

Mission statement of the Faculty of Forest and Environment

To learn from the forest - To teach, research and act for the benefit of the forest

Not every environment is forest but an environment without forest is something we would not like to think of.

The exceptional ecological and economical importance of forests for the global environment and the well-being of mankind is our incentive.

Forests cover one third of the earth's terrestrial surface. They form part of the most complex and species-rich ecosystems of our planet. Forests are in an exceptional way part of global cycles of matter and hydro-climatic systems. The amount of carbon stored in biomass, dead wood, litter and soil of forests exceeds the percentage of carbon in the atmosphere by about 50 per cent. The loss of forests of currently 13 billion hectares per year - half of them beforehand untouched primeval forests - contributes considerably to a change in the living conditions on our planet¹.

In many regions of the world forests and their living organisms are increasingly affected by synergetic environmental disturbances, e.g. air pollution or habitat fragmentation. Forest ecosystems are connected in multiple ways with other types of ecosystems, through exchange of matter and other biotic factors. Degradation and loss of forest ecosystems brings about serious changes in the functionality of the global ecosystem. Measures to preserve forest do not only foster climate protection to a considerable amount, but also conserve biodiversity and other essential ecosystem functions².

We teach, research and act with the background of our experience in forest ecosystems.

Our work has its roots in the long tradition of Forest-Sciences in Eberswalde. We owe important ideas and methods of sustainable, nature-orientated forestry, based on the natural conditions of a site, to our predecessors. We actively engage in the future development and implementation of innovative concepts for a holistic ecosystem management that includes the cultivation of forests.

¹ Quantitative Angaben nach dem Global Forest Resources Assessment 2005 der FAO (<http://www.fao.org/forestry/site/fra2005/en/>)

² "Forest-related mitigation activities can considerably reduce emissions from sources and increase CO2 removals by sinks at low costs, and can be designed to create synergies with adaptation and sustainable development (*high agreement, much evidence*)". IPCC Fourth Assessment Report, Working Group III. Summary for Policymakers. May 5 2007.

To learn from the forest stands for a holistic-complex, systemic and long-term orientated thinking.

Our most important task is the education of experts trained for problem solving and having practical experience, who deal with the environment and natural resources under the aspect of it being an interference with very complex systems. Thereby humans as part of these systems have to be in the centre of attention of any strategy.

We allow for the fact that an effective and sustainable management of the environment and ecosystems does not only require knowledge about the scientific and technical fundamentals but also about the socio-economic, judicial and political framework and that especially those are of great importance. Holistic and open thinking, as well as trans- and interdisciplinary acting is essential.

To act for the benefit of a forest stands for taking over responsibility for a long-living ecosystem, the life cycle of which goes beyond the horizon of a single human life.

An important aspect of modern forestry is the approach that economic and social sustainability in natural resource management is only to be achieved when ecological sustainability is maintained. The aim is to ensure long-term functionality of ecosystems and preserve their multiple products and functions for future generations. The global environmental change herein is an additional and central challenge. The rapid change of site conditions overstrains the ability for adaptation of many forest ecosystems.

Our aim is to contribute to the solution of important societal problems and a true sustainable development.

Accordingly we carry out applied research. The results can be applied directly and are incorporated into our teaching. We allocate multifunctional and practical educated experts to the labour market. We look for the best possible working abilities of our graduates. Apart from imparting technical, methodical and social competences we therefore also try to introduce the students to the different relevant segments of the national and international labour market.