

Advancing sustainable resource management through community engagement in Eastern Partnership Countries

Armenia, Georgia, Moldova & Ukraine

From Forests to Local Development in Ukraine: Strengthening Community Engagement in Forest Governance and Sustainable Livelihoods

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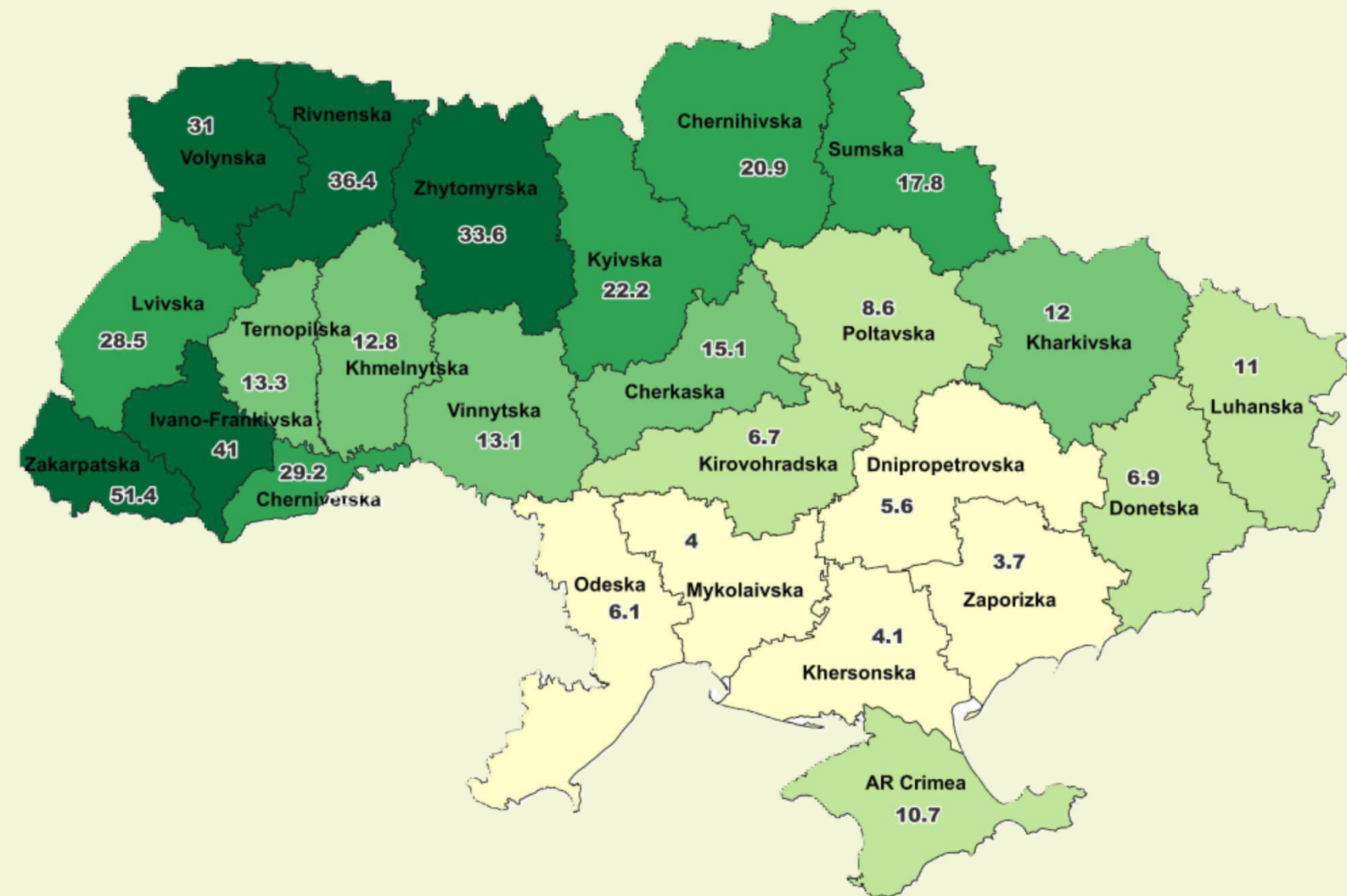
About Ukrainian forests

- Forest cover: **~16%** (~10 million ha)
- Diverse forest landscapes: Carpathians – Polissia – Forest-Steppe – Steppe
- Forests unevenly distributed

Forest governance is mostly centralized:

- **~80%** of forests are managed by state forest enterprises
- **12%** are communal forests
- **1.5%** are privately owned.

Ukraine also contains extensive protected areas and Emerald Network sites, many of which overlap with forest landscapes and influence local development opportunities.

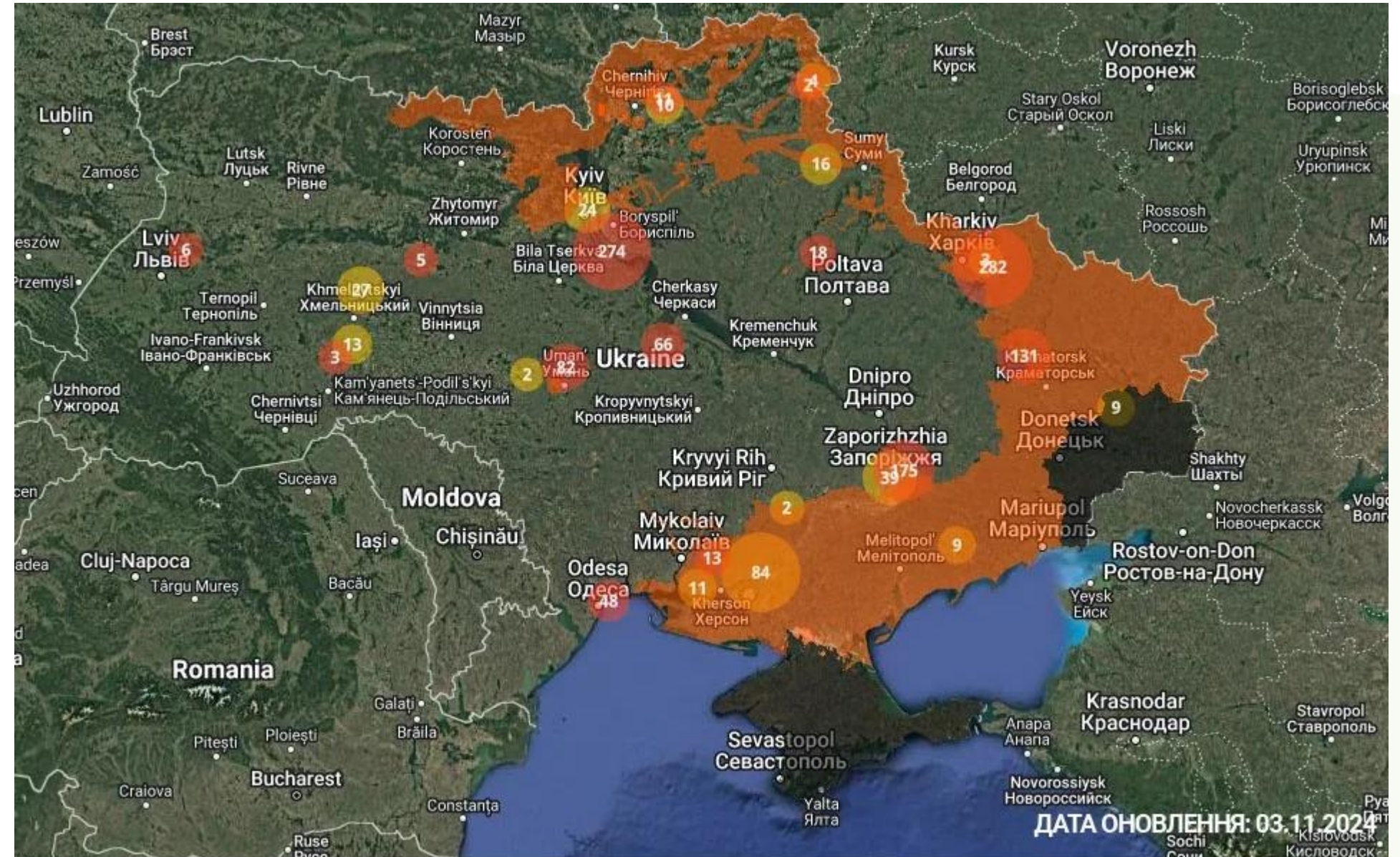


Forest cover (% of oblast area)

Source: State Forest Resources Agency of Ukraine

Project Implementation Under Wartime Conditions

- Project implemented during Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine
- Around 20% of Ukraine's forests have been affected by occupation, hostilities or restricted access
- Communities faced significant social, economic and governance challenges
- Despite these challenges, pilot communities remained actively involved in identifying local forest-based development opportunities.

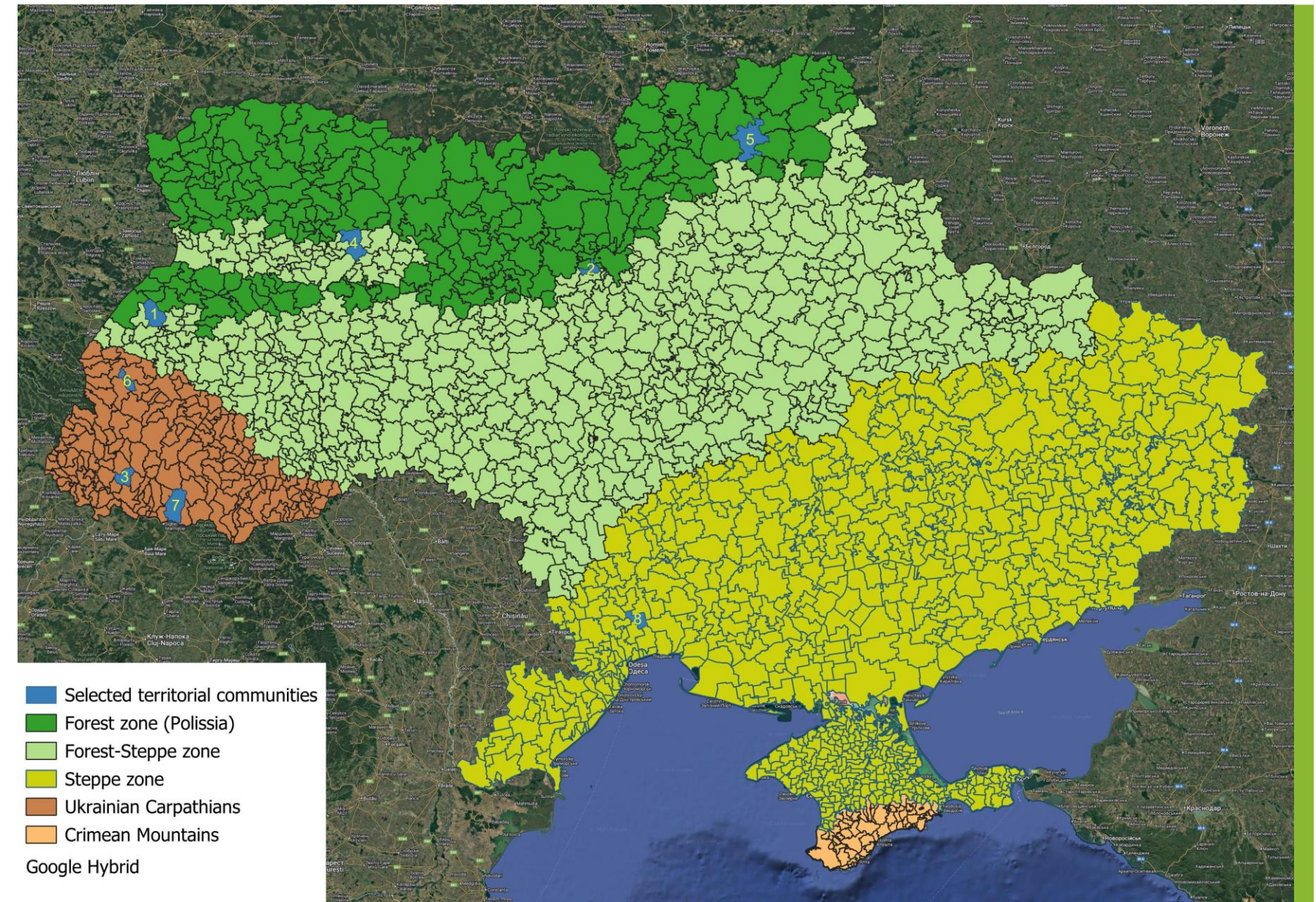


Territorial Communities under Decentralization Reform

Since decentralization reform, territorial communities have become key actors in local development

Territorial community (*hromada*) - a local self-governance unit

- Usually formed by amalgamation of several settlements (villages, towns and/or a small city)
 - Has elected council and mayor
 - Has its own budget and revenues
 - Responsible for local development, spatial planning and environmental programmes
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- 1,469 territorial communities in Ukraine
 - 8 pilot communities selected
 - 4 natural zones represented

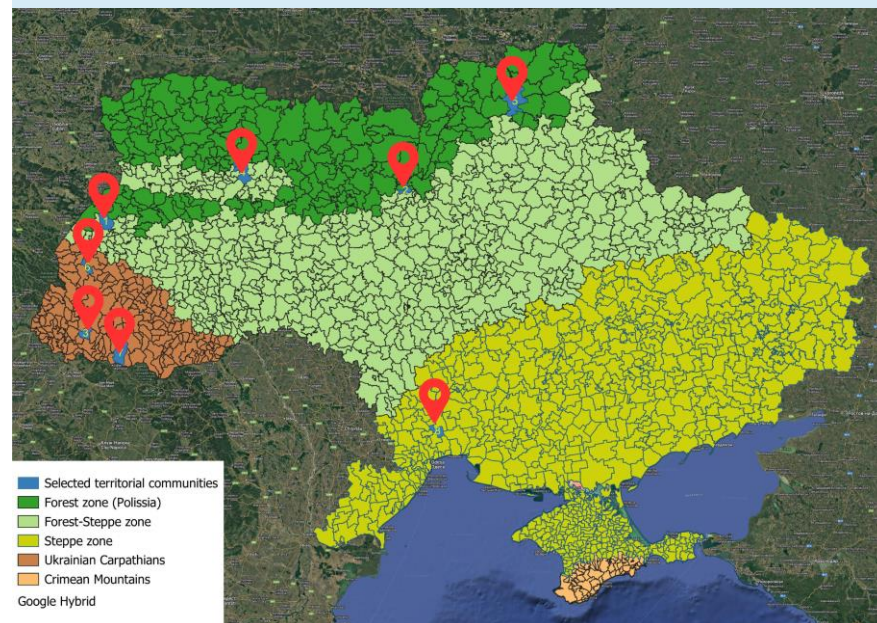


Different landscapes create different pathways for local development.

Project Approach and Key Findings

How we worked

- 🔍 Resource mapping
- ⚖️ Legal review
- 🌐 GIS analysis
- 👥 Surveys and consultations
- 🏠 8 pilot territorial Communities
- Field visits, EU experience



What we learned

- 🌲 **Forests are increasingly viewed as development assets**
 - Local economic development
 - Tourism opportunities
 - Community well-being
 - Ecosystem services
- 🏛️ **Communities have limited influence**
 - Forests mostly managed by other actors
 - Limited participation in decision-making
 - Forests and natural resources often underrepresented in local strategies
- 💰 **Economic benefits remain limited**
 - Forest revenues mostly indirect
 - Land tax and payroll taxes dominate
 - Limited value-added processing and local businesses
- 🌱 **Communities need practical mechanisms to unlock opportunities**

What we produced

- Analytical report
- Practical tools
- Recommendations and implementation concepts
- Community trainings

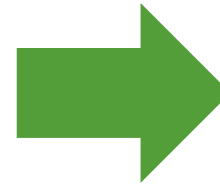


From Opportunities to Community Priorities

Bottom-up identification of local development priorities

Potential forest-based development pathways

- 🌲 Secondary succession forests
- 🌲 Non-timber forest products
- 🌲 Nature-based tourism
- 🌲 Carbon initiatives
- 🌲 Shelterbelts and afforestation
- 🌲 Wood products
- 🌲 Private forestry



Pilot communities selected three priority pathways



- 🌲 Nature –based tourism
- 🌲 Secondary succession forests
- 🌲 Non-timber forest products



Case 1 · Ivano – Frankivska TC

Tourism and Landscape Governance

📍 Lviv oblast

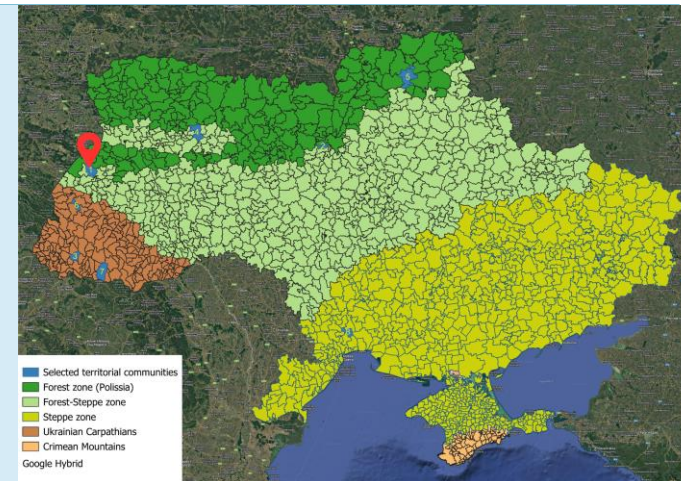
- 43% forest cover
- 24% protected areas
- UNESCO World Heritage forests
- Emerald Network (Roztochia Transboundary biosphere reserve)

Challenge

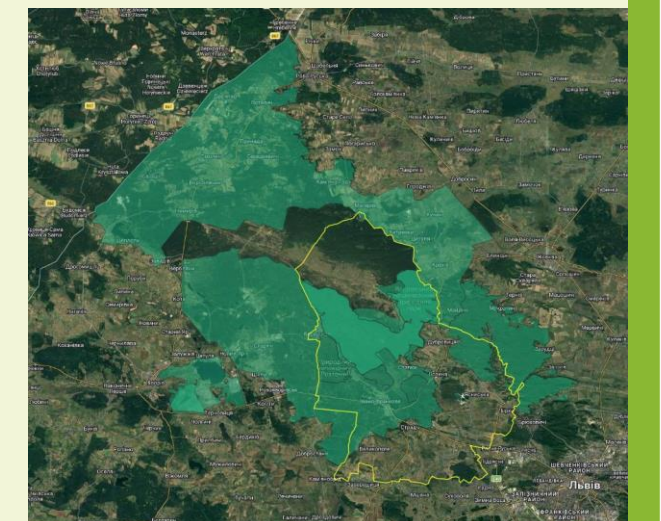
- Multiple forest users
- Fragmented tourism offer

Project response

- Tourist asset inventory template
- Tourism development concept
- Tourism Council - platform
- Strategic recommendations



Emerald Network site Roztochia



Case 2 · Hoshchanska TC

Secondary Succession Forests: From Recognition to Management

Rivne oblast

 Agricultural landscape, forest cover 8%)

 485 ha of secondary succession forests (236 sites) on communal land

Why now?

 Large areas of abandoned agricultural land have naturally reverted to forest.

 Recent legislation created opportunities to formalize and manage these forests.

Key challenge: Risk of illegal logging, wildfire, responsibility of TC.

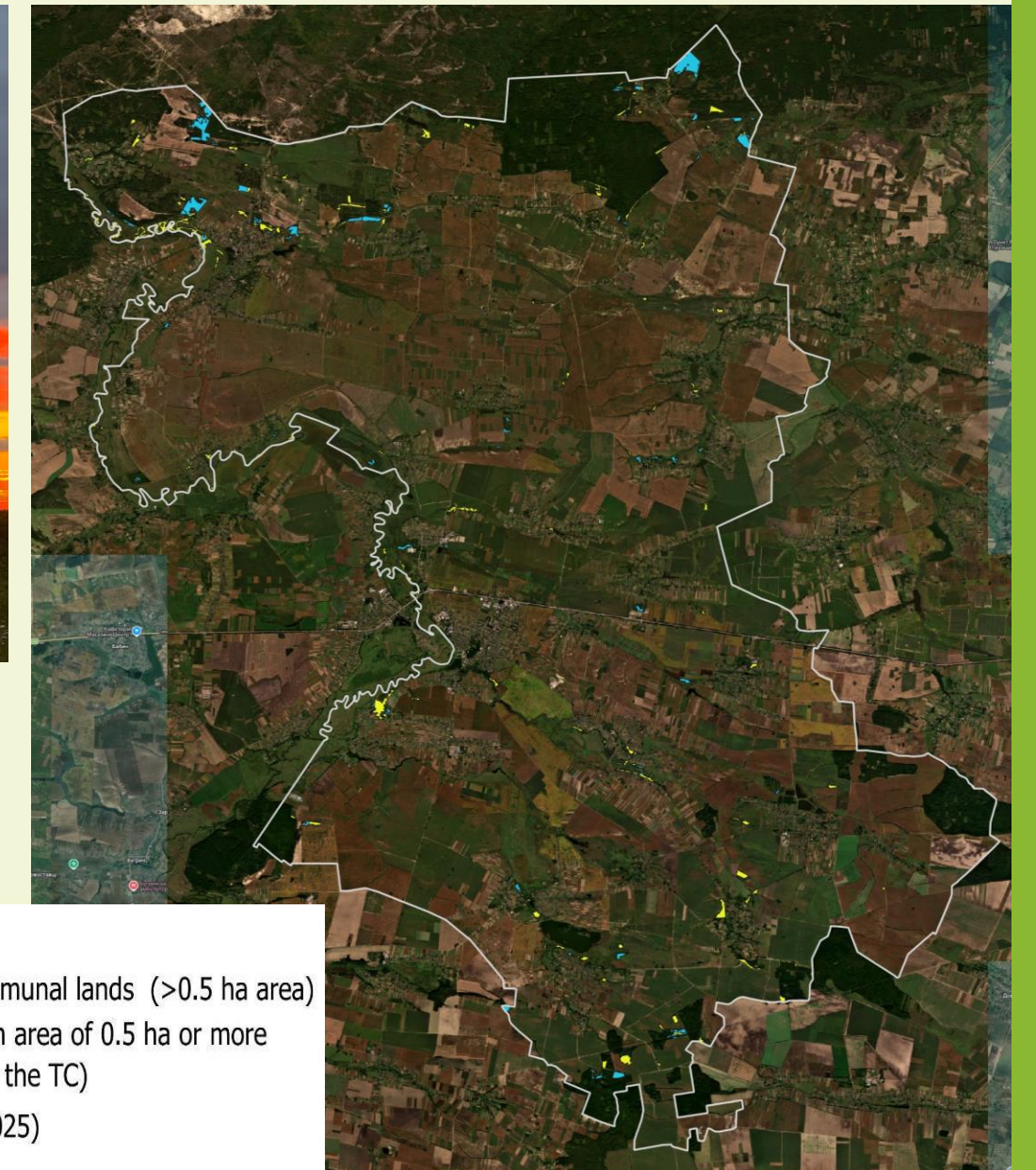
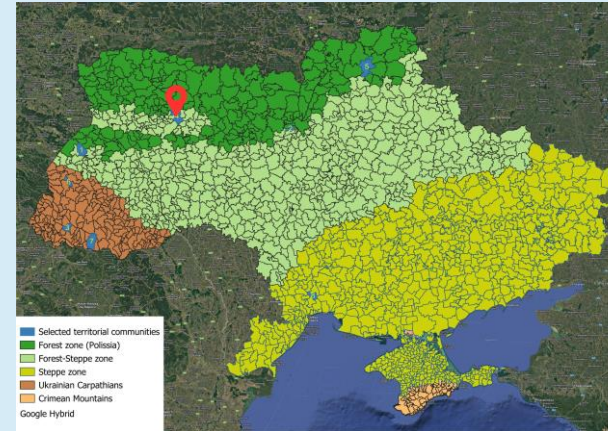
Project response

Four management options evaluated:

- Protected areas
- Communal forest management
- Transfer to state forestry
- Private ownership (where legally possible)

 Financial feasibility of communal forest management assessed

Discussed voluntary carbon project option



Secondary succession forests identified through GIS analysis



Case 3 · Dovzhanska TC

From Forest Resources to Local Benefits

📍 Carpathian Mountains

🌲 75% forest cover

🌳 Primeval beech forests

📍 Emerald Network site

🌿 Rich non-timber forest products potential

Key challenge: Rich NTFP resources exist, but communities lack clear pathways for their legal and sustainable use.

Project outputs

📄 Legal roadmap for NTFP use across different land categories:

🌲 Forest fund lands

🌿 Communal non-forest lands

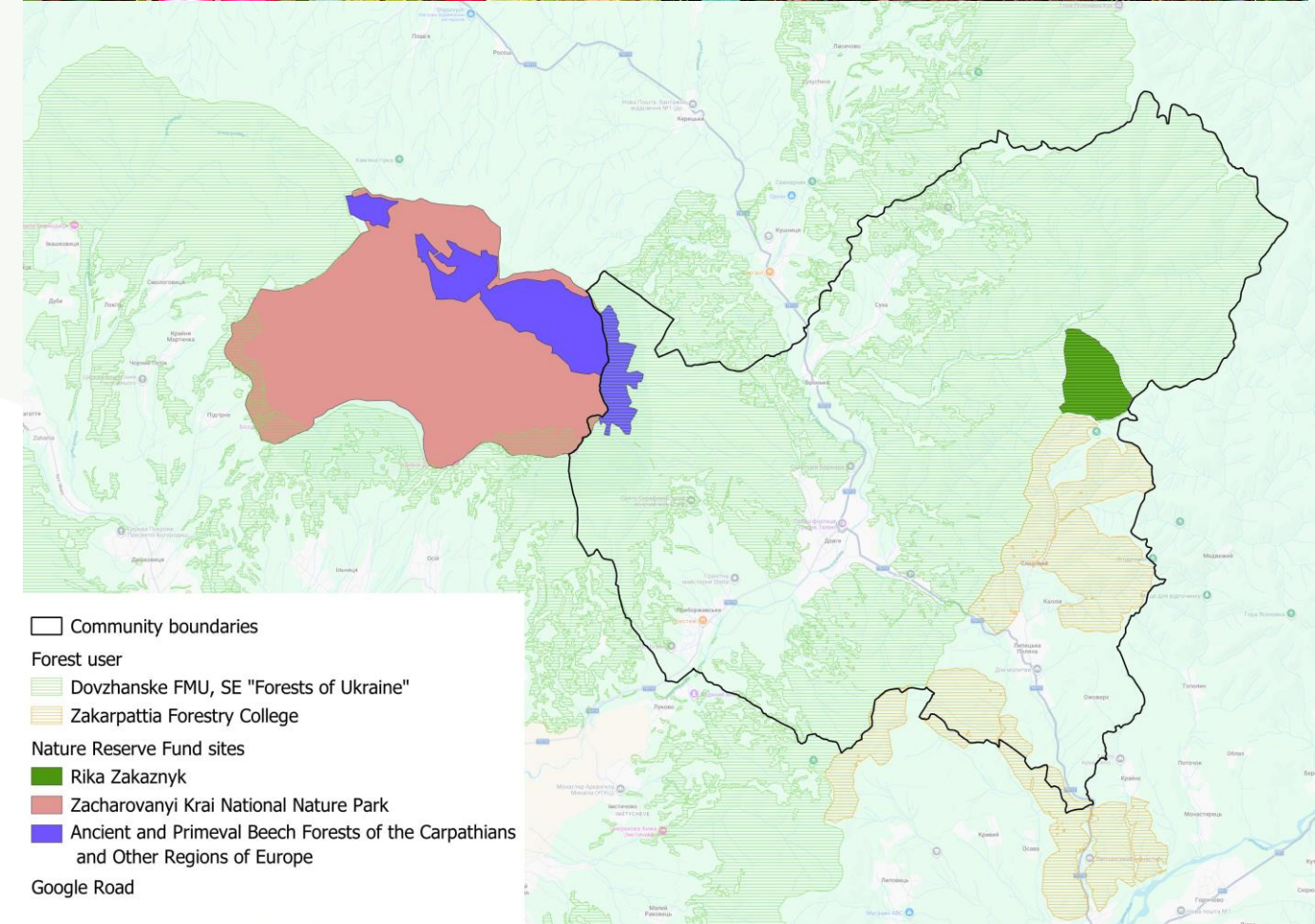
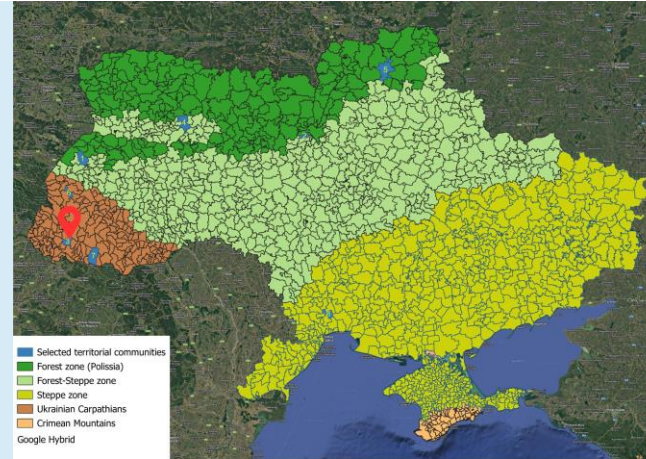
📍 Protected areas

📊 Economic calculator and implementation roadmap

✉️ Community engagement in forest management planning

First practical step

Community initiated participation in forest management planning and proposed inclusion of NTFPs into forest resource assessments.



From Analysis to Practical Tools

Challenges identified

- Fragmented governance
- Legal uncertainty
- Limited community capacity
- Weak economic benefits

Tools developed

- **Practical Guide for Territorial Communities**
- Tourism asset inventory framework
- NTFP implementation roadmap
- NTFP legal guidance
- NTFP economic calculator
- Secondary succession forest management options
- Forest-site inventory template
- Ecological passport template

Practical tools were developed to help communities translate opportunities into action.

What the Pilot Communities Taught Us

Forests matter for local development

Tourism, local non-timber forest products, ecosystem services and recreation were consistently identified as local opportunities.

Cooperation matters more than ownership

Successful development depends on coordination among multiple actors managing the same landscape. (Ivano-Frankivska, Dovzhanska TC)

Legal pathways matter

The challenge is often not the lack of resources, but the lack of clear pathways to use them legally and sustainably. (Hoshchanska, Dovzhanska TC)

Forest-based economic potential remains underutilized

Forest revenues remain largely indirect and local value-added is limited.

Awareness and practical tools unlock opportunities

Many opportunities already exist, but communities often lack information about legal pathways, management options and available instruments.

Forests create opportunities. Communities create benefits.

Community engagement is the bridge between forest resources and local development.



Thank you



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