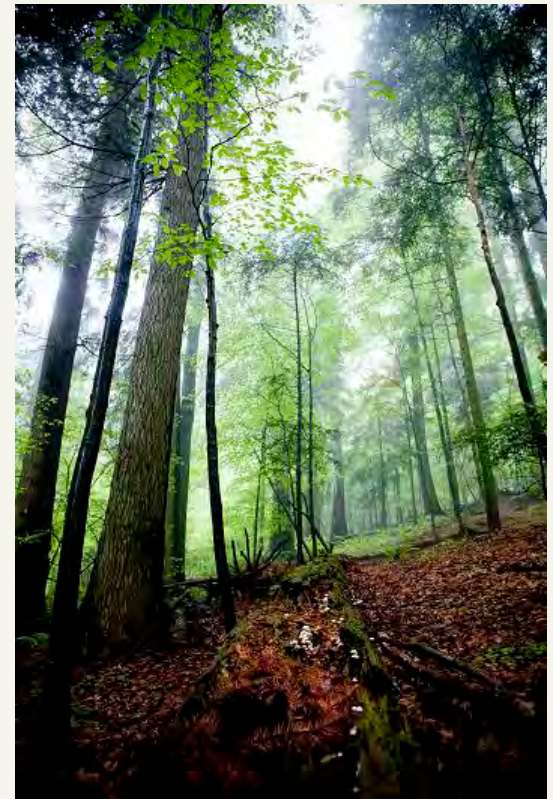
- higher demand for timber
- land tenure significantly changed
- dangerous amendments proposed to change the forest code
- Carpathian Convention (through the Forest Protocol) aims to identify and protect the last samples of virgin forests within this mountain range

The Issue

Over the past few decades, virgin forests have disappeared in the developed countries. Romania's virgin forests represent up to 65% of the virgin forests still remaining in Europe, outside of Russia, over 200.000 hectares. They are an important part of Europe's natural patrimony and were lost mostly due to bad management.

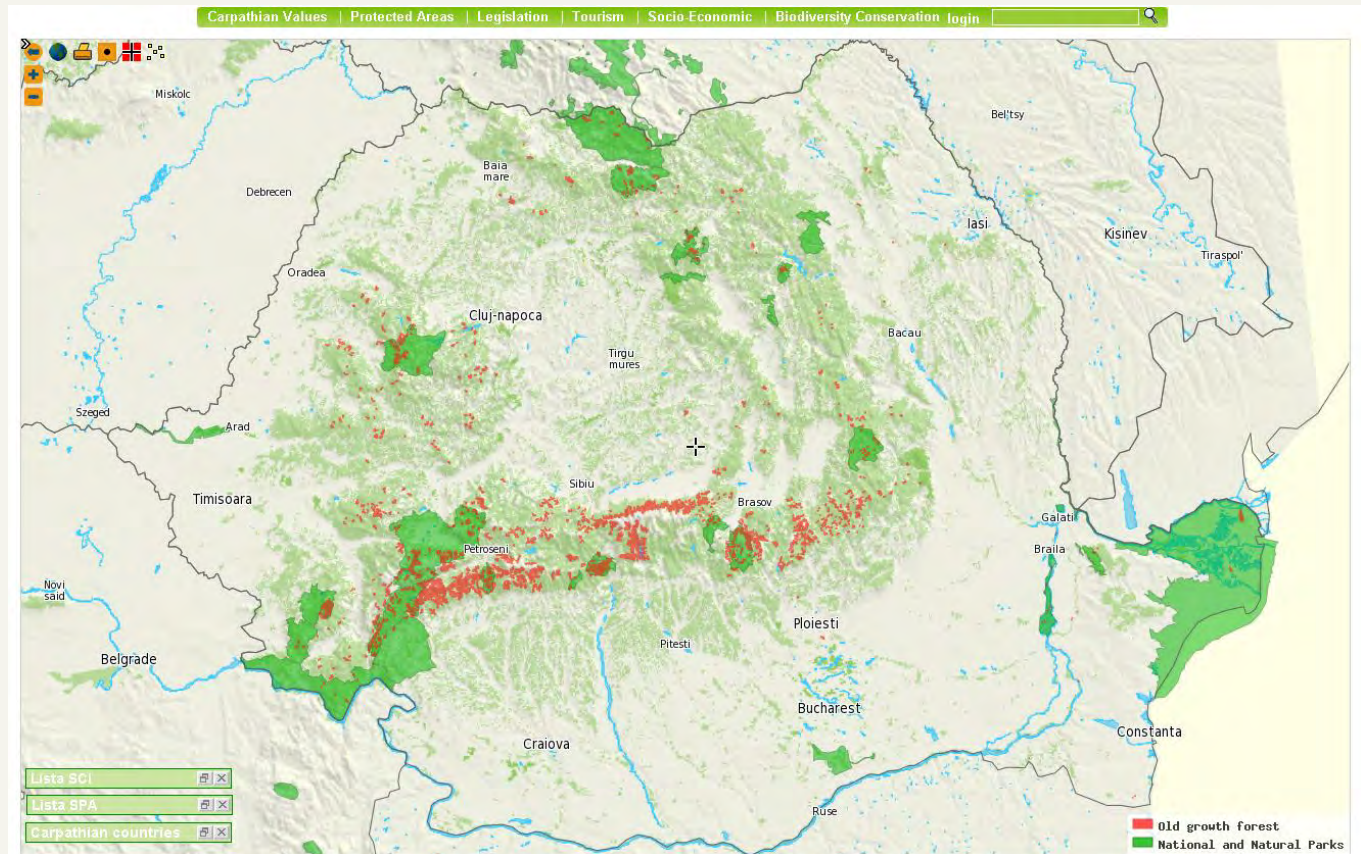
Their scientific, educational, and ecological value is undisputed.

Virgin forests have survived because of their inaccessibility and the low economic value of the wood coming from these stands. However, today virgin forests are more vulnerable than ever because of socio-economic pressures in Romania. These include the ever increasing demand for wood and the challenges of managing small patches of forests in a business way.



Virgin forests in Romania

- 2001-2004 Forest Research and Planning Institute from Romania, identified 238.000 ha of virgin forests in Romania (Pin Matra project)
- However, not all of them are protected
- A re-evaluation is needed



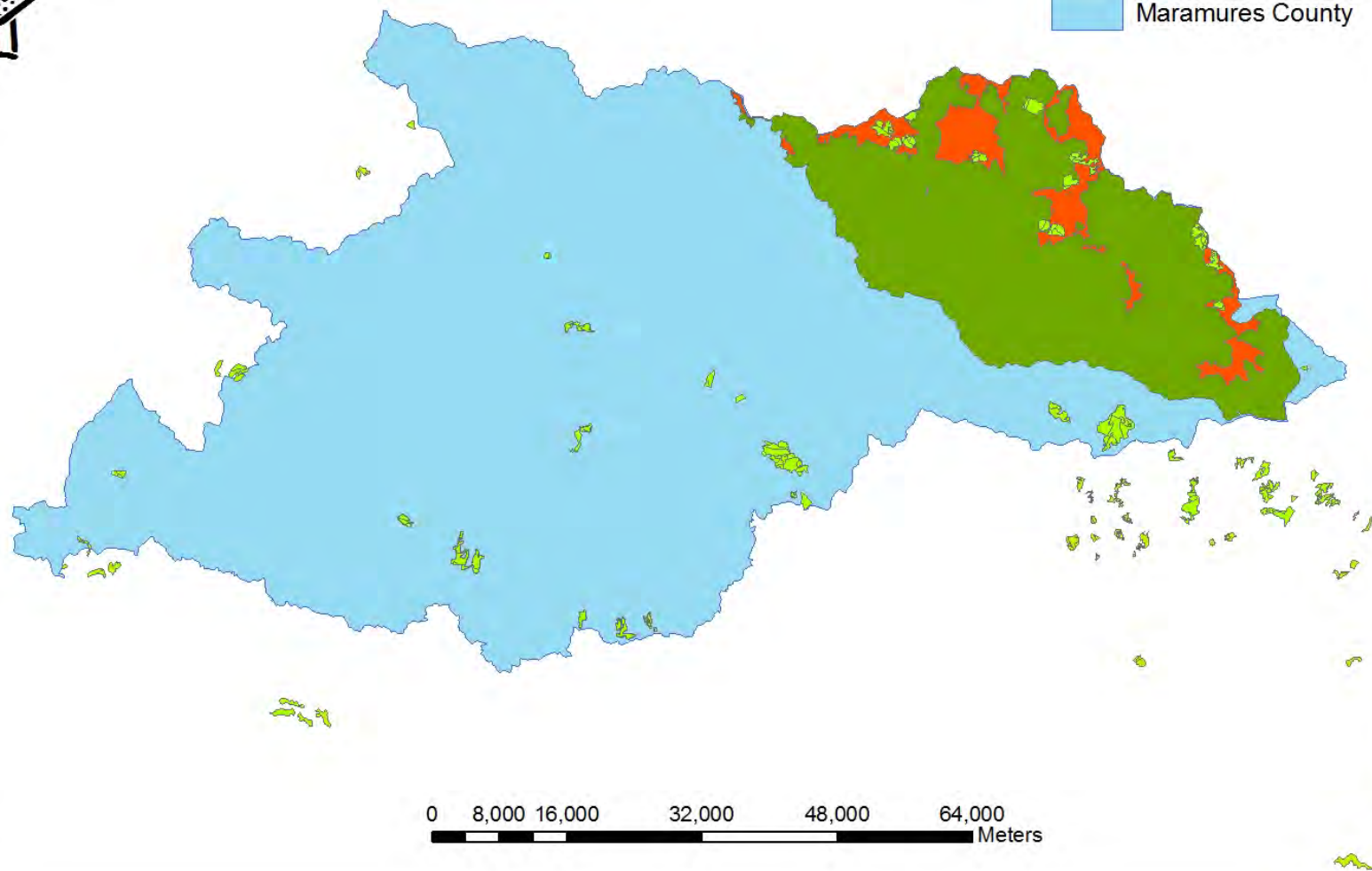






Legend

- Primeval forests
- Core area
- MM Nature Park
- Maramures County





The Solutions

To save virgin forests, total protection was needed.

In October 2011, in a letter to the Ministry of Environment and Forests in Romania, WWF asked for urgent measures for the effective protection of the country's remaining virgin forests and changes to the legislative framework to guarantee their protection as well as compensatory funds for private forest owners.

With support from IKEA, an awareness raising campaign telling the story of virgin forests was launched on October the 20th 2011. A petition asking the Ministry of Environment and Forests to take urgent measures to protect virgin forests could be signed on the campaign website www.padurivirgine.ro.

Around 2000 stories were published in the Romanian mass media. Virgin forests were a hot topic in the International media for a few weeks. Signature-raising actions with volunteers in Bucharest and other 5 cities in Romania, including in IKEA store in Bucharest.

In only 33 days, 100.000 people signed the petition, which determined the Ministry of Environment to react. At the end of the campaign, over 106.000 people had signed the petition.



The Change

On the 20th of December 2011, WWF-Romania and the Ministry of Environment and Forests signed a Memorandum of Understanding, agreeing that virgin forests in Romania will receive the status of protection and that the Ministry will work with WWF to identify, map and protect virgin forests.

Since then, 4 meetings have taken place, bringing together representatives of WWF, MEF, Romanian Academy, National Forest Administration, Forest Planning and Research Institute, Private Forest Owners' Association, for:

- defining criteria;
- developing the normative act for the protection of the virgin forests;

As a result of the debates, as well as of the public pressure, a Ministerial Order has been elaborated, signed and published in September 2012.



What did we learn?

1. People love forests more than we thought! They are active and committed to change things!
 2. Forest specialists understand the best the necessity for protection but they can not put pressure on the politicians;
 3. Specialists + civil society can make the difference!
-



Conclusions

Value has to be recognized and appreciate.

Inherited treasure belongs to the next generation in the same way it belongs to us.

Who taught us forestry?

How will we deal with forest management facing the climate change?

Can we afford to run out of nature based solutions?



Save Europe's Virgin Forests!



Thank you!

Costel Bucur

cbucur@wwfdcp.ro

