

7th June 2024

**Open letter to the President of the Region Apulia, President of the Province of Lecce
and to the Mayors of Nardò and Porto Cesareo**

**Stop the planned deforestation of the Bosco D'Arneo for the planned expansion of the
Porsche race and test track now!**

Dear Mr. Emiliano, dear Mr. Minerva, dear Mr. Mellone, dear Mrs. Tarantino,

ROBIN WOOD and over 20 environmental initiatives from Europe and around the world welcome the fact that Mr. Emiliano has temporarily halted the planned clearing of the completely healthy Bosco D'Arneo.

We appeal to all of you to do everything in your power to stop the planned deforestation permanently.

To avoid soil sealing on even more land and to preserve the forest with its countless ecosystem functions - which are particularly important for climate protection and biodiversity - the Porsche test track must not be extended!

The Bosco D'Arneo is an old and healthy, valuable forest. It is protected by the EU as a Natura 2000 site. According to EU law, it may only be encroached if a planned measure serves the common good and if it is possible to compensate for the damage caused.

Porsche argues that the existing fire brigade would be expanded and that this would benefit the population. The construction of a new helipad would also benefit the population in the event of urgent patient transport.

Both these reasons were not recognised by the EU Commission: *'In reality, the negative impacts on habitats 6220 and 9340 result directly from the works to widen the test tracks in the NTC intervention area (...) However, from the examination of all currently available documentation, the justification of the project on human health and public safety grounds is not considered adequate. In fact, the project appears to have an outstanding economic interest (...)'*, said Andrea Vettori, Head of the Nature Conservation Unit of the European Commission's Directorate-General for Environment and Biodiversity.

In addition, in the event of deforestation, adequate compensation measures by Porsche would only be a utopian dream. The planned planting of 1.2 million seedlings over an area of 600 hectares would require decades of artificial irrigation in order to grow under the extremely harsh climatic conditions of Apulia. However, Porsche only wants to support the compensatory measure for five years. The exorbitant amount of groundwater required to irrigate the seedlings would accelerate the progressive salinisation of the groundwater. Accordingly, Porsche holds a permit to draw up to 1000 cubic meters of ground water per year to be used for hygiene purposes and fire protection. The compensation measures as mentioned in the project and required by EU law are doomed to fail right from the start; it would not serve to protect nature and the environment, but to promote Porsche's greenwashing by concealing blatant environmental offences.

As we all know, climate change is progressing rapidly. Periods of heat and drought will increase in the future, especially in southern Europe, including Apulia. The centuries-old Bosco D'Arneo is a local protective shield against this climate catastrophe - a protective shield that cannot be replaced.

If even the very last remnant of a healthy ecosystem in a landscape already heavily affected by climate change is wiped out, how can the people of Apulia and all of us on this planet survive? What use are international nature conservation rules if they are ignored as soon as economic interests come into play?

We appeal to you to take responsibility for the future of your region and the planet: Ensure the implementation of existing EU legislation to protect nature! Set a good example and do everything in your power to protect the Bosco D'Arneo in the long term! Resist the pressure from an international car company to put profit interests above environmental protection - the civil society stands behind you!

Kind regards,

Julian Smaluhn (Board of Directors, ROBIN WOOD, Germany) on behalf of all signatories

List of all signatories:

EU

Adam Eagle, CEO, The Lifescape Project, United Kingdom and international

Artur Milewski, Founder, Forests Now! (and forever), Poland

Biofuelwatch, Almuth Ernsting, Codirector, United Kingdom

Evelyn Schönheit, Environmental Scientist, Forum Ökologie & Papier, Germany

Hans Hedrich, Deputy Chairman, Verein Neuer Weg; Romania

Heinz Kowalski, Deputy Spokesman, NABU Federal Forest & Game Committee, Germany

Klaus Schenck, Director, Salva la Selva, Spain

Lina Burnelius, Project Leader and International Coordinator, Protect the Forest, Sweden

Maarten Visschers, Boardmember, Leefmilieu, Netherlands

Marianne Klute, Chairwoman, Rettet den Regenwald e.V. (Rainforest Rescue), Germany

Marjan Houpt, Co-Founder, Landelijk Netwerk Bossen- en Bomenbescherming (Dutch National Network for the Protection of Forests & Trees – LNBBB), Holland

Matthias Fischer, Head of Communications, Naturforest Academy (Naturwald Akademie), Germany

Peter Langhammer, Founder, WaldWerkstatt, Germany

Peter Wohlleben, CEO, Wohllebens Wald und Wildnis gGmbH, Germany

Rubens Carvalho, Deputy Director, Earthsight, United Kingdom

Dr. Sandra Altherr, Head of Science and Co-Founder, Pro Wildlife, Germany

Sylvia Hamberger, First Chairwoman, Gesellschaft für ökologische Forschung (Society for Ecological Research), Germany

International

Andy Wood, Director, Coastal Plain Conservation Group, United States

Bob Bancroft, President, Nature Nova Scotia, Canada

Claudia Zenhäusern, Founder, health-and-forest.org/, Switzerland

Ines Gavrilut, Eastern Europe Campaigner, Bruno Manser Fonds, Switzerland.

Nicholas Bell, International Coordinator, European Civic Forum, France/Switzerland

Sophia Bauer, Bioenergy & Geothermal Project Manager, Global Energy Monitor, United States

Yuyun Indradi, Director Executive, Trend Asia, Indonesia