



Minutes of the Core Group Meeting of COST Action CA15206 “Payments for Ecosystem Services (Forests for Water)”

***Skype/Teleconference
10h30 (11h30 CET) 18th September 2018***

1. Welcome to participants

Participants were welcomed by the Action Chair. (Others present were Lars Högbom, Paula Ovando, Rik de Vreese, Tom Nisbet and Alex Chikalanov).

2. Adoption of agenda

Meeting participants agreed to adopt the draft agenda circulated in advance by the Action Chair.

3. Budget

The Chair apologised again on behalf of the grant holder for the delay in reimbursing participants for their expenses for the Norway meeting as receipt of the first GP3 grant instalment from the COST Association had been delayed. This had just been received, so participants had now been reimbursed. The Chair and the Grant Manager had contacted the COST Association to request that the grant holder receive the second GP3 budget instalment in good time in 2018 to allow more timely reimbursement of participants in the events planned this autumn.

It was noted that as there had been fewer participants in the Norway meeting than originally budgeted for, around €8k remained unallocated. (This was the amount left after also taking account of the decision to allocate €4k for dissemination meeting grants and €1k remaining unspent from the allocation for ITC conference grants).

When the issue of the meeting budget allocation being likely to have been underspent had been raised at the MC meeting in Norway, the proposal by the WG3 leaders to use remaining funds for a WG3 paper writing workshop was supported. A draft budget for the proposed workshop based upon assuming around a dozen participants and a maximum nightly accommodation rate of €120/night had been circulated in advance of the Core Group meeting. The proposal for the workshop to be held from 16th Oct (14h) - 17th Oct (18h) at Ecosystem Services Partnership (ESP) conference venue in San Sebastian, Spain was accepted, with the Core Group also agreeing the €8573 budget proposed for this meeting. As formal designation of the Local Organiser for the meeting remains to be decided in consultation with the PESFOR-W members organising the ESP conference, were it to prove infeasible for them or their colleagues to take on the Local Organiser role in relation to financial arrangements for the meeting, it was agreed that Forest Research would be formally designated the Local Organiser and undertake these.

4. Bulgaria Meeting

Final arrangements for the meeting in Bulgaria from 25th-27th September 2018 were discussed. The Chair welcomed the offer by Margaret Shannon to give her presentation by Skype as she was unable to participate in person, noting that the programme had been rearranged to accommodate this. The Chair also expressed his thanks to the WG3 leader and Mariyana Lyubenova for their efforts as local organisers of the meeting.

5. Ecosystem Services Partnership conference 2018

It was noted that the eVotes on awarding dissemination grants to Paola Ovando and Cristian Accastello for presentations at the ESP conference had been passed. The WG3 vice-leader noted that 11 of the abstracts submitted for the joint PESFOR-W and IUFRO Global Forest Expert Panel on Forests and Water session on ‘Forests for Water: scientific evidence and economic mechanisms for encouraging ecosystem service provision’ at the conference had been accepted. Of these, one presentation had so far been withdrawn, with a definitive programme of presentations at the session expected to be available at the beginning of October once the deadline for conference registration has passed. The session had been allocated 2 one and a half hour slots and is scheduled for the morning of October 16th 2018. It is hoped that the conference organisers will permit those participants in the WG3 workshop who are not registered for the conference to participate in the session.



6. ITC Conference grants

It was noted that the eVotes on awarding ITC conference grants to Cláudia Carvalho-Santos and to Attila Tóth had been passed. Given the continuing interest in applying for grants, the Chair suggested that potential for launching a further call should be considered if funds remain unspent after the meeting in Bulgaria.

7. Training School

A total of 23 applications from participating COST countries had been received for the PESFOR-W training school on 'Environmental Effectiveness of Woodland Measures for Reducing Agricultural Diffuse Pollution to Water – Evidence, SWAT Modelling and Decision Support Tools' being organized in Portugal from 23rd to 26th October 2018. Although more than the 18 trainees originally budgeted for, the organizers had agreed to accept all the eligible applicants, with additional applicants to be accommodated within the allocated budget by reducing the level of grants offered. 21 applicants so far had been invited, with queries about eligibility outstanding in the 2 other cases - including whether a government department commissioning research can be considered to be an institution that 'has within its remit a clear association with performing research' under COST Association rules. Invitees had been requested to provide formal evidence of their eligibility prior to the event as the COST Association had informed the grant holder this would be required in the case of a future audit.

8. STSMs

Neither the STSM Coordinator, nor the STSM Vice-Coordinator were able to be present at the meeting, but the STSM Vice-Coordinator had outlined plans to prepare the second GP3 call the following week. To allow sufficient time for those interested to apply, a deadline for this call of 31st October was agreed.

9. Spatial Repository

The WG3 vice-leader noted that the template circulated to gather information from PESFOR-W participants on woodlands for water PES case studies had been returned for around 10-12 countries so far. The quality of the information collected to date had generally been good. However, some of the information submitted related to schemes that did not fit within the definition the Action had adopted of woodlands for water PES. It was agreed that identifying the case studies that fall within this definition was a priority in order then to focus on these initially in building the spatial repository. The WG3 vice-leader agreed to present an overview of case study information received and those cases falling within the Action's definition during the meeting in Bulgaria. It was agreed that those yet to respond would be sent a reminder.

10. Exploitation & Communication Plan

The WG4 leader noted that the Action's dissemination and communication plan will be finalised during the meeting in Bulgaria so that it can then be added to the website.

11. Stakeholder Engagement

A proposal by the WG4 leader to present the work of the Action to members of the Forest Technology Platform and other interested stakeholder groups in Brussels was welcomed. It was agreed that this would best be timed to fit in with plans by the WG4 leader to be in Brussels for other meetings.

12. Skills database

The WG4 leader noted that over 90 responses had now been received from PESFOR-W participants. The WG4 vice-leader noted plans to make information for those respondents having consented to this publically available soon through a new web application.

13. Website

Although updating and further development of the Action's pages on the new website (<https://www.forestresearch.gov.uk/research/pesforw/>) was taking longer than originally hoped, there had been significant progress recently thanks to the efforts of the grant manager, with further comments and suggestions welcome.

14. IUFRO World Congress 2019

Following a suggestion by the WG4 leader supported by the Vice-Chair, the Chair had submitted a proposal for a session on “Forests for Water Payments for Ecosystem Services: Evidence & prospects’ at the IUFRO World Congress to be held from 29th September – 5th October 2019 in Curitiba, Brazil. The proposal had now been accepted subject to the session being merged with 2 others (one on ‘the forest based industry and SDGs most linked to water resources’ and the other on ‘Nature as an integrative solution: the use of natural infrastructure for water security in Brazil’), with the Chair having been requested to lead the organisation of the joint session. The Core Group expressed their support for this initiative. The Chair suggested potential for inclusion of the conference as a Dissemination Meeting in the GP4 budget in order to facilitate participation in this event and it was agreed to return to this at a future meeting.

15. Information gathering on governance of woodlands for water PES

In the absence of the WG1 leader, no update was available on the response to the questionnaire circulated to participants on governance issues.

16. Newsletter & GDPR

The WG4 leader noted that it is now hoped to produce a newsletter after the meeting in Bulgaria. The Chair noted the Grant Manager’s plan to create a form for participants at the meeting to sign in order to cover consent requirements under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) for use of photos taken, etc.

17. 24-month report

The need for information to be sent to the Chair and WG4 leader on funding proposals and successful applications, as well as publications, linked to the Action was noted again – information needed in order to prepare the 24 month report to the COST Association due to be submitted in November 2018.

18. Links with other COST Actions

Notification had been received that a representative of PESFOR-W would be welcome to participate in the next LAND4FLOOD COST Action meeting. It was agreed to return to the issue of who to appoint at the MC meeting in Bulgaria after enquiring further about dates and the location of this meeting.

19. Date of next Core Group meeting

The Chair agreed to initiate a doodle poll for dates in late October and early November 2018 for the next Core Group meeting.

20. Closing

The Chair thanked other members for their participation.

Prepared by:

Action Chair: Dr. Gregory Valatin