



Engelberg, November 2nd 2015

Welcome to Engelberg and Welcome to the Canton of Obwalden

Dear Participants of the 3rd European Forest Week

It is a great pleasure for me to welcome you to Engelberg. The village of Engelberg is one of seven municipalities in the canton of Obwalden. With around 37,200 inhabitants and with an area of 491 km², Obwalden is one of the smaller cantons of Switzerland. But we do have a lot to offer: we are located in the middle of Switzerland, which makes us an attractive place to live and work. The cities of Basel, Bern and Zurich are all reachable within 90 minutes. We are also surrounded by beautiful nature, with mountains, forests and lakes.

One out of ten jobs in Obwalden is in the agriculture and forestry sector. Compared to the average in Switzerland, this number is quite high. But nowadays, as is normal for Switzerland, the other two sectors (industrial and services) are more important for our economy. Some technology companies that are well known internationally have their production plants or their headquarters in Obwalden. For example maxon motor, Leister, Sika, or alpna.ch. And we have famous ski resorts. One of them, of course, is Engelberg itself, with the famous Mount Titlis.

40 % of the territory of Obwalden is covered by forest, and 87 % of this forest is owned by cooperatives. Most of it is maintained by seven different forestry companies from Obwalden. The main trees in our woods are the Spruce (60 %), the Beech (18 %) and the Silver Fir (7 %).

The existing forest is very important for Obwalden, since it fulfils various crucial functions. One of those functions is protection from natural hazards, such as landslides, avalanches and rockfalls. Our overall strategy in our daily work with these natural hazards is called "Integrated Risk Management". It means that we are trying to pursue a holistic approach in dealing with them. Over the last few years, we have realised that it is much more cost-effective for us to maintain our protective forests than it is to build new technical protective structures.

But the forest is not only important to us because of its protective functions. It is also an important place for recreation, it is important for the conservation of our landscape, it gives us clean drinking water, and it is also a habitat for our plants and animals. And – last but not least – the forest is an important raw material supplier and therefore an important employer for our people.

Dear participants of the European Forest Week – I wish you an interesting and very productive week here in Engelberg.

On behalf of the Government Council of the Canton of Obwalden

Paul Federer

Member of the Government Council