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Update of the Hunting Management Concept for the Brdy Hunting Ground

Project 101074426 – LIFE21-CCA-CZ-LIFE Adapt Brdy

Climate Change Adaptation of Forests in the Brdy Highland



Version	Date	Author/Organization
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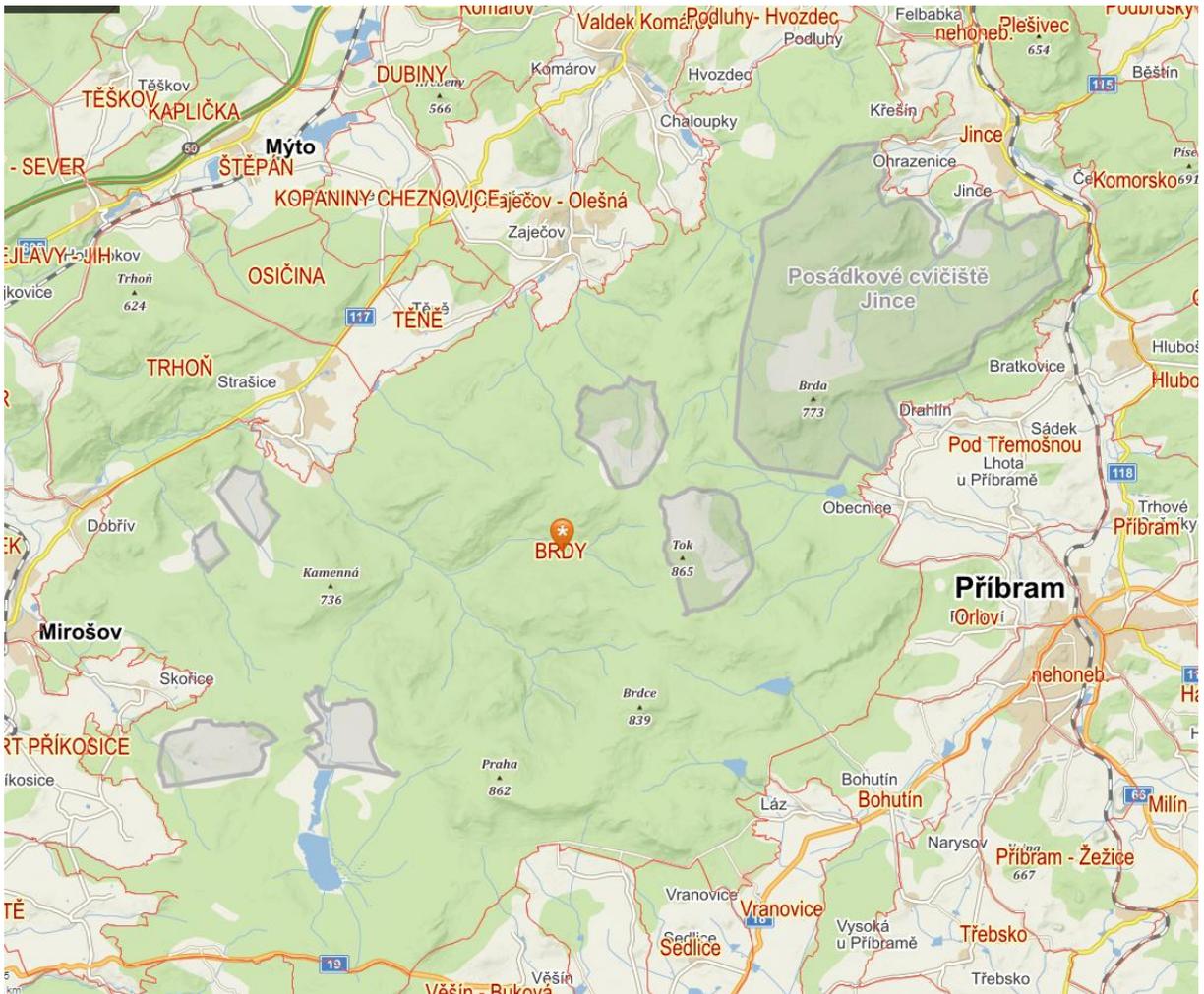


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1. Main objective

The main objective of the Hunting Management Concept is to reduce the population of cloven-hoofed game to optimum levels that correspond and do not cause disturbances to the natural environment. Optimum game populations will provide the conditions for the development of natural regeneration of all habitat-suitable tree species, while the need to protect these tree species from game damage will be significantly reduced. This is also essential for the successful implementation of the principles of close-to-nature management and for enhancing the resilience of forest stands to climate change.

Optimum game populations are defined as those that do not hinder the establishment and growth of naturally regenerating and habitat-suitable tree species and provide conditions for possible artificial regeneration without the need for protection against game damage.

For Vojenské lesy a statky CR, s.p., the right of hunting is regulated by the Directive for the Exercise of the Right of Hunting and Fishing in Hunting and Fishing Grounds of Vojenské lesy a statky CR, s.p. with the registration number: VLS-IMS-S-2022-576-1900, dated 14 March 2023 (hereinafter referred to as "the Directive").

2. Development trends in game populations

2.1. History

Game harvest statistics for the Brdy region have been recorded since 1949. The average annual harvest of red deer for the period 1949 to 2021 is 464 animals. The minimum harvest in 1968 was only 132, while the maximum harvest was reached in 1992, totalling 990 red deer. Since 1981, the red deer harvest has been increasing from 394 to 990 in 1992. In the following years, the number subsequently decreased to 347 in 1998. Between 2000 and 2002, the annual harvest was above 500. It later declined to 280 red deer hunted in 2005. From 2006, the annual harvests showed a slightly increasing trend until 2018 with 456 recorded. Subsequently, there was a sharp increase in the harvest in 2021 and 2022 to 892 and 914 red deer hunted respectively. In 2023, 824 pcs red deer were hunted. In 2024, 546 pcs red deer were hunted. The plan for 2025 counts with 400 animals to be hunted.

As to roe deer, the average annual harvest for the period 1949 to 2021 was 77. There were no significant differences in the annual harvest here in the past until 2018 (44 roe deer). From 2019, the harvest of roe deer increased to 114; in 2021 to 204 and in 2022 to 263 animals. In 2023, 355 pcs roe deer were hunted. In 2024, 324 pcs roe deer were hunted. The plan for 2025 counts with 236 animals to be hunted.

A regular inventory of game damage in forest stands has been carried out in the region since 2006 using a uniform methodology. In 2020, the fifth inventory cycle was conducted, following the earlier inventories in 2006, 2009, 2014 and 2017. The sixth inventory cycle carried out in 2023 recorded reduction in game damage caused by browsing and bark stripping. A higher level of browsing damage was observed only in broadleaved tree species, which relates to their increased proportion in forest stands.

2.2. Modelling of game populations

Based on the data from game harvest statistics and the data from game damage inventories, we may get an overview of the modelled numbers of game and their impact on forest ecosystems. From these, it is possible to derive the anticipated level of game harvest that will reduce the game damage to the forest to a tolerable level.

The level of game harvesting in the Brdy hunting ground will be determined on the basis of the developed models and the monitoring of game damage. Thus, the game populations will be reduced to a level that is sustainable for the given ecosystem.

2.3. Anticipated future development

Provided that the established trend of intensive reduction of red deer populations is maintained, it is assumed that sustainable ecosystem levels will be reached as early as 2024 in the most optimistic scenario, and no later than 2026 in the pessimistic scenario. The total area of the Brdy hunting ground is 25 665 ha. According to the maximum allowable population, there are 1.17 red deer per 100 ha. The Saxon model considers the optimal density of the population to be 0.5 to 1 red deer per 100 ha.

With the decreasing number of red deer, the roe deer population is expected to increase. It will therefore also be essential to regulate the populations of roe deer in the coming years in order to maintain their sustainable levels and to prevent an increase in the damage caused by this game.

3. Main pillars of the Concept

- **Game damage monitoring** - to determine the current state and define the game harvest levels
- **Game management and hunting as a tool in silviculture** - hunting is perceived as a service to the forest and not as a sole business activity of the "cult of trophy"
- **Game management**

4. Game damage monitoring

4.1. Monitoring conducted within an external inventory survey

A regular three-year inventory survey is being carried out in the area using a uniform methodology. The game damage inventory was conducted by IFER, s. r. o. in years: 2006, 2009, 2014, 2017, and 2020.

The sixth cycle will be carried out in 2023 while the seventh is planned for 2026. The two mentioned cycles will be part of the project LIFE Adapt Brdy.

4.2. Monitoring at control plots

There are total 55 control plots (CPs) located in the Brdy hunting ground. Of these, 12 CPs are determined in FMP area Jince, 9 in FMP area Obenice, 12 in FMP area Nepomuk, 10 in FMP area Mirošov, and 12 in FMP area Strašnice. The respective data show that the game damage load in the

hunting ground is uneven with significant differences between individual localities. For this reason, the hunting plan is scheduled for individual forest districts with this regard.

4.3. Determining game damage by browsing and peeling using adjusted Saxon methodology

This methodology has been simplified in terms of operation. Where control plots are also established in stands intended for natural regeneration, this monitoring is fully sufficient for assessing damage by browsing. The part of the methodology dedicated to assessing bark stripping damage will be retained.

5. Game management and hunting as a tool in silviculture

5.1. Modification of management documents

In order to apply in practice the objectives established by the Concept, it is necessary to implement the tasks from the Directive into the management documents of VLS ČR, s.p.

- maximum motivation of hunters towards game harvest (reductions for holders of long-term hunting permits if the specified number of harvested game is met; see hunting price list),
- abolishment of parameters of selective hunting of trophy game,
- arrangement of stalking hunts with the possibility of hunting trophy game and a fee for harvested animals (not for hunting sites) on the basis of a group hunting permit.

5.2. Hunting facilities

Hunting facilities shall be numbered (a series of 500 stalk hunting blinds acquired within the LIFE Adapt Brdy Programme shall be provided with its own series of numbers 1-500), recorded both graphically and numerically. During the first three years (2023–2025), the majority of the 500 hunting stands financed through the LIFE programme were installed in the field. Some of these were subsequently relocated to more suitable sites. The inspection of the condition of hunting facilities is the responsibility of the respective forest staff. The responsibilities of this staff are mainly to keep an ongoing graphic record of the functional facilities, to check their condition, to provide for the necessary repairs and to ensure the disposal of non-functional facilities that can no longer be repaired. All the hunting facilities shall be inspected minimum once a year in the period before 30 April. Non-functional facilities shall be made inaccessible in the period before 31 May. The inspection shall be recorded in the Register of Hunting Facilities. It is forbidden to lock any hunting facilities. Before any purchase of new facilities or their construction by contractors, the head of the forest district shall consult such activities with the hunting operations staff and the person responsible for purchasing goods and services.

5.3. Targeted group hunt

With the number of game declining towards optimum levels sustainable for a balanced ecosystem, individual hunting of game will become more demanding and will more often be replaced by group hunting with standby (chase and stalk). This should become more efficient in terms of meeting the hunting plan. A greater proportion of the prescribed number of game should gradually be harvested in this way. Appropriate infrastructure will be built for this hunting method in suitable locations (500 stalk hunting blinds).

500 hunting blinds acquired within the LIFE Adapt Brdy Programme will be installed by the individual forest districts (100 blinds for each FD), primarily in the three locations of the Brdy hunting ground identified as the most suitable for this type of hunting:

- 1, Area Kočky (FD Mirošov, FD Nepomuk and FD Strašice)
- 2, Area U třech pánů (FD Obecnice, FD Nepomuk and FD Strašice)
- 3, Area Baština – Červený potok (FD Jince, FD Obecnice – area around Bahenská and Kvaňská paths and Hill Zavírka, FD Strašice)

Maps will be produced for these areas, showing the positions of the blinds with marked directions of safe shooting and areas of movement of hunters.

For joint hunts in these areas, the blinds will be preferably occupied by guest hunters, while the remaining vacant blinds will be occupied by VLS, s.p. employees. The guest hunter may also hunt trophy game – the price for each hunted animal will be charged according to the current price list. The staff shall carry out clearance and selective hunting and shall be paid a fee for each hunted animal.

Joint (cooperative) hunting involves:

- Hunt leader – is responsible for adhering to the hunting time schedule, hunting traditions including roll calls, greeting guests and hunting bugle calls.
- Guides – have an assigned number of shooters they are responsible for. They will position the shooters at designated locations and brief them on possible movements of handlers or hunters in the vegetation. Upon the completion of the hunt, the guides will successively withdraw their shooters from their stations to the designated meeting point. They shall further verify the progress of each shooter's hunt, including demonstration of the game harvested or the location of the shot (wounded animal), which shall be marked for subsequent trailing.
- Shooters – are assigned by the guides to designated hunting blinds with precise instructions on the course of the hunt.
- Beaters – providing escort for handlers and helping to haul the harvested animals to the lines.
- Handlers with their dogs – with hounds to work in drive areas and scent hounds for tracking.
- Game harvest handlers – responsible for timely transport of the hunted game, its marking and preparation for display.

The 500 drive-hunt stands procured under the LIFE Adapt Brdy Project will be reallocated by individual Forest Districts (100 stands per district). Group hunts with standby will be conducted in smaller units (smaller number of shooters and shorter duration). Pre-surveyed locations will be occupied by a smaller number of shooters and shorter group hunts with standby and stalking will be organised.

5.4. Individual hunt

5.4.1. Individual hunt by employees

The current and former employees of the Hořovice Division mainly carry out professional clearance and selective hunting with the aim of achieving standard game numbers and improving the condition of the population of game species subject to management in the hunting grounds of this division. The professional clearance and selective hunting is considered to be the hunting of antlerless cloven-hoofed game (hinds and calves), and trophy cloven-hoofed game up to 2 years of age within the statutory time limit. The selective hunting of red deer of the 1st age class (1-4 years) up to 130 points with antlers up to an 8-point is without restriction for employees, who are paid the same fee as for antlerless (hinds and calves) red deer.

When an exemption is issued for the hunt of trophy game over 2 years of age that is not subject to the hunting plan, employees who have mouflon, sika deer, and fallow deer listed on their hunting license may hunt these animals according to the point value specified in their approved individual hunting plan. The Division Director authorizes the employees under Article 6.1.1 and former employees under Article 6.1.2 of the Guidelines to hunt game animals without an escort.

All game taken will be recorded in the Game Management Register and in the Record of Game Harvest. Each forest district shall keep the Record of Game Harvest. Any mortalities found shall also be listed in the Record of Game Harvest. All the harvest shall be recorded on weekly basis by 10 a.m. each Monday at the latest. Recorded mortalities will be documented with photographs and a report. The game harvest reports for the preceding month will be submitted regularly to the hunting operations staff always by the 15th day of the following month.

The trophies of roe deer yearling knobbers, roe deer yearling bucks with an average beam height of 10 cm or less, bucks up to the 8-point on antlers, fallow deer spike bucks, and sika deer spike bucks are not required to be submitted for assessment and trophy show. If the listed trophies are not presented, they shall be submitted to the head forest warden for inspection after the hunt (in the hind). Other trophies shall always be properly scored and the scoring tables generated in the Game Management Register software.

In accordance with the opinion of the Ministry of Agriculture issued pursuant to Section 36(5) of the Act on Hunting, hunting of unregulated (not subject to the hunting plan) hinds and calves, and bucks up to 2 years of age, is possible in unlimited numbers. Hinds and calves not subject to the hunting plan (mouflon, sika deer, fallow deer in the Brdy hunting ground) shall be harvested by all VLS employees, retired VLS employees, and guest hunters during the legal hunting period. Male trophy game not over 2 years of age and not subject to the hunting plan will only be allowed on the basis of a decision of the state administration body (Ministry of Agriculture), which will be requested by the VLS headquarters. Individual forest districts will be informed on the issue of the given permit and the respective conditions for the hunt. The mentioned type of trophy game may not be hunted before the permit has been issued.

The employees are motivated to hunt hinds and calves by all available means (harvest of hinds and calves is one of the criteria evaluated when awarding bonuses).

If the staff capacity of a forest district is not sufficient for the specified harvest, the staff from the forest districts where the specified harvest is fulfilled will be deployed.

Individual intensive hunting is used, supported by a larger number of small, temporary baiting sites, which are rotated over time.

5.4.2. Individual fee hunting of trophy game

The general rules for fee hunts in the hunting grounds of the Hořovice Division are regulated by the "general terms and conditions for hunting" set out in Annex 6 to the Directive. In cases when a hunting contract is not concluded with the hunter, they shall sign the 'Declaration on Hunting Safety', a specimen of which is provided in Annex 5 to the Directive. This obligation applies to all guest hunters (fee hunting guests, the members of the Military Hunting Club and non-fee hunting guests) who do not have a hunting contract concluded.

When a fee hunt is completed, it must always be settled – according to the point value of the trophy and the fees associated with the hunt. The settlement will be made solely in the form of a protocol. The prices depend on the current price list of fee hunts for the given hunting season. The settlement of fee hunts must be completed within 14 days of the hunt, but always by the end of the month in which the game was taken. The fees shall be charged even in cases where the hunt has been carried out and no game has been taken. The trophy must always be evaluated by a committee consisting of at least two members. In the case of a roe deer with a score above 105 pts. CIC, red deer above 170 pts. CIC, fallow deer above 160 pts. CIC, mouflon above 185 pts. CIC and tusker above 110 pts. CIC, a member of the operations staff shall be present at the trophy scoring. All fees related to the hunt (trophy fee, escorts, trailing, accommodation, catering, trophy preparation and any other services according to the price list) will be charged through the cash desk of the forest district or by invoice. A complete tax document or invoice must always be issued to the trophy hunter.

Guest hunters with long-term fee permits shall not pay escort fees or fees at non-commercial joint hunting events. They only pay fees for other services associated with the hunt (shot verification, trailing, game shooting (wounding), trophy preparation, accommodation, etc.) – such fees will be charged once within the hunting protocol by 31 December for seasons 4 to 12 and by 31 March for seasons 1 to 3, but no later than 10 days after the expiry of the hunting permit.

Guest hunters with a long-term fee permit are rewarded with a discount on the hunting permit for the following hunting season if they harvest the specified number of hind and calves during the hunting season.

Commercial hunting of trophy deer with escorts shall be conducted only during the deer rut so as not to overburden the staff, who may thus fully concentrate on the clearance hunting.

5.5. Hunting schedule for the Brdy hunting ground.

The hunting schedule shall be issued annually by a decision of the Division Director and shall be structured according to hunting grounds and forest districts. The annex to this decision includes a schedule of the implementation of the hunting plan for individual forest districts and months. It shall be supervised by the division directorate and shall be part of the quarterly evaluation of the heads of the forest districts. The Head of the respective Forest District is responsible for the implementation of the overall hunting plan.

Modelling of actual game numbers is used for the compilation of the hunting schedule (see Chapter 2.2). Comparing the number of game harvested with the results of the game damage surveys in previous years, it is possible to estimate the future trend in game numbers for the next hunting season. The hunting schedule shall be compiled in a way to achieve/maintain a sustainable density of red deer of 0.5-1 animal per 100 ha.

6. Game management

The levels of game populations must reflect the given environment and its carrying capacity. The quality of the habitat is crucial for maintaining game populations in the forests in the long term. Appropriate transformation of forest stands will create a high quality and stable habitat for game in the medium and long term.

Based on the above mentioned, the number of feeding facilities will be reduced during the transition period. When the optimum game numbers are reached, these feeding facilities will be completely removed. The list of game feeding facilities is continuously maintained by the forest districts and submitted as an annex to the Game Management Plan to the operations staff as at 31 March. From 2023 on, only facilities for roughage can be used. By 30 April, all such facilities including their immediate surroundings must be cleaned and disinfected. This cleaning has to be carried out at least once a year. By the same date, all facilities used for the care of game must be inspected by the forest district staff. A record shall be made of the inspection and proposed measures (such as repair, disposal, etc.) in the list of facilities, which is drawn up by the heads of the forest districts as an annex to the annual game management plan. The maintenance and removal of feeding facilities is the responsibility of the head of the forest district.

Grains with a lower gluten content (oats, barley) may only be used on food plots for ruminant cloven-hoofed game. Such food plots shall not be combined with feeding plots for wild boar.

Three no-hunting zones shall be delimited: impact area Kolvín, Tok, and Jordán, where individual hunting is not permitted, except for trophy hunting during the red deer rut. Hunting in these areas shall be carried out in form of one-off joint events.

The reduced game population leads to a higher proportion of tree species, shrubs and herbaceous vegetation subject to browsing. This enhances the carrying capacity of the habitat for game.

7. List of change

2.1. History

4.3. Determining game damage by browsing and peeling using adjusted Saxon methodology

5.2. Hunting facilities

5.3. Targeted group hunt

5.4.1. Individual hunt by employees

6. Game management



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8. Annexes

Form Determining game damage by browsing and peeling using adjusted Saxon methodology:

Form No. 3

Form No. 4

Form No. 4:

Date:.....

Survey of damage by peeling

Serial number:..... Division:..... Forest district:..... FMP:..... „Oddělení“:..... „Dílec“:..... Stand:.....

Management unit:.....

Main tree species:/...../..... Age:/...../..... Type of regeneration:..... Continuous area: yes/ no

Point No./ Tree No.	Tree species	Peeling		Point No./ Tree No.	Tree species	Peeling		Point No./ Tree No.	Tree species	Peeling		Point No./ Tree No.	Tree species	Peeling		Point No./ Tree No.	Tree species	Peeling	
		old	new																
1/1				2/1				3/1				4/1				5/1			
2				2				2				2				2			
3				3				3				3				3			
4				4				4				4				4			
5				5				5				5				5			
6				6				6				6				6			
7				7				7				7				7			
8				8				8				8				8			
9				9				9				9				9			
10				10				10				10				10			
Center distance to 10th tree (m):				Center distance to 10th tree (m):				Center distance to 10th tree (m):				Center distance to 10th tree (m):				Center distance to 10th tree (m):			
Point No./ Tree No.	Tree species	Peeling		Point No./ Tree No.	Tree species	Peeling		Point No./ Tree No.	Tree species	Peeling		Point No./ Tree No.	Tree species	Peeling		Point No./ Tree No.	Tree species	Peeling	
		old	new																
6/1				7/1				8/1				9/1				10/1			
2				2				2				2				2			
3				3				3				3				3			
4				4				4				4				4			
5				5				5				5				5			
6				6				6				6				6			
7				7				7				7				7			
8				8				8				8				8			
9				9				9				9				9			
10				10				10				10				10			
Center distance to 10th tree (m):				Center distance to 10th tree (m):				Center distance to 10th tree (m):				Center distance to 10th tree (m):				Center distance to 10th tree (m):			

Legend: 0 - without peeling
 1 - isolated signs of peeling with damage to the cambium
 2 - up to one third of trees damaged by peeling
 3 - one to two thirds of trees damaged by peeling
 4 - more than two thirds of trees damaged by peeling
 5 - individual protection

None: Drawing:

Peeling	old		new	
	n	%	n	%
0				
1				
2				
3				
4				
Σ				