

## Introducing the inaugural issue of **Forests Monitor**: an international peer-reviewed open-access scientific journal.

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### ABSTRACT

On behalf of our editors and scientific board members, we are delighted to welcome you to the inaugural issue of *Forests Monitor*. Launching a new journal dedicated to addressing pressing challenges in academic publishing is a significant endeavor, and we would like to share the purpose and focus of *Forests Monitor*, as well as the unique benefits it offers to readers, reviewers, and prospective authors. The mission of *Forests Monitor* is to accelerate scientific and practical discourse on the applied science of multifunctional forest ecosystems. By providing a robust platform for exchanging ideas supported by a rigorous peer-review process, we aim to contribute meaningfully to advancing forest management and governance. Our vision for *Forests Monitor* is to become a premier applied scientific journal that bridges forest ecology and conservation, forest management and planning, and forest policy and economics—all under one umbrella. *Forests Monitor* seeks to foster scientific development and promote meaningful dialogue by publishing original research articles, comprehensive reviews, thought-provoking opinion pieces, forest perspectives, and book reviews related to multifunctional forest ecosystems. This editorial also summarizes the contributions included in our inaugural issue, where we published five articles, including two research papers and three perspectives on forestry. The contributions address a diverse range of topics across the globe, such as Forest Stewards Guild position statement on climate-smart forestry, forest governance in the Nordic region, defining and monitoring forest disturbances and damages, methods for tracking forest pests in the United States, and the role of retention border zones in enhancing broadleaf habitats within production forests in Sweden. In this editorial, we also want to highlight how you can support our grassroot mission.

### Keywords

editorial, *Forests Monitor*, mission, scientific publishing

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## WHY FORESTS MONITOR?

The decision to launch Forests Monitor stems from the willingness to address current challenges in the academic publishing, as well as from the success of the *Journal of Forest Business Research*<sup>1</sup> launched in 2022. Over the past decade, academic publishing has witnessed exponential growth, with significant shifts in publishing models and commercial concentration. These trends have often prioritized profit interests over the dissemination of quality science, creating barriers for researchers and perpetuating inequities in the publishing ecosystem. Building on the experience of the *Journal of Forest Business Research*, Forests Monitor aims to create a more equitable and sustainable platform for forest science.

The academic publishing industry has undergone dramatic changes, with increasing consolidation of power among a small number of publishers. Five for-profit entities now control over 50% of global scientific output (McGill 2024). This oligopoly has created a system where authors and reviewers bear the costs of publishing without fair compensation, while for-profit publishers, including subscription-based and open-access journals, achieve profit margins rivalling the most lucrative industries (McGill 2024). At the same time, academia—funded by taxpayers' money—is also losing out, as public funds meant to advance research are funneled into exorbitant subscription fees and publishing charges rather than directly supporting scientists and their work. Adding to the inequity, taxpayers who fund much of this research often cannot access the outputs themselves, as they are locked behind paywalls.

On the other hand, open access journals—once heralded as a solution to the challenges of traditional subscription models—have increasingly morphed into a 'pay-to-publish' system that primarily benefits corporate publishers. This shift, driven by the growing dominance of for-profit open-access publishers, has exacerbated global inequities in scholarly publishing, as researchers from institutions or countries with limited funding often cannot afford the high Article Processing Charges (APCs) required for publication. Moreover, the proliferation of special issues—often featuring APCs that are even higher than regular submissions—has further distorted the publishing landscape, prioritizing profit over scholarly rigor and contributing to the oversaturation of academic literature with uneven quality. At the same time, many subscription journals that were initially skeptical on open access science (e.g., Tennant 2018), have discovered a lucrative hybrid

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<sup>1</sup> Refer to: [www.forest-journal.com](http://www.forest-journal.com)

model, charging steep subscription fees to academic libraries while offering an "open access" option for authors willing to pay APCs to bypass paywalls for their readers. This dual-revenue strategy is entrenching financial barriers to equitable knowledge dissemination and incentivizes quantity over quality in scientific outputs.

By launching *Forests Monitor*, we aim to empower the forestry research community and lead the charge for a publishing model that values independence, quality, transparency, and fairness.

At *Forests Monitor*, our goal is to offer a functional alternative to the mainstream scientific publishing by introducing a model that prioritizes the needs and values of the scientific community over profit. Our approach includes several key elements:

1. **Rewarding reviewers:** We recognize that peer reviewers are central to the integrity and quality of published research. Despite their essential role, their time and expertise often go unrewarded in traditional publishing models. *Forests Monitor* seeks to change this by providing fair compensation for reviewers, valuing their contributions, and incentivizing excellence in peer review. This ensures that reviewers are not only appreciated but also motivated to maintain high standards in their work.
2. **Supporting the forest science community by sponsoring *Forests Monitor* Awards for young scholars.** *Forests Monitor* is deeply committed to supporting the next generation of scholars in the forest-related science. We sponsor awards for young researchers, encouraging fresh perspectives and innovation while fostering a diverse and inclusive environment for forestry research.
3. **Affordable APCs:** In our mission to make quality publishing accessible, *Forests Monitor* keeps Article Processing Charges (APCs) affordable by implementing a per-page pricing model. This allows authors to publish their work without facing the prohibitive fees often seen in traditional journals, which charge a flat fee regardless of article length. Our approach ensures that authors are not burdened with unnecessary costs, allowing them to publish their research in an equitable way.

Finally, by addressing the challenges inherent in the current publishing system, *Forests Monitor* strives to create a platform that supports the advancement of forest science. The field is essential to tackling urgent global issues such as climate change, biodiversity loss, and nature reforestation. Being locked behind paywalls important research for tackling these challenges is often

inaccessible to the very communities and decision-makers who need it most. Additionally, many researchers face financial barriers to publishing their work, making it difficult for them to gain the exposure and recognition they deserve. Finally, the "pay-to-publish" system, which often prioritizes profit over quality, can hinder progress in addressing the critical challenges of climate change and biodiversity loss.

Even more troubling is the widespread exploitation of scholars who contribute to the academic publishing ecosystem—whether as editors, special issue leaders, or peer reviewers—without fair compensation for their time and expertise, often under the misconception that such unpaid work is an obligatory part of their professional responsibilities, when in fact it is not. These unpaid contributions form the backbone of many for-profit journals, which benefit from the labor of the academic community while offering little in return.

At *Forests Monitor*, we recognize that for science to truly serve society, the publishing process must be reimagined to be more inclusive, equitable, and sustainable for everyone involved. At *Forests Monitor*, we believe the time for change is now. Together, we can challenge the status quo and build a publishing system that works for science—not taking advantage of it.

### **“TYRRANY OF IMPACT FACTOR” AND HOW CAN YOU CONTRIBUTE?**

Despite its lean business model, *Forests Monitor* must contend with what has been called the "tyranny of the impact factor" (Colquhoun (2003). First discussed in Peter A. Lawrence's (2003) commentary "The politics of publication," this concept highlights the unscientific obsession with impact factors—metrics that have become a primary, and often misleading, measure of scientific quality. In response, David Colquhoun (2003) pointed out that this obsession is largely fueled by laziness and a lack of understanding within academic and bureaucratic circles, where the pursuit of prestige often overshadows the true value of research.

Colquhoun highlighted that the impact factor—a metric invented by Eugene Garfield—was never designed to rank individual papers. Yet, this flawed metric is now used by some to evaluate researchers, despite studies showing that articles' citation rates do not correlate with the impact factor of the corresponding journals (e.g., Seglen 1997; Finardi 2013) and that the inflation of journal impact factors risks confusing quality signals (Hanson et al. 2024). In this context, *Forests Monitor*, which must cover essential publication and maintenance costs—such as DOI fees, copyediting, and OJS platform expenses—faces the challenge of navigating an academic system

that continues to disproportionately prioritize impact factors over the substance and quality of individual research. In an ideal world, selection committees and academic institutions would evaluate research based on its actual content and its contribution to the field—not simply the journal in which it was published. However, this bias toward high-impact journals persists, creating systemic pressure on researchers and publishers alike.

Despite the numerous challenges we face, *Forests Monitor* remains steadfast in its mission to provide a high-quality platform for forestry research. This commitment would not be possible without the dedication and expertise of our editors and scientific board member. We are committed to attracting top-tier submissions, and we will rigorously assess each manuscript to ensure that only the highest-quality papers are published. Lower-quality or questionable submissions will be rejected, as we aim to uphold the integrity and credibility of our journal. However, the success of *Forests Monitor* also relies on the support of the global forest science community. We encourage researchers to consider submitting their work to our journal as a means of contributing to a publishing ecosystem that prioritizes quality and fairness.

We believe that by supporting independent journals like *Forests Monitor*, researchers do not only contribute to the growth of a more ethical publishing models but also help to ensure that quality research receives the recognition and dissemination it deserves. We invite you to explore our new journal and to consider submitting your valuable research *Forests Monitor*.

## **OVERVIEW OF THE INAUGURAL ISSUE**

For the inaugural issue of *Forests Monitor*, we received a total of 11 article submissions. Of these, five were accepted corresponding to the acceptance rate of 45%.

The five articles include two research papers and three perspectives on forestry. These contributions address a diverse range of topics, such as Forest Stewards Guild position statement on climate-smart forestry, forest governance in the Nordic region, defining and monitoring forest disturbances and damages, methods for tracking forest pests in the United States, and the role of retention border zones in enhancing broadleaf habitats within production forests in Sweden. Below, we provide a brief summary of each published paper.

Climate-smart forestry is becoming increasingly crucial in forest policy and practice. However, its definition is often debated, impacting billions in investments to promote climate-smart forestry in the U.S. As an advocate for ecologically, economically, and socially responsible forestry, *Forest*

Stewards Guild (FSG) has crafted a position statement to steer discussions on climate-smart forestry. To ensure holistic benefits, the paper by Himmes et al. (2024) suggests transparent communication of goals, comprehensive system boundaries, assessment of trade-offs and climate benefits, context-specific practices, and recognition of uncertainties.

Nebasifu et al. (2024) examined Nordic forest governance from 1970 to 2023, highlighting a shift from state-based to interactive governance. Drawing on 2023 interviews, the authors discussed climate-smart, multi-use forest policies and management systems in Finland, Sweden, Norway, and Denmark and concluded that policy mixes will be crucial for sustainable forest management in the future.

Robertson et al. (2024) explored improving regional monitoring of forest disturbances and damages, emphasizing the distinction between the terms and their management implications. The paper discusses the role of human expectations in data collection, the complexity of ecological processes, and challenges in consistent reporting across countries. Despite difficulties in aggregating diverse data, the article stressed its importance for advancing scientific understanding, policy-making, and environmental management.

Forest pests like the spruce budworm (SBW) cause tree mortality and disrupt ecosystems. SBW defoliates balsam fir and spruce in northeastern USA and Canada, with outbreaks every 30–60 years. Monitoring methods include ground sampling (pheromone traps, larval surveys) and remote sensing. Foster et al. (2024) assessed cost-effectiveness over 10 years, finding Sentinel-2 imagery (US\$33–\$63/sq km) the most economical. PlanetScope (US\$77–\$241/sq km) and UAV imagery (US\$9,220–\$58,481/sq km) were pricier. Labor costs ranged from 30% (remote sensing) to 80% (field sampling). An integrated approach (US\$144–\$213/sq km) improved accuracy, emphasizing adaptive monitoring strategies.

Swedish forestry relies on even-aged management of Norway spruce and Scots pine, but diversifying practices with mixed forests and broadleaves can enhance biodiversity and climate resilience. Eriksson et al. (2024) found that prioritizing retention in border zones near water and open land, which naturally have more broadleaves, slightly increased broadleaf volumes over 100 years compared to average stand conditions. Active management and a landscape-level approach could amplify conservation and economic benefits from this strategy.

## HOW CAN YOU CONTRIBUTE?

First and foremost, you can support us by submitting high-quality articles that fit our Journal's scope. You can find our [recent call for papers](#) with a due date set to **1 March 2025**.

Second, please feel free to join our database of Forests Monitor reviewers. Forests Monitor starting compensation for every review completed within two weeks is 50 EUR net of taxes. We will review this rate each year. To meet the highest ethical and quality standards in the scientific publishing process in Forests Monitor, the reviewer's compensation is entirely independent of the reviewer's recommendation. **To register for our Reviewers' Database, visit our website, or click here: <https://forestsmonitor.com/index.php/fm/user/register>**

Next, to better track our Journal's progress and news, we recommend you join our social media and help us build the community around our research work in forestry. We recently established [LinkedIn](#) and [X \(formerly Twitter\)](#) accounts to help us with our external communication, community buildup and marketing of all papers published at Forests Monitor.

We are always open to your suggestions. If you like to nominate a highly qualified person to serve on our Scientific Board, have comments on what we can do better, do not hesitate to contact journal manager at: [rafal@forestsmonitor.com](mailto:rafal@forestsmonitor.com)

We hope that our collective work will enrich the field of forest management and conservation and provide valuable insights for practitioners, policymakers, and academics. We look forward to you becoming a part of the exciting journey to advance forest science in tackling the urgent challenges of climate change, preserving biodiversity, and promoting the sustainable use of forest resources. Thank you for your support.

**Respectfully,**

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