

Precious  
Forests  
Foundation

# Precious Forests Foundation

## Annual report 2024





**Our Vision** is to preserve tropical forests and their vital functions in the long term by enhancing the value of their ecosystem services and through innovative and sustainable forest management.

**Our Mission:** The Precious Forests Foundation (PFF) is committed to promoting sustainable land use practices in tropical forests. As an independent dialogue platform for collaboration and innovation, PFF brings together industry, academia, NGOs, and other stakeholders to jointly address the challenges of sustainable forest management (SFM). Through targeted issue management, strategic dialogues, and effective knowledge transfer, PFF develops and initiates practical solutions that increase the value of tropical forests, improve the livelihoods of local communities, and promote the responsible use of forest resources.



## EDITORIAL

### Sustainable forest management: Progress is lagging behind, and PFF also needs to adapt it's role



In the sixth year since it was founded, PFF is facing new challenges: On the one hand, we are a comparatively small player in the field of forest management. The financing of various projects has undoubtedly contributed to the dissemination and improvement of sustainable forest management in the tropics (SFM, sustainable management of tropical forests). On the other hand, a growing number of large and diverse organizations and initiatives are now active in the field of SFM and nature-based solutions.

PFF is convinced of the potential to strategically focus on smaller and more focused topics from now on. In this way, PFF clearly differentiates itself from other organizations, can better showcase its own strengths and make use of its broad and diverse network. As an independent organization, it pursues the following goals in particular:

- as a neutral moderator, PFF identifies and addresses obstacles that regularly arise in the implementation of SFM;

- as an “enabler”, PFF helps with the development and implementation of innovative solutions;
- as a catalyst, it promotes and ultimately improves SFM theory and practice.

That said, our foundation underwent several changes in the reporting year: First and foremost, we are focusing on a role as a facilitator. In this role, we aim to bring together relevant organizations and individuals to positively influence sustainable forest management.

We appreciate your continued support and will of course be happy to keep you up to date!

Zurich, in June 2025

Han de Groot  
Chairman





# ANNUAL REPORT 2024

## Activities in the year under review

### Evaluation, assessment and realignment

After just over five years of work, the Precious Forests Foundation has carefully and self-critically reviewed its previous activities. The following two factors in particular were decisive drivers:

- The financing of the foundation's work to date is not secured in the medium term. Efforts to provide sustainable support proved to be unsustainable for various reasons. In addition, the discontinuation of generous support from Precious Woods in the spring of 2024 accelerated these considerations. Without a change of direction, the foundation would have used up its capital in a few years.
- The selective support of a number of projects made highly interesting contributions in the interest of sustainable forest management. Viewed objectively, however, this does not have a resounding effect on the promotion of sustainable forest management. Due to the strong fragmentation of forest stakeholders with their most diverse interests, sustainable forest management is and remains a difficult topic. Companies that are committed to sustainable business practices and protect very large areas through their work are visibly struggling to assert themselves against a variety of unsustainable forms of use. The proportion of sustainably used tropical forests therefore remains modest, while many times the area is used improperly.

Against this background, the Board of Directors decided to discontinue traditional support for projects. However, projects already underway will be completed unchanged. The focus is now on the role of a *facilitator*, stimulator and bridge builder. This is due in particular to the experience that the round tables organised and contested by PFF on topics relevant to sustainable forest management (such as carbon or biodiversity) were very well received. In each case, it was possible to bring together experts from different disciplines for a constructive exchange and to prepare concrete measures.

The considerations and discussions on the realignment occupied the Board of Directors throughout the year under review. The focus is on understanding what is really needed to promote sustainable forest management and what is helpful for broad circles. Considerations as to which steps can be achieved with the foundation's modest resources are also relevant. This discussion is not over with the year under review, but is likely to occupy the Precious Forests Foundation for a long time to come.

### Organizational impact

The realignment of the content entailed considerable administrative adjustments. The office was abandoned in the second half of the year and replaced by a *shared office*. The previous part-time position was no longer filled. The working methods of the Board of Directors also adapted as a result, with the rhythm of work becoming much more "virtual". Previous tasks were partly reduced, partly external.



## Completed projects:

In the year under review, two projects supported by the Foundation were completed.

- **Life cycle assessment data of tropical woods: Updating and completion of European databases** *in cooperation with FSC Holland and FSC Denmark (project within the EU LIFE programme)*

A major obstacle to the use of wood and wood products in social housing is the lack of up-to-date and reliable Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) data. Life cycle assessment data is increasingly required by law in Europe and is mandatory for calculating the environmental performance of a (wooden) building. The development of new LCAs for wood products and the updating of existing ones is therefore an important part of promoting the consumption of wood from proven well-managed forests. PFF participated in the EU LIFE-funded project "Environmental Management and Information".

The life cycle assessments for six important tropical wood species were prepared for the first time. Six existing but outdated LCAs have been updated. Three of them are related to tropical hardwoods. The data obtained is used to create product cards that can be used nationally (for windows, doors, parquet, facades, panels, etc.). In the Netherlands, a major buyer of tropical woods, they can be viewed in the National Milieu Database (NMD). On the sidelines, 20 further LCAs were prepared for conversion into nationally usable product cards.

- **BiodivX: Testing of instruments for biodiversity assessment in Amazonia (Xprice Competition 2024)** *in cooperation with the ETH Foundation, Zurich*

The accurate, comprehensive and reliable determination of biodiversity is a very big challenge, especially in tropical zones. Not only is the *bottom line* – the knowledge of a basic stock at a given point in time – largely unknown. In addition, the recording of the extremely rich biodiversity in a very small area is technically very demanding and can only be carried out with immense effort. After all, knowledge of species is generally very poor; each elevation leads to the discovery of countless new plant and animal species.

However, knowledge of biodiversity and understanding of its development is an important criterion for defining the sustainable use of complex living systems such as forests. For this reason, many agencies are researching methods for the simple collection of biodiversity. One of the most modern techniques being researched is the collection and analysis of eDNA, i.e. DNA traces on the surface, in the air and in the water.

An ETH team is developing an analysis tool based on drones. With a contribution of CHF 23,000, PFF supported the test phase in Amazonia before the team took part in the XPRIZE Rainforest competition. The team reached third place. Together, all participants in the competition develop their work further.



## Current projects:

PFF is still supporting two projects despite the discontinuation of case-by-case project funding. They were initiated in 2023 and 2024 and will be completed in 2025 or 2026.

- **Sustainable timber harvesting: Obtaining essential data for the second timber harvesting cycle in the Amazon rainforest** *in collaboration with IMA-FLORA, Tropical Silviculture Laboratory (Lastrop/Esalq-USP) and Tropical Forest Institute (IFT)*

An important sustainability criterion requires that used forests retain their diversity and vitality even when used carefully. To this end, key information on forests that are in the second harvest cycle must be collected and analysed, in particular on the type of regeneration and the regrown wood stock.

The project is intended to demonstrate in a well-founded manner that sustainable timber extraction in forests that have already been responsibly managed in the first cycle is harmless and economically attractive. These forests still have valuable wood stocks (volume, species composition) as sought by the market. The aim is to raise awareness among actors in the tropical timber supply chain about the economic viability of production forests in the second cycle. Wise use of forests helps to protect them.

The implementation of the project is expected to last until 2026.

- **Wikipedia entry on Reduced Impact Logging (RIL)** *in collaboration with HAFL and ATIBT*

The technique of Reduced Impact Logging (RIL) is at the heart of the sustainable management of tropical forests. As part of this technique, comprehensive data of the tree population is first collected. The information is used for careful and long-term planning of the harvest. Harvesting is then carried out in accordance with strict conditions regarding the impact of felling and tree removal. The concept has evolved since its launch, also in view of regional peculiarities.

Surprisingly, this important and central element of sustainable forest management in the tropics is not discussed on Wikipedia. PFF is therefore developing the text for a Wikipedia entry with specialists from HAFL in Bern and ATIBT. These explanations require careful preparation and must stand up to critical reading. The publication will take place in the course of 2025.

## Round tables and dialogue formats

As a moderator, PFF has already organised various round tables in the past, for example on the topics of carbon certificates or biodiversity as far as sustainable forest management is concerned. As a rule, a white paper was the basis for discussions among specialists. The initial goal was a mutual understanding of the problem, but also always the search for pragmatic steps for action.

No round table of this kind took place in the reporting year. However, PFF took the opportunity to discuss future strategy with various experts.



## What are we working on in 2025?

With the focus on the role of a moderator and the cessation of project support, the Foundation's field of activity changes considerably. Even though the broad exchange of knowledge and experience with experts remains the focus, the decisive challenge remains: How can the Precious Forests Foundation reach the key players who hold the levers for sustainable management of tropical forests? This question is and remains a central issue, especially since many other actors are also committed to forest protection.

A current project of the Precious Forests Foundation aims to evaluate the enormous literature on *sustainable forest management* and to trace the development of the concept in different regions. This leads to considerations about sustainability in the forest management of tomorrow. The analysis may show possible ways to improve or expand the concept. Since the pressure on tropical forests is not decreasing (especially the demand for wood), sustainable methods have a clear advantage. They allow use without damaging the substance. On the contrary: they protect!



## Board of Directors, Administration and Finance

In the course of the year, Ted van der Put resigned as a member of the Board of Directors. He was replaced by Plinio Sist, an experienced expert in sustainable tropical forest management. The Board of Directors thus remains unchanged with six members.

In 2024, five meetings of the Board of Directors were held, one of which was physically held in Zurich. In addition, numerous virtual working sessions with a select group of members of the Board of Directors took place at regular intervals.





The head of the office, Jeanne Ehrensperger, took over all administrative tasks until her departure in the summer of 2024. Since then, these have been provided partly by members of the Board of Directors and partly by external service providers.

Bank Vontobel, Zurich, manages the foundation's assets as part of a mandate. The decision is based on conservative investment regulations.



#### Credits

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## BOARD OF DIRECTORS AND EXPERT COUNCIL

### Board

#### *Chairman*

#### **Han de Groot**

Interim CEO Wetlands International; Agricultural economist from Wageningen University; elected in May 2023

#### *Members*

#### **Inez Colyn**

Head of Philanthropy Department WWF Switzerland; Environmental scientist ETH Zurich; elected in May 2020

#### **Liesbeth Gort**

Co-founder and Managing Director Treevive; Studied "Development Studies" at the University of Utrecht; elected in May 2021

#### **Daniel Heuer**

Specialist in M&A, educated in political science and development studies (FU Berlin/Université de Genève); elected in May 2018

#### **Benoit Jobbé Duval**

Managing Director Association Technique Internationale des Bois Tropicaux; Agricultural engineer, graduate of Bordeaux Sciences Agro and the Ecole Supérieure d'Agronomie Tropicale de Montpellier; elected in May 2023

#### **Plinio Sist**

Director «Forests and Societies Research Unit», Cirad/Monpellier, Coordinator «Tropical managed Forests Observatory» (TmFO), Tropical forest ecologist/PhD University of Paris 6; elected in May 2025

#### **Dr. Ernst A. Brugger**

Honorary

### Group of experts

#### **Dr. Zuzana Burivalova**

Assistant Professor, University of Wisconsin Madison, Department of Forest and Wildlife Ecology, and The Nelson Institute for Environmental Studies

#### **Chris Buss**

Co-founder of FFORA, former Director of the IUCN Centre for Economy and Finance

#### **Prof. Dr. Kristy Deiner**

Assistant Professor at the Institute of Environmental Systems Science, ETH Zurich

#### **Prof. Dr. Jaboury Ghazoul**

Professor of Ecosystem Management, ETH Zurich

#### **Dr. Robert Nasi**

Director-General CIFOR; Forest ecologist

#### **Prof. Dr. Benno Pokorny**

Chair of Silviculture, University of Freiburg

#### **Dr. Cesar Sabogal**

Forest scientist, international consultant (including CIFOR, FAO, GIZ)

#### **Prof. Jeff Sayer**

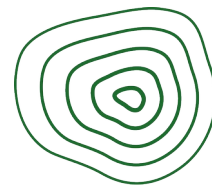
Professor of Conservation & Development Practice, University of British Columbia

#### **Dr. J.A. (Joeri) Zwerts**

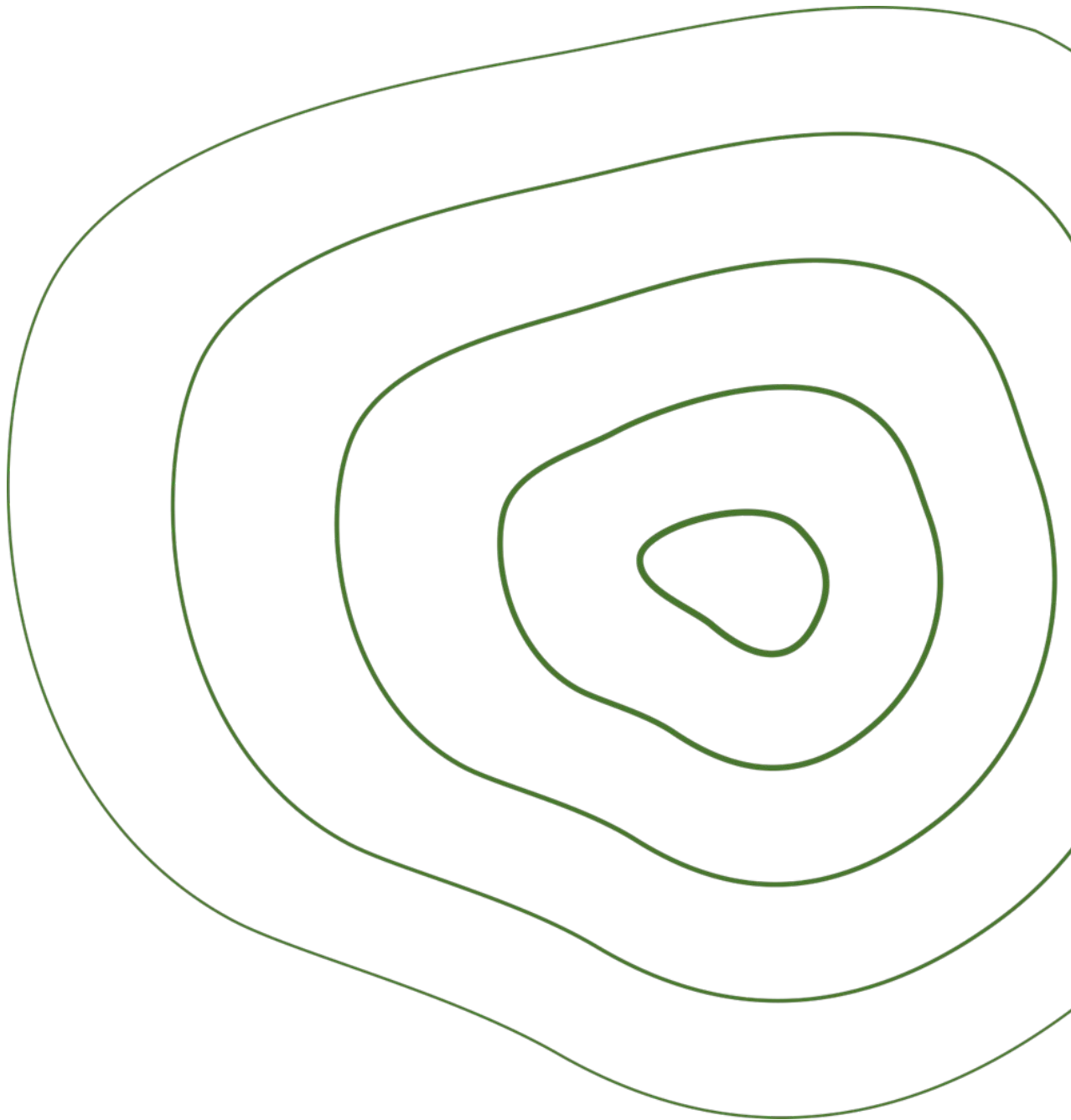
Assistant Professor at Utrecht University, Environmental Biologist

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