The Cyprus Forests

The Forests of Cyprus both on state and private land, cover about 42% of the total area of the island (about 18.5% are high forests and 23.5% are other wooded land). They are natural forests consisting mainly of Calabrian pine (\textit{Pinus brutia}) and Black pine (\textit{Pinus nigra} ssp. \textit{pallasiana}), which cover the higher peaks of Troodos above 1,200m.

The Pine forests cover the whole island except the Messaoria plain, where the climatic conditions and especially the low rainfall are extreme to the species’ survival. On Pentadaktylos mountain range the existence of pine trees is either as pure or as mixed with cypress.

\textit{Quercus alnifolia, Arbutus andrachne, Styrax officinalis, Acer obtusifolium} and \textit{Cistus} spp., are part of the understory of the pine forest at an altitude higher than 600m, while at the lower one is consisted of \textit{Pistacia lentiscus, Olea europaea, Calycotome villosa} and others.

Other species include the Cypress, Juniper, Plane tree and Alder. Endemic species include the Golden oak (\textit{Quercus alnifolia}) which is restricted on the Troodos mountain range, and Cedar (\textit{Cedrus brevifolia}), which is restricted around the Tripylos area in the Pafos Forest.

The Department of Forests, (\url{www.moa.gov.cy/forest}) under the Ministry of Environment and Agricultural Development, is responsible for the management of the state forests, and implementation of Forest Policy and Forest Law.
The forests of Cyprus are an important national resource. They provide timber and non-wood products and contribute significantly to: the beauty of the landscape, the preservation of the national heritage, the protection of biodiversity, the supply of good quality water, the economic development of village communities. Forests also attract visitors from foreign countries thus contributing to the national economy as well as to mitigation of climatic changes absorbing CO$_2$.

**Fire Hazard**

In Cyprus, fire is considered as the most destructive agent threatening the forests and other wooded land. Prevention of fires, their early detection and suppression are some of the priorities of the Department of Forests. The long hot and dry summers, the frequent strong winds, the configuration of the ground and the flammability of the vegetation favour the outbreak and quick spread of fires. Furthermore, the urbanization, the abandonment of rural areas and the increased number of visitors in the forest for recreation, raise the fire hazard to very high levels.

According to the forest fire incidents of the period 2009 – 2013, 81% are anthropogenic and 19% are natural (mainly due to lightning). 77% of the anthropogenic forest fires are due to human negligence or accidents, while the rest 23% are due to arson. Among the fires caused by human negligence or accidents 40% are due to agricultural activities, 23% due to recreational activities, while 15% due to residential activities. The rest are due to military activities, short-
circuit of high voltage electric lines, forest works, hunting and waste burnings.

Climatic changes, also affect Cyprus to a large extent. The reduced precipitation, the prolonged drought periods and the high temperatures of the last years have led to dieback of forest trees.

The Department of Forests, recognizing the negative effect of climatic changes, took measures to cope with the problem.

**Recreation Facilities in Forest Areas**

The Department of Forests allocates a great part of its resources to the creation, improvement and expansion of picnic and camping sites for the public, as well as to the establishment, development and maintenance of National Forest Parks within the state forest.

Recreation facilities such as picnic and camping sites, nature trails, viewpoints, bicycle paths, botanical centers and gardens are improved. Within the area of the state forests there are 45 picnic sites managed by the Department of Forests with a total capacity of 23,000 persons. They provide all the basic facilities for daily excursions like barbeques, potable water, tables and latrines. All the sites provide facilities for wheelchair users. Five camping sites with a total capacity for 2,400 persons are situated within the state forests. Three of them are managed by the Department of Forests, while the other two by other agencies.
Nature Trails

Seventy-four nature trails have been established in various parts of the Cyprus forests such as Akamas, Pafos, Troodos, Lemesos (Limassol), Adelfi, Macheras, and Kavo Greko. Nature trails attract many walkers both from Cyprus and abroad, giving them the opportunity to study the flora and geology of Cyprus and enjoy its environment and scenery.

Visitor Centres

Three Visitor Centres have been constructed, one at the Troodos National Forest Park (Troodos Square) in 2002, the other one at Athalassa National Forest Park in 2004 and a third one at Kavo Greko National Forest Park in 2012. Their purpose has a recreational, educational, training and informative character giving emphasis to the local environment. In September 2008, the visitor centre at Athalassa National Forest Park was upgraded to an Environment Educational Centre and a teacher was appointed there, while in 2013 a Park for Domestic animals has been established as part of the Centre too. Furthermore, three botanical gardens (Athalassa, Amiantos mine area and Aphrodite’s baths in Akamas forest) have been established by the Department of Forests.

Contact details:

Department of Forests
1414 Nicosia

Tel: 22805510    Fax: 22805542

E-mail: director@fd.moa.gov.cy

Website: www.moa.gov.cy/forest