UNECE/FAO Green Forest Jobs Workshop

Nature, Health & Wellbeing Ireland

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Nature, Health & Wellbeing Ireland

Designs and delivers nature based interventions to promote health and wellbeing in Ireland
Problem & Potential

Solution

- stress
  - anxiety
  - overwhelmed
  - fear
  - pressure
  - feeling
  - strain
  - panic attack
  - depression
  - insecurity
  - avoidance
  - trauma
  - post-traumatic stress disorder
  - PTSD
  - veterans
  - veterans' stress
  - veterans' mental health
  - mental health problems
  - panic attacks
  - concentration
  - trigger
  - acute arousal
  - trigger
  - relaxation
  - mindfulness
  - meditation
  - exercise
  - nature
  - stress reduction

(Sign: Petrichor
- the pleasant, earthy smell after rain)
“It is not so much for its beauty that the forest makes a claim upon men’s hearts, as for that subtle something, that quality of air, that emanation from old trees, that so wonderfully changes and renews a weary spirit”

Robert Louis Stevenson (1904)
Mental Health

• One in four people will experience some kind of mental health problem in their lifetime

• WHO predicts that depression and anxiety will be the 2\textsuperscript{nd} biggest cause of illness by 2020

• Predicted 70\% of world population will live in cities by 2050

• Major link between urbanization and mental illness
Thinking Outside the Box
Forest Therapy:

An evidence-based integrative wellness practice benefitting people and nature
"SHINRIN-YOKU MEANS BATHING IN THE FOREST ATMOSPHERE, OR TAKING IN THE FOREST THROUGH OUR SENSES. THIS IS NOT EXERCISE, OR HIKING, OR JOGGING. IT IS SIMPLY BEING IN NATURE, CONNECTING WITH IT THROUGH OUR SENSES OF SIGHT, HEARING, TASTE, SMELL AND TOUCH. IT IS LIKE A BRIDGE. BY OPENING OUR SENSES, IT BRIDGES THE GAP BETWEEN US AND THE NATURAL WORLD."

QING LI, AUTHOR OF THE ART AND SCIENCE OF FOREST BATHING
Green Forest Jobs

- Economy
- Ecology
- Forest Therapy
- Society
- Health
Potential for Green Forest Job Creation

- Health Promotion
- Disease Prevention
- Treatment
- Rehabilitation

Forests
Forest Therapy Wellbeing Walks
Workplace Wellbeing
6 Week Stress Intervention

6 Week, 2 hour sessions

Forests in Ireland
5 Key Components

- Nature Connection Invitations
- Mindfulness
- Gentle Physical Activity
- Solo Time (Reflection)
- Expressive Arts
Forest Therapy for Mental Health Recovery
ANFT European Training
3 Main Pathways between Forests and Health Benefits

- Directly through restorative effects
- Indirectly through opportunities for social contact
- Indirectly through opportunities for physical activity
Health Benefits of Spending Time in Forests

Physical Health
- Reduces stress & blood pressure
- Boosts immune functioning
- Improves cardiovascular health
- Reduces blood sugar levels

Mental Health
- Improves mood
- Reduces anxiety
- Enhances cognitive functioning
- Improves concentration
- Increases vitality

Social Wellbeing
- Enhances social cohesion
- Reduces health inequalities
- Reduces crime
Forest Medicine

- Restorative Environments
- Phytoncides
- Microbes
- Negative Ions (water)
- Oxygen rich clean air
- Soundscape
- Sunlight
- Optimal colour mix
- Fractal patterns
Green Prescription

The Health Benefits of Nature

- For children, outdoor play in a natural setting can improve motor strength, balance and coordination. (Fjortoft, 2001)
- Exposure to nature can improve depression, anxiety, and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. (Sugiyama, Leslie, Giles-Corti & Owen, 2008) (Taylor & Kuo, 2009)
- Positive experiences in nature can lead to a lifelong commitment to caring for and conserving natural resources. (Wells & Lekies 2006)
- Time spent in places with natural landscaping can encourage social interactions and integrations. (Kweah, Sullivan & Wiley, 1998)
- Time in nature may contribute to children's cognitive, emotional, social, and educational development. (Stirke & Downey, 2009)
- For the elderly, time outdoors in a natural setting can improve cognition. (Ottoson & Graham 2005)
- Exercising outdoors can reduce sadness, anger, and fatigue and improve attention spans. (Blower, Buyung-Alif, Knight & Pullin, 2010)
- Spending time outdoors is associated with improved distance vision. (Rose et al, 2008)
- Regular exposure to bright natural light can increase vitamin D levels and decrease blood sugar levels among diabetics. (F.E. Kuo, 2010)
Optimal Forest Therapy Trails

- Easy public access with car parking and toilet facilities
- Access to a workshop space onsite
- Looping trails approx 3-5 km
- Mixed woodland
- Rich biodiversity
- Presence of stream/waterfall
- Natural soundscape
- Well maintained wide trails
- Little incline
- Few tripping hazards
- Forest Therapy signage
- Rest places along the trails
Forest Therapy Guide Research

- 116 ANFT Forest Therapy Guides (1/3 of all members)
- Forest Therapy Facebook Group
- 28 countries represented
- 77% female
- 86% educated to Diploma/Degree/Masters level
Forest Therapy Guide Survey

Skills
- Naturalist knowledge
- Forest Therapy knowledge
- Group facilitation
- Mental health awareness
- First aid
- Communication
- Mindfulness
- Nature connection
- Business and Marketing

Challenges
- Credibility and acceptability amongst healthcare professionals
- Lack of awareness amongst public
- Access to safe, quality trails for urban populations
- Severe Weather
- Limited government funding
- Gap between research and practice

Future Needs
- Integration into healthcare systems
- Development of Forest Therapy programs within universities
- Designing specific forest therapy interventions for specific populations
- Designated forest therapy trails and bases internationally
- Guide Diversity
Forest Therapy Groups

- Dementia
- ADHD

- Caregiver stress
- Domestic violence

- Addiction
- War Veterans

- Mental Health
- HIV

- Children and families

- Cancer support

- Disabilities

- Occupational Stress and burnout
# UN Sustainable Development Goals

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| **1. No Poverty** |
| **2. Zero Hunger** |
| **3. Good Health and Well-being** |
| **4. Quality Education** |
| **5. Gender Equality** |
| **6. Peace and Justice** |
| **7. Responsible Consumption and Production** |
| **8. Decent Work and Economic Growth** |
| **9. Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure** |
| **10. Reduced Inequalities** |
| **11. Sustainable Cities and Communities** |
| **12. Responsible Consumption and Production** |
| **13. Climate Action** |
| **14. Life on Land** |
| **15. Life Below Water** |
Ecosystem Services

- Health Crisis
- Care time bomb
- Exorbitant Health care costs
- High prescribing
- Environmental Crisis
- Loss of biodiversity
- Deforestation
- Nature Deficit Disorder

FOREST THERAPY
Forest Therapy has major potential for the development of Green Forest Jobs internationally.

Cultural Services

Ecosystems Services
Ecosystem Services

- Designated Forest Therapy Trails and Bases
- Forest Therapy Research
- Ecotourism
- Forest Therapy Guides
- Forest Infrastructure
“When I lie on the forest floor, I know nature will not judge me, abandon and forsake me, expect anything of me, just lets me be there, accepting me allowing, showing my place in it all”

Forest Therapy Participant
Thank You