Dear Editors,

I am submitting the manuscript “What data to use for forest conservation planning? A comparison of coarse open and detailed proprietary forest inventory data in Finland” for your consideration for publication as a research article in PLOS ONE. I have prepared the work with the co-authors, who have all read the final version and given their consent on submitting the manuscript. We have permission to publish the work presented in the manuscript, which has not been submitted elsewhere and has no prior interactions with PLOS ONE.

Many countries around the world collect and maintain national forest inventory (NFI) databases primarily meant for forest management planning. In contrast, we are severely limited in terms of available biodiversity data that is needed as the basis of informed conservation decision-making [1–3]. This paucity of data is made worse by the fact that only a fraction of the potentially useful data is openly available. In the submitted manuscript, we demonstrate how forest inventory data collected primarily for forestry planning can be used as a basis for informative spatial conservation prioritization. Furthermore, we compare how well an openly available NFI data compares against more detailed, but proprietary data. Multiple authors have recently called for more open data sharing in ecology and conservation [e.g. 4,5,6] and we hope to contribute to this discussion with work presented in this manuscript. While our work concentrates on a specific region in Finland, the results and methods should be applicable to other countries with similar data and planning needs. Finally, while previous studies in Finland [7–10] and elsewhere [11,12] have studied the utility of forest inventory data for conservation purposes, validation of the results has often received less attention. In the submitted manuscript, we demonstrate an approach to spatial conservation prioritization using forest inventory data and validate the results against known locations of high conservation value.

Finally, as we believe that the spatial conservation prioritization approach described in the manuscript forms a basis for more detailed prioritization studies or practical planning applications, we make the implementation of the analyses openly available as well.

As for a suitable PLOS ONE Academic Editor, I would like to suggest one of the following: Kamal Bawa, Regina Lindborg, or Rob Slotow. I would like to suggest the following reviewers based on their field of expertise:

* Dr Bronwyn Rayfield, [bronwynrayfield@gmail.com](mailto:bronwynrayfield@gmail.com)
* Dr Lars Gamfeldt, [lars.gamfeldt@bioenv.gu.se](mailto:lars.gamfeldt@bioenv.gu.se)
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* Dr Nathalie Pettorelli, [nathalie.pettorelli@ioz.ac.uk](mailto:nathalie.pettorelli@ioz.ac.uk)

We look forward to hearing from you in due course!

Sincerely,

Dr Joona Lehtomäki

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