

## In memoriam. Dr. hab. silv. Pēteris Zālītis (13.06.1937–02.03.2025)



A year has passed since the passing of our colleague Pēteris Zālītis.

Pēteris Zālītis, one of the founders of applied forests science in Latvia, was born in June 13 1937 in Piebalga parish in the family of Pēteris (Sr.) and Marija Zālīši. After the graduation of Jaunpiebalga high school and afterwards the faculty of forest management and forestry mechanization at the Academy of Agriculture of Latvian SSR, he dedicated his further career to solving problems of forest hydroamelioration. Initially he was working as an engineer in State institute of melioration systems, and then transferred to current day LSFRI ‘Silava’, where he rose in career from scientific fellow to Senior researcher and Head of Forest Hydroamelioration Lab. In 1993, he was elected as a professor.

In 1967, Pēteris defended his candidate thesis “Dynamics of increment of pine and spruce in drained oligotrophic site with deep organic soil”, and was promoted to doctor of forest science based on the dissertation “The scientific basis for rational forest drainage (example from Latvian SSR)”. In 1992, he was awarded with the degree of habilitated doctor.

The main research topics of Pēteris was productivity of stands and water balance in forests as a holistic functional system. Many of his works are based on long-term observations of experimental sites, which are maintained and monitored up to this date, thus expanding his legacy. Systematic monitoring of stand, spoil and hydrological proxies have been continuous since 1963. One of the noteworthy facts, that have been widely recognized, is that

paludification is only partially dependent on atmospheric precipitation, as ground water discharge plays a key role. Hence, the developed hydroamelioration approaches have been proven to be sustainable allowing simultaneous improvements of forest productivity while preserving quality of streams.

Since the fall of Soviet Union and regained independence, Pēteris focussed on both practical and theoretical forestry, shaping the modern forest management in Latvia, emphasizing importance of precommercial thinning. Pēteris was student, esteemed colleague, and successor of the remarkable Latvian forest scientist Kaspars Bušs enhancing the reach of the modern forestry school in Latvia. The legacy of Pēteris is passed to the numerous students, who’s thesis he supervised, and many of which have grown into leading scientists.

Since the 1993, Pēteris has been a member of the Latvian Academy of Sciences, and has been elected as a chair of forestry department. Due to outstanding research and scientific, as well as applied legacy, Pēteris has received several awards. Even though the physical presence has perished, the legacy of Pēteris remains and continues to shape forest research in the Baltics.

Latvian State Forest Research  
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