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Presentations	Session 5.1	<i>Comparative analysis of policymaking and implementation regarding integrated forest management.</i>

*Abstract Session 5.1 – Protecting forest, animals or both? Foresters and wildlife management in Poland.*

Forests play a crucial role for sustaining of biodiversity, including populations of large, charismatic wildlife species. Forest managers need to balance sustainable forestry with the requirements of wildlife, managed either as game or as protected species. However, reconciling these two objectives may sometimes be problematic and can lead to social conflicts. In my paper I explore tensions connected with protecting large mammals in forests by investigating disputes over the management of three wildlife species (the moose, the European bison, and the wolf) in Poland. My research is theoretically informed by new institutionalism, particularly its discursive and historical strains, and the Advocacy Coalition Framework. Data collection was carried out between 2015 and 2019 within a larger project on wildlife management and involved desk research and 42 semi-structured interviews. I suggest that each of the analysed species involved a different dilemma for forest management. The wolf was protected in Poland since 1998, mainly as a result of the lobbying of environmental NGOs that highlighted its role in regulating wild game and reducing damage to forests. Some foresters were critical of the protection regime though and highlighted its negative effects. In the case of the European bison, the State Forest Holding had been involved in the restitution of the species and its management. In recent years, however, it became increasingly criticized by environmental actors for the lethal control of bison populations, which allegedly violated the EU Habitat Directive. The moose is a game species, but since 2001 moose hunt has been suspended and foresters are trying to restore it because of damages the increasingly numerous species does to the forests. I argue that disputes over wildlife management reveal a wider struggle for a control over institutions regulating wildlife management in Poland between coalitions of actors representing utilitarian and ecosystem-oriented beliefs and values.