



Press Release

November 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2021

## **Old Growth Forests in Slovakia will be protected in newly established nature reserve thanks to NGOs Prales and WWF Slovakia.**

**Old Growth Forests of Slovakia is the official name of a new nature reserve approved by the Government of the Slovak Republic. Establishment of the new reserve is a result of long lasting effort of two conservation organizations OZ Prales and WWF Slovakia. Yet unprotected or insufficiently protected old growth and natural forests in 76 localities throughout Slovakia with a total area of almost 6.5 thousand hectares are going to be declared a nature reserve on December 1st, 2021.**

About a year ago (September 17th, 2020), WWF Slovakia and NGO PRALES submitted a petition with more than 30,000 signatures supporting the declaration of The Old Growth Forest Reserve to the Slovak Minister of the Environment Ján Budaj. The petition was the last step in the long-lasting efforts of the organizations to protect remaining old growth forests in Slovakia. However, the effort of NGOs had begun years ago by old growth forests mapping and continued through numerous negotiations and the preparation of the conservation proposal itself.

*„Under the Carpathian Convention, Slovakia made a commitment to identify its natural forests and old growth forests. We seized this task in the belief that it is a topic, which can unite foresters and conservationists. Unfortunately, this was not the case. However, the results of mapping were gradually recognized by the relevant state institutions, although we lost several hundreds of hectares of old growth forests on this route. Therefore, in addition to all those involved in mapping and ensuring the protection of forests, I would like to thank all foresters who perceived the protection of old growth forests as our commitment to future generations,”* says Marián Jasík, conservation expert from OZ Prales.

*"When in 2017 WWF Slovakia entered into negotiations about the protection of old growth forests in Slovakia, the topic was impassable for many foresters or officials. However, as we did not retreat in our efforts, the first success came in 2019, when a new amendment to the Forest Act allowed forest owners and managers to protect old growth forests in their possession on a voluntary basis. The global loss of biodiversity we are witnessing nowadays is historically the largest and fastest ever, therefore I believe that no one doubts that the old growth forests in Slovakia deserve proper protection,”* says Miroslava Plassmann, director of WWF Slovakia.

Old growth forests mapping lasted from 2009 to 2015 and had proven that 10,180 hectares remained in Slovakia out of which one third is unprotected or insufficiently protected. Therefore, NGO PRALES and WWF Slovakia prepared a proposal for establishment of a nature reserve in 2018 and after several negotiations with the Forests of Slovak Republic state enterprise (LESY SR) gained a public commitment that foresters will not intervene in the localities identified as parts of the proposed nature reserve until the final decision about the proposal is made. In 2020 the 30,759 people signed petition organized by WWF Slovakia and Prales supporting the declaration of the new nature reserve Old Growth Forests of Slovakia.

The Government of the Slovak Republic approved establishment of the nature reserve on November 3rd, 2021. The Old Growth Forest of Slovakia nature reserve will become a reality on December 1st, 2021. It will include 76 state owned forest localities in various parts of Slovakia with a total area of 6,462.42 hectares.

With this decision, Slovakia contributes to the goals in the Carpathian Convention and in The EU's biodiversity strategy for 2030, according to which *"all of the EU's remaining primary and old-growth forests should be strictly protected."*

**For more information:**

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