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Press release

In the Land of Wildcats and Giant Trees

Commitment to nature conservation by Institute for Federal Real Estate (BImA) and Rentenbank acclaimed as UN Decade Project

Frankfurt. Nature conservation is a priority at Buchenborn Forest near Friedberg-Ockstadt in Hesse, Germany. For four years, the Institute for Federal Real Estate (BImA) has been running numerous projects aimed at promoting biodiversity and species conservation with Rentenbank. The partners have had their work commended as a UN Decade Project. Oliver Conz, the undersecretary to the Hessian Ministry for the Environment, symbolically handed over the 'Tree of Diversity' to BImA board member Paul Johannes Fietz and Nikola Steinbock, divisional board member for Promotional Business at Rentenbank.

'For many years BImA's Federal Forest Service division has been supporting the implementation of our national strategy for biodiversity at its properties. Today's commendation as a UN Decade Project underlines this important work and shows what we achieved together for biodiversity,' stressed BImA board member Paul Johannes Fietz.

'As Germany's development agency for agribusiness and forestry, biodiversity and sustainability are important to us at Rentenbank. So we are very glad to have been able to set this project up with BImA. We want it to demonstrate how careful ecological forest management can contribute to nature and species protection and consequently enhance everyone's living environment,' said Nikola Steinbock, divisional board member at Rentenbank.

Old Giant Trees

The giant tree project has more than a thousand old and individual trees with large crown widths across an area of 500 ha in the Buchenborn Forest under protection. The valuable individual trees will no longer be disturbed in their natural development within and alongside the forest ecosystem. In the past, these trees were often felled before they could reach their natural age of over 300 years. Nevertheless, they play a

significant role in the ecosystem because they provide the forest with protection from frost or too much sun like an umbrella and contribute substantially to the natural rejuvenation of the forest. Until they decompose naturally, they also provide numerous creatures with a home including birds, bats and beetles.

Romanticism in the Caspar David Friedrich Forest

'The best ham is grown at the oaks' was the swineherds' saying in the Middle Ages. The forest pasture as an early form of use of old forests was what linked forestry to agriculture. This particular type of forest is a famous and widely used motif in paintings of German romantic artist Caspar David Friedrich (1774-1840). There is a copy of such a forest pasture in the Buchenborn Forest where the tree populations are infused with light and its use as pasture prevents the growth of new trees. As a result, more light reaches the forest floor, which is advantageous to plants and animals with a special need for light.

On silent paws

Small rodents may feel at home between berries, acorns and beechnuts but they are never far away from the European wildcat (*Felis silvestris*). Once near extinction, it has resettled in several large scale forested areas in Germany which tend to have fringe areas and clearings. However, the population continues to be endangered and is therefore rigorously protected. The construction of roads and housing developments is reducing their natural hunting ground. The shy species can gain so much more benefit from the forest near Friedberg-Ockstadt because of its structural diversity in a natural setting. They can find hollow trunks and piles of deadwood there to meet their need to keep out of sight. The vast, uninterrupted forest also provides them with the quiet and space they need to choose an area for breeding.

Every year, in order to monitor the population, poles with brushes infused with valerian are set up to lure the wildcats and make them mark their territory. The Senckenberg Research Institute based in Frankfurt carries out the regular genetic analyses of the hair samples which are caught in the brushes and documents this.

UN Decade on Biodiversity

The UN Decade on Biodiversity initiative was created in 2011 by the United Nations. It was intended to raise awareness and draw attention to the preservation and protection of biodiversity which is diminishing in almost all countries across the globe. Up to the end of 2020, the UN will continue to reward particularly successful activities and projects such as the 'Forest of Wildcats and Giant Tress' under the 'life.nature.diversity' banner.

The property's history

Until the first armoured division pulled out from where they were stationed in Friedberg in 2008, the forest area around the Winterstein range had been used by the US military. Even before the end of the Second World War, Buchenborn had been a parade ground and firing range. When the US Army released and returned the forest in 2008, BImA's Federal Forest Service division took on the maintenance of the area. Today the forest is at the heart of various nature conservation projects.

Rentenbank press contact:

Christof Altmann, Tel: +49 69 2107 393, Fax: +49-69/2107-6447
Email - altmann@rentenbank.de

BImA press contact:

Thorsten Grützner, Tel: +49 228 37787-171, Fax: +49-228 37787-172
Email - presse@bundesimmobilien.de

Background information:

Landwirtschaftliche Rentenbank is Germany's development agency for agribusiness and rural areas. Under its statutory promotional mandate, Rentenbank provides loans at favourable interest rates for agriculture-related investments via other banks on a competitively neutral basis. Rentenbank provides funding for banks, savings banks and local authorities operating in rural areas. The appropriation of profits is also subject to the promotional mandate. The Bank is a federal public law institution whose capital stock was formed by contributions paid by the German agricultural and forestry sectors. It is subject to the German Banking Act (KWG) and is regulated by the Federal Financial Supervisory Authority (BaFin) and the Bundesbank. The Bank is one of the few triple-A rated institutions in Germany and raises funds primarily in the financial markets. Rentenbank does not receive any funds from the federal government budget but generates its own funds to keep fulfilling its statutory promotional mandate and its operations running.

The **Institute for Federal Real Estate** is Germany's Federal Real Estate service provider. It falls under the responsibility of the Federal Ministry of Finance and acts in accordance with modern practices within property management. It is registered in Bonn. Its main role is the integrated management of the federal properties, their administration and sales as well as the management of the forests and nature conservation areas. BImA also has a great deal of affordable residential property at its disposal which it primarily provides to employees of the federal government as part of a housing assistance programme. The institute supports the federal government's initiative to create housing by itself initiating building projects. BImA provides the property and space required by the federal ministries from its portfolio, through new builds, purchase or rental. It then makes the properties available to the users by means of rental agreements. With around 4,600 properties, BImA administers almost all federal properties, which include the administrative buildings of the federal government's ministries and the supreme federal authorities as well as the entire property portfolio of the Federal Armed Forces.