

FOREST RESEARCH INSTITUTE
PROFOREST CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE

LARGE-AREA FOREST FIRES

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INTRODUCTION

A collection of articles is presented here which originates from the seminar on "Large-area Forest Fires" that was held in Poland on 7-8 September 2004 under a Project titled "Protection of Forest Resources in Central Europe" (WP.5.5 – Forest Fires) aimed at the PROFOREST Excellence Centre and organised by the Independent Laboratory for Forest Fire Protection of the Forestry Research Institute, in Warsaw.

The aforementioned Project included a workshop that was organised for specialists on forest fire protection and attended by relevant participants of Eastern European Countries, including those of Russia.

The principal objective of the seminar was to familiarise its participants with the large-area fire hazards in Eastern European forests and to present the major issues relating to their origins and impacts.

The reason that the area of the Rudy Raciborskie Forest Inspectorate was chosen as the venue for the seminar was that the largest catastrophic forest fire in the history of post-war Poland took place there in 1992 and burned a forest area of more than 9 thousand hectares. Subsequently, the fire propagated throughout the forest areas in two adjacent Forest Inspectorates of Kędzierzyn and Rudzieniec.

The programme of the seminar included a scientific session with relevant participants' presentations and a discussion summing-up their presentations, and also an outdoor session that included field site visits and discussion of the history and course of the aforementioned catastrophic fire, including the methods for management of the area burnt.

The representatives of both the host country and certain Eastern European Countries (including some new Member States of the European Union) participated to the seminar – i.e. Slovak Republic and Hungary, and also those from Russia, as well as the representatives of the Global Fire Monitoring Centre in Germany.

For the Polish participants, the seminar provided an opportunity for familiarisation with fire protection conditions and issues in the neighbouring countries, including up-to-date research techniques applied in the scope of forest fires (e.g. the analysis of satellite images).