



UNDP Project Document

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(GOB)

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Catalyzing sustainability of the wetland protected area system in Belarusian Polesie through increased management efficiency and realigned land use practices

This project aims to enhance Belarus' capacity to conserve wetland biodiversity harbored in its network of wetland reserves by enhancing the management efficiency of reserves, while at the same time integrating biodiversity conservation concerns in agricultural, forestry and flood protection activities that occur in and around wetland reserves, to ensure sustainability of conservation efforts. This will be achieved through the demonstration of this approach at four wetland reserves in the Polesie lowland, which is a unique biogeographical area spanning southern Belarus, Northern Ukraine and parts of Poland and Russia. These demonstrations will lead to the development of policies, tools, and methodologies, and these will be institutionalized within the ongoing planning and policy framework of key government bodies.

In order to secure biodiversity values of wetland reserves and reduce threats emanating from unsustainable land use practices, the project approach will be twofold: (1) the project will build up management effectiveness and capacities of the reserves, and (2) it will also help realigning land use regulations and practices in and around wetland protected areas towards conservation-oriented and sustainable land use. In doing so, the project will work with national and regional decision-makers, land users and local communities, as well as counterparts in Ukraine. Finally, the project will develop and implement a viable replication strategy. By demonstrating the feasibility of integrating biodiversity considerations and economic activities in Polesie reserves, Government of Belarus will be able to strengthen the overall system, 60-75% of which consists of protected areas facing similar challenges.

SIGNATURE PAGE

Country: Belarus

Country Programme Outcome:

Biodiversity, ecosystem services, protected areas and other commitments under the Convention on Biological Diversity and other multilateral environmental agreements integrated into national governance and production systems (including social, economic and policy frameworks such as MDGs, NSDSs and key sectors such as agriculture, forestry, energy, and flood control)

Implementing Partner:

Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection of Belarus

<p>Programme Period: <u>2006-2010</u></p> <p>Programme Component: <u>Conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity</u></p> <p>Project Title: <u>Catalyzing sustainability of the wetland protected area system in Belarusian Polesie through increased management efficiency and realigned land use practices</u></p> <p>Project ID: <u>2894</u></p> <p>Atlas Award ID: <u>00042261</u></p> <p>Atlas Project ID: <u>00048429</u></p> <p>Project Duration: <u>5 years</u></p> <p>Management Arrangement: <u>NEX</u></p>	<p>Budget: US\$ 11,285,500</p> <p>Allocated Resources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GEF US\$ 2,191,500 <p>Co-financing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government US\$ 8,767,000 including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ministry of Environment: US\$ 396,000 • Ministry of Forestry: US\$ 403,000 • Land Resources Committee: US\$ 171,000 • Belmeliovodkhoz: US\$ 7,487,000 • Brest Exec. Committee: US\$ 50,000 • Mizhlesse: US\$ 240,000 (in-kind) • Dniper-Bug Canal: US\$ 20,000 • UNDP US\$ 155,000 • UNESCO US\$ 50,000 • RSPB US\$ 122,000 (of which US \$72,000 in-kind)
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UNDP:	Ms. Cihan Sultanoglu	UNDP Resident Representative in Belarus		

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AEWA	African-Eurasian Migratory Water Bird Agreement
APB-Birdlife	National NGO "Bird Conservation Belarus"
APR	Annual Project Report
AWP	Annual Work Plan
BSU	Belarusian State University
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CCF	UNDP Country Cooperation Framework
CMS	Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (Bonn Convnetion)
ERP	Enterprise Resource Platform
EU-TACIS	European Union's technical assistance program for 12 countries of Eastern Europe and Central Asia
FSU	Former Soviet Union (country)
GCF	UNDP Global Cooperation Framework
GIS	Geographic Information System
GoB	Government of Belarus
IBA	Important Bird Area
IMCG	International Mire Conservation Group
IR	Inception Report
IUCN	International Union for the Conservation of Nature
IW	Inception Workshop
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
METT	Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool
MoA	Ministry of Agriculture
MoF	Ministry of Forestry
MoNREP	Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection
PAMU	Protected Area Management Units
PAs	Protected Areas
PDF	GEF Project Development Facility
PSC	Project Steering Committee
RCF	UNDP Regional Cooperation Framework
RCU	UNDP/GEF Regional Coordination Unit
RSPB	Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
SCLRC	State Committee on Land Resources and Cartography
TOR	Terms of Reference
TPR	Tripartite Review
TTR	Terminal Tripartite Review
UNCCD	United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNDP-CP	UNDP Country Programme
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
USD	US Dollars
WP-TBR	West Polesie Transboundary Biosphere Reserve
WSSD	World Summit on Sustainable Development

PART I: SITUATION ANALYSIS

Belarus is situated along the Western Dvina and Dnieper, bounded to the west by Poland, north by Latvia and Lithuania, east by Russia, and south by Ukraine. With a total land area of 207,600 sq km., Belarus is divided into 6 regions (*oblasts*) - Brest, Vitebsk, Gomel, Grodno, Mogilev, and Minsk, which are further subdivided into 117 districts (*rayons*). The Polesie biogeographic region primarily covers the south of Belarus and northern Ukraine with limited extension into adjacent areas in Poland and Russia. The Belarusian Polesie – which is the immediate focus of this project – spans 6.1 million ha and accounts for 46% of the overall Polesie area. It occupies the territory of more than 30 administrative districts of the Gomel, Brest and partially Minsk and Mogilev oblasts in Belarus, and most of Ukraine's Volyn, Rivno, Zhitomir and Chernigov oblasts, as well as some districts in the Lviv, Khemnitzk, Kiev and Sumy oblasts.

POLITICAL, SOCIOECONOMIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONTEXT

The Republic of Belarus is one of the former Soviet Union states. Within the Union, it specialized in processing industries and agriculture, the latter facilitated through the all-Union campaign on wetland drainage in the second half of the 20th century. It regained independence to become a presidential republic in 1991. State-managed agriculture (the so-called collective and soviet farms dependant on allocations from the state budget rather than on own profit) has retained its leading role in the national economy.

Belarus occupied 62nd place in the Human Development Index in 2004, and had one of the lowest levels of poverty amongst FSU countries¹. Despite the consequences of the *Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant* accident (1986), the transition process, and more recently the 1998 Russian financial crisis, the economy continues to grow but remains vulnerable due to its dependence on Russia for fuel and raw materials. In contrast to other FSU countries, GDP growth has been associated with state owned enterprises rather than private sector development.

Historically, economic activities have taken precedence over conservation as evidenced in the large-scale drainage campaigns during the Soviet period (1950-1990). In Soviet times the seemingly unending wetland areas were hardly perceived as natural heritage, rather as an impediment to extensive agriculture, forestry and peat extraction which needed to develop fast enough to “feed” the industries and cities developing rapidly after World War II. Drainage of wetlands has transformed river basins and undermined the water balance in many rivers. As a result, wetland areas have shrunk by 40% and many small rivers and brooks have disappeared. Since ecological and nature conservation requirements were not taken into account there has been a substantial decline in the biodiversity and the population of many plants and animal species, especially wetland plants and water birds.

However, in the last decade or more, the basic principles of Agenda 21 have received widespread recognition in the country, with the implementation of various strategies and action plans aimed at sustainable development. In 2004, GOB drafted and approved the *National Sustainable Socio-Economic Development Strategy for the period to 2020 of the Republic of Belarus*, which builds on the first strategy adopted in 1997. The strategy takes into consideration recent domestic and international developments in environmental governance, such as the essential policy documents adopted by Belarus, new international agreements, including the UN Millennium Declaration, the Political Declaration and Action Plan of WSSD held in Johannesburg. It thus reflects existing global trends in social and economic advancement, making a special focus on mainstreaming environmental concerns into various sectors of the economy. A National Sustainable Development Commission has been established to implement the Strategy (see [Section IV, Part VII](#) for the composition of the Commission).

The preservation of remaining natural wetland areas remains the utmost priority for GOB. Under growing pressure from scientists and the international community, GOB has come to understand that the remaining natural complexes in Polesie represent a unique heritage for the whole world in many aspects: the wetlands of Polesie were discovered to fix CO₂ several times better than mature forests and the traditional lifestyle of people

¹ World Bank's *2005 World Development Indicators* lists Belarus as having one of the lowest levels of poverty among FSU countries based on international poverty line measures of population living on less than \$1 and \$2 per day.

in Polesie presented a unique mix of Polish, Belarusian and Ukrainian traditions blended into a special culture worth cherishing. But most importantly, remaining natural areas were discovered to host exceptional biodiversity, of which several habitat types were the last standing samples on Earth, and some globally threatened species had up to 100% of presence here.

In fact, the convergence of environmental concerns in Polesie and the willingness to draw international attention to the region has provided the main argument for Belarus to join key multilateral treaties, such as Ramsar Convention, Convention on Biodiversity, UNFCCC, and UNCCD. At the national level, the first response to the increased awareness of the values of Polesie was to enlarge the Polesie protected area network, with the establishment of Prip'yatsky National Park, followed by the Mid-Prip'yat, Prostyr, Sporovsky, Zvanets, and Olmany mires national reserves (funded by GOB with assistance from Michael Otto Foundation for Environmental Protection, Germany).

GLOBAL SIGNIFICANCE OF POLESIE

Polesie is a stand-alone unique biogeographical area characterized by specific geological, morphological and hydrological features. (See [Section IV, Part IV](#) for a detailed description and map.) Human interference by way of the large-scale, Soviet-era drainage campaign in the 20th century has resulted in the loss of 40% of its wetland natural areas, with irreversible losses to the biodiversity it hosted. Despite this, the region has managed to retain many of its unique natural landscapes and habitats, which are concentrated in 7 areas that have been accorded varying degrees of protection. Two of the 7 areas are national parks (the second highest level of protection). The remaining 5 are reserves (third level of protection), the use of which is regulated by special order. Of these 7 areas, 3 areas are well protected – these are Dikoe and Prip'yatsky National Parks and Olmany Mires. The last is very well preserved due to its inaccessibility and absence of damaging anthropogenic activities on adjacent lands. The remaining four Reserves (zakazniks) – Mid-Prip'yat, Sporovsky, Zvanets, and Prostyr – remain especially vulnerable to threats from activities within reserve boundaries or on adjacent lands.

Located almost in the center of Europe, the Polesie region is an important ecological corridor for many flora and fauna species. It is a very important element in the genetic foundation of the East-European biodiversity. It is famous for “hosting” the watershed between the Baltic and the Black seas in its western-most part. Two mass bird migration routes meet here: the White-Baltic-Mediterranean seas North-South route and the latitudinal East-West route. The Prip'yat river basin is a key ecological and landscape element of the Polesie and its main waterway. The Prip'yat is the second largest tributary of the Dnieper in length, and the largest by catchment size.

There are sections of fens, floodplain broad-leaved forests, and floodplain meadows (located mainly in the floodplains of the Prip'yat and its tributaries) that still remain in their natural condition. It is exactly these ecosystems and their biodiversity that make Polesie a globally significant natural complex. In terms of globally threatened species, the analysis of their distribution in Europe reveals that the open fen mires located in the Prip'yat floodplain and its tributaries constitute the most important breeding habitats for several species whose numbers are declining rapidly in Europe and elsewhere. Specifically, Prostyr, Sporovsky, Zvanets, and Mid-Prip'yat reserves, as well as the Prip'yatsky National Park host the bulk of globally threatened biodiversity in its natural and semi-natural state. All four reserves contain important bird areas (IBAs) and Ramsar sites. Together these reserves and the National Park, all located in the Prip'yat river basin, form an interdependent network of globally important habitats.

According to the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species (IUCN 2002), the Polesie region hosted: 7 species of birds, 17 species of mammals, 3 species of reptilians and amphibians, 8 species of fish, 19 species of arthropods, 1 species of annelids, and 3 species of mollusks. Twenty-two species of plants are under protection according to the Habitat directive and Bern annexes. The Belarusian Polesie region is essential for conservation of such globally endangered species of birds as aquatic warbler (up to 80% of the European population breeding here), spotted eagle (about 10%), great snipe (about 10%), and corncrake (about 15%). The region also plays significant role as a stopover site for internationally important migrating bird species, like lesser white-fronted goose, ruffs. Among other groups of vertebrates, it should be noted that the Stviga River basin hosts one the few European microgroups of European mink; there are data on the Russian desman which was considered extinct in Belarus.

PROBLEM DEFINITION

Today, these remaining natural areas remain vulnerable with most of the threats emanating from land use practices in surrounding areas and inadequate management of the protected areas. Recognizing the need for conserving the unique values of the Polesie region, the *First International Conference on Conservation of Floodplains and Fen Mires of the Belarusian Polesie* was held in 1997 and it resulted in an Action Plan, which supported the establishment of the Mid-Pripyat reserve, the review of the borders of the Sporovsky reserve and the elaboration of management plans for key biodiversity sites of the Polesie. GOB in partnership with the international community has achieved considerable progress in strategic planning and elaboration of the legislative foundation for conservation of Polesie biodiversity, as exemplified in numerous projects and programs (see Baseline section for more details).

The need for practical steps to address existing threats to these areas is now high on the agenda. As was noted at the *Second International Conference on Conservation of Floodplains and Fen Mires of the Belarusian Polesie* (May 2002), these steps have to be based not only on improving management of the protected areas, but also on integrating biodiversity conservation objectives with the key economic activities – agriculture, forestry, flood defense – taking place in and around protected areas. Since all of the key Polesie reserves were established without complete cessation of economic activities by landowners, mainly collective farms and forestries (Mid Pripyat – 85%, Prostyr – 100%, Sporovsky – 73%, Zvanets – 18%), the enforcement of a special protection regime on such territories is rendered even more complex and in many cases is poor. The protection regime itself needs revision to make use of innovative approaches that can balance biodiversity conservation goals with sustainable economic activities in surrounding areas.

The need to identify innovative approaches to integrating biodiversity conservation and economic activities in the Polesie is of broader relevance to the national system of protected areas. Protected areas in Belarus cover some 1.6 million ha (7.9% of national territory). GOB envisages expanding protected territories to include some 9.3% of total territory by 2015. At the same time, budgetary allocations have not increased in proportion and do not allow for many of the interventions necessary to protect or enhance ecosystems or protect individual species. Hence, support from the international community, especially in strategic or challenging areas, will continue to play a catalytic role in realizing much of the country's important biodiversity conservation objectives.

The national protected areas system – consisting of Biosphere Reserves, National Parks, Reserves (zakazniks), and monuments of nature – plays a major role in the preservation of natural biological and landscape diversity in Belarus. Listed in declining level of protection, the national system as at January 1, 2005 consisted of Berezinsky Biosphere Reserve covering 80,900 ha (highest level of protection), 4 national parks with a total area of 397,600 ha (containing an exclusion zone restricted from any activity, but also zones with regulated economic activities), 96 national zakazniks covering 838,000 ha, 473 local zakazniks covering 303,100 ha, 337 national monuments of nature, and 573 local monuments of nature.

Reserves (or zakazniks) account for 70% of the national protected area system, and wetland zakazniks are around 60%. Most of the globally significant biodiversity in the Polesie region is in reserves, where economic activities (mainly agriculture, forestry and flood defense) are allowed by law. By demonstrating the feasibility of integrating biodiversity considerations and economic activities in Polesie reserves, GOB will be in a position to strengthen the overall system, 60-75% of which consists of protected areas facing similar challenges.

THREATS, ROOT CAUSES AND BARRIERS ANALYSIS

The main proximate threats to wetland biodiversity are changes in hydrology (due to agriculture, fish farming and construction of embankments for flood defense); unsustainable natural resource use by locals; and unsustainable forestry. Water pollution is a problem to a very limited extent. The Pripyat River and its tributaries are considered "comparatively clean" with water pollution index of around 1.0. Only fragments of the river and tributaries (e.g. Pripyat downstream Pinsk, Yaselda downstream Berioza) fall under the "moderately polluted" category with water pollution index 1.3-1.7.² A detailed description of threats, the adverse impacts on biodiversity, as well as the barriers to addressing these threats are detailed in [Section IV, Part V](#). A brief

² Monitoring, use and management of water resources in Pripyat river basin // M.U. Kalinin, A.G. Obodovsky – Minsk, Belsens, 2003. – 269 pp.

summary follows.

Drainage systems in agricultural lands and environmentally inappropriate **agricultural practices** in areas surrounding wetland reserves result in the drying of wetlands, changes in vegetation type and biodiversity loss within reserves. The construction and operation of drainage systems inside the reserves and on adjoining territories affects biodiversity because of reduction in the area of the most significant habitats. The bulk of drainage systems located within reserves and on adjacent territories is inefficient. The same situation can be observed in the majority of drainage systems in Polesie.

The underlying causes are a combination of weaknesses in the environment sector and the agriculture sector. On the environment side, laws and policies governing the management of reserves (Protected Area and Wildlife Protection Acts) are inadequate to minimize adverse effects of agriculture on surrounding lands. By regulation, the zoning of reserves and demarcation of buffer zones does not have to be in line with ecological needs and hydrographic boundaries³. Furthermore, the legislation does not explicitly require management plans and management units in reserves, all of which would provide the enabling environment for minimizing the impact of agriculture.

On the agriculture side, although GoB's sustainable agriculture policy is fairly progressive and should in theory curtail agricultural activity on lands that are both unproductive and compromising biodiversity, the application of it is not taking place, and this is of particular concern in ecologically vulnerable areas surrounding reserves. This is primarily because there are no guidelines and methodologies for conducting ecological-economic optimization of agricultural land to identify areas that should no longer be under cultivation. Furthermore, there is no systematic effort to integrate such an approach into district-level land use planning. Collectives do not have alternative land use options that are economically productive yet do no harm to the reserves. Guidelines on water use by drainage systems do not take into account biodiversity needs.

Similarly, in the case of **fish farms**, while appropriate water use guidelines exist, these are not being observed. Fish farms have limited financial capacity to implement guidelines. On the environment side, the legislation does not require reserves to have management units that are empowered to liaise with fish farms and enforce guidelines.

GoB's **flood defense** plan includes the selective construction of embankments and dykes (as opposed to full-length embankments) with an attendant impact on wetland biodiversity. The plans do not include alternative "win-win" flood defense options, primarily because biodiversity expertise was not included in the elaboration of the plan. For example, six summer polders (4,625 ha) built in the Pripyat floodplain sections, which are important for fish spawning and bird breeding, are designed so as to be inundated only in high spring floods. This has led to almost a complete loss of biodiversity valuable area within the above section.

The local population residing near Reserves (there are no settlements within Sporovsky, Prostyr and Zvanets, reserves; but several settlements are located within Mid-Pripyat reserve, please refer to [Section IV, Part III](#) for further details) has traditionally used the area for various subsistence and income-generating activities. These include **tillage of mineral islands, hunting, fishing and haymaking**. In the case of tillage of mineral islands, hunting, and fishing, the unsustainable nature of these activities and their adverse impact on biodiversity are driven by the fact that locals do not have any alternative sustainable uses of local natural resources that could increase their utilitarian stake in conservation. In addition, reserve management capacity is weak due to weaknesses in the legal and policy framework governing protected areas. In the case of haymaking, locals are not undertaking this activity as much as before primarily due to demographic changes. There is, however, scope for getting collectives more engaged in haymaking activities.

Forestry activities in and around reserves continue to significantly undermine the state of biological diversity, despite the fact that forestry enterprises are expected to comply with the established special protection regime at reserves, and are subject to monitoring by district environmental inspections. This is because the forest management plans need to be revised using new information on globally important biodiversity and innovative approaches that could be beneficial both for biodiversity and forestry. The barrier is not willingness, but the lack

³ Currently, there are no guidelines for the identification of buffer zones, so they are normally set in meters width, rather than according to hydrographic boundaries.

of experience, methodologies, and knowledge of exact distribution of endangered species to integrate this level of detail in forest management plans.

Finally, a key factor compounding all of the above threats and that is unique to the centrally-planned economic system, is the **exclusion of local stakeholders and public from land use and development decision making** leading to inappropriate and illegal activities. The legacy of the Soviet-type planning is the main barrier in switching over to a new model of physical planning and decision-making in the country. This is evidenced in all aspects of policy planning, including establishment of protected areas. The very fact that protected areas have traditionally been established just by state decree and did not presuppose a management plan or a management system meant little democracy in identifying how the area in question is to be best managed for the benefit of both economy and environment.

INSTITUTIONAL, SECTORAL AND POLICY CONTEXT

The legal framework for environmental protection and rational use of natural resources, as elements for achieving national sustainable development, consists of: the Constitution of the Republic of Belarus; Laws adopted by the Parliament (National Assembly) and decrees and orders issued by the President and other executive bodies. The main body of national laws, orders and decrees of relevance to the goal of this project include – Law on Protected Areas, Wildlife Protection Law, Law on Environmental Protection, Code on Land of the Republic of Belarus, Water Code, Forest Code. A major gap in this legal framework is that reserves are not required by law to have management plans and management units and neither do they receive funding from the state for the same. National legislation states that under conflicting or unclear situations, the norms of international conventions or protocols should preside over those ones in national legislative acts (paragraph 56 of the Law on Protection of Environment, 1992). Belarus is party to 12 international conventions and protocols.

The Parliament determines major aspects of state environmental policy and adopts environmental legislation. The President of the Republic of Belarus issues decrees and orders for the implementation of laws, including those relevant to environment and natural resources. The Council of Ministers is the central body with executive powers to implement state environmental policy, coordinate activities of Ministries and of other national bodies under state control in the field of environmental protection.

Under the supervision of the Council of Ministers, MoNREP, working through its central office, regional committees on environment, and district environmental inspections, ensures on-the-ground implementation of environmental policy. The strategic role of MoNREP is to enable creation of a system of environmental legislation not only by lobbying for adoption of environmental laws, but also by mainstreaming environmental considerations in the various sectoral laws regulating all spheres of state activity.

Research into environmental issues is undertaken by a number of research institutes of the *National Academy of Sciences of Belarus*, such as the *Institute of Zoology*, the *Institute of Botany*, and the *Institute of Ecology*. The *State Ecological Monitoring Network* is managed by the Academy of Sciences. New sites, identified as important for ecological monitoring, are studied by various institutes of the Academy of Sciences and are then proposed for inclusion into the State Ecological Monitoring Network. Practical studies to devise technical plans for implementation of specific nature-conservation activities are carried out by Project Institutes and enterprises, such as *Belgiprovodkhoz* and *Polesiegiprovodkhoz*.

The State Committee on Land Resources and Cartography (SCLRSC) manages and regulates land practices. This organization develops proposals for the priority lines of the state land policy, drafts regulatory acts for the land legislation and ensures their practical implementation. The Ministry of Forestry determines the strategy and tactics in relation to forestry use.

STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS

Given the system boundary of the project and the nature of threats, stakeholders of the project cut across a number of sectors (including environment, agriculture, land use planning, forestry, flood defense), and encompass government, research institutes, NGOs, at the local, regional, national and international levels. The identification of stakeholders was done through several rounds of consultations at the regional and national level during the PDF-A stage, and subsequently refined at the PDF-B stage. The development of this project has

benefited from the active involvement of several governmental, scientific and economic agencies in Belarus with mandates over Polesie. ([See Section IV, Part III](#) for more details on the Stakeholder Analysis and Participation Plan.)

The principal **project initiators** have been MoNREP (which is the key central governmental body involved in biodiversity policy in Belarus; the executing agency of the PDF-B); APB-BirdLife Belarus (NGO and key project partner); Institute of Zoology of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus (which is involved in research on fauna of Belarus).

Other **national government institutions** include the Ministry of Forestry (responsible for developing and monitoring forest policy in the country); Ministry of Agriculture (responsible for developing and monitoring policy for state agriculture); Belmeliovodkhoz Concern (which is the state agency in charge of the State Program for Flood Defense and land amelioration activities); and State Committee on Land Resources and Cartography. The SCLRSC determines land use and regulation. It develops proposals for the priority lines of state land policy, drafts regulatory acts for land legislation and ensures their practical application.

Other **scientific and applied research institutions** that are stakeholders of the project include the Institute of Botany of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus (which is involved in research on flora of Belarus); Central Scientific Institute for Complex Use of Water Resources (which is a key institution involved in scientific and applied studies of water resources, their quality and use); Belgiprozem (which manages the Program on optimization of grasslands); Belgiprovodkhoz enterprise (which is the leading institute dealing with hydrological research and elaboration of TORs for technical and engineering water-use and anti-flood facilities); Polesiegiprovodkhoz institute (which is in charge of hydrology research and water-use planning in the area of the Polesie); and Belnitszem (which is involved in land-use planning and cartography). The Belarusian State University's Geography Department and specialized companies of the BSU are also key stakeholders inasmuch as they are involved in landscape studies and planning and elaboration of GIS.

In terms of **local stakeholders**, the project will involve the following local authorities and land-users:

- District Inspections of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection of the target districts. These are local (district) branches of MoNREP in charge of nature conservation
- Land-use departments of the districts involved, which are responsible for land-use planning at local level
- Forestries active in the target sites
- Collective farms active in the target sites
- Local drainage companies, local branches of Belmeliovodkhoz
- Public at large that has been consulted through workshops and numerous field visits

At the **international level** (apart from UNDP), the UK Royal Society for the Protection of Birds is a key stakeholder. The valuable expertise of RSPB has enhanced the project design significantly. This support, including financial contribution, will continue through the full stage. The Michael Otto Foundation has actively co-financed numerous activities in the Polesie and is expected to continue with support in the future. As a legacy of Soviet times, local land users are typically excluded from decision making in the Polesie, and this is one of the most fundamental reasons for continued threats to biodiversity. Thus, stakeholder involvement in planning and implementation of decisions governing conservation of natural heritage is central to the success and sustainability of the project.

BASELINE ANALYSIS

Under the baseline situation, the ability of Belarus to effectively conserve wetland biodiversity in the Polesie and other areas through its network of wetland reserves will remain weak. Much progress has been made in the recent past in terms of raising the awareness of the government about the unique heritage of the Polesie and motivating actions at the strategic planning level. As a result the first national response was to enlarge the Polesie protected area network with the establishment of the Pripyatsky National Park first, followed by the staggered establishment (1980-2000) of the Mid-Pripyat, Prostyr, Sporovsky, Zvanets, and Olmany mires national reserves.

The gradually increasing scientific knowledge about Polesie has led to more strategic action towards conservation of the Polesie. To launch and discuss this idea the *First International Conference on Conservation of Floodplains and Fen Mires of the Belarusian Polesie* was conducted in Minsk in 1997. The Conference resulted in an Action Plan, the main provisions of which supported integrated management planning as a means to deal with biodiversity conservation issues in the Polesie region. One-time awareness campaigns (in 1997 and 1998) were organized by the National Academy of Sciences in cooperation with MoNREP and Michael Otto Foundation to raise the awareness of local people and authorities about the biodiversity values and need for conservation of the Pripyat floodplains.

Strategic planning initiatives following the 1997 Conference have laid the basis for the future of Polesie. In the forest sector the Government benefited from the World Bank loan for elaboration of a strategic action plan for the forestry sector. The Strategic Action Program for conservation of the Dnieper and its tributaries was another significant step inasmuch as the Polesie almost fully lies within the Dnieper basin. The Dnieper Basin Biodiversity Conservation Strategy envisages integration of biodiversity conservation priorities into key economic activities in the area, such as agriculture, flood defense, and forestry; and identifies Mid-Pripyat, Sporovsky, Zvanets, and Olmany mires as priority biodiversity hotspots.

Today GOB acknowledges the need to move on from simply extending protected area networks and strategic planning, to practical implementation of sustainability principles established by key national and international documents, such as the *National Sustainable Socio-Economic Development Strategy for the period to 2020 of the Republic of Belarus* and *Regional Biodiversity Strategy for the Dnieper Basin*. This was the core decision of the *Second International Conference on Conservation of Floodplains and Fen Mires of the Belarusian Polesie* in May 2002 (see [Section IV, Part VIII](#) for the Conference Resolution).

Looking to the future, national efforts to move from the strategy level to implementation are described below. Most of these initiatives have the potential to factor conservation of Polesie biodiversity into the key economic sectors so as to secure conservation in the network of reserves. The proposed GEF project would contribute to and build on these initiatives to help them realize their full potential in terms of the conservation of globally significant biodiversity.

Protected Area Management

GOB with the assistance of UNESCO and the National Academy of Science are planning to develop the so-called Polesie bionetwork. This idea emerged in late 2000 and its development is continuing with support from UNESCO's Man and Biosphere program. The concept envisages the establishment of a bionetwork on the basis of existing and newly established protected areas (as core elements) surrounded by buffer zones and interconnected through corridors, with integration of the Polesie bionetwork into the Pan-European Econet through establishment of transboundary biosphere reserves with Ukraine, Poland, and Russia. The funding for the next project design stage (which involves very detailed designing modules of the future Polesie bionetwork, specifying location and size of buffer zones, placement of corridors, etc. based on a number of criteria, such as presence of habitats of valuable flora and fauna, hydrological boundaries of catchments and sub-catchments) has been approved by UNESCO to the tune of US\$ 226,000. This is still at a very early concept stage and does not yet include specific measures to secure conservation at the wetland reserves in the Polesie. The project proposal "Establishment of Transboundary Biosphere Reserve and Regional Econetwork in Polesie" has endorsed by UNESCO for implementation in Belarus, Ukraine and Poland in 2006-2008.

GOB will continue to support the protected area network in Polesie. With support from the Darwin Initiative, RSPB, UNDP, and the Michael Otto Foundation limited activities focused on developing management plans for three fen mires (Zvanets, Sporovo, and Dikoe). However, this has not included systemic changes needed at the level of the policy and legal framework governing management of reserves, nor capacity building for implementation of management plans, nor the systematisation of experiences so that it can be applied to other wetland reserves in the country.

GOB will continue with scientific monitoring efforts that were started in the late 1990s to provide the scientific basis for studying and proposing more integrated approaches to preservation of the Polesie. The National Academy of Sciences has since the early 1980s been implementing the *Scientific Monitoring Program*, in which

various institutes of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus monitor the impact of large-scale drainage on biodiversity in the floodplains of the Pripyat and its tributaries, among other things. Another element of the monitoring program is the compilation of descriptions of the flora and fauna in the most significant sectors of the Pripyat River, carried out for the last 5 years by the Institute of Botany and the Institute of Zoology of the National Academy of Sciences. Environmental monitoring is assisted by *the State Hydrological Monitoring Program* carried out through a network of stations along the Pripyat and its tributaries. The Program has been carried out for several decades now and contributes toward analysis of factors defining the biodiversity and conditions of wetlands.

Sustainable agriculture

Agricultural production still plays the key role in the region's economic development. More than 1,200 Belarusian collective farms are located in Polesie. More than 600 Belarusian private farmers produce about 5% of the agricultural output. However, these agricultural activities continue on drained lands with ever-declining efficiency. This is true for crop production, which is the dominant agricultural activity, represented mainly by grain production and grass seeding on drained peatlands, the level of mineralization of which grows every year, resulting in drastically declining soil fertility. The need to harmonize ecological and economic factors in agricultural land use has resulted in GOB adopting a sustainable agriculture policy (reflected in the elements below); however, implementation of the sustainable agriculture policy will be slow through limited local land use planning for agricultural organizations.

Concept of Development of Drained Areas and Their Use in Belarus (adopted by the Minister of Agriculture 25 April 1994): The key principles are that drained areas shall be used in a way so as to ensure ecological security in accordance with acting legislation on natural heritage, waters, forests, protection of flora and fauna. Design of new drainage facilities – if any – shall include the assessment of ecological changes which construction of such a facility might bring about. Drainage and use of drained areas near protected areas shall be used with strict observance of the protection regimes and the need to maintain the level of protection sought at protected areas. This includes a number of specific guiding principles such as (1) establishment and maintenance of an interrelated network of protected areas, (2) establishment of special protection regimes for especially valuable sites and species providing additionally for buffer zones and corridors, (3) segregate agricultural landscapes, plant forest strips, and introduce landscape diversity. This Concept serves as guidance for the agricultural sector in terms of future use of Polesie territories.

The State Program on Inventory of Drained Areas of Belarus. The Program was carried out in 1996-1999 with the purpose of assessing the condition of drained agricultural lands and providing recommendations for their subsequent use. The Program found that out of the 3.05 million ha of drained areas, about 760,000 ha could no longer continue to be exploited as usual, their draining networks being extremely dilapidated, so decisions needed to be made regarding introduction of a different agricultural or non-agricultural use there. Many of the areas in this category are those arable lands in and around the Zvanets, Sporovsky and Mid-Pripyat zakazniks targeted by the project.

Measures on Effective Sustainable Agriculture in selected districts in Belarus (adopted by the Council of Ministers' Decree #79 dated 20 January 2000). Building on the outcomes of the inventory, the aim of this list of measures is to develop practical recommendations on how to optimize arable farming and grassland management. This program is managed by the *BelGiproZem Project Institute*. It divides lands into various categories based on their conditions, and specific recommendations and work program are being proposed for each category. Specifically, for wet soils and those subject to annual or more frequent flooding, the clear instruction is to exclude land from arable farming and use them only as grasslands, growing hydrophilic plant species only. This project covers entire Belarus, and hence this will serve as a policy baseline for the project. The project will seek to strengthen implementation of the program and review some of its components related to biodiversity conservation, with a focus on globally important biodiversity.

Sustainable Forestry

Following elaboration of the National Strategic Action Plan, the Ministry of Forestry launched a *Program on elaboration of national forest certification standards* in 2001. The introduction of certification is a high priority

for GOB and it is seeking to make it a national law, which will obligate forestries and independent harvesting and wood processing companies to observe certain limits in terms of logging, follow reforestation guidelines and take into account principles of good environmental practices. At the same time, wood companies would get an economic benefit in that their produce will be competitive in international markets. The national standards are to be compatible with international ones, and will also be included into the All-Belarusian economic certification system. By late 2002 the draft national certification system was elaborated and successfully tested in Smorgon forestry. However, the proposed system as it is currently being elaborated does not fully cover specific forestry cases, such as forestry at protected areas, where special biodiversity conservation conditions have to be taken into account.

Also at a national scale, through the Belarusian-Polish Forest Mapping Project, the most valuable forest plots in terms of biodiversity are being mapped based on the materials of the national forestry inventory.

For the last several years the Government has been carrying out a *program on transfer of forests from under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Agriculture (from management of collective farms) into the jurisdiction of the Ministry Forestry* (for management by forestries), which will result in environmentally more sustainable management of forests. In each case, the transfer requires elaboration of a plan and methodology for sustainable use of the transferred forests. In the coming years, similar activities were planned for the forests of Mid-Pripyat and Zvanets reserves, offering an excellent opportunity to ensure that special biodiversity concerns of wetlands reserves in the Polesie are taken into account.

Flood defense

In 1990-1996, the elaboration of a *mathematical hydrological model of the Pripyat floodplain including a GIS module* was initiated in the country, to prepare grounds for planning and construction of flood defense facilities. The program, however, was halted halfway due to lack of funds. Subsequently, the Ministry of Emergencies took it up and is now revising the previous work and developing a GIS module to forecast floods in the Pripyat floodplain.

The State Program on Installation of Technical Facilities for the Protection of Dwellings from Floods in the Critical Locations of the Polesie Region, for 1999-2004 was adopted by the Council of Ministers on 30 June 1998. The first program, adopted in 1994 resulted in the embankment of about 2/3 of the Pripyat floodplain by full-length levees. The Program currently in implementation relies on localized dyking to protect the more important towns, villages and isolated industrial and agricultural areas, which is better in terms of hydrology. In the baseline scenario, the next program for 2005-2010 would continue to be implemented with almost no heed for biodiversity.

Weaknesses in the baseline

Clearly, the baseline scenario is fairly advanced in terms of the sustainable development framework and policies for the Polesie region, as evidenced in the strategic importance accorded to Polesie biodiversity at the highest level, sustainable agriculture and forestry policies, and a move from full-length embankments to selective dyking as a means for ensuring greater security against floods. In the absence of a GEF intervention, all of the baseline activities described above will continue as currently planned, with national sustainable development priorities being realized.

However, there will be insufficient account of the need to preserve globally important biodiversity of Polesie and the potential of enhancing this existing sustainable development baseline to achieve global conservation priorities will not be realized. The baseline will not adequately emphasize the identification and removal of barriers to moving from strategic planning to implementation. Ad hoc conservation measures that are likely to continue in the Polesie region will not focus on institutionalizing the experience and knowledge gained, to enable transfer to other areas facing similar challenges in Belarus.

Poor protected area management capacity on the one hand combined with lack of efforts for awareness raising and involvement of local people will result in continued illegal tillage on the territory of protected areas, poaching, illegal fishing, overgrazing, destruction of vegetation layer in forests, excessive collection of wetland and forest resources. Biodiversity risky behavior among local land-users and local people, such as burning of

vegetation, will continue undermining the feeding base and vegetation composition, contributing to eventual unprecedented changes in the population density of key globally threatened species.

Slow implementation of sustainable agriculture policy in Polesie will result in habitats of globally important biodiversity suffering from progressive encroachment of agricultural deserts and shrubs, with valuable species eventually losing their population density, up to the point of total disappearance. This is primarily due to the continued lack of integrated land use planning (and its implementation), and the lack of real stakeholder involvement in management and land use planning issues. Lack of capacity to elaborate and test special forest management planning and certification procedures specifically for protected areas will lead to continued logging of valuable biotopes, fires, biological pollution, eventually resulting in loss of habitats for globally threatened birds, and a substantial decrease of unique oak and alder ecosystems. Full-length levees – unaffected by innovative technologies – will continue to limit opportunities for habitat extension. Shortages of shallow areas will result in substantial loss of fish stock, with some already rare species under threat of disappearance within 10 to 15 years.

PART II: STRATEGY

PROJECT RATIONALE AND POLICY CONFORMITY

This project will build on the sustainable development baseline, by addressing the weaknesses described above, and will thus be a catalyst for helping Belarus move from the strategic planning phase to concrete conservation actions in the Polesie, and beyond. It will demonstrate the feasibility of integrating biodiversity conservation, economic activities and flood protection in wetland protected areas at four wetland reserves in the Polesie lowland, with the objective of enhancing the potential of Belarus' overall system of PAs in this respect. The experience will lead to the development of policies, tools, and methodologies for improved wetland reserve management, and this will be institutionalized within the ongoing planning and policy framework of key government bodies (MoNREP, MoA, MoF, Belmeliovodkhoz, SCLRC). This institutionalization or integration is a critical component of the project strategy. By liaising with the Ukrainian protected area system (especially in the Ukrainian Polesie through the UNDP-GEF supported project) and the UNESCO supported Polesie bionetwork concept, project efforts will be tightly linked to longer term efforts to conserve the broader Polesie biogeographic region.

In order to secure biodiversity values of wetland reserves and reduce threats emanating from unsustainable land use practices, the project approach will be twofold: (1) the project will build up management effectiveness and capacities of the reserves, and (2) it will also help realign land use regulations and practices in and around wetland protected areas towards conservation-oriented and sustainable land use. In doing so, the project will work with national and regional decision-makers, land users and local communities ([see Section IV, Part III](#)). Finally, the project will develop and implement a viable replication strategy.

Capacity building of various state and other agencies is an integral part of the project strategy. In the initial stage of the project, relevant local, national, and international experience will be analyzed. Based on the result of this analysis an educational (or training) programme will be developed to provide local authorities and individuals with the knowledge (environmental, legal, law enforcement, specific accounting, etc.) required for effectuating changes. Participants of this programme will be staff of the established reserve management units, regional and local environmental inspections, local ecotourism entrepreneurs, and other stakeholders.

The project conforms to the objectives of the GEF Operational Program 2 (Coastal, Marine, and Freshwater Ecosystems) as it aims to promote conservation and sustainable use of the unique wetland ecosystem of the Polesie region in southern Belarus. As stated in OP-2, the project will achieve conservation and sustainable use in "...specific ecosystems that are identified as priorities within national biodiversity strategic plans and programs", and "...successful outcomes will be *replicated* elsewhere on the basis of the experience and learning gained." In line with OP-2 guidance project outcomes will be monitored and evaluated by measuring key indicators of ecosystem structure and function, and of sustainable use (see logical framework matrix). Project outputs will be measurable, and aimed at threat removal, sectoral integration, sustainable use and institutional strengthening.

The project falls under Strategic Priority 1 (SP-1: Catalyzing Sustainability of Protected Areas). The project will focus on catalyzing sustainability of a subset of the national system of PAs – namely its network of wetland reserves in the Polesie biogeographic region. The institutionalization of the approaches, tools and methodologies developed for this specific sub-region will, in turn, enable replication to other parts of the national system. The project will focus on capacity building for long-term sustainability at the systemic, institutional and individual levels, focusing not only on the protected area management side, but also on the country's economic sectors (agriculture, forestry) and flood protection programme whose activities near protected areas are affecting the sustainability of conservation efforts. Insofar as the project will address the historical alienation of local users from land use and development decision making typical of the centrally-planned context, it will be furthering the SP-1 objective of promoting the participation of local land users in the design, implementation, management and monitoring of biodiversity conservation and sustainable use activities. Finally, through its activities related to removing barriers to alternative land use options (ecotourism, haymaking), the project would improve the environment for greater private sector involvement in conservation-oriented activities. Given the above, the project is aligned with the Guidance and decisions provided to the financial mechanism by the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity.

Some of the proposed project components would to a limited extent further GEF Strategic Priority 2 (Mainstreaming Biodiversity in Production Landscapes and Sectors). Specifically, the project's focus on addressing barriers to integrating biodiversity conservation considerations in the implementation of Belarus' sustainable agriculture and forestry policies insofar as these activities affect the conservation potential of reserves, will provide tools and methodologies which will be useful for replication at a wider scale even outside protected areas.

The proposed project fits well and complements the GEF portfolio in the region. With a complementary UNDP/GEF initiative in Ukraine (under preparation), this project helps create a sub-regional conservation framework for the transboundary Polesie eco-region. The project will contribute to and benefit from exchange of lessons and best practices generated by GEF projects addressing wetland biodiversity in Lithuania, Latvia, Slovakia, Poland and other countries in the region through the Wetland Implementers Network initiated by UNDP.

Institutionalization of Project Approach

The project strategy to institutionalize proposed actions is based on the initial application of advanced methods of PA management, forestry, agriculture and flood defense in the project sites. Along with elaboration and testing of the new methods to ensure sustainable land use, the project will start incorporating these into the current legal and policy framework. Already at PDF-B stage, the project has initiated drafting of new laws, policy documents and methodological guidelines, which, once adopted, will ensure institutionalization of the proposed actions.

To ensure quick "startup" and implementation of the newly adopted legislative and normative acts, the project envisages a series of promotional actions and workshops to demonstrate project best-practices to various ministries, agencies, enterprises and local community.

Protected area management best practices will be institutionalized through the following steps. PAMUs will be established and management plans developed and implemented. At the same time, amendments to the Law on Protected Areas and several by-laws, developed as part of the project, will ensure the application of the new policy framework to all internationally and nationally valuable protected areas. Among other major changes, the new law will specifically provide for the establishment of PAMUs, elaboration of management plans and obligatory monitoring. Adoption of the new law will also envisage government financing for the management of protected areas. Particular emphasis on the biodiversity-focused principles of designation of buffer zones around protected areas will be placed in the corresponding by-law document to be adopted as part of the package.

Sustainable agricultural practices will be institutionalized through mainstreaming of biodiversity into the national program of land-use planning currently commencing in Belarus. The project will contribute to the elaboration of comprehensive sustainability-minded land-use plans for the administrative districts hosting the project sites. The land-use planning process will be supported by the elaboration and adoption of a methodological guidebook for the development of land-use plans, which build on the principles of biodiversity

conservation. All administrative districts in Belarus are expected to undergo a comprehensive land-use planning exercise in the near future; thus utilization of the methods developed by the project would enable integration of the principles of sustainable agriculture and land-use across the whole country.

The Ministry of Forestry is about to launch a program on national and international certification of all forestry enterprises in Belarus. An agreement has been achieved with the Ministry of Forestry to elaborate a set of policy documents on forest certification and forest management planning which incorporate biodiversity conservation needs and to test these in project sites' forestries. Once adopted, these documents will provide for wide replication across the country. As part of its co-financing for the PDF-B stage, the Ministry of Forestry has initiated certification process of Luninets Forestry.

Jointly with Belmeliovodkhoz, the project has identified a series of measures to avoid and/or minimize negative impact on biodiversity of the already completed or planned activities in the state flood prevention program in the Pripyat floodplain. These measures have already been incorporated in the large-scale state program that spans across the entire Pripyat River in the Polesie. The program was approved by a decree of the Cabinet of Ministers #311 dated March 23, 2005.

PROJECT GOAL, OBJECTIVE, OUTCOMES AND OUTPUTS/ ACTIVITIES

The **project goal** is to catalyze sustainability and effectiveness of Belarus' national system of protected areas with the emphasis on its network of wetland Reserves. The **project objective** is to catalyze sustainability of the wetland protected area system in Belarusian Polesie through increased management efficiency, and aligning the land use framework in and around protected areas with conservation objectives. This objective will be realized through 5 outcomes described below. Indicators are provided in the logical framework (Section II, Part II).

Outcome 1: Reserves are being managed effectively, with the active participation of local stakeholders in design and implementation aspects

The project will focus on establishing and strengthening the capacity for management of the reserves at the lowest possible level. Through participatory elaboration and implementation of management plans, local decision makers and the public will be involved in planning and managing Polesie protected areas, thus addressing one of the key underlying causes of habitat destruction and biodiversity loss which is the traditional exclusion of locals from land use and conservation planning. The experience accumulated by the Conservation Finance Alliance in developing partnerships with the private sector and business planning for protected area financing will be taken into account in the conservation management planning interventions which will be undertaken by the project. To address threats from unsustainable natural resource use (tillage of mineral islands, hunting, fishing), this outcome will demonstrate the feasibility of ecotourism as an income-generating alternative. Project efforts to strengthen reserve management capacity will be closely linked to the outcomes that focus on minimizing adverse impacts from practices of other economic sectors near reserves. Thus, implementation of concrete measures in these sectors will be aligned with the management plans (mutually reinforcing each other) and will be coordinated operationally by the local protected area management units, with support from the project management unit during the course of the project. In particular, the project will strengthen transboundary cooperation between Ukraine and Belarus through establishment of the Prostyr-Pripyat-Stokhid transboundary protected area.

Output 1.1: Legal framework is amended to improve protection level at reserves

The absence of legal requirements for reserves to have management plans and units results in insufficient coordination between the organizations maintaining and protecting natural resources inside protected areas and on surrounding territories and this is one of the principal underlying causes of threats to biodiversity. Therefore, the laws on wildlife protection and protected areas will be amended to upgrade protection level at Reserves (zakazniks) from unregulated to regulated reserves. These are expected to be endorsed by the Belarusian Parliament by end of 2005 – early 2006. Management plans and zoning of sites with designated buffer zones will become mandatory. The basis for designation of buffer zones will be changed from the current approach of defining it in terms of meters width to designation on the basis of hydrographic boundaries. In addition, the law will also provide for the establishment of government funded protected area management units (PAMUs) in reserves of international importance. To this end, relevant amendments and additions have already been made to

the Regulations on National and Local Nature Protection Funds, endorsed by a decision of the Cabinet of Ministers #321 dated March 25, 2005.

Output 1.2: Capacity of institutions and individuals for reserve management is developed

The capacity of PAMUs at 4 target reserves will be strengthened through hiring of staff, training, construction of information centers, and equipment. Respective Local Nature Protection Funds will cover the costs of staff during the project life (starting from year 2) and will continue to do so after project completion. PAMUs' capacity for carrying out improved scientific monitoring and research at target reserves will also be enhanced. Comprehensive monitoring plots will be established with project funding for ultimate incorporation in the National Monitoring System upon project completion. PAMUs will be responsible for clearing of fen mires of vegetation build-up. This will be achieved by a combination of controlled burning (led by PAMUs) and by the sustainable haymaking (led by collectives) supported through Output 2.3.

Integrated 5-year management plans for the target reserves will be prepared and approved by central and local authorities, and local land-users and discussed widely with the general public. The management plan preparation will build on the participatory strategy applied in the UNDP project *Management Planning for Conservation of Fen Mire Biodiversity* described in the baseline. It will benefit from extensive information collection during the PDF B stage. The experience will be distilled into guidelines for developing management plans (including sustainable hunting and fishing management plans).

For Mid-Pripyat and Prostyr reserves management units will be set up. The operation of PAMUs will be guided by the management plans to be prepared during the project. Baseline data for the management plans for these reserves have been collected at the PDF-B stage; the plans will be finalized within the first year of the project. For Zvanets and Sporovsky reserves such management units have already been established and are financed as part of the project *Integrated Management of Key Biodiversity Sites in Polesie*. However, these areas will still benefit from the project interventions at the legal level, by providing greater legal substantiation for their operation.

To enhance local participation in planning and monitoring activities, local Conservation Committees will be created with representatives of all stakeholders (including collectives and forestries). In addition, local stakeholders will be provided training to improve their capacity to participate in development and implementation of management plans. This will also enable awareness raising of locals about the zoning needs of the reserves. Final management plans will be discussed at a highly participatory workshop and agreed to by all land users. All project activities will be implemented by local organizations involving the local community. Continued implementation of the management plans and supervision of the protected areas beyond the project will be run by the management units supported through Nature Protection Funds.

Output 1.3: Transboundary conservation arrangements are established and coordination is strengthened between Ukrainian and Belarus protected areas in Polesie

The Prostyr-Pripyat Stokhid transboundary protected area (with Ukraine) will be established with a PAMU. At the PDF-B stage, the project has prepared a detailed description of the Prostyr zakaznik for a joint submission of a transboundary Ramsar site to the Ramsar Convention Secretariat (Ukraine's Pripyat and Stokhid have been designated Ramsar sites since 1995). The coordinated submission took place in June 2005, with the designation of the first transboundary Ramsar site in the Polesie region expected toward November 2005. This will provide precedence and lessons for consolidation of two sub-systems of protected areas in Ukrainian and Belarusian Polesie. The transboundary protected area will have fixed boundaries, a uniform protection regime in both countries, a single management plan combining management planning work on Prostyr in Belarus and Pripyat-Stokhid National Nature Park in Ukraine. Close coordination will be maintained with the project team of the UNDP-GEF biodiversity project in Ukrainian Polesie (exact process to be worked out during project inception phase).

Output 1.4: Viability of ecotourism as an alternative biodiversity-friendly livelihood is demonstrated

Ecotourism will be established as an alternative sustainable livelihood for locals. PDF-B findings on the feasibility of ecotourism ([Section IV, Part VI](#)) have shown that ecotourism can be developed in support of the project's goals as a partnership between local communities; national and local state enterprises, tourist sector

enterprises and NGOs. It can increase the number of local residents benefiting from associated income opportunities and thereby deliver direct benefits to conservation. The project will take an incremental approach whereby facilities are developed and improved at a rate, which generally matches supply to demand. Due to the limited availability of data in the PDF-B stage, a pre-requisite task for the project will include visitor surveys, further market research and detailed program planning. The project will help to improve, together with the local organizations, the tourism conditions (information centers in the reserves as well as special houses for fishermen and hunters will be built and repaired); to build and equip tourist trails, including water trails (tourist camping sites and boat docks will be arranged).

One of the key challenges for the project, to be addressed through this output, will be to leverage the successful pilot, to build conservation constituencies among locals who are engaged in harmful, illegal activities. As noted by the PDF-B feasibility assessment, communities that are going to be the most effective partners in the ecotourism pilot communities in traditional villages are often not the ones directly responsible for destructive, illegal activities in the reserves. Under this output, an active attempt will be made to reach out to those engaging in harmful practices.

Output 1.5: Linking of target reserves within the Polesie bionetwork (supported by UNESCO) concept is achieved

Under the PDF-B, contacts have been established with UNESCO representatives in Belarus. A schedule of joint activities is being developed with the UNESCO bionetwork project to ensure that project sites are an integral component of the longer-term vision of the Polesie bionetwork. Some of the joint activities envisioned include: gathering basic scientific information for the establishment and functioning of the West Polesie Transboundary Biosphere Reserve (WP-TBR), several workshops will be conducted for consideration of the results of joint research and field work; setting up of scientific background for a Polesie regional ecological network focusing on the floodplains of the Bug and Pripyat rivers; building on the results of the above, to design a future potential WP-TBR in the Ancient Pripyat Valley, discuss the results during multi-stakeholder workshops. These activities are expected to be implemented jointly with UNESCO project "Establishment of Transboundary Biosphere Reserve and Regional Econetwork in Polesie" scheduled for 2006-2008.

Outcome 2: Agricultural activity in and around the reserves is modified to diminish threats to biodiversity harboured in reserves.

The project will ensure that the use of agricultural lands (used by collectives) in the reserves and on adjacent areas will be aligned with the conservation needs of the reserves, as elaborated in reserve management plans. Similarly, the operation of water facilities by local amelioration companies (especially water uptake and pumping) will be made compatible with biodiversity conservation interests by minimizing adverse impacts. The objective will be to build on the sustainable development baseline provided by the sustainable agriculture policy to strengthen specifically the biodiversity component and address barriers to its implementation. This will require close liaison of national and international experts with local and central authorities. The state program tools, once revised, will be re-adopted, and this will constitute one of the key elements of the project's sustainability strategy. Through this outcome, the project will be able to address threats from the environmentally inappropriate practices of drainage systems, agricultural collectives and fish farms in areas surrounding wetland reserves, as well as cessation of haymaking by enabling agricultural collectives to replace agriculture with sustainable haymaking on lands in and near reserves.

Output 2.1: Guidelines for the environmental and economic optimization of agricultural land are developed and tested

The State Program on Sustainable Agriculture will be enhanced through the development of a methodology (in the form of a guidebook) for the environmental and economic optimization of agricultural land. Given the importance of the process of methodology development, stakeholders from the agriculture sector, including the SCLRC, will be closely involved in this process, as was the case under the PDF-B. This methodology will be tested and applied as part of GOB funded district-level land use planning schemes in districts where target protected area sites are located. The SCLRC has been closely involved in these discussions under the PDF-B, and is committed to institutionalizing the methodological guidebook in its future land use planning work (Section IV Part I below).

Agricultural lands used by collective farms in and around target reserves that are found to be unproductive and harm biodiversity in the reserve will be transferred from arable farming to grasslands (agricultural quotas/ outputs will no longer be expected from these unproductive, state owned lands), restoring the natural hydrological regime. As regards other land areas, their use conditions will be altered (the polders that were not flooded in the past will be transformed into flooded polders with the regulated water condition for fish spawning). Hay harvesting in these areas will be made once a year, after the water subsides. Several options for the procedures for land transfer have been discussed and agreed with collectives under the PDF-B. Based on PDF-B findings and negotiations with land users, a preliminary list of areas to be transferred include: Rozhnoe (216 ha), Novoselki (108 ha), and in an un-named area (250 ha), Berezhtsy (2607 ha), Rakitno (348 ha), Molodelchitsy (301 ha), Cherebasovski (416 ha), Yastrebel (563 ha), Krivichi (98 ha).

Under the PDF-B, the revision of the 2005-2007 work plan of the SCLRSC to develop Integrated Land Use Plans for the project sites has been initiated. SCLRSC has agreed to coordinate the preparation of the Plan for sites **Mid-Pripyat** (Stolin, Pinsk, Luninets, Zhitkovichi districts), **Prostyr** (Pinsk, Stolin), **Zvanets** (Drogichin, Kobrin), **Sporovsky** (Berioza, Drogichin) with the project. The Integrated Land Use Plans for the areas located within or adjacent to protected territories will be financed with GEF resources, with the rest supported through government cofinancing. Development and testing of the methodological guidebook will be conducted in parallel with the assessment of efficiency of agricultural land use and identification of the most effective and sustainable ways of their further uses.

Output 2.2: Impact of drainage systems on project sites is reduced

New operational guidelines for drainage systems will be prepared and implemented to avoid all damage to the reserves in normal years (8 out of 10 years) and minimize damage in extremely dry or wet years. This would include activities ranging from construction of overflow dams/ weirs to blocking the flow of water down the drainage canal, to the requirement of constant local-level coordination between drainage systems of Drogichin and Kobrin districts and PAMUs. Hydrotechnical construction works will be co-funded by the project *Integrated Management of Key Biodiversity Sites in Polesie*. Based on PDF-B findings a preliminary list of systems to be targeted includes Radostovo, Travy, and Orekhovsky. A compensation mechanism, financed through Local Nature Protection Funds, will be developed as an incentive to apply new guidelines in cases where they result in increased costs for drainage companies.

Output 2.3: Viability of haymaking as an alternative biodiversity-friendly use of land owned by collectives is demonstrated

Environmentally friendly haymaking (mechanized) will be introduced on lands transferred out of agriculture (for instance, timing will not coincide with breeding of ground-nesting grassland birds, and will be conducted on a 'centre-outward basis' to reduce impacts on terrestrial wildlife). This will involve exchange of experience with Poland that has implemented a similar approach, upgrading of technology and training. The project will undertake regular and sustainable mowing on fens Zvanets and Sporovsky and Pripyat floodplain meadows, with commitment from local authorities of Berioza and Drogichin districts on organizing regular mowing having been obtained under the PDF-B. Project funds will be used to procure necessary equipment, whereas local land users will pay for the fuel and salaries for annual mowing. An initial pilot haymaking was implemented on 4 ha of Sporovsky mire, 4 ha of Zvanets mire during PDF-B of the project. At full stage, it is planned to organize hay harvesting over the area of 600 ha in the Sporovsky mire and 600 ha in the Zvanets mire, and 500 ha in the Pripyat River flood valley (see [Section IV, Part IX](#) for more details on the economic feasibility, methodology and technological process). This will enable the team to verify haymaking costs for other project sites, and subsequent replication of experience to some 8,000 ha in Zvanets reserve, 2,500 ha in Sporovsky reserve and 4,000 ha of Pripyat floodplain meadows. This will enable the biodiversity of open fen mires and floodplain meadows to be sustained at an ecologically optimal level.

Output 2.4: Adverse impact of water use by upstream fish farms is reduced

Revised water use regulations for fish farms will be developed and ratified, to ensure that an optimum hydrological regime is maintained in reserves. The authority for enforcing these water use regulations will be vested with PAMUs. To enable fish farms to observe the revised guidelines, agreements will be made at the national level (MoNREP and Belmeliovodkhoz concern) and local level (fish farm and Environmental

Inspection) on the reallocating of financial resources to the fish farms (there are prior instances of such instances of resource reallocation, e.g. as part of the UNDP-RSPB project *Integrated Management of Key Biodiversity Sites in Polesie*). The construction and repair of non-functioning infrastructure at fish farms and the repair/construction of small water regulating structures within Reserves that can enhance water availability during dry periods will be undertaken through cofinancing.

Outcome 3: Forestry activity in and around the reserves is modified to diminish threats to biodiversity harboured in reserves.

Similar to the agriculture sector, Belarus' forestry sector too has made progress in terms of sustainable forestry practices. The focus of the project will be to build on this foundation, to ensure biodiversity conservation needs of the reserves are integrated into forestry management plans of forestries near reserves (see [Section IV, Part X](#) for more details). Special forest management planning principles will be applied to forestries in protected areas, and certification standards will be completed with special provisions for protected area management. The project will focus on forested tracts in Mid Pripjat and Zvanets (as the remaining sites have insignificant forest cover) to address the threat of forestry activities in and around reserves continuing to significantly undermine the state of biological diversity. Planned activities will be co-funded by the Ministry of Forestry. During the project inception phase, the UNDP offices in Belarus and Lithuania will focus on identifying a suitable process for transfer of technical assistance from the UNDP-GEF Lithuania project, specifically on the innovative approaches being applied there for integrating biodiversity concerns into forestry management plans.

Output 3.1: Forest management plans are revised to integrate biodiversity conservation objectives

Up-to-date data on the distribution of rare and endangered flora and fauna species will be collected and made available to forestry units. Modern forest management plans that focus on biodiversity conservation, with recommendations on species protection, will be developed for forestry units in the project areas (Zhitkovichi, Luninets, Stolin, Pinsk, Drogichin and Ivatsevichi), by working closely with forest sector officials and technicians. In order to ensure that there is adequate control over the introduction and distribution of invasive species, the new law on protection of wildlife will include amendments in the article on invasive species.

Output 3.2: Certification in line with national standards (6 forestry enterprises) & international standards (2 forestry enterprises) on forest certification is completed, with guidelines for replication

Forestlands belonging to Luninets (144,810 ha) and Ivatsevichi (104,700 ha) forestry (in and adjacent to the Mid-Pripjat & Sporovsky reserves) will be fully certified according to national and international standards & 6 forestry units (Zhitkovichi, Luninets, Stolin, Pinsk, Drogichin and Ivatsevichi) will be certified according to national standards. The certification experience will be shared and incorporated into the process of development of the national policy in the area of certification to boost the adjustment of national policy to international standards. The replication of experience from Luninets forestry will be undertaken using national funds. This will ensure that all future certification and forest management plans take into account biodiversity and wetland conservation needs

Outcome 4: Flood protection program in and around the reserves is modified to diminish threats to biodiversity harboured in reserves.

The State Program on Flood Defense will be revised to reflect biodiversity conservation principles. Biodiversity expertise will be integrated in the revision process. This will significantly increase habitat extension opportunities through summer polder solutions.

Revisions are expected to include⁴: modification/ closing of 9 summer polders covering 4,907 hectares to increase floodplain area for fish breeding, nesting of birds, etc; restoration of the previous Khotomelsk water passage from the Goryn River to the Stviga River for ensuring flood protection while not compromising biodiversity. Modification of the polder systems for their comprehensive use will require construction of new and reequipping of the existing water-regulating works and dams. As per national EIA policy and guidelines, any engineering works will be subject to EIAs as appropriate. Costs of this will be covered by the revised state

⁴ While no lowering of embankment is foreseen, it will be "broken up"; close-to-channel embankments will be replaced by close-to-dwelling protection, etc.

program implemented by *Belmeliovodkhoz* and the GEF resources. Summer polder agricultural systems will be enabled, fish stocks stabilized, and human security increased. Specific activities will include engineering and technical construction work, with subsequent capacity building for local users to enable effective flood protection and conservation of biodiversity.

Outcome 5: Tools and methodologies generated by the project in selected wetland reserves are institutionalised, enabling replication in other similar areas within the national protected areas system.

So that the experience generated through the project's specific demonstration sites is internalized and applied to other parts of the PA system, the project will ensure that key national and local government bodies adopt the revised guidelines, tools, and methodologies as standard operating procedures. The long-term goal of the GOB to be supported by the UNDP/GEF project is to strengthen the capacity and sustainability of the national PA system focusing on regional and local reserves. This will be done by establishing regional centers (3-4 staff) in 6 regions of the country, with local branches (1-3 staff) in 37 reserves (4 of which are the project demonstration sites). Additional regional and local centers will be established during the project, but the precise number will be determined in the initial stages of the project. Funding of regional and local management units will be provided from the Nature Protection Fund. The lessons and experience gained at the four project sites will greatly assist GOB in achieving this long-term objective.

Output 5.1: Management capacity of the national network of wetland reserves is strengthened

The lessons and best practices generated by the project will be used to prepare a package of training materials, tools and guidelines, especially on developing reserve management plans (including sustainable hunting and fishing management plans) and enhancing local participation in planning and implementation of reserve management plans. A strategy for exchanging information, organizing field visits, mentoring, and collaboration on research and monitoring will be developed and implemented. Close dialogue will be maintained with the National Ramsar Committee (established by the MoNREP in the course of the PDF-B), which is an intersectoral committee including representatives of Ministries, scientific institutions and nongovernmental organizations, to facilitate replication to other wetland areas in the country. The first sitting of the Committee has already taken place, where its members discussed, among other issues, the work program of the Committee and planned a series of meetings to discuss the progress of international projects related to Ramsar areas. The replication of the project's experience gained at the 4 demonstration sites will be integrated into their work program.

Output 5.2: Implementation of sustainable agriculture policy near wetland reserves strengthened at a national level

The project will ensure that the experience of aligning agricultural land use near reserves with conservation needs of reserves will be replicated through the dissemination of the methodological guidebook on ecological-economic optimization of agricultural land use, demonstration of its application through site visits, field seminars on best practices in transferring agricultural land to conservation-oriented uses, and by ensuring that the SCLRSC adopts this methodology at the national, regional and local levels, so that all future land use planning exercises are informed by conservation needs. Elaboration of biodiversity conservation-driven methods of assessing land use efficiency and their testing in the course of the project will enable large-scale replication of the approach in developing Integrated Land Use Plans for other areas, and this is a particularly opportune time as Belarus has just started the process of drafting Integrated Land Use Plans. Similarly, water use regulations for fish farms to minimize adverse impact on reserve hydrology and guidelines for regulation of drainage systems to minimize adverse impact on reserve hydrology will be adopted by the *Belmeliovodkhoz* concern.

Output 5.3: Integration of biodiversity principles in forest management plans at a national level

Tools and methodologies for achieving such integration will be documented so that, once successfully applied to the Mid-Pripyat forest tracts, these can be replicated in similar conditions throughout Belarus. The certification experience will be shared and incorporated into the process of development of the national policy in the area of certification to boost the adjustment of national policy to international standards. The replication of experience from Zhitkovichi forestry will be undertaken using national funds. This will ensure that all future certification and forest management plans take into account biodiversity and wetland conservation needs.

Output 5.4: Adaptive management and learning

Effective project management will be ensured through recruitment of a full-time Project Manager, a Scientific Director and an Administrative and Financial Assistant. Project monitoring and evaluation will follow the UNDP/GEF guidelines as described at lengths in [Section I, Part IV](#) below. A project communication strategy will be developed at the inception stage to ensure adequate exchange of information between the stakeholders and the wider public.

PROJECT INDICATORS, RISKS AND ASSUMPTIONS

See Logical Framework in [Section II, Part II](#).

EXPECTED GLOBAL, NATIONAL AND LOCAL BENEFITS

The primary global benefits of the project will be the conservation of critical habitat and improvements in survival probabilities of vulnerable & threatened flora and fauna in the unique biogeographical area of the Polesie region as a result of promoting improved management capacity of wetland reserves, reduction in threats from agricultural activity, reduction in threats from forestry, and from a new flood defense plan that does not alter reserve hydrology near wetland reserves. Additional global benefits will accrue due to the enhancement of the capacity of the national system of wetland protected areas which will benefit from the experience and methods developed at the project's demonstration sites to integrate biodiversity conservation objectives with economic activities near reserves. (See Incremental Cost Matrix in [Section II, Part I](#).)

National benefits will consist of increased capacity of nationals for efficient management of reserves and better alignment of economic activities surrounding reserves with management plans. Locals will be able to diversify their economic activities due to ecotourism demonstrations. Instead of continuing to deploy certain lands for unproductive agriculture, Belarus will be able to use this land more sustainably due to the sustainable haymaking demonstrations, which will be a win-win option for state collectives. Finally, forestries will benefit from a certification system and access to green premiums.

The project will also result in some indirect global benefits under the International Waters focal area, as the Pripyat is a transboundary river (straddling Ukraine, Belarus and – to a minor extent – Poland), and part of the larger Dnieper River Basin that also includes Russia. Improved management of lands surrounding reserves and improved conservation capacity of the reserves themselves will have a beneficial impact on the Pripyat.

COUNTRY OWNERSHIP: COUNTRY ELIGIBILITY AND COUNTRY DRIVENNESS

Belarus ratified the Convention on Biological Diversity on 8 September 1993. The country is eligible to receive assistance from the United Nations Development Programme, GEF and the World Bank. Belarus is also a Contracting Party of the following international treaties relevant to the project: CITES (1973); Ramsar Convention (1971); UN Convention to Combat Desertification (2001); Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Water Resources, Helsinki (1992). The project has been endorsed by the GEF National Operational Focal Point on June 10, 2005, letter #01-01/1172 (please see [Section IV, Part I](#)).

Consistency with national priorities

The *National Sustainable Socio-Economic Development Strategy for the period to 2020 of the Republic of Belarus* proclaims integration of environmental concerns into all sectors of economy a key priority for the Government for the coming decade. The unique Polesie natural complex is given special attention, as an area where not only the key global environmental conventions (Biodiversity, Climate Change, Land Degradation) converge, but also where the need is most evident to integrate economic activities and flood defense issues, with the fulfillment of the mentioned international environmental treaties.

Under the National Sustainable Development Strategy, the Polesie protected area network is to continue playing the central role in preserving the nation's, as well as the world's unique natural heritage untouched by human interventions. Government's plans in this respect are further reflected in the *National Strategy and Action Plan on Conservation of the Biological Diversity in Belarus*. These documents define the wetlands of the Polesie area as priority sites for investments in the area of environmental protection and biodiversity conservation.

Conservation of biodiversity should be the predominant purpose of establishment and operation of protected areas. Economic activities on such territories, such as forestry, agriculture, and flood defense are to be adjusted accordingly to enable effective biodiversity conservation on the one hand, while seeking to strengthen human security and business efficiency – in a sustainable way – on the other.

As of late 2004, GOB remained a full participant in the UNDP-GEF regional project Preparation of a Strategic Action Program (SAP) for the Dnieper River Basin and Development of SAP Implementation Mechanisms. The draft *Dnieper Basin Biodiversity Conservation Strategy* developed within the mentioned project has factored biodiversity conservation priorities into agriculture, flood defense, forestry, fishing and other key areas of economic interest in the Dnieper basin. Polesie, which geographically almost fully lies within the Dnieper basin, is sought to make the full benefit of the Strategy, in which its nature reserves, such as reserves Mid-Prityat, Sporovsky, Zvanets, Olmany are defined as priority biodiversity hotspots. Being fully aware of the need for taking practical steps in implementation of the *Dnieper project's* key documents, once these are adopted by the three countries⁵, GOB through a number of its national and international programs and projects has already started to prepare the ground for providing Polesie biodiversity hotspots with effective protection while ensuring human security and sustainable economy. The proposed GEF project is expected to synergistically add-on to these efforts, assisting the GOB in moving from the strategic planning level established by the *Dnieper project*, to the level of action, trying to ensure that the way Polesie natural values are managed is beneficial not only for the country, but also for the international community.

Link to UNDP Country Programme/GCF/RCF and UNDAF

UNDP support to the Government of Belarus under the second Country Cooperation Framework (CCF) for 2001-2004/5 is concentrated on two thematic areas: (1) economic and democratic governance, and (2) environmental conservation and management. Support to environmental management is focused on enhancing government and non-government capacities to deal more effectively with climate change, biodiversity conservation, and sustainable use of natural resources. The CCF implementation process includes assistance in establishment and effective management of protected areas for the most vulnerable and valuable ecosystems, as well as in sustainable use of other natural resources, especially wetlands. In all activities, a link is established between specific local actions, which will help to put in place and strengthen the implementation of conducive national policies. Raising public awareness and promoting access to information through environmental education and public participation, as well as building partnerships with key national and international stakeholders, are important elements in all activities.

Environmental sustainability will remain in the focus of the new UNDP Country Program for 2006-2010 currently pending approved by the UNDP Executive Board. Particular emphasis is going to be placed on the integration into national governance and production systems of biodiversity, ecosystem services, protected areas, and other commitments under the Convention on Biological Diversity and other multilateral environmental agreements.

One of the focal areas of the 2nd UNDP Regional Cooperation Framework for Europe and the CIS (2002–2005) is Environmental Governance. Its objective is to ensure that natural resources are exploited in ways that promote human development and minimize the negative environmental impacts of economic activities. Environmental governance activities will focus in several policy areas, including the management of protected areas, drought prevention and mitigation, and related environmental management concerns. The environmental governance program area will work in transboundary development programs that mainstream environmental concerns, participation and advocacy in sub-regional, regional and global environmental arenas, including the Rio+10 process, on issues that relate to institution building, harmonizing environmental legislation, and broadening public participation in environmental policy processes, and building stakeholder capacity in environmental governance. This project has been designed with the environmental governance program as a conceptual framework for financial and technical assistance. In addition, the framework of assistance of the UNDP office in Belarus closely follows the objectives set by the Millennium Declaration. The project's activities, which are

⁵ As of mid-2005, the Dnieper SAP has been approved by the governments of Belarus and Ukraine. Trilateral consultations between Ukraine, Belarus and Russia on finalization of an intergovernmental agreement on the endorsement of the Dnieper SAP are expected to commence in 2005.

expected to result in the conservation of the resource base upon which many communities obtain their income, are in line with UNDP activities in support of the MDGs.

UNDP Belarus is fully involved in the management of the GEF project entitled *Preparation of a Strategic Action Program (SAP) for the Dnieper River Basin and Development of SAP Implementation Mechanisms*. This full regional (Belarus-Ukraine-Russian Federation) GEF project (RER/98/G31), which ran from 2000 to 2004, has successfully developed a program of measures and their respective implementation mechanisms in order to protect Europe's third largest river, the transboundary Dnieper, of which Pripyat is one of the biggest tributaries.

This project has been designed as the most important follow-up step in implementation of the *Regional Biodiversity Strategy*, prepared under the regional project. It has also drawn on the lessons from, and will complement, the following associated initiatives assisted by UNDP Belarus:

- Development and internalization of the National Sustainable Development Strategy within the context of the Republic of Belarus. The project has assisted the Government of Belarus in establishing the conditions for sustainable economic, social and environmental development;
- Management Planning for Conservation of Fen Mire Biodiversity in Belarus and Integrated Management of Key Biodiversity Sites in Polesie. This two-phase project, through RSPB technical expertise and financial support of UNDP, Darwin Initiative, Otto Foundation, RSPB, has developed participatory management plans for key fen mires of Polesie and embarked on the implementation of the immediate recommendations of the plans.
- Establishment of an Environmental Management and Monitoring System in Belarus for Rehabilitation of the Dnieper River Basin. The goal of the project is to enable the Republic of Belarus to participate fully and effectively in the regional GEF project "Dnieper Basin Environment Program" through national capacity building;
- Public Awareness & Environmental Information: Phase 1 of an NGO-based cross-border initiative in the Polish-Belarusian border region at the Bialowieza-Belovezhskaya Pushcha National Park area. The project aims to strengthen environmental protection in the Polish-Belarusian border area through increased cross-border cooperation and public awareness and participation in the management of Belavezhskaya Pushcha National Park and its adjacent areas.
- Renaturalization and sustainable management of peatlands in Belarus. The medium size project focuses on the needs of degraded peatlands across the whole country (as opposed to peatlands in their natural state) because the potential for simultaneously generating multiple global benefits on these degraded lands is not being adequately tapped.
- National Capacity Self-Assessment for Global Environmental Management in Belarus. This GEF initiative has helped Belarus to identify its needs for capacity building in the area of global environmental management, specifically focusing on the synergy of the three Rio conventions (on biodiversity, climate change, and land degradation). A respective Action Plan for building the national capacity is being agreed with the relevant government institutions.

In addition, the project will liaise closely with the UNDP/GEF project in Ukraine that focuses on conserving wetland biodiversity in the Ukrainian Polesie. It will also establish links with the UNDP/GEF Lithuania project (Conservation of Inland Wetland Biodiversity in Lithuania), specifically for obtaining technical assistance and transfer of experience on the theme of integrating biodiversity concerns in forestry management plans.

Link to other relevant programs and strategies

Given the focus of the project on wetland reserves there are a number of related strategies and programs that are relevant to this project, and in the project inception phase a dialogue will be established with the following:

- Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS or Bonn Convention). Belarus recently (1st September 2003) became a party to the Bonn Convention, and given the relevance of coordinating the conservation of migratory species along the two major bird migration routes in Polesie, the project will maintain close links with CMS.
- African-Eurasian Migratory Water Bird Agreement (AEWA), the largest agreement developed so far under the Bonn Convention. AEWA came into force on 1 November 1999, when 20 contracting Parties

met in Cape Town, South Africa. The agreement covers 235 species of birds ecologically dependent on wetlands for at least part of their annual cycle. Belarus is not a contracting party or signatory to AEWA, but lies within the area covered by AEWA, and Polesie is certainly of importance for the AEWA migratory species.

- Aquatic Warbler Memorandum of Understanding, which was concluded in Minsk, under CMS auspices, became effective on 30 April 2003. This bird is a regular but rare autumn migrant travelling up to twelve thousand kilometres from Eastern Europe to sub-Saharan Africa. Over half of the world population of this species is breeding and spending part of the year in the marshes and fen mires of Belarus. The MoU area covers 14 Range States in Europe and Africa including Belarus, Belgium, Bulgaria, Germany, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Poland, Russian Federation, Senegal, Spain, Ukraine and the United Kingdom.
- Potential second phase of an EU funded project on the Pripyat River. This will be a continuation of the Joint River Management Project (2001-2003) funded by EU-TACIS, specifically targeting four transboundary rivers in the FSU, including the Pripyat River shared by Ukraine and Belarus. The first phase of the project dealt with transboundary issues related to water quality – data collection, sharing and interpretation – and a second phase is likely to focus on other transboundary issues, including flood management.
- Global Action Plan for Peatlands (or GAPP), based on collaboration between the International Mire Conservation Group (IMCG), Wetlands International and others, and was adopted by the Ramsar Standing Committee in December 2001 (http://www.ramsar.org/key_res_viii_17_e.htm).
- Global Peat Initiative, which was based on a continuation of the GAPP, and resulted in initiatives and guidelines for the wise use and conservation of peatlands (www.wetlands.org/projects/GPI/default.htm).

SUSTAINABILITY

One of the fundamental elements for ensuring sustainability of conservation efforts initiated by the project is its approach of integrating biodiversity concerns into the main economic sectors, especially near protected areas. Once integration is achieved at the policy level and pilot/validation activities are successfully undertaken, the project will be sustainable, since the financial and administrative ownership for follow up will in rest with national and local stakeholders upon project end.

In terms of improved protected area management, the operation of management units and implementation of the reserve management plans beyond the project will be funded by the state. Special budget will be allocated for public awareness work. In addition, personnel for the units will be carefully selected, trained and monitored during the first year of their work. Subsequently, they will fully transfer under the jurisdiction of the local branches of MoNREP, becoming integral elements of the national enforcement system of protected area management. It is envisaged that once successfully introduced and operated for some time, the management unit personnel will serve as a local source of technical training and advice to other areas, thus improving the overall national capacity for sustainable protected area management. The National Environmental Monitoring Network System will be officially upgraded to include new monitoring plots. Funding will be allocated for maintenance of new monitoring plots from the budget of the National Environmental Monitoring Network. The National Academy of Sciences of Belarus through its institutes (Institute of Zoology, Botany) will continue monitoring of the sites after project completion. Special budget lines will be allocated in the budget of the Prostyr reserve for maintenance of transboundary cooperation, with this obligation strengthened on both sides through the preparation by the Governments of documents for designation of Prostyr-Pripyat-Stokhid as a transboundary Ramsar site.

As a result of the National Capacity Self-Assessment project⁶, MoNREP expressed interest in establishing a Conventions Center, which will take up from UNDP the role of coordinator in fund-raising for Polesie initiatives. Under the overall supervision of the Commission on Sustainable Development this mechanism will coordinate all stakeholders inside the country, establish and maintain links with the outside world to make sure Polesie values receive the necessary support nationally and internationally.

⁶ The NCSA project gives special attention to the Polesie as a region of convergence of all environment-related conventions.

In terms of the biodiversity overlay on the agriculture sector, the State Program on Sustainable Agriculture will be revised and expanded to strengthen the biodiversity components. Collective farms will continue with land use types established by the project upon its completion since this is not only beneficial to the environment, but also economically more profitable than the previous land use. The operational policies of local amelioration companies will be modified; technologies will be modified to be environmentally friendly; and awareness among company personnel on biodiversity values will be raised.

In terms of the biodiversity overlay on the forestry sector, special forestry planning procedures will be adopted by the Ministry of Forestry as a policy document obligatory for use at especially protected areas. The maintenance of appropriate forest condition will be carried out by the forestries since upon certification forestries will derive an additional market advantage of selling certified timber.

In terms of flood defense, the revised State Program will be implemented by the state with its funding upon project completion. The maintenance of regulated gates within the system will be allocated necessary funding from local land-users.

REPLICABILITY

The main strategy of the project is to integrate biodiversity concerns into key economic activities at protected areas. The policy changes introduced for each sector (protected areas, agriculture, forestry, flood defense) will ensure that they are legally obligatory for all of the country's protected areas. The demonstration of this approach at the project sites will serve to validate that the proposed concrete – and in many aspects innovative – mechanisms and tools are favorable for replication not only because GOB has established so through its policies, but also because this is of advantage to stakeholders with non-environmental interests. The project model will also be shared with Ukraine and Russia as part of continued Dnieper Basin cooperation.

Specific replication activities in the protected areas system will include amendments to the Law on Protected Areas that will provide legal basis for establishment of management units and elaboration of management plans for reserves, including transboundary ones (20 zakazniks are expected to get management units by the project end). The project experience in the area of sustainable forestry is expected to be replicated across Polesie, to have 21 forestry enterprises certified in accordance with the national system and seven enterprises as per international standards. The experience of the project in sustainable agricultural policy will be replicated across the Polesie region through the dissemination of the methodological guidebook and examples of its application among the concerned organizations; organization of field seminars to demonstrate best practices in transferring agricultural land to sustainable nature use. (See [Section IV, Part XIII](#) for details.)

PART III: MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS

The project will be nationally executed in accordance with standard UNDP national execution guidelines. The Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection will be the Implementing Partner for the project and will appoint a National Project Director. The Ministry will be responsible for planning and overall coordination of project activities, reporting. Recruitment, procurement, subcontracting and financial operations will be conducted in line with corresponding UNDP procedures. The Ministry is responsible for the production of outputs, for the achievement of project objectives and for the use of financial resources. The National Project Director will be responsible for the overall coordination of the project, representing and supporting the project's objectives at high decision-making levels within the Belarusian Government.

Project implementation will be overseen by a Project Steering Committee to be established on the basis of the National Ramsar Committee (see [Section IV, Part XI](#) for Terms of Reference and composition of the Committee). The PSC will be responsible for ensuring that the project is implemented in line with the agreed project design and consistent with national development policies. The PSC will also be responsible for approving the project's annual workplans and reviewing and endorsing the Annual Progress Reports (APR) prior to the annual Tripartite Review Meetings.

The PSC will include senior- to medium-level officials from the MoNREP, MoF, MoA, SCLRC, National Academy of Sciences of Belarus, Belmeliovodkhoz, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, APB-BirdLife Belarus, representatives of local authorities from project target districts. UNDP will be represented in the PSC

by the Program Officer on Environment, and UNDP-GEF unit may also periodically participate in PSC meetings.

Operational implementation of the project will be led by a full-time Project Manager, under the overall supervision of UNDP and in coordination with MoNREP. The Project Manager will be supported by a Scientific Coordinator and an Administrative and Financial Assistant, and short-term consultants as required.

It is proposed that the project works through the subcontracts basis. Specific activities can be subcontracted to non-governmental organizations, research institutes, collective farms, etc. – those who through a standard UNDP bidding procedure will confirm their best ability to deliver the outcomes to the needed level of quality and efficiency. (Building on the available UNDP Belarus experience with biodiversity projects in Polesie it can be said that local stakeholders – including those mentioned above such as local drainage companies, collective farms – are normally best suited to undertake specific protected area management assignments. They possess local knowledge, local experts and best available human and technical resources to do practical things on the ground.)

In order to accord proper acknowledgement to GEF for providing funding, a GEF logo should appear on all relevant GEF project publications, including among others, project hardware and vehicles purchased with GEF funds. Any citation on publications regarding projects funded by GEF should also accord proper acknowledgment to GEF. The UNDP logo should be more prominent -- and separated a bit from the GEF logo if possible as, with non-UN logos, there can be security issues for staff.

PART IV: MONITORING AND EVALUATION PLAN AND BUDGET

Project monitoring and evaluation will be conducted in accordance with established UNDP and GEF procedures and will be provided by the project team and the UNDP Country Office (UNDP-CO) with support from UNDP/GEF. The Logical Framework Matrix ([Section II, Part II](#)) provides *performance* and *impact* indicators for project implementation along with their corresponding *means of verification*. These will form the basis on which the project's Monitoring and Evaluation system will be built.

The following sections outline the principle components of the Monitoring and Evaluation Plan and indicative cost estimates related to M&E activities. The project's Monitoring and Evaluation Plan will be presented and finalized at the Project's Inception Report following a collective fine-tuning of indicators, means of verification, and the full definition of project staff M&E responsibilities.

Furthermore, the project will be subject to monitoring and evaluation according to the Regulation on Evaluation of International Technical Assistance Projects approved by the decision of Council of Ministers of Belarus #1513 dated November 26, 2004.

MONITORING AND REPORTING⁷

Project Inception Phase

A Project Inception Workshop will be conducted with the full project team, relevant government counterparts, co-financing partners, the UNDP-CO and representation from the UNDP-GEF Regional Coordinating Unit, as well as UNDP-GEF (HQs) as appropriate. A fundamental objective of this Inception Workshop will be to assist the project team to understand and take ownership of the project's goals and objectives, as well as finalize preparation of the project's first annual work plan on the basis of the project's logframe matrix. This will include reviewing the logframe (indicators, means of verification, assumptions), imparting additional detail as needed, and on the basis of this exercise finalize the Annual Work Plan (AWP) with precise and measurable performance indicators, and in a manner consistent with the expected outcomes for the project.

Additionally, the purpose and objective of the Inception Workshop (IW) will be to: (i) introduce project staff with the UNDP-GEF *expanded team* which will support the project during its implementation, namely the CO

⁷ As per new GEF guidelines, the project will also be using the SP1 Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool (see Section IV Part XII). New or additional GEF monitoring requirements will be accommodated and adhered to once they are officially launched.

and responsible Regional Coordinating Unit staff; (ii) detail the roles, support services and complementary responsibilities of UNDP-CO and RCU staff vis à vis the project team; (iii) provide a detailed overview of UNDP-GEF reporting and monitoring and evaluation (M&E) requirements, with particular emphasis on the Annual Project Implementation Reviews (PIRs) and related documentation, the Annual Project Report (APR), Tripartite Review Meetings, as well as mid-term and final evaluations. Equally, the IW will provide an opportunity to inform the project team on UNDP project related budgetary planning, budget reviews, and mandatory budget rephasings.

The IW will also provide an opportunity for all parties to understand their roles, functions, and responsibilities within the project's decision-making structures, including reporting and communication lines, and conflict resolution mechanisms. The Terms of Reference for project staff and decision-making structures will be discussed again, as needed, in order to clarify for all, each party's responsibilities during the project's implementation phase.

Monitoring responsibilities and events

A detailed schedule of project reviews meetings will be developed by the project management, in consultation with project implementation partners and stakeholder representatives and incorporated in the Project Inception Report. Such a schedule will include: (i) tentative time frames for Tripartite Reviews, Steering Committee Meetings and (ii) project related Monitoring and Evaluation activities.

Day to day monitoring of implementation progress will be the responsibility of the Project Manager based on the project's Annual Work Plan and its indicators. The Project Team will inform the UNDP-CO of any delays or difficulties faced during implementation so that the appropriate support or corrective measures can be adopted in a timely and remedial fashion.

The Project Manager will fine-tune the progress and performance/impact indicators of the project in consultation with the full project team at the Inception Workshop with support from UNDP-CO and assisted by the UNDP-GEF Regional Coordinating Unit. Specific targets for the first year implementation progress indicators together with their means of verification will be developed at this Workshop. These will be used to assess whether implementation is proceeding at the intended pace and in the right direction and will form part of the Annual Work Plan. The local implementing agencies will also take part in the Inception Workshop in which a common vision of overall project goals will be established. Targets and indicators for subsequent years would be defined annually as part of the internal evaluation and planning processes undertaken by the project team.

Measurement of impact indicators related to global benefits will occur according to the schedules defined in the Inception Workshop. The measurement of these will be undertaken through subcontracts or retainers with relevant institutions or through specific studies that are to form part of the projects activities or periodic sampling.

Periodic monitoring of implementation progress will be undertaken by the UNDP-CO through quarterly meetings with the project proponent, or more frequently as deemed necessary. This will allow parties to take stock and to troubleshoot any problems pertaining to the project in a timely fashion to ensure smooth implementation of project activities.

Annual Monitoring will occur through the Tripartite Review (TPR). This is the highest policy-level meeting of the parties directly involved in the implementation of a project. The project will be subject to Tripartite Review (TPR) at least once every year. The first such meeting will be held within the first twelve months of the start of full implementation.

The Project Manager in coordination with the CO will prepare a UNDP/GEF APR and submit it to UNDP-CO at least two weeks prior to the TPR for review and comments. The APR will be used as one of the basic documents for discussions in the TPR meeting. The Project Manager will present the APR to the TPR, highlighting policy issues and recommendations for the decision of the TPR participants.

The terminal tripartite review will be held in the last month of project operations. The Project Manager will be responsible for preparing the Terminal Report and submitting it to UNDP-CO. It shall be prepared in draft at least two months in advance of the TTR in order to allow review, and will serve as the basis for discussions in

the TTR. The terminal tripartite review considers the implementation of the project as a whole, paying particular attention to whether the project has achieved its stated objectives and contributed to the broader environmental objective. It decides whether any actions are still necessary, particularly in relation to sustainability of project results, and acts as a vehicle through which lessons learnt can be captured to feed into other projects under implementation or formulation.

Project Monitoring Reporting

The Project Manager in conjunction with the UNDP-GEF extended team will be responsible for the preparation and submission of the following reports that form part of the monitoring process.

(a) Inception Report (IR)

A Project Inception Report will be prepared immediately following the Inception Workshop. It will include a detailed First Year/ Annual Work Plan divided in quarterly time-frames detailing the activities and progress indicators that will guide implementation during the first year of the project. This Work Plan would include the dates of specific field visits, support missions from the UNDP-CO or the Regional Coordinating Unit (RCU) or consultants, as well as time-frames for meetings of the project's decision making structures. The Report will also include the detailed project budget for the first full year of implementation, prepared on the basis of the Annual Work Plan, and including any monitoring and evaluation requirements to effectively measure project performance during the targeted 12 months time-frame.

The Inception Report will include a more detailed narrative on the institutional roles, responsibilities, coordinating actions and feedback mechanisms of project related partners. In addition, a section will be included on progress to date on project establishment and start-up activities and an update of any changed external conditions that may effect project implementation. When finalized the report will be circulated to project counterparts who will be given a period of one calendar month in which to respond with comments or queries. Prior to this circulation of the IR, the UNDP Country Office will review the document.

(b) Annual Project Report (APR)

The UNDP/GEF APR will be prepared on an annual basis prior to the Tripartite Project Review, to reflect progress achieved in meeting the project's Annual Work Plan and assess performance of the project in contributing to intended outcomes through outputs and partnership work. The APR will include the following:

- An analysis of project performance over the reporting period, including outputs produced and, where possible, information on the status of the outcome
- The constraints experienced in the progress towards results and the reasons for these
- The three (at most) major constraints to achievement of results
- AWP and other expenditure reports (ERP generated)
- Lessons learned
- Clear recommendations for future orientation in addressing key problems in lack of progress

(c) Quarterly Progress Reports

Short reports outlining main updates in project progress will be provided quarterly to the local UNDP Country Office and the UNDP-GEF regional office by the project team.

(d) Project Terminal Report

During the last three months of the project the project team will prepare the Project Terminal Report. This comprehensive report will summarize all activities, achievements and outputs of the Project, lessons learnt, objectives met, or not achieved, structures and systems implemented, etc. and will be the definitive statement of the Project's activities during its lifetime. It will also lay out recommendations for any further steps that may need to be taken to ensure sustainability and replicability of the project's activities.

(e) Technical Reports

As part of the Inception Report, the project team will prepare a draft Reports List, detailing the technical reports that are expected to be prepared on key areas of activity during the course of the Project, and tentative due dates. Where necessary this Reports List will be revised and updated, and included in subsequent APRs. These

technical reports will represent the project's substantive contribution to specific areas, and will be used in efforts to disseminate relevant information and best practices at local, national and international levels.

INDEPENDENT EVALUATION

The project will be subject to at least two independent external evaluations as follows:

Mid-term Evaluation

An independent Mid-Term Evaluation will be undertaken at the mid point of project implementation. The Mid-Term Evaluation will determine progress being made towards the achievement of outcomes and will identify course correction if needed. It will focus on the effectiveness, efficiency and timeliness of project implementation; will highlight issues requiring decisions and actions; and will present initial lessons learned about project design, implementation and management. Findings of this review will be incorporated as recommendations for enhanced implementation during the final half of the project's term. The organization, terms of reference and timing of the mid-term evaluation will be decided after consultation between the parties to the project document. The Terms of Reference for this Mid-term evaluation will be prepared by the UNDP CO based on guidance from the Regional Coordinating Unit and UNDP-GEF.

Final Evaluation

An independent Final Evaluation will take place three months prior to the terminal tripartite review meeting, and will focus on the same issues as the mid-term evaluation. The final evaluation will also look at impact and sustainability of results, including the contribution to capacity development and the achievement of global environmental goals. The Final Evaluation should also provide recommendations for follow-up activities. The Terms of Reference for this evaluation will be prepared by the UNDP CO based on guidance from the Regional Coordinating Unit and UNDP-GEF.

LEARNING AND KNOWLEDGE SHARING

Results from the project will be disseminated within and beyond the project intervention zone through a number of existing information sharing networks and forums. In addition, the project will participate, as relevant and appropriate, in UNDP/GEF sponsored networks, organized for Senior Personnel working on projects that share common characteristics. The project will identify and participate, as relevant and appropriate, in scientific, policy-based and/or any other networks, which may be of benefit to project implementation though lessons learned. The project will identify, analyze, and share lessons learned that might be beneficial in the design and implementation of similar future projects. Identify and analyzing lessons learned is an on- going process, and the need to communicate such lessons as one of the project's central contributions is a requirement to be delivered not less frequently than once every 12 months. UNDP/GEF shall provide a format and assist the project team in categorizing, documenting and reporting on lessons learned. To this end around 4% of project resources will need to be allocated for these activities.

INDICATIVE MONITORING AND EVALUATION WORK PLAN AND CORRESPONDING BUDGET

Type of M&E activity	Responsible Parties	Budget US\$ <i>Excluding project team staff time</i>	Time frame
Inception Workshop	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Project Manager ▪ UNDP CO ▪ UNDP GEF 	\$8,000	Within first two months of project start up
Inception Report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Project Team ▪ UNDP CO 	None	Immediately following IW
TPR and TPR report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Government Counterparts ▪ UNDP CO ▪ Project team 	None	Every year

Type of M&E activity	Responsible Parties	Budget US\$ <i>Excluding project team staff time</i>	Time frame
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ UNDP-GEF RCU 		
Steering Committee Meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Project Manager ▪ UNDP CO 	None	Following Project IW and subsequently at least twice a year
Technical reports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Project team ▪ Hired consultants as needed 	\$10,000	To be determined by Project Team and UNDP-CO
Mid-term External Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Project team ▪ UNDP- CO ▪ UNDP-GEF RCU ▪ External Consultants (i.e. evaluation team) 	\$60,000	At the mid-point of project implementation.
Final External Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Project team, ▪ UNDP-CO ▪ UNDP-GEF RCU ▪ External Consultants (i.e. evaluation team) 	\$60,000	At the end of project implementation
Terminal Report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Project team ▪ UNDP-CO ▪ External Consultant 	None	At least one month before the end of the project
Lessons learned	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Project team ▪ UNDP-GEF RCU (suggested formats for documenting best practices, etc) 	\$25,000 (average \$5,000 per year)	Yearly
Audit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ UNDP-CO ▪ Project team 	\$5,000 (average \$1000 per year)	Yearly
Visits to field sites by project team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Project team 	\$20,000	As often as required
TOTAL INDICATIVE COST		US\$ 188,000	

PART V: LEGAL CONTEXT

This Project Document shall be the instrument referred to as such in Article I of the Standard Basic Assistance Agreement between the Government of Belarus and the United Nations Development Programme, signed by the parties on September 24, 1992. The host country implementing agency shall, for the purpose of the Standard Basic Assistance Agreement, refer to the government co-operating agency described in that Agreement.

The UNDP Resident Representative in Belarus is authorized to effect in writing the following types of revision to this Project Document, provided that he/she has verified the agreement thereto by the UNDP-GEF Unit and is assured that the other signatories to the Project Document have no objection to the proposed changes:

- a) Revision of, or addition to, any of the annexes to the Project Document;
- b) Revisions which do not involve significant changes in the immediate objectives, outputs or activities of the project, but are caused by the rearrangement of the inputs already agreed to or by cost increases due to inflation;
- c) Mandatory annual revisions which re-phase the delivery of agreed project inputs or increased expert or other costs due to inflation or take into account agency expenditure flexibility; and
- d) Inclusion of additional annexes and attachments only as set out here in this Project Document.

SECTION II: STRATEGIC RESULTS FRAMEWORK AND GEF INCREMENT

PART I: INCREMENTAL COST ASSESSMENT

DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVE

The GOB is committed to achieving a transition to a socially oriented economy based on sustainable development principles and the restriction of environmentally unsound technologies. This includes the development of environmentally safe production patterns; the use of resource conservation and environmentally sound technologies; development of the framework for ecological services; international cooperation for conservation, protection and rehabilitation of ecological systems; raising public awareness on sustainable development issues; and development and promotion of local Agenda 21s. The *National Sustainable Socio-Economic Development Strategy for the period to 2020 of the Republic of Belarus* will focus on harmonization of environmental, economic and social priorities of development.

GLOBAL ENVIRONMENTAL OBJECTIVE

The global environmental objective of the project is to build on the sustainable development baseline to catalyse the sustainability of the network of wetland reserves in the unique biogeographical Polesie region, thus conserving globally important habitats and species and also laying the foundation for replicating the project approach in other parts of the national system of protected areas.

BASELINE SCENARIO

GOB has identified the conservation of wetland biodiversity, especially the unique natural heritage in the Polesie, as a top priority under various national priority-setting exercises (national biodiversity strategy and action plan, the biodiversity strategy emanating from the Dnieper basin regional project, action plans prepared by the 2 international conferences on the conservation of floodplains and fen mires of the Belarusian Polesie).

Much progress has been made in terms of drawing attention to the biodiversity significance and conservation needs of wetland reserves in general, and that of the Polesie more specifically. Key decision makers have been mobilized to undertake actions at the strategic planning level, such as the establishment of a network of wetland protected areas. These are particularly notable achievements against the backdrop of Soviet-era policies and priorities represented by the large-scale drainage campaigns aimed at converting wetlands into arable agricultural land.

Under the baseline scenario, Belarus in 2006-2010 plans to be dedicating its own resources as well as mobilizing external funding for **basic management and upkeep of the network of reserves** as follows:

- Development of management plans for the key fen mires of Polesie for conservation of biodiversity (Darwin Initiative, RSPB, UNDP, MoNREP): US\$ 300,000
- National spending for protected areas in Polesie that are not project sites (including National Park Pripyatsky): US\$ 8 million
- National spending on scientific monitoring at four project sites under the National Monitoring Program: US\$ 475,000

In terms of **agricultural activities** near reserves, the following activities will take place under the baseline, however these will not take into account conservation needs of reserves due to the lack of methodological guidance on the same:

- Land use plans for Drogichin, Luninets, Berioza, Pinsk, Stolin and Zhitkovichi districts that include the project areas (SCLRC): US\$ 500,000
- Planned expenditures of the 6 drainage companies on drainage activities near project sites: US\$ 2,800,000

For the **forestry** sector, baseline activities consist of the following, which will not take into account special requirements for forestries near protected wetland areas:

- Mapping of the most valuable forest plots in terms of biodiversity based on the materials of the national forestry inventory of forest having the highest biological value (Jensen Foundation, Bird Life International, Forest Task Force): US\$ 33,000
- Annual expenditures by forestry companies in project sites (Zhitkovichi, Luninets, Stolin, Pinsk, Drogichin, Ivatsevichi districts) US\$ 1,314,000

In terms of **flood defense**, the government will be funding the National Program titled “Engineering water economy activities for protection of populated centers and agricultural land against floods in the most flood-affected areas of Polesie for 2005–2010”, as per decision of the Cabinet of Minister of Belarus #311 dated March 23, 2005, through budgetary resources totaling \$46,331,627. However, without the GEF project, this program will not be looking at alternative flood security measures that are less harmful to biodiversity, yet do not compromise human security. About \$7,000,000 of this amount are essential for realizing the project’s objective of reducing threats to reserves from flood defense activities and can be considered as cofinancing. This will significantly increase habitat extension opportunities through summer polder solutions. Revisions are expected to include: modification/closing of 7 summer polders covering 4,625 hectares to increase floodplain area for fish spawning, nesting of birds, etc; restoration of the previous Khotomelsk water passage from the Goryn River to the Stviga River for ensuring flood protection while not compromising biodiversity. Modification of the polder systems for their comprehensive use will require construction of new and reequipping of the existing water-regulating facilities and dams. Costs of this will be covered by the revised state program implemented by *Belmeliovodkhoz* and the GEF resources.

Despite the above initiatives, however, there will be insufficient account of the need to preserve globally important biodiversity of Polesie and the potential of enhancing this existing sustainable development baseline to achieve global conservation priorities will not be realized. The baseline will not adequately emphasize the identification and removal of barriers to moving from strategic planning to implementation. Ad hoc conservation measures that are likely to continue in the Polesie region will not focus on institutionalizing the experience and knowledge gained, to enable transfer to other areas facing similar challenges in Belarus.

Poor protected area management capacity on the one hand combined with lack of efforts for awareness raising and involvement of local people will result in continued illegal tillage on the territory of protected areas, poaching, illegal fishing, overgrazing, destruction of vegetation layer in forests, excessive collection of wetland and forest resources. Biodiversity risky behavior among local land-users and local people, such as burning of vegetation, will continue undermining the feeding base and vegetation composition, contributing to eventual unprecedented changes in the population density of key globally threatened species.

Slow implementation of sustainable agriculture policy in Polesie will result in habitats of globally important biodiversity suffering from progressive encroachment of agricultural deserts and shrubs, with valuable species eventually losing their population density, up to the point of total disappearance. Lack of capacity to elaborate and test special forest management planning and certification procedures specifically for protected areas will lead to continued logging of valuable biotopes, fires, biological pollution, eventually resulting in loss of habitats for globally threatened birds, and a substantial decrease of unique oak and alder ecosystems. Full-length levees – unaffected by innovative technologies – will continue to limit opportunities for habitat extension. Shortages of shallow areas will result in substantial loss of fish stock, with some already rare species under threat of disappearance within 10 to 15 years.

ALTERNATIVE

The alternative strategy builds on the sustainable development baseline and provides technical and financial resources to secure biodiversity values of wetland reserves and reduce threats emanating from unsustainable land use practices, through a two-pronged approach: (1) the project will build up management effectiveness and capacities of four reserves, and (2) it will also help in realigning land use regulations and practices in and around wetland protected areas towards conservation-oriented and sustainable land use. It will further ensure that tools and methodologies developed under the demonstrations are institutionalized within key government bodies by being adopted as standard operating practice, ensuring replication in the rest of the protected area system (for

further details on project outcomes see the logframe in [Section II, Part II](#)). Taking into account all contributions, the GEF alternative amounts to **US\$ 71,039,127**.

INCREMENTAL COSTS

The difference between the GEF alternative and the baseline amounts to **US\$ 11,285,500** which represents the incremental cost of achieving sustainable global environmental benefits. Of this amount, the contribution from non-GEF sources amount to **US\$ 9,094,000**, including a national contribution of US\$ 8,767,000. The national contribution, as per the letters of endorsement from Belarusian ministries and organization, will be made available in the form of parallel co-financing. The GEF will provide **US\$ 2,191,500**.

INCREMENTAL COST MATRIX

Outcome	Cost Category	Cost, US\$	Domestic Benefit	Global Benefit
Outcome 1: Reserves are being managed effectively, with the active participation of local stakeholders in design and implementation aspects	Baseline MoNREP, Darwin Initiative, Michael Otto Foundation, RSPB, UNDP	8,775,000	There is limited protection of biodiversity harbored in the Polesie network of reserves, but sustainability is in question given continued threats emanating from economic activities surrounding reserves and weaknesses in the legal framework governing reserves.	
	Alternative MoNREP, UNESCO, RSPB, UNDP, MoF, Brest Executive Committee, Dnieper-Bug Canal GEF	10,269,000	Ability of reserves to protect biodiversity is enhanced through increased management efficiency of reserves and better alignment of economic activities surrounding reserves with management plans. Locals can diversify their economic activities due to ecotourism demonstrations.	Conservation of critical habitat and improvements in survival probabilities of vulnerable & threatened flora and fauna result from promoting improved management capacity of wetland reserves.
	Increment	1,494,000	of which GEF: 832,000 co-finance: 662,000 MoNREP: 356,000 MoF: 37,000 Brest Executive Committee: 44,000 Dnieper-Bug Canal: 20,000 UNDO: 155,000 UNESCO: 50,000	
Outcome 2: Agricultural activity in and around the Reserves is modified to	Baseline MoNREP, SCLRC, Drainage enterprises	3,300,000	Collective lands near reserves continue to be used for agriculture despite their declining production potential and adverse impact on reserve hydrology.	

Outcome	Cost Category	Cost, US\$	Domestic Benefit	Global Benefit
diminish threats to biodiversity harboured in reserves.	Alternative MoNREP, SCLRC, Belmeliovdkhoz, Drainage enterprises, Mizhlesse, RSPB, GEF	4,369,000	Improvements in implementation of Sustainable Agricultural Policy, especially near reserves, due to the availability of methodologies for ecological-economic optimisation of agricultural land and integration of this in district-level land use planning efforts. Agricultural lands that are unproductive can be more effectively used as grasslands due to haymaking demonstrations.	Conservation of critical habitat and improvements in survival probabilities of vulnerable & threatened flora and fauna result from reduction in threats from agricultural activity near wetland reserves.
	Increment	1,069,000	of which GEF: 541,000 co-finance: 528,000 MoNREP: 30,000 SCLRC: 171,000 Belmeliovdkhoz: 37,000 Mizhlesse: 240,000 RSPB: 50,000	
Outcome 3: Forestry activity in and around the Reserves is modified to diminish threats to biodiversity harboured in reserves.	Baseline MoF, mapping project	1,347,000	Forestry activity near reserves continues to compromise biodiversity because forest management plans lack a biodiversity overlay.	
	Alternative MoF, GEF	1,753,000	Revised forest management plans minimize adverse impacts on biodiversity; forestries benefit from a certification system and access to green premiums.	Conservation of critical biotopes and improvements in survival probabilities of vulnerable & threatened flora and fauna result from reduction in threats from forestry near wetland reserves.
	Increment	406,000	of which GEF: 143,000 co-finance: 263,000 (MoF)	
Outcome 4: Flood protection program in and around the Reserves is modified to diminish threats to biodiversity harboured in reserves.	Baseline Belmeliovdkhoz	46,331,627	Flood protection plan only takes into account human security.	
	Alternative Belmeliovdkhoz, GEF	53,986,627	A revised plan enables Belarus to achieve the dual objectives of human security and conservation.	Conservation of critical habitat and improvements in survival probabilities of vulnerable & threatened flora and fauna result from a new flood defense plan that does not alter reserve hydrology.
	Increment	7,655,000	of which GEF: 205,000 co-finance: 7,450,000 (Belmeliovdkhoz)	

Outcome	Cost Category	Cost, US\$	Domestic Benefit	Global Benefit
Outcome 5: Tools and methodologies generated by the project in selected wetland reserves are replicated in other similar areas within the national protected areas system.	Baseline	0		
	Alternative GEF, MoNREP, MoF, Brest Executive Committee, RSPB	661,500		The national system of wetland protected areas can benefit from the experience and methods developed at the demonstration sites to integrate biodiversity conservation objectives with economic activities near reserves.
	Increment	661,500	of which GEF: 470,500 co-finance: 191,000 MoNREP: 10,000 MoF: 103,000 Brest Executive Committee: 6,000 RSPB: 72,000	
TOTAL COST	Baseline	59,753,627		
	Alternative	71,039,127		
	Increment	11,285,500	Of which: GEF: 2,191,500 Co-finance: 9,094,000	

PART II: LOGICAL FRAMEWORK ANALYSIS

Table 1: Objectively Verifiable Impact Indicators

<p>Project Goal TO CATALYZE SUSTAINABILITY AND EFFECTIVENESS OF THE BELARUS NATIONAL SYSTEM OF PROTECTED AREAS WITH THE EMPHASIS ON ITS NETWORK OF WETLAND RESERVES (ZAKAZNIKS)</p>					
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	Indicator	Baseline	Target	Sources of verification	Assumptions and Risks
<p>Project Objective: To catalyze sustainability of wetland protected area system in Belarusian Polesie through increased management efficiency and aligning land use framework in and around protected areas with conservation objectives</p>	Percentage of seasons (years) when water conditions in and around reserves are favourable for biodiversity	8 out of 10 years, water conditions are not favourable for biodiversity	8 out of 10 years, water conditions are optimum for biodiversity	Hydrological monitoring reports prepared by the PAMUs	Government will continue to play a key role in the economic activities that are having an impact on reserves (agriculture, fish farms, drainage, flood protection measures, forestry) and will therefore be able to pursue and sustain the recommended changes. State institutions responsible for planning and implementation of
	Areas occupied by unique plant associations and vegetation composition of open fens and floodplain meadows	The area of open fens and floodplain meadows is decreasing	Area of open fens increases by 1200 ha by project end; Area of floodplain meadows increases by 500 ha by project end	Biological monitoring reports prepared by the project	

	Indicator	Baseline	Target	Sources of verification	Assumptions and Risks
	Population of indicator bird species (spotted eagle, aquatic warbler, great snipe, corncrake)	Population of indicator species greatly varies: spotted eagle (10-22) Aquatic warbler (3700-9000) Great snipe (150-1000) corncrake (550-2100)	In regular years, the population is maximal for the ecosystem potential: Spotted eagle (25) Aquatic warbler (9000) Great snipe (1000) Corncrake (1000-2100).		activities related to protected area management (MoNREP), land use planning (SCLRC), agriculture (MoA), drainage (Belmeliovodkhoz), forestry (MoF), and flood defense (Belmeliovodkhoz) are committed to effecting changes in their policies and operational plans on the basis of the successful demonstration of the project approach at the four sites.
	Population of indicator animal species (elk, beavers, otter, pond turtle)	Populations of indicator species at the minimum level (elk, beaver, otter, pond turtle)	Populations of indicator species will increase: elk by about 50%, beavers by 100%, otter by 30%, pond turtle by 30%	Results of game management at the beginning and end off the project	Cofinancing commitments from state institutions are realized.
	Population of indicator fish species (pike, ide, catfish, pike perch, roach, zope, white bream)	The share of catch of valuable species (pike, ide, catfish, pike perch) is decreasing; the share of roach, zope and white bream in the catch is increasing	The share of catch of valuable species (pike, ide, catfish, pike perch) increases, while the share of roach, zope and white bream remains the same	Industrial catch statistics; scientific monitoring reports.	Changes at the national level will filter down to the regional and local level representative bodies of the same state institutions. Activities in the bordering countries, into which the Polesie

	Indicator	Baseline	Target	Sources of verification	Assumptions and Risks
	Use of METT indicates measurable increase in management capacities of the four PAs	Cumulative METT score 137	Cumulative METT score increase to 229 by year 3 and to 289 by year 5		extends, will also be conducive to conservation.
Outcome 1: Reserves are being managed effectively, with the active participation of local stakeholders in design and implementation aspects	Legislative approval of Reserve status for Zvanets and Prostyr and increase of their areas	The Zvanets reserve area is 10460 ha, that of Prostyr is 3440 ha	The Zvanets reserve area is 15873 ha, that of Prostyr is 7600 ha	The regulations on the new borders of the nature reserves have been approved by the Council of Ministers	<p>GoB counterpart funding and staff are provided in a timely manner</p> <p>Ukrainian Government is interested in transboundary cooperation</p> <p>Wetland-dependent communities are interested and able to participate</p> <p>Field demonstration projects are accessible to all stakeholders</p> <p>Government & community are interested to use participatory processes</p> <p>Economic incentives are realized within the project duration and cause changes in wetland use</p>

	Indicator	Baseline	Target	Sources of verification	Assumptions and Risks
	Legislative approval of cross-border Ramsar site status for Prostyr Reserve	Prostyr has national special reserve status	Prostyr has status of transboundary Ramsar site “Prostyr-Pripyat-Stokhid”	Annual project report, list of wetlands of international importance	
	Full complement of PAMU staff recruited, trained, funded	Currently 4 people are responsible for management of two reserves Zvanets and Sporovsky (funded by a UNDP project)	By end of project Zvanets has 2 staff members, Sporovsky has 2 staff members, Mid-Pripyat 4 staff members, Prostyr 1 staff member; all are funded by the state	Annual project report; mid-term evaluation	
	Annual budget allocation from Nature Protection Fund	0 PAMUs at project sites	Starting from 2 nd year onwards, all 4 PAMUs receive an annual budget, adjusted every year for cost increases	MoNREP data	Nature Protection Fund disbursement authority remains with MoNREP
	Management plans produced and approved by Ministry of Environment	Management plans have been made for 2 reserves Zvanets and Sporovsky	Management plans have been made for Mid-Pripyat and Prostyr by 3 rd project year	Annual project report. Management plans	

	Indicator	Baseline	Target	Sources of verification	Assumptions and Risks
	Endorsement of zoning proposals by locals	About 20% of locals aware of zoning regime of reserves (based on a survey in 2004)	80% of local land users endorse zoning regime	Mid-term evaluation	
	Local fishermen observing sustainable fishing guidelines	2,200 incidents of illegal fishing annually	450 incidents of illegal fishing annually	Annual reports of PAMUs	
	Locals observing sustainable hunting guidelines	200 incidents of illegal hunting annually	40 incidents of illegal hunting annually	Annual reports of PAMUs	
	Increased income-generating opportunities for local population due to ecotourism	No income-generating options associated with ecotourism	By project end 5-10% of local population in the pilot project region is involved in local ecotourism	Annual project report; mid-term evaluation	
	Number of locals involved in Reserve management	Every year about 24 persons are involved in reserve management at 4 project sites	At least 150 of local population involved in Reserve management at 4 project sites (paid or voluntary capacity)	Annual report of PAMUs	
Outcome 2: Agricultural activity in and around the Reserves is modified to diminish threats to biodiversity harboured in reserves.	Land area converted from arable agriculture to grasslands	Zero	By 4 th project year, 4000 ha are converted from arable agriculture to grasslands	Annual project reports; mid-term evaluation	Effective inter-sectoral dialogue can be established at the national and local levels (seniority & frequency), especially between MoNREP, MoA and SCLRSC

	Indicator	Baseline	Target	Sources of verification	Assumptions and Risks
	The area of floodplain meadows for stable haymaking	The area of open floodplain meadows decreases	The area of floodplain meadows for stable haymaking will increase by 500 ha by project end	Annual project reports; mid-term evaluation	
	The area of open fen mires for stable haymaking	Haymaking is organized on an area of 100 ha maximum	The area of open fen mires for stable haymaking increases to 1200 ha by project end	Annual project reports; mid-term evaluation	
	Area of mineral islands under traditional agriculture	The area of mineral islands under agriculture is increasing	Islands have been inventoried; No increase	Annual project report. Materials of territorial planning of the reserve	
	Decrease in number of drainage systems surrounding the Reserves that have an adverse impact on biodiversity	Currently 9 water systems have an adverse impact	By 4 th project year, zero systems have an adverse impact	Annual project reports; mid-term evaluation	
	Hectares of non-economic agricultural lands that continue to be employed in agriculture in the Polesie lowlands	In Polesie, land area employed in non-economic agriculture stands at 283,000 ha (700,000 ha total for Belarus)	By project end, land area employed in non-economic agriculture will decrease by 30%	Statistical data on land planning, Annual project reports; final evaluation	

	Indicator	Baseline	Target	Sources of verification	Assumptions and Risks
	Number and extent of human-caused uncontrolled burning of vegetation	Annual uncontrolled burning of vegetation includes about 20,000 ha in fen mires	No more uncontrolled burning of vegetation	Annual reports of PAMUs	
	Increased income-generating opportunities for local population due to hay-making	Local population involved in local hay-making enterprises decreases	By the 4 th project year, local population involved in local hay-making enterprises will increase by 30%	Annual project report; mid-term evaluation	
Outcome 3: Forestry activity in and around the Reserves is modified to diminish threats to biodiversity harboured in reserves.	Number of forest enterprises operating in and around the selected reserves that apply special forestry planning principles	Zero	By project end, 6 forest enterprises operating in and around the Reserves that apply special forestry planning principles	Annual project reports; mid-term evaluation	Heavy emphasis by the government on self-sustaining of forestry industry
	Number of forest enterprises operating in and around the reserves that are certified according to national standards in the project areas	Zero	By project end, 6 forest enterprises are certified according to national standards in the project areas	Annual project reports; mid-term evaluation	

	Indicator	Baseline	Target	Sources of verification	Assumptions and Risks
	Number of forest enterprises operating in and around the reserves that are certified according to international standards in the project areas	Zero	By project end, 2 forest enterprises are certified according to international standards	Annual project reports; mid-term evaluation	
Outcome 4: Flood protection program in and around the Reserves is modified to diminish threats to biodiversity harboured in reserves.	Number of planned anti-flood embankments that are modified to avert adverse impacts on biodiversity	Belmeliovodkhoz plans to construct 4 anti-flood embankments (20 km long) that will adversely affect Reserves; 7 dykes (35 km long) adversely affecting BD have already been constructed	By end of project 6 dykes (30 km) are relocated, 3 (10 km) are not constructed at all and 2 (15 km) existing dykes are demolished	Annual project reports; final evaluation	Effective inter-sectoral dialogue can be established at the national and local levels (seniority & frequency), especially between MoNREP and Belmeliovodkhoz
Outcome 5: Tools and methodologies generated by the project in selected wetland reserves are institutionalized and replicated in other similar areas within the national protected areas system.	Extension of wetland reserve management model to other Reserves in the national system	National legislation does not stipulate the establishment of PAMUs for reserve areas	By project end a new law will be passed which will stipulate mandatory management plans and management units for reserves of international significance. By project end at least 20% are embarking on a similar management approach	Final evaluation	GOB remains committed to improved protection in Reserves, without excluding sustainable economic activities

	Indicator	Baseline	Target	Sources of verification	Assumptions and Risks
	Number of similar protected areas where project's integrated approach of realigning land use practices in surrounding areas to meet reserves' needs is being applied	No Reserves within the national PA system are adopting such an integrated approach	By end of project, at least 20% of wetland Reserves in Belarus adopt the integrated approach	Final evaluation	
	Number of local representative bodies of SCLRC that are trained in integration of biodiversity conservation concerns in land use planning	None	By end of project, at least 20 local land use planning committee officers are trained	Annual reports	
	Number of forest enterprises in Belarus that apply special forestry planning principles, certified according to national standards, certified according to international standards	None	By project end 6 forestry enterprises in Polesie region (excluding project sites) apply special forestry principles, 15 are certified according to national standards, 5 certified according to international standards	Report on activities of the Ministry of Forestry	

Indicative Outputs, Activities and quarterly workplan

A detailed quarterly workplan will be developed during the inception workshop.

SECTION III: TOTAL BUDGET AND WORKPLAN

Award ID: 00042261										
Award Title: PIMS 2894 BD FP: Belarus Catalyzing sustainability of the wetland protected area system										
Project ID: 00048429										
Project Title: PIMS 2894 BD FP: Catalyzing sustainability of the wetland protected area system in Belarusian Polesie through increased management efficiency and realigned land use practices										
Executing Agency: NEX execution, MNREP										
GEF Outcome/Atlas Activity	Responsible Party (Implementing Agent)	Source of Funds	Atlas Budgetary Account Code	ERP/ATLAS Budget Description/Input	Amount (USD) 2006	Amount (USD) 2007	Amount (USD) 2008	Amount (USD) 2009	Amount (USD) 2010	Total (USD)
OUTCOME 1: Effectives PA management	Ministry of Environment	GEF	71200	International consultants	0	0	40,000	0	20,000	60,000
			71300	Local consultants	70,000	60,000	40,000	35,000	20,000	225,000
			71600	Travel	40,000	30,000	20,000	14,000	10,000	114,000
			72100	Contractual services	82,000	125,000	118,000	86,000	22,000	433,000
				sub-total	192,000	215,000	218,000	135,000	72,000	832,000
OUTCOME 2 Biodiversity friendly agriculture	Ministry of Environment	GEF	71200	International consultants	2,000	4,000	0	0	20,000	26,000
			71300	Local consultants	19,000	45,000	35,000	40,000	10,000	149,000
			71600	Travel	12,000	35,000	20,000	20,000	6,000	93,000
			72100	Contractual services	32,000	53,000	88,000	72,000	28,000	273,000
				sub-total	65,000	137,000	143,000	132,000	64,000	541,000
OUTCOME 3 Biodiversity friendly forestry	Ministry of Environment	GEF	71300	Local consultants	5,000	5,000	8,000	7,000	7,000	32,000
			71600	Travel	4,000	4,000	5,000	4,000	5,000	22,000
			72100	Contractual services	6,000	16,000	27,000	27,000	13,000	89,000
				sub-total	15,000	25,000	40,000	38,000	25,000	143,000
OUTCOME 4 Biodiversity friendly flood protection program	Ministry of Environment	GEF	71300	Local consultants	4,000	12,000	23,000	25,000	25,000	89,000
			71600	Travel	2,000	7,000	12,000	14,000	14,000	49,000
			72100	Contractual services	1,000	11,000	13,000	21,000	21,000	67,000
				sub-total	7,000	30,000	48,000	60,000	60,000	205,000
OUTCOME 5 Upscaling of positive project's experience on the national level	Ministry of Environment	GEF	71200	International consultants	0	0	15,000	0	15,000	30,000
			71300	Local consultants	7,000	4,000	8,000	12,000	22,000	53,000
			71400	Service Contracts	25,800	25,800	25,800	25,800	22,300	125,500
			71600	Travel	7,000	5,000	18,000	15,000	24,000	69,000
			72100	Contractual services	8,000	10,000	20,000	29,000	33,000	100,000
			72200	Equipment and furniture	20,000	0	0	0	0	20,000

		GEF	72400	Comm&aud. vis. equip	2,000	3,000	3,000	3,000	3,000	14,000
			72500	Supplies	1,200	1,200	1,200	1,200	1,200	6,000
			73300	Maintenance of Hardware	500	500	500	500	500	2,500
			73400	Rent&Mnt off equip	2,000	4,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	21,000
			74100	Audit	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	5,000
			74200	Aud&Vis &Prn product costs	1,000	4,000	4,000	4,000	4,000	17,000
			74500	Miscellaneous	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500	7,500
				sub-total	77,000	60,000	103,000	98,000	132,500	470,500
				TOTAL	356,000	467,000	552,000	463,000	353,500	2,191,500

PART I: OTHER AGREEMENTS

Letter of Endorsement from the GEF Operational Focal Point

МІНІСТЭРСТВА
ПРЫРОДНЫХ РЭСУРСАЎ І АХОВЫ
НАВАКОЛЬНАГА АСЯРОДДЗЯ
РЭСПУБЛІКІ БЕЛАРУСЬ



ул. Коллекторная, 10, 220048, г. Минск,
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Р/р № 3620000000112 ААБ «Беларусбанк»
г. Минск, код 795, УНП 100519825; АКПА 00012782

МИНИСТЕРСТВО
ПРИРОДНЫХ РЕСУРСОВ И
ОХРАНЫ ОКРУЖАЮЩЕЙ СРЕДЫ
РЕСПУБЛИКИ БЕЛАРУСЬ

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г. Минск, код 795, УНП 100519825; ОКПО 00012782

Ліста 10, н.д.д. № 01-01/1172

Ms. Cihan Sultanoglu
UNDP Resident Representative in
Belarus

Dear Ms. Sultanoglu,

RE: UNDP/GEF Project “Catalyzing sustainability of the wetland protected area system in Belarusian Polesie through increased management efficiency and realigned land use practices”

On behalf of the Government of Belarus and, in my capacity as GEF Operational Focal Point, I hereby endorse the above mentioned Full Size Project proposal, to be presented through the UNDP to the Global Environment Facility.

Being a party to the UN Convention on Biological Diversity and the UN Convention to Combat Desertification and Land Degradation, Belarus bears great responsibility for ensuring conservation and sustainability of the country's unique biological, ecosystem and landscape diversity. Thus, the UNDP/GEF project complies well with the national priorities inasmuch as it helps the country fulfill its international environmental obligations. Designated to coordinate the implementation of the above Conventions, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection has been involved in the project preparation at all stages.

Belarusian Government sets high priority on the conservation of the country's valuable biodiversity, which depends largely on the national network of nature protected areas. The network currently covers around 7.6% of the country's territory, and the Government plans to expand it to around 9% by 2015. However, there is a growing understanding within the Ministry that mere expansion of the protected areas system is not enough to ensure sustainable management of the nation's biological resources. There is a clear need for upgrading the network of protected areas, particularly wetland reserves which represent the bulk of the system, as well as for integration of biodiversity conservation objectives into main economic practices, including agriculture, land use, forestry, and flood defense.

Therefore, the Ministry believes that the present UNDP/GEF project will significantly contribute to improvement of the national environmental policy through targeted interventions in the Polesie region for subsequent scaling up throughout the

whole country. In view of the above, the Ministry confirms that USD 396 000 will be spent on co-financing of the activities within the above UNDP/GEF project as described in the project documents.

Yours sincerely



Vasily Podolyako
GEF Operational Focal Point
First Deputy Minister

Letters from other project partners confirming their co-financing are attached in separate files

PART II: TERMS OF REFERENCES FOR KEY PROJECT STAFF AND MAIN SUB-CONTRACTS

PROJECT MANAGER

Duration: 60 months, full-time

Location: Minsk - base; duty travel in Belarus and abroad as required

Scope of the assignment:

The Project Manager assumes overall responsibility for the successful implementation of project activities and the achievement of planned project outputs. He/she works closely with the National Project Director, assigned by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection, and the UNDP Country Office.

Duties and responsibilities:

- Supervise and coordinate the project to ensure its results are in accordance with the Project Document and the rules and procedures established in the UNDP Programming Manual;
- Assume primary responsibility for the daily project management - both organizational and substantive matters, budgeting, planning and general monitoring of the project;
- Ensure adequate information flow, discussions and feedback among the various stakeholders of the project;
- Ensure adherence to the project's work plan, prepare revisions of the work plan, if required;
- Assume overall responsibility for the proper handling of logistics related to project workshops and events;
- Prepare GEF quarterly project progress reports, as well as any other reports requested by the Executing Agency and UNDP;
- Prepare and agree with UNDP terms of reference for national consultants and subcontractors;
- Guide the work of consultants and subcontractors and oversee compliance with the agreed work plan;
- Maintain regular contact with UNDP Country Office and the National Project Director on project implementation issues of their respective competence;
- Monitor the expenditures, commitments and balance of funds under the project budget lines, and draft project budget revisions;
- Assume overall responsibility for the meeting financial delivery targets set out in the agreed annual work plans, reporting on project funds and related record keeping;
- Liaise with project partners to ensure their co-financing contributions are provided within the agreed terms;
- Ensure collection of relevant data necessary to use in the Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool;
- Undertake any other actions related to the project as requested by UNDP or the National Project Director.

Expected Results:

- Successful delivery of all project outputs and milestones, as indicated in the project logical framework.

Qualifications and skills:

- University degree in the field of environment protection and management, sustainable human development or related;
- Outstanding communication, project management and organizational skills;
- At least 5 years of experience in development cooperation and project management;
- Familiarity with the working environment and professional standards of international non-profit organizations;
- Working experience with the Belarus institutions involved in nature conservation;
- Experience in working with the civil society and with participatory approaches;
- Proficiency in English and Russian. Computer literacy.

Terms and conditions for provision of the services:

- The Project Manager works under supervision of UNDP and in coordination with the National Project Director at the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection;
- Citizen of Belarus;
- The Project Manager cannot be employed elsewhere during the entire course of the project.

ADMINISTRATIVE AND FINANCIAL ASSISTANT

Duration: 60 months, full-time

Location: Minsk - base; duty travel in Belarus as required

Scope of assignment:

The Administrative and Financial Assistant provides assistance to the Project Manager in the implementation of day-to-day project activities. He/she is responsible for all administrative (contractual, organizational and logistical) and all accounting (disbursements, record-keeping, cash management) matters under the project.

Duties and responsibilities:

- Provide general administrative support to ensure the smooth running of the project management unit;
- Project logistical support to the Project Manager and project consultants in conducting different project activities (trainings, workshops, stakeholder consultations, arrangements of study tour, etc.);
- During the visits of foreign experts, bear the responsibility for their visa support, transportation, hotel accommodation etc;
- Organize control of budget expenditures by preparing payment documents, and compiling financial reports;
- Maintain the project's disbursement ledger and journal;
- Keep files with project documents, expert reports;
- Control the usage non expendable equipment (record keeping, drawing up regular inventories);
- Keep regular contact with project experts and consultants to inform them about the project details and changes;
- Provide English translation as required;
- Draft correspondence and documents; finalize correspondence of administrative nature; edit reports and other documents for correctness of form and content;
- Arrange duty travel;
- Act on telephone inquiries, fax, post and e-mail transmissions, and co-ordinate appointments;
- Perform any other administrative/financial duties as requested by the Project Manager;
- Organize and coordinate the procurement of services and goods under the project;

Expected Results:

- Successful operation of project office

Qualifications and skills:

- University degree;
- Fluency in written and spoken English and Russian;
- Outstanding time-management, organizational and inter-personal skills;
- At least 2-year experience in office administration, preferably within UNDP projects;
- Excellent computer literacy.

Terms and conditions for provision of the services:

- The Administrative and Financial Assistant reports to the Project Manager and works under his/her direct supervision;
- Citizen of Belarus;
- The Administrative and Financial Assistant cannot be employed elsewhere during the entire course of the project.

PROJECT SCIENTIFIC COORDINATOR

Duration: 60 months, full-time

Location: Minsk - base; duty travel in Belarus and abroad as required

Scope of the assignment:

The Project Scientific Coordinator's principal responsibility is to ensure preparation and revision of management plans for project sites and their subsequent implementation. He/she acts as a key biodiversity consultant within the project. In consultations with other project experts, he/she ensures incorporation and observance of the principles and methods of biodiversity conservation in land use, forestry and anti-flood program.

Duties and responsibilities:

- Hold regular consultations and planning of cooperation with other national and international programs and partners relevant to the project;
- Provide briefing and background materials to the Project Manager, sub-contractors, national consultants and other local counterparts and stakeholders;
- Hold regular consultations with the Ramsar, CBD and UNFCCC national focal points;
- Coordinate the work of protected areas' management offices in the area of biodiversity conservation;
- Assume overall responsibility for the preparation of amendments to the law on protected areas, including through substantive contributions at respective workshops;
- Coordinate organization, implementation and reporting on biodiversity monitoring;
- Provide substantive contribution to the biodiversity section of and coordinate preparation of management plans for project sites;
- Assume overall responsibility for the establishment of the transboundary Ramsar site Prostyr-Pripyat-Stokhid;
- Guide the works of different consultants to ensure inclusion of coordinated activities in the management plans for project sites;
- Provide assistance during the stakeholder meetings/workshops to ensure useable results.

Expected Results:

- Set of agreed amendments to the law on protected areas;
- Annual biodiversity monitoring reports;
- Completed biodiversity sections in the management plans;
- Set of documents for establishment of the transboundary Ramsar site Prostyr-Pripyat-Stokhid;
- Agreed recommendations in the management plans for Mid-Pripyat and Prostyr, and updated management plans for Zvanets and Sporovo;

Qualifications and skills:

- Postgraduate or other advanced university degree related to biology or related science;
- At least 10 years of practical experience in biodiversity conservation;
- Previous experience in preparation and implementation of UNDP projects in the field of biodiversity conservation;
- Outstanding communication, drafting, analytical and presentation skills;
- Knowledge of English language is an advantage.

Terms and conditions for provision of the services:

- The Project Scientific Coordinator reports to the Project Manager and works under his/her direct supervision;
- Citizen of Belarus;
- The Project Scientific Coordinator cannot be employed elsewhere during the entire course of the project.

LAND USE EXPERT

Duration: 12 months

Location: Minsk - base; duty travel in Belarus as required

Scope of the assignment:

The principal responsibility of the Land Use Expert is to ensure the elaboration of land use plans and spatial planning for project sites and adjacent areas, elaboration of a guidebook on economic-environmental optimization of agricultural lands in Belarus. He/she acts as a key consultant in the area of agricultural land use and influence of agriculture on biodiversity and ensures consistency of outputs within the area of interaction between biodiversity and agriculture, as well as coordination with the outputs of other consultants engaged under the project.

Duties and responsibilities:

- Ensure coordination between the project and related government programs and agencies (Ministry of Agriculture, Land Use Committee, Belnitszem);
- Assume overall responsibility for the preparation of a guidebook on economic-environmental optimization of agricultural lands in Belarus and production of content for it;
- Coordinate the elaboration of justification for revising land area planning for 4 districts around the project sites taking into consideration economic and environmental requirements, based on the application of new approaches and methods;
- Provide substantive contribution to the spatial planning schemes for the project sites;
- Prepare substantiation for changes in land use in the project sites;
- Elaborate land-use recommendations for the management plans for Mid-Pripyat and Prostyry, and updated management plans for Zvanets and Sporovo;
- Provide substantive contribution to the land use section of project reports;
- Provide monitoring of project outcomes in terms of land use optimization.

Expected Results:

- Guide-book: Methodology for Biodiversity-Friendly Agricultural Land Optimization;
- Comprehensive spatial planning schemes for zakazniks Mid-Pripyat, Prostyry, Zvanets, Sporovo;
- Land use optimization plans for administrative districts hosting the project sites.

Qualifications and skills:

- University degree in the field of land-use, economy, agriculture or related science;
- Familiarity with the GEF project related focal area (land-use) as well as sustainable development issues;
- Experience in work with national and international land-use institutions;
- Experience in working with civil society and participatory approaches;
- Advanced communication, drafting, analytical, information processing and presentation skills.

Terms and conditions for provision of the services:

- The Land Use Expert reports to the Project Manager and works under his/her direct supervision;
- Citizen of Belarus.

FORESTRY EXPERT

Duration: 12 months

Location: Minsk - base; duty travel in Belarus as required

Scope of the assignment:

The principal responsibility of the Forestry Expert is to ensure elaboration of necessary policy documents for mainstreaming biodiversity in the forestry sector, special forestry planning and certification of forestries located within the project sites. He/she acts as a key consultant in the area of sustainable forestry, forestry certification and ecological aspects for forest management. He/she ensures consistency of outputs within the forestry thematic area, as well as coordination with the outputs of other consultants, including international experts on certification engaged under the project.

Duties and responsibilities:

- Assume a leading role in the elaboration of strategy and methods of sustainable forest management at project sites;
- Assume overall responsibility for the elaboration and introduction of inventory and conservation of biodiversity in the forestry policy documents;
- Coordinate the preparation and carrying out of certification and special forestry planning in the project sites;
- Elaborate and oversee implementation of special forest management plans for 6 forestries (110,000 ha) that focus on biodiversity conservation, with recommendations on species protection and introduction of new rules of forest management (including biodiversity inventory);
- Elaborate forestry-related recommendations for the management plans for Mid-Pripyat and Prostyr, and updated management plans for Zvanets and Sporovo;
- Liaise on an ongoing basis with the Ministry of Forestry;
- Provide substantive contribution to the forestry section of project reports;
- Oversee the implementation of local monitoring of plants, its coordination with the subsystem of vegetation monitoring of the National Monitoring System of Belarus;

Expected Results:

- Components on inventory and conservation of biodiversity in relevant forestry policy documents;
- Reports on certification of six forestries according to national and FSC standards;
- Reports on completion of special forest management planning for six forestries;
- Forestry monitoring reports.

Qualifications and skills:

- University degree in the field of forestry, environment protection and management, or related;
- At least 10 years of practical experience in forestry conservation, management;
- Familiarity with the GEF project related focal area (biological diversity) as well as sustainable development issues;
- Working experience with Belarus institutions involved in forest conservation (with a focus on biodiversity);
- Experience in working with civil society and participatory approaches;
- Advanced communication, drafting, analytical, information processing and presentation skills.

Terms and conditions for provision of the services:

- The Forestry Expert reports to the Project Manager and works under his/her direct supervision;
- Citizen of Belarus.

HYDROLOGY EXPERT

Duration: 12 months

Location: Minsk - base; duty travel in Belarus as required

Scope of the assignment:

The principal responsibility of the Hydrology Expert is to ensure the elaboration and implementation of activities aimed at sustaining the project sites' hydrology and to coordinate project activities with the relevant government programs. He/she acts as a key consultant in the area of hydrology and ensures consistency of outputs within the hydrology thematic area, as well as coordination with the outputs of other consultants engaged under the project.

Duties and responsibilities:

- Liaise with and organize joint activities with relevant government organizations responsible for the conservation and use of water resources;
- Assume overall responsibility for the elaboration of recommendations on optimization of hydrological regime at Zvanets and Sporovo zakaznik, as well operational guidelines for drainage facilities around the two sites;
- Assume overall responsibility for the elaboration of recommendations for the management plans and ensure their incorporation in the flood defense program in the sections related to the hydrological regime at drainage facilities adjoining Mid-Pripyat and Prostyr reserves;
- Elaborate recommendations on optimization of hydrological regime for the management plans for Mid-Pripyat and Prostyr, and updated management plans for Zvanets and Sporovo based on the latest hydrological monitoring data;
- Coordinate construction works aimed at the optimization of hydrological regime at the project sites;
- Analyze hydrological monitoring data in terms of meeting the targets and prepare reports;

Expected Results:

- Agreed operational guidelines for the drainage facilities around Zvanets and Sporovo;
- Recommendations on optimization of hydrological regime at Mid-Pripyat, Prostyr, Sporovo and Zvanets;
- Reports on completion of hydrotechnical construction for the optimization of hydrological regime at the project sites;
- Hydrological monitoring reports and analysis of success of the proposed activities.

Qualifications and skills:

- University degree in the field of hydrology or related science;
- At least 10 years of experience in theoretical hydrology and practical application;
- Working experience with Belarus institutions involved in conservation and use of water resources;
- Experience in working with civil society and participatory approaches;
- Advanced communication, drafting, analytical, information processing and presentation skills.

Terms and conditions for provision of the services:

- The Hydrology Expert reports to the Project Manager and works under his/her direct supervision;
- Citizen of Belarus.

PART III: STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS AND PARTICIPATION PLAN

PART A: STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS

An initial analysis of stakeholders in Zvanets and Sporovsky reserves was undertaken as part of the project “Development of Management Plans for the Key Fen Mires of Polesie for Conservation of Biodiversity”. This analysis was subsequently enhanced during the PDF-B stage of the present project. The identification of stakeholders in the two other sites, Mid-Pripyat and Prostyr, was undertaken during the preparatory development stages of the present project (PDF-A and B). The process has yielded a list of stakeholders, with key ones having been involved in project development. All stakeholders can be divided into two groups: (i) stakeholders who would be most able to influence the delivery of project outcomes and (ii) stakeholders who could be most impacted by the project. The two groups are described in detail in the table below in terms of their roles and mandates, interest in the project, potential impact on the project and mitigation strategies.

Table III.1: Key stakeholders, their roles and responsibilities, interest and impact on the project and mitigation strategies

Key Stakeholder	Role in the conservation of biodiversity in the Pripyat river basin	Interest in the project	Potential Impact and Mitigation of impact
Stakeholders most able to influence project outcomes			
<i>Ministry of Environment and its district-level Inspections in project areas</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides policy framework and legislation relating to biodiversity conservation Responsible for conservation and management of protected areas of national and international importance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chairs the Project Steering Committee Development of new version of the law on protected areas Establishment of PA management units Setting up of Polesie Eco-network Development of a procedure to establish transboundary PAs Development of a system of sustainable use of resources in PA buffer zones Improvement of PA monitoring system 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Current legislation hinders improvements to the PA management system, especially the achievement of effective conservation within zakazniks where economic activities are allowed by law <p>MITIGATION STRATEGY:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draft amendments to the law on PAs; Draft policy document on biodiversity-focused principles for designation of buffer zones for reserves
Ministry of Forestry and local forestries operating in project areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Statutory responsibilities for forestry management, policy planning and monitoring 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Member of the Project Steering Committee Improvement of forest certification system Certification of forests in project sites Inclusion of forestries in sustainable PA management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Possible limitations on forest use in project sites Forestry planning and management plans do not take into account biodiversity conservation needs <p>MITIGATION STRATEGY:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Through the certification programme, the project will provide incentives for forestries to adopt biodiversity-friendly practices, which may include restriction of logging in certain areas, as it will open up European markets where certification is a prerequisite for forest products Development of a policy document on revised forestry management plans Inclusion of a clause in the forest management plans on

Key Stakeholder	Role in the conservation of biodiversity in the Pripjat river basin	Interest in the project	Potential Impact and Mitigation of impact
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> limitation of forestry activities in certain areas of the reserves Improvement of knowledge and skills of forestry workers in sustainable forest use that explicitly takes into account biodiversity conservation aspects
<i>Ministry of Agriculture</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Statutory responsibilities for management of agriculture, policy planning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Member of the Project Steering Committee Improvement of the land use structure in the region with due heed to biodiversity Introduction of biodiversity friendly agricultural methods Biodiversity concerns incorporated in long-term agricultural planning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agricultural planning does not adequately integrate biodiversity conservation needs <p>MITIGATION STRATEGY:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development of comprehensive biodiversity-friendly land use plans Adoption of biodiversity friendly methods of agriculture Improvement of knowledge and skills of workers in agricultural collectives in sustainable land use that takes into account impacts on biodiversity harbored in reserves
<i>State Committee on Land Resources and Cartography (SCLRC), Land-use departments of the District Executive Committees Belnitszem Institute (Research and Policy development branch of SCLRC)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responsible for providing legislative and policy framework for land-use planning; Involved in land-use planning and cartography. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Member of the Project Steering Committee Development of methodology for preparation of biodiversity friendly land use plans Development of comprehensive land use plans for project districts Development of system of territorial planning for PAs Sustainable land use in Polesie 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is no approved methodology for integration of biodiversity concerns in land use planning. <p>MITIGATION STRATEGY:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Preparation and approval of methodology for integration of biodiversity in land use planning Development and agreement with local stakeholders of comprehensive land management plans for project sites Incorporation of principles of biodiversity-friendly agricultural practices
<i>Belmeliovodkhoz Concern, Belgiprovodkhoz (Hydrological project design and research institute – focusing on central and northern parts of country) Polesiegiprovodkhoz (specifically focusing on Polesie region)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> State agency in charge of the State Program for Flood Defense and land amelioration activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Member of the Project Steering Committee Focal point for hydrological issues in the project Optimization of flood defense program Development of engineering construction projects for optimization of hydrological regime at project sites 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing policy framework and guidelines provide an inadequate basis for integration of biodiversity into water resource management Poor coordination between conservation organizations and drainage facility operators in water resource management <p>MITIGATION STRATEGY:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draft policy document on biodiversity-focused principles for designation of buffer zones for PAs with a focus on hydrographic criteria New operational guidelines for operation of drainage systems to include biodiversity conservation considerations Improvement of knowledge of Belmeliovodkhoz staff about basin approach to water resource management and need to

Key Stakeholder	Role in the conservation of biodiversity in the Pripjat river basin	Interest in the project	Potential Impact and Mitigation of impact
			integrate biodiversity conservation needs in water management
<i>Regional executive committees</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responsible for coordination of all kinds of economic activities in the region, implementation of social programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sustainable development in the region, improvement of local people's quality of life, implementation of comprehensive land use planning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Possible changes to the current local agricultural practices Possible limitations on usage of certain areas of reserves by local people and agricultural enterprises <p>MITIGATION STRATEGY:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Economically justified changes to the current land use patterns with due respect to biodiversity concerns Establishment of alternative sources of income for local communities (ecotourism) Participation of the executive committees in the elaboration and approval of policy documents relating to agricultural land use and alternative income-generating ventures in project sites
<i>APB-BirdLife Belarus</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Works to conserve Belarusian biodiversity Responsible for implementation of the international program on Important Bird Area (IBA); 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Member of the Project Steering Committee Integration of IBAs in the national PA system Inclusion of local APB members in IBA management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Insufficient involvement of NGOs in dialog and decision making for sustainable PA management and development of the region <p>MITIGATION STRATEGY:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Elaboration of methods for NGO participation in decision making at the site level Communication strategy and materials about participatory management – roles, responsibilities, enforcement.
<i>NGO Ecopravo</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improvement of the national conservation legislation (draft laws, policy documents) in line with requirements of international agreements and conventions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participation in drafting of policy documents on PA management, wildlife conservation Analysis of foreign conservation legislation Membership in the Project Steering Committee will be decided at the inception stage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Insufficient involvement of NGOs in dialog related to (i) alignment of national legislation with the requirements of international conventions and (ii) ensuring coordination between policy documents issued by different government agencies <p>MITIGATION STRATEGY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Involvement of the NGO in drafting amendments to the law on protected areas and new policy documents on buffer zones identification, forest management plans Relying on advocacy experience of the NGO to bring about agreements on proposed policy documents
<i>NGO Ecological Initiative</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote local communities' participation in local development decision making Incorporation of environmental approaches in 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Member of the Project Steering Committee through the National Ramsar Committee Participation in establishment of ecological information centers Program on ecological awareness raising Promotion of sustainable development of 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not systematically engaged in ecological awareness raising in local communities and decision makers <p>MITIGATION STRATEGY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The project will seek their direct involvement in communication and awareness raising activities of the project so as to effectively build conservation constituencies among locals

Key Stakeholder	Role in the conservation of biodiversity in the Pripjat river basin	Interest in the project	Potential Impact and Mitigation of impact
	economic sectors through awareness raising	communities through specific support projects	
<i>NGO "Belarusian Geographical Society"</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scientific backup to landscape conservation and land degradation, peatland conservation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Drafting policy documents on prevention of landscape degradation Improvement of knowledge base of decision makers in the area of landscape conservation and prevention of land degradation Membership in the Project Steering Committee will be decided at the inception stage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing scientific information on landscape conservation and prevention of land degradation is not being used in determining land use <p>MITIGATION STRATEGY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Targeted activities to improve awareness of local decision makers on scientific basis for ecological land use planning; Involvement of the NGO in the development and agreement of ecological-economic land use planning methodology guidebook
<i>Institutes of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus (botany and zoology)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scientific backup to biodiversity conservation in Belarus Development of biodiversity conservation strategy Development and implementation of PA monitoring system Study of flora and fauna in Belarus 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Member of the Project Steering Committee Study of flora and fauna of project sites, identification of negative factors and causes Participation in management planning for project sites Development of a monitoring system of project sites 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Insufficient level of knowledge of region's flora and fauna Insufficient development of wildlife monitoring in project sites <p>MITIGATION STRATEGY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Targeted research in project sites to verify biodiversity threats Improvement of wildlife monitoring system
<i>Ministry of Sports and Tourism</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responsible for the development and implementation of national program of tourism development, including ecotourism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Incorporation in the national program on tourism development of new approaches to ecotourism Development of ecotourism infrastructure in the region Expand ecotourism on the basis of PAs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited experience in ecotourism development <p>MITIGATION STRATEGY:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use of experience with ecotourism development at project sites throughout the country.
Stakeholders who will be most affected by the project at the local level			
<i>Local communities</i> (Further details on human settlements located within the Mid-Pripjat reserve are provided after this table.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Primary resource users and land users 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improvement of conditions of hayfields in floodplain meadows and fens Participation in implementation of management plans Improved collaboration with the relevant authorities on management of land Potential employment opportunities and/or alternative sources of income Elaboration of sustainable management plans for hunting and fishing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Possible changes in the usage of areas adjacent to PAs Illegal tillage of land within the PAs Possible seasonal inundations of mineral islands used illegally and road network Lack of knowledge on alternative sources of income <p>MITIGATION STRATEGY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Awareness raising campaigns on changes in land use patterns in PAs and buffer zones Updating land use plans in districts Map and assign the existing plots inside the reserves to their

Key Stakeholder	Role in the conservation of biodiversity in the Pripjat river basin	Interest in the project	Potential Impact and Mitigation of impact
			users, to ensure control over their status and to prevent further expansion <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resolving conflict in hydrology by mutually acceptable decision Creation of new sources of income for local population through participation in ecotourism activities
<i>Collective farms operating in and around project sites</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Primary land users 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improvement of conditions of hayfields in floodplain meadows and fens and development of alternative land uses through sustainable haymaking Participation in implementation of management plans Improved collaboration with the relevant authorities on management of land 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Possible changes in the usage of areas adjacent to PAs MITIGATION STRATEGY <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstrating feasibility of sustainable hay-making on lands that are agriculturally unproductive
<i>Local drainage facilities operators</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responsible for operation and construction of drainage and water-regulation facilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementation of water regulation construction works Participation in the development and implementation of new operational guidelines for activities in buffer zones 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Possible additional costs for operators to meet new guidelines MITIGATION STRATEGY <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create a mechanism to provide funding to secure necessary hydrological regime in PA buffer zones Participation of operators in management of water regime in PAs
<i>Local organizations involved in tourism development</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responsible for development of tourism infrastructure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participation in development of ecotourism infrastructure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Skills for planning and implementation of ecotourism operations, infrastructure, baseline data for trails are lacking MITIGATION STRATEGY <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create infrastructure together with local community and other stakeholders Training programs for stakeholders Preparation of ecotourism development plans Description of the region on the basis of ecotourism development potential and in view of biodiversity conservation needs

Settlements within Mid-Pripyat reserve

Within the boundaries of the landscape zakaznik Mid-Pripyat there are 7 settlements consisting of a total of 318 people; there is no inflow of new residents. The composition of these settlements is as follows:

- Zhitkovichi administrative district: Kniazbor (11 inhabitants), Vilcha (131), Povchin (31) – total 173 inhabitants as of January 1, 1999;
- Pinsk administrative district: Kudrichi (38 inhabitants), Ploschevo (66), Kuradovo (38) - total 142 inhabitants;
- Stolin administrative district: Yastrebel (3 inhabitants).

The lands of Ploschevo and Kuradovo villages (Pinsk) are not included in the reserve, whereas the other 5 settlements, as well as parts of arable and meadowlands of the above 2 villages are included in the total area of Mid-Pripyat reserve. Thus, in legal terms, there are 214 people living inside Mid-Pripyat reserve.

Current way of life of local inhabitants in Mid-Pripyat reserve

The local inhabitants are pensioners. The majority do not have any employment and are exclusively engaged in subsistence farming – home plots, fishing, apiculture, animal husbandry, and hunting.

Impact of local people on the Mid-Pripyat reserve

- Local inhabitants use mineral islands in the Pripyat floodplain within the reserve for growing potatoes and other crops (for sale and self consumption), which impacts biological diversity. This arable farming is prohibited under the Reserve Regulations.
- Harvesting of grass in floodplain meadows has a beneficial effect on the ecosystems as it prevents encroachment of shrubs.
- Uncontrolled burning of vegetation in spring damages biodiversity, particularly in low-water years, but has a positive impact in years with optimal water level.
- Illegal hunting and fishing have an adverse impact on biodiversity.

Impact of the Mid-Pripyat Reserve Regulations on the local people

- Conservation and land use guidelines within the reserve will limit further expansion of illegal tillage of mineral islands.
- Stricter control over the spring ban on burning of vegetation will be enforced, which is not going to impact on the local community.
- Optimization of the hydrological regime in the reserve could lead to flooding of some of the areas illegally ploughed by local people, limiting access to these areas in early spring.

Project impact mitigation strategy

- The existing plots inside the reserve will be mapped and assigned to their users, to ensure control over their status and to prevent further expansion.
- Support will be provided to the local community in implementing sustainable hay harvesting in floodplain meadows and fen mires.
- Hydrology optimization activities will be agreed with the local people to accommodate their needs.
- The project will support the local community in the development of traditional sustainable activities like haymaking, apiculture.
- Selected households with traditional architecture and way of life will be supported to enable them to provide tourism services.
- The project will study the possibility of renting out the areas surrounding the villages for the use by local communities for fishing and hunting.

PART B: PARTICIPATION PLAN

Stakeholder participation has been instrumental in the project development stage. For instance, with regard to the Mid-Pripyat and Prostyr reserves, two meetings were held with local stakeholders to identify the vision for the Mid-Pripyat and Prostyr areas. Before and after the workshops a series of bilateral consultations took place with local forestries and collective farms to discuss both the strategy of action for the sites, as well as forms of participation of local stakeholders in the project. Most of the information collected during the PDF stage was done so locally by local stakeholders at the request of the project.

The full stage will continue in the spirit of local ownership and broad participation in decision-making. The experience of UNDP has shown that local enterprises (collective farms, ameliorative companies, local scientific institutes) are also best placed to actually implement the conservation activities. A collateral benefit of it, apart from awareness raising and income generation, is that when involved in implementation, chances of reverting to environmentally harmful practices of the past are extremely low. The project will continue building on this strategy. The process of stakeholder participation is guided by a comprehensive set of principles, which are presented in Table III.2.

Table III.2: Stakeholder participation principles

Principle	Stakeholder participation will:
Value Adding	be an essential means of adding value to the project
Inclusivity	include all relevant stakeholders
Accessibility and Access	be accessible and promote access to the process
Transparency	be based on transparency and fair access to information; main provisions of the project's plans and results will be published in local mass-media
Fairness	ensure that all stakeholders are treated in a fair and unbiased way
Accountability	be based on a commitment to accountability by all stakeholders
Constructive	Seek to manage conflict and promote the public interest
Redressing	Seek to redress inequity and injustice
Capacitating	Seek to develop the capacity of all stakeholders
Needs Based	be based on the needs of all stakeholders
Flexible	be flexibly designed and implemented
Rational and Coordinated	be rationally planned and coordinated, and not be <i>ad hoc</i>
Excellence	be subject to ongoing reflection and improvement

The project will provide the following opportunities for participation of all stakeholders, with a special emphasis on the active participation of local communities. This will be particularly crucial for the locals residing within the Mid-Pripyat reserve. While the project will not result in major changes to their established way of life that would necessitate resettlement plans, their active involvement in the participatory process of developing and implementing reserve management plans will be critical to sustainability. These communities have already been engaged in the project development process:

- (i) **Decision-making** – through the establishment of the Project Steering Committee and the Conservation Committees. The establishment of each structure will follow a participatory and transparent process involving the confirmation of all stakeholders; conducting one-to-one consultations with all stakeholders; development of Terms of Reference and ground-rules; inception meeting to agree on the constitution, ToR and ground-rules for the committees.
- (ii) **Capacity building** – at systemic, institutional and individual level – is one of the key strategic interventions of the project and will target all stakeholders that have the potential to be involved in brokering, implementing and/or monitoring management agreements related to activities in and around the reserves. The project will target especially organizations operating at the community level to enable them to actively participate in developing and implementing management agreements.
- (iii) **Communication** - will include the participatory development of an integrated communication strategy (see Output 5.4). The communication strategy will be based on the following key principles: (i) providing information to all stakeholders; (ii) promoting dialogue between all stakeholders; (iii) promoting access to information; and (iv) promoting a consistent image of the Polesie region.

The participation plan for the project against the outcomes is as follows:

Outcome 1: Reserves are being managed effectively, with the active participation of local stakeholders in design and implementation aspects

The main mechanisms for local community participation in this outcome will include: (i) establishment of Conservation Committees in all zakazniks, which will include representatives of the protected area management units, local environmental inspections, forestries, collectives, fish-farms, drainage companies, heads of rural councils (elected local governance bodies) and members of the local community. The Committees will play an advisory role by reviewing and endorsing all major interventions proposed by the project, thus enabling the local stakeholders to participate in reserve management; (ii) hiring of locals to undertake specific actions under the management plans; (iii) training and hiring of locals to undertake monitoring activities; and (iv) participation of stakeholders from other regions in workshops for experience sharing.

Through participatory elaboration and implementation of management plans, local decision makers and the local community will be involved in planning and managing Polesie protected areas, thus addressing one of the key underlying causes of habitat destruction and biodiversity loss which is the traditional exclusion of locals from land use and conservation planning. The capacity of the local level stakeholders to participate in the development and implementation of management plans will be increased through pathfinder workshops and targeted training interventions. Agreement with each local stakeholder of final management plans will be obtained before adoption by MoNREP. The central government is not adopting management plans before these are agreed by the absolute majority of local stakeholders. This is an indication of substantial decision-making powers, which are in fact in the hands of local decision makers, but which they have so far not managed to use properly to make their voice heard at the national level.

To address threats from unsustainable natural resource use (tillage of mineral islands, hunting, fishing), this outcome will demonstrate the feasibility of ecotourism as an income-generating alternative. Local involvement in the development of the ecotourism strategy will be provided through the Conservation Committee. The process of ecotourism planning would involve one-on-one discussion, community meetings and workshops to identify potential ecotourism products and service providers, and to improve their capacity through dedicated training programs. The project would include visitor surveys, further market research and detailed program planning. The ecotourism plan will also propose a strategy on how to specifically reach out to those members of the local community who are engaged in harmful practices.

Many conflict situations arise due to insufficient knowledge of the reserve regime. To address this issue an awareness raising campaign will be carried out to improve the awareness of the local population on legal aspects of land use patterns in PAs and buffer zones. It will include educational tours, meetings, seminars, publishing of booklets and subsequent dissemination through local communities, etc.

Outcome 2: Agricultural activity in and around the reserves is modified to diminish threats to biodiversity harboured in reserves

Key national organizations will be involved in the development of guidelines and methodology for the environmental and economic optimization of agricultural land use; the document prepared will then be discussed at workshops with local stakeholders (collectives, local communities). The methodology developed will be used in project sites for preparation of land use plans through targeted demonstrations, field seminars on best practices in transferring agricultural land to conservation-oriented uses. The initial drafts of these plans will be discussed through a set of workshops at the regional level with a wide participation of different local stakeholders, including Conservation Committees. Mutually acceptable ways of resolving potential conflicts of interests between biodiversity needs and economic interests in specific sites will be sought at this stage. Stakeholders of different levels (national, regional, district, collective farms) will be involved in the preparation and agreement of the land use plans.

To address the issue of illegal tillage of lands inside the reserves by locals, the project will undertake mapping of all the existing private plots, to assign them to their current users and ensure control over their status and to prevent further expansion. The Conservation Committees will then participate in monitoring of compliance with the agreed plot distribution.

New operational guidelines for drainage systems will be prepared and implemented to avoid all damage to the reserves in normal years (8 out of 10 years) and minimize damage in extremely dry or wet years. New operational regulations will be developed with input from local drainage facilities operators, local authorities and the Conservation Committees through one-to-one interviews and workshops to prevent possible conflicts. The local stakeholders, including local residents, will be involved in the implementation and monitoring of the activities under

the new regulations, which would include, among others, construction of overflow dams/ weirs. The Conservation Committees will serve as a key vehicle for local community participation in the process of adjustment of reserves' hydrology, in order to avoid potential inundation of the mineral islands cultivated illegally by the locals.

The project will help increase the understanding of local stakeholders (primarily agricultural collectives, but also including local individuals who engage in subsistence haymaking) of sustainable and effective ways of use of fen mires and floodplain meadows. The testing of the viability of haymaking will be done by one of the collective farms. Environmentally friendly haymaking will be introduced on lands transferred out of agriculture. This will enable the biodiversity of open fen mires and floodplain meadows to be sustained at an ecologically optimal level, while creating additional benefits for the local community.

Outcome 3: Forestry activity in and around the reserves is modified to diminish threats to biodiversity harboured in reserves.

The project will help improve the understanding in the forestry sector of the need to observe special rules for biodiversity conservation in forest management within PAs. Leading experts will be involved in the development of guidelines on sustainable forestry with due heed to biodiversity. This policy document will be used in forest management planning throughout the country. The inputs of local forestries technicians and officials will be sought in the development of this policy document through workshops and discussions. The local Conservation Committees will take part in the planning workshops to ensure that interests of the local community are adequately addressed. The guidelines will be tested in the project sites. Forestry workers will be trained in the application of the guidelines.

Modern forest management plans that focus on biodiversity conservation, with recommendations on species protection, will be developed for forestry units in the project areas (Zhitkovichi, Luninets, Stolin, Pinsk, Drogichin and Ivatsevichi), by working closely with forest sector officials and technicians. Informational campaigns about the relevant forestry plans in the target areas will be carried out to present to the local population key provisions of these plans, to discuss with stakeholders disputed matters, and to seek solutions.

Outcome 4: Flood protection program in and around the reserves is modified to diminish threats to biodiversity harboured in reserves.

This outcome will enable the optimization of the hydrological regime at PAs and prevent flooding of human settlements, while significantly improving the understating among key organizations and experts on the principles of sustainable management and basin approach to water resources. All activities in the flood protection program are aimed at minimizing possible flood consequences, especially for local population, and according to the national legislation all interventions proposed must be approved by the local community through general assembly of the residents potentially affected by the intervention. The project will build on this strategy to involve the local community in the process of discussion and agreement on the proposed modifications to the program. This will be achieved through issue-based meetings, tours of the area by program designers, and targeted discussions.

Outcome 5: Tools and methodologies generated by the project in selected wetland reserves are institutionalized, enabling replication in other similar areas within the national protected areas system.

So that the experience generated through the project's specific demonstration sites is internalized and applied to other parts of the PA system, the project will ensure that key national and local government bodies adopt the revised guidelines, tools, and methodologies as standard operating procedures. The long-term goal of the GOB to be supported by the UNDP/GEF project is to strengthen the capacity and sustainability of the national PA system focusing on regional and local reserves. The lessons and experience gained at the four project sites will greatly assist GOB in achieving this long-term objective.

Lessons and best practices generated by the project will be used to prepare a package of training materials, tools and guidelines, especially on developing reserve management plans (including sustainable hunting and fishing management plans) and enhancing local participation in planning and implementation of reserve management plans. The documents will be sent for review to all the stakeholders to ensure that all the lessons of the participatory development process have been adequately captured. A strategy for exchanging information, organizing field visits, mentoring, and collaboration on research and monitoring will be developed and implemented. Close dialogue will be maintained with the National Ramsar Committee (established by the MoNREP in the course of the PDF-B), which is an intersectoral committee including representatives of Ministries, scientific institutions and nongovernmental organizations, to facilitate replication to other wetland areas in the country. The replication of the project's experience

gained at the 4 demonstration sites will be integrated into their work program. Corresponding awareness-raising campaigns on changes in land use patterns in PAs and buffer zones will be organized at the national level, through exchange of experience between representatives of local communities from project areas with counterparts from different regions of the country.

Project experience and lessons beyond project sites will be disseminated through various organizations, particularly through the representatives of various organizations on the Project Steering Committee. Furthermore, a series of promotional actions and workshops to demonstrate project best practices to various ministries, agencies, enterprises and local community will be arranged.

PART IV: DESCRIPTION OF THE POLESIE REGION



The large relatively isolated biogeographical complex Polesie has an area of 13.2 million ha. It occupies the south of Belarus, the north of Ukraine, and partially the east of Poland and the west of Russia. It belongs to the Southern warm unstably wet agroclimatic region, characterized by formation of a moderately continental climate with soft and short winters. The average January (coldest month) temperature is -5.3°C ; the average July (warmest month) temperature is $+18.6^{\circ}\text{C}$. The average year temperature is $+6.9^{\circ}\text{C}$. Annual precipitation figure for the Polesie region is 590-600 mm. Stable snow cover keeps for 75 days from last decade of December till beginning of March.

The relief of the area was defined by the Dnieper and Sozh glaciers, and specifically by the melting glacial water. Polesie is a relatively flat area with absolute altitudes above sea level of 100-150 meters. The territory is characterized by low sloping and high standing level of groundwater. These unique conditions, together with sufficient annual precipitation and favoring temperature amplitude led in the past to formation in this part of Europe of large open wetlands, mostly lowland mires (fens) with poor peat layer (1.1 – 1.8 m). By its landscape structure, genetic and morphological qualities the site belongs to azonal nature complexes, which makes its biological and landscape diversity outstanding and requiring special attention.

Polesie covers about 30% of Belarus, and some 17% of Ukraine. The Belarusian Polesie - 6.1 million ha - accounts for 46% of the overall Polesie area, with the remaining part located in Ukraine. It occupies the territory of more than 30 administrative districts of the Gomel, Brest and partially Minsk and Mogilev oblasts in Belarus, and most of Ukraine's Volyn, Rivno, Zhitomir and Chernigov oblasts, as well as some districts in the Lviv, Khemnitzk, Kiev and Sumy oblasts. Polesie contributes 80% of the total discharge into the Dnieper River.

Large natural wetlands of Polesie, which up until 1960 covered 44% of the area, were barriers for economic and social development of the region during Soviet times. In 1960s, the Soviet government embarked on a large scale ameliorative drainage campaign, which was intended to provide solution to excessive waterlogging, thereby improving the agricultural performance. The campaign has paid off poorly, causing grave environmental problems throughout the region. By now, more than 1.7 million ha of Belarusian Polesie has been drained; about

10,000 km of rivers were rectified; 492 pump stations were built, 12 water reservoirs and ponds with a total volume of 631 million c.m. have been constructed for flow regulation. The history of amelioration knows no other examples of ameliorative transformations of the scale and degree observed in the Polesie.

Large-scale drainage brought significant changes into lives of local people. It enabled construction on drained lands of roads, new large enterprises, and dwellings. Land productivity rose greatly in the first several years following the drainage, thereby turning Polesie into a significant agricultural area. 75% to 85% of all Belarus' ripe and green feeding stuffs, as well as roughage, were produced in Polesie. However, the situation has changed drastically in the last decade. Both in Belarus and Ukraine agricultural use of drained lands is no longer as productive as it used to be. Several subsequent years of exploitation brought about a significant decline in harvest on a large share of the drained lands. Further use of those tracts for agricultural purposes required introduction of fertilizers, implementation of complex mechanisms to regulate the water regime, sometimes even presupposing irrigation, which led to overdrying of many lands. As time went by, a large number of drainage facilities (initially of poor construction quality) were going out of order, and re-appearance of wetlands became quite common on numerous drained areas. Today in Belarus drainage systems servicing more than 500,000 ha need capital reconstruction; drainage facilities on another 200,000 ha require substantial maintenance works.

Drainage of Polesie mires has led to a significant drop of the groundwater table, decrease in the amount of precipitation (long-term monitoring data indicate that in the wake of peatland drainage the average June-July temperatures in southern Belarus have dropped 0.3-0.7⁰C, precipitation has decreased by 10-31 mm)⁸, soil erosion, and increase in the runoff of biogenic elements into natural water bodies and ground water aquifers. Annually about 1.5 million tons of mineral and up to 700,000 tons of aggressive water-soluble organic substances originating from drained mires flow into the Black Sea via rivers Pripyat and Dnieper. Because of the fact that the drainage campaign took no account of ecological and nature-conservation requirements, the subsequent destruction of natural habitats and rise in the intensity of economic activities caused a substantial decline in the biodiversity and in populations of many animal and plant species. Transformation of wetlands has led to a catastrophic drop in the number of near-water animals, especially water birds. Currently about 50% of Belarusian water birds are considered to be rare or threatened because of drainage.

In terms of land-use, agricultural production still plays the key role in the region's economic development. More than 1,200 Belarusian collective farms are located in Polesie. More than 600 Belarusian private farmers produce about 5% of the agricultural output. Agricultural activities continue on drained lands with ever-declining efficiency. This is true for crop production, which is a dominating agricultural activity, represented mainly by grain production and grass-seeding on drained peatlands, the level of mineralization of which grows every year resulting in drastically declining soil fertility. An ever growing area of lands is being annually withdrawn from agriculture.

The Chernobyl Nuclear Power Station explosion affected the region in a dramatic way. 69% of lands in the Gomel oblast (all of which is in Polesie) has been contaminated, in Brest oblast this figure is 13%. More than 1.8 million ha of agricultural lands have contamination exceeding 1 Ku/sq.km for Cs₁₃₇. In Belarus about 300,000 of agricultural lands of Polesie were withdrawn from agriculture of the region for good.

The density of the population is the highest in the Pripyat floodplain. In Brest oblast alone (Belarus), about 100,000 people live in the floodplain of Pripyat and its tributaries, as well as in the first over-floodplain terrace (the total population of Belarus is about 10,000,000, with about 1.9 million people living in the capital).

The Pripyat river basin is a key ecological and landscape element of the Polesie and its main waterway. The Pripyat is the second largest tributary of the Dnieper by its length, and the largest by the catchment size. The river is 761 km long, with 261 km flowing through Ukraine. The catchment area is 121,965 km² with 52,700 km² in Belarus. There are more than 10,000 streams and rivers flowing into the Pripyat. The largest left-bank tributaries of the Pripyat are rivers Yaselda, Lan, Sluch, and Ptich. The key right-bank tributaries are Stokhid, Styr, Goryn, Stviga, Ubort, Slovechna. Floodplains of the Pripyat and its tributaries are discharge areas for the

⁸ V.F. Loginov *Impact of drainage on regional climate in Belarus // Prirodnye Resursy*, - 1997. #1. pp. 24-27

groundwater aquifers, and this, in combination with low channel gradient and poor outflow defines permanently high standing groundwater level, some 0-1.0, sometimes to 2.0 meters above soil.

The Pripyat and its tributaries belong to the flatland river type with dominating snow feeding. In Belarus, bearing the main part of the Pripyat channel, dynamics of the in-year water level fluctuations reveal a relatively low-level and quite large-scale spring flood, short summer no-flood period, which is still almost every year interrupted by rainfall floods, and much more discernible autumn and winter no-flood periods, attributed mainly to a peculiar combination of rainfalls and thaws. The flooding period varies greatly: from 40-45 days on small rivers to 3.5-4 months on the Pripyat itself. On the Pripyat and most of the tributaries the flood peak is normally observed at the end of March – beginning of April. The average rise of the water in spring (relative to the lowest summer level) is 3.5-4.5 m on the Pripyat proper, 1.5-3 m on left-bank tributaries and 1-2.5 m on right-bank tributaries. Water rising during rainfall events (as compared to that during normal annual flooding) is irregular and in some instances it exceeds spring flooding (years 1952, 1960, 1974, 1993). Rainfall events and normal flooding lead to inundation of the whole floodplain including dwellings, public and administrative buildings, and communication facilities. The largest area ever inundated during spring flooding in Belarus was 425,000 ha. Spring flow of the Pripyat constitutes about 61% of its yearly figure; for the summer-and-autumn and winter flows the shares are 23% and 16% correspondingly.

The middle Pripyat covers the central part of the Belarusian Polesie. The structure of the valley here has three subsequently ascending over-floodplain terraces. The width of the first over-floodplain terrace fluctuates from 4-5 to 10-18 km. This part of the Pripyat floodplain hosts the biggest natural alluvial landscape plots not just in Belarus but in the whole Europe. Structural and functional features of the floodplain landscapes result for the most part from the alluvial character of the Pripyat river and its main tributaries. One of the most peculiar features of this area is presence of a large ancient lake-type enlargement, which is flooded every year. Two landscape structures are distinguished within the Mid-Pripyat area. These are: (1) floodplain landscape complexes with lowland hypnum-sedge mires, black alder grassy-and-sedge forests in broad-coomb areas; and (2) flat-crested landscapes with mesohydrophilic meadows, oak-forests on soddy-gley and gley soils, as well as with forb-and-sedge mires. Each of the two types of landscape complexes has its own micro- and mesorelief.

The soil cover of the Pripyat floodplain and its over-floodplain terraces is characterized by extreme diversity and complexity. It formed and developed under conditions of annual floods and deposition of new alluvial sediments on the surface. The alluvial sediments are dominated by sands, sandy loams, loams, with substantial siltation in some of the depressions. Vast wetland plots are typical for this area. Acid soils of high and medium degree cover 19-24% of the territory. They have a relatively high humus content (3-4%), which drops down only in near-channel soils (about 1%). Floodplain peat-and-wetland type soils cover more than 50% of the floodplain area and are characterized by high ash content. All floodplain soils are poor in mobile nutrients (this is observed at 80% of the area). The soddy-podzolic, mainly sandy, soils of the over-floodplain terraces are characterized by elevated acidity, low humus content and unstable water regime.

According to the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species (IUCN 2002), the Polesie region hosted: 7 species of birds, 17 species of mammals, 3 species of reptilians and amphibians, 8 species of fish, 19 species of arthropods, 1 species of annelids, and 3 species of mollusks. Twenty-two species of plants are under protection according to the Habitat directive and Bern annexes. The Belarusian Polesie region is essential for conservation of such globally endangered species of birds as aquatic warbler (up to 80% of the European population breeding here), spotted eagle (about 10%), great snipe (about 10%), and corncrake (about 15%). Among other groups of vertebrates, it should be noted that the Stviga River basin hosts one the few European microgroups of European mink; there are data on the muskrat which was considered extinct in Belarus.

The table below summarized globally important biodiversity of the Polesie region.

The IUCN-protected species of Polesie

Species, Latin	Species, English	Protection status
Birds		
<i>Acrocephalus paludicola</i>	Aquatic warbler	(E) VU
<i>Aquila clanga</i>	Greater spotted eagle	(E)
<i>Aythya nyroca</i>	Ferruginous duck	(E)

Species, Latin	Species, English	Protection status
<i>Crex crex</i>	Corncrake	(E)
<i>Gallinago media</i>	Great snipe	(E) LR/nt
<i>Glareola nordmanni</i>	Black-winged pratincole	(E)
<i>Haliaeetus albicilla</i>	White-tailed eagle	(E)
Mammals		
<i>Barbastella barbastellus</i>	Western barbastelle	(E) VU
<i>Lutra lutra</i>	Common otter	(E)
<i>Bison bonasus</i>	European bison	(E)
<i>Castor fiber</i>	Eurasian beaver	(E) NT
<i>Desmana moschata</i>	Russian desman	(E) VU
<i>Dryomys nitedula</i>	Forest dormouse	(E) LR/nt
<i>Glis glis</i>	Fat dormouse	(E) LR/nt
<i>Lynx lynx</i>	Eurasian lynx	(E)
<i>Micromys minutus</i>	Harvest mouse	(E) LR/nt
<i>Muscardinus avellanarius</i>	Common dormouse	(E)
<i>Myotis bechsteini</i>	Bechstein's bat	(E) VU
<i>Myotis dasycneme</i>	Pond bat	(E) VU
<i>Myotis myotis</i>	Greater mouse-eared bat	(E)
<i>Mustela lutreola</i>	European mink	(E) EN
<i>Nyctalus lasiopterus</i>	Giant noctule	(E) LR/nt
<i>Nyctalus leisleri</i>	Lesser noctule	(E) LR/nt
Reptiles		
<i>Emys orbicularis</i>	European pond turtle	(E)
Amphibians		
<i>Bombina bombina</i>	European fire-bellied toad	(E) LR/cd
<i>Hyla arborea</i>	European common tree frog	(E)
Fishes		
<i>Acipenser ruthenus</i>		VU A1c+2d
<i>Aspius aspius</i>	Asp	(E) DD
<i>Eudontomyzon mariae</i>	Ukrainian brook lamprey	(E) DD
<i>Lampetra planeri</i>		LR nt
<i>Gymnocephalus acerina</i>		DD
<i>Misgurnus fossilis</i>	Weatherfish	(E) LR/nt
<i>Pelecus cultratus</i>		DD
<i>Phoxinus phoxinus</i>	Swamp minnow	(E) DD
Cancers		
<i>Astacus astacus</i>		VU B2 bce+3bcd
Nexapods		
<i>Aeshna viridis</i>		LR/nt
<i>Buprestis splendens</i>		VU A1c
<i>Dytiscus latissimus</i>		VU
<i>Carabus intricatus</i>		LR/nt
<i>Cerambyx cerdo</i>		VU A1c+2c
<i>Coenonympha oedippus</i>		LR/nt
<i>Cucujus cinnaberinus</i>		VU A1c
<i>Formica aquilonia</i>		LR/nt
<i>Formica rufa</i>	Red wood ant	(E) LR/nt
<i>Formica uralensis</i>		LR/nt
<i>Lycaena dispar</i>		LR/nt

Species, Latin	Species, English	Protection status
Maculinea alcon	Alcon large blue	(E) LR/nt
Maculinea arion	Large blue	(E) LR/nt
Maculinea nausithous	Dusky large blue	(E) LR/nt
Maculinea teleius		(E) LR/nt
Osmoderma eremita	Hermit beetle	(E) VU
Buprestis splendens	Goldstreifiger	(E) VU
Lycaena dispar	Large copper	(E) LR/nt
Phyllodesma ilicifolia	Small lappet moth	(E) VU
Spiders		
Dolomedes plantarius	Great raft spider	(E) VU
Annlides		
Hirudo medicinalis	Medicinal leech	(E)
Molluscs		
Myxas glutinosa	Glutinous snail	(E) DD
Pseudanodonta complanata		LR/nt
Unio crassus		LR/nt

Cited by: IUCN 2002. 2002 IUCN Red List of Threatened Species. Downloaded 27 December 2002.

Internationally important flora species

	Habitat directive	Bern annexes
<i>Aldrovanda vesiculosa</i>	II	I
<i>Arnica montana</i>	V	
<i>Caldesia parnassifolia</i>	II	I
<i>Cypripedium calceolus</i>	II	I
<i>Liparisloeselii</i>	II	I
<i>Najas flexilis</i>	II	
<i>Pulsatillapatens</i>	II	I
<i>Saxifraga hirculus</i>	II	I
<i>Thesium ebracteatum</i>	II	
<i>Trapa natans</i>		I
<i>Botrychium simplex</i>	II	I
<i>Botrychium multifidum</i>		I
<i>Botrychium matricariifolium</i>		I
<i>Lycopodium annotinum</i>	V	
<i>Lycopodium clavatum</i>	V	
<i>Salvinia natans</i>		I
<i>Jurinea cyanooides</i>	II	
<i>Dracocephalum ruyschiana</i>	II	
<i>Angelica palustris</i>	II	
<i>Moehringia lateriflora</i>	II	
<i>Cinna latifolia</i>	II	
<i>Agrimonia pilosa</i>	II	

PART V: THREATS ANALYSIS

Project sites include – Mid-Pripyat, Sporovsky, Zvanets, and Prostyr – that remain especially vulnerable. Most of the threats emanate from activities within the reserve boundaries or on adjacent lands in the buffer zone.

Sporovsky (Berioza, Drogichin, Ivanovo, Ivatsevichi districts):

Reserve (19,384 ha): This is one of the largest fen mires in Europe. The reserve is an IBA and a Ramsar site. 30% of the area is used for haymaking, another 10% for cattle grazing. The remaining area is not used. Adjacent lands are mainly used for arable farming. There is a fish farm (Selets) upstream from the reserve.

Zvanets (Drogichin, Kobrin districts):

Reserve (15,873 ha): Huge fen mire that is an IBA and a Ramsar site. About 10% of the area is used for haymaking and cattle grazing; mineral islands are partially used by locals for agriculture. 16.7% of the reserve is under forestry. The rest is in natural condition and is not used. Adjacent lands are mainly used for arable farming (perennials, grains). There is one fish farm. There is also a large reservoir situated close to the reserve boundaries that is used to store water pumped out of “ameliorated” (poldered) areas during rainy periods, and to supply water to drained tracts during dry periods.

Mid-Pripyat (Luninets, Pinsk, Stolin, Zhitkovichi districts):

Reserve (90,447 ha): This is Europe's last natural complex of lowland mires, rivers, streams and floodplain forests of this size and level of biodiversity. It is an important bird area (IBA) and a Ramsar site. 64% of land is under the management of 34 collective farms. Hay cutting and cattle grazing are the key types of agriculture within the reserve itself (14% of area), but some minor plots and mineral islands are being used for arable agriculture. 27% of the area is used in forestry. The remaining area is not used. Adjacent lands are mainly used for arable farming.

Prostyr (Pinsk district; bordering Ukraine):

Reserve (3,440 ha): This is a floodplain wetland on the border with Ukraine. The reserve contains an IBA and a potential transboundary Ramsar site. Only a small part (5%) is used for haymaking and cattle pasturing. The remaining territory is not used. Adjacent lands are mainly used for arable farming, but this does not present a significant threat to biodiversity.

The primary threats, their impact on biodiversity and the barriers to addressing these are described below

CHANGES IN HYDROLOGY (HIGH)

This is the result of water use and water drainage by agricultural lands and fish farms in and around reserve boundaries. Drainage systems in agricultural lands and environmentally inappropriate agricultural practices result in the drying of wetlands, changes in vegetation type and biodiversity loss. Water use by upstream fish farms adversely affects stream flow (lack of spring floods or increase in summer floods) with attendant impacts on habitat and biodiversity. Another causal factor is flood defense measures aimed at protecting local dwellings from floods, which have caused changes to the natural hydrological regime

(a) Agricultural lands

Many of the currently existing threats stem from environmentally detrimental past activities targeted at improving the productivity of Soviet agriculture. The **historical drainage campaign** carried out in Polesie in 1960-1990s affected the groundwater table, resulting in the disappearance of natural wetlands. Remaining natural fen mires still retain their biodiversity, but being surrounded by drained areas they are exposed to imminent threats of habitat loss following fragmentation and encroachment of shrubs: vegetation succession unnatural for the former vast open fen mires. Overall, the area of natural wetlands, floodplain forests and meadows shrunk considerably, resulting in a substantial loss of biodiversity.

For those areas that remained in their natural and semi-natural condition, the **traditional management of the surrounding drained lands**, the way it is practiced by collective farms⁹ and local drainage companies (which operate the agricultural drainage facilities, including water uptake and pump stations), presents a significant threat. In many areas, especially in Polesie, collective farms manage lands included in protected areas, which were established without withdrawal of land from the land-users (e.g., Mid-Pripyat and Sporovsky reserves). A significant portion of drained lands adjacent to reserves has degraded and can no longer be used productively in agriculture. However, these lands continue to drain the neighboring natural areas encroaching on their territory, leading to their increased fragmentation, loss of shallow water breeding areas, gradual loss of naturalness and disappearance of valuable plant and animal species.

The key barriers to modifying environmentally detrimental agricultural practices include the following:

- State agricultural policies are quite progressive in terms of biodiversity-conservation, however the methodological guidelines to implement the policy are lacking.
- There is no system for district-level land use planning based on economic and ecological factors, due to the absence of appropriate methodologies
- Collective agriculture is governed by a production quota system that is not aligned with the ecological production capacity of the wetland area and requires collectives to generate outputs even on lands that are not productive.
- Collectives do not have the knowledge or experience (and are therefore unwilling to take on associated risks) with applying biodiversity-friendly agricultural practices and norms.
- In the past, planning of the placement of meliorative (drainage) systems did not take into account their potential economic efficiency and influence on the Reserve's ecosystem, because of the absence of precise techniques and normative documents for assessing economic efficiency & ecological impact of systems
- Current water use regulations for meliorative systems do not take into account the negative impacts on the reserve; when the regulations were designed, the need for reserves protection was not taken into consideration.
- Water use by drainage systems surrounding the reserve is not coordinated; as a result this can lead to floods caused by swapping of water in fen mire pump stations; improved coordination (reflected in new guidelines) would help prevent inundations and droughts, through coordinated operation of pumping stations and sluices.
- There is lack of coordination at a local level between the enterprises managing the drainage systems of Drogichin and Kobrin districts and relevant Environmental Inspections.

(b) Fish farms

Water use by upstream fish farms also contributes to changes in hydrology, primarily by reducing the groundwater table during the breeding season and affecting seasonal floods. Decline in groundwater table leads to mire's bush overgrowth, reduction of productivity, reduction of density of all kinds of birds and insects, increased fire danger to peat bogs and forest, which destroys populations of numerous birds. The absence of spring floods causes the build-up of aquatic macrophyte vegetation in the riverbed and restriction of flow. The increased incidence of summer floods during the growth period of vegetation bring a sharp fall in hydrochemical parameters of swamp water causing plant associations to shift, particularly the rapid spread of narrow-leaved cat's tail (*Typha angustifolia*), which then dominates over the primary sedge vegetation, and also brings changes in the composition of invertebrate and bird species.

The barriers to implementing biodiversity-friendly water use patterns by upstream fish farms include:

- Existing water use regulations for the fish farms are meant to minimize adverse downstream impacts. However, there is an inadequate allocation of financial resources to fish farms, which diminishes their capacity to maintain equipment and observe existing regulations.

⁹ Private farming development has been quite slow.

- The coordination and continuous dialogue which is necessary at the local level (between the fish farms and Environmental Inspection) to ensure that water use guidelines are appropriate and are being implemented, as well as for trouble-shooting on specific issues, is limited. Similarly, at an inter-ministerial level, there is limited coordination and dialogue between the Belmeliovodkhoz concern (responsible for elaboration of operational guidelines for the fish farm and flood control) and MoNREP to ensure that at a national scale water use guidelines take into account downstream impacts on biodiversity and that these are being observed.

(c) Flood defense

Polesie floods, a tragic outcome of unwise physical planning in the past, render significant direct physical and psychological damage. 13 large floods have taken place on the Pripjat and its tributaries over the last 50 years. The first *Program of Action for Flood Defense for the Polesie* was developed in 1977, and subsequently revised several times. Initially, the Program envisaged construction of full-length ground levees along the river on both banks. More than half of the Pripjat was protected this way. The latest revision of the Program up to 2015, currently in implementation, uses a modified approach, whereby localized dyking is introduced to protect the more important areas, such as towns and isolated industrial and agricultural areas. However, the capacity to factor biodiversity conservation concerns into the Program is lacking.

The construction of flood defense facilities, in the past, adversely affected the width of the flood plain, caused a decrease in habitat area, loss of shallow breeding areas, and changes in flood timing. Mid-Pripjat and Prostyr continue to remain under the threat of further losing its biodiversity if the currently planned flood defense activities continue.

In the past, full-length embankment of more than half of the Pripjat and many of its upstream tributaries, and selective dyking were planned and performed without due account for the need to conserve biodiversity. In its current version, the flood defense program does not guarantee biodiversity conservation, with small, local embankments and dyking envisioned as part of the new program.

The barrier to modifying the flood defense program to minimize adverse impacts on biodiversity is that, at the time of the elaboration of the Program, there were no biodiversity experts present in the development team, and hence this work was deprived of in-depth analysis of the outcomes of the Program for biodiversity. Belmeliovodkhoz concern is acknowledging the negative implications of the existing Program for Flood Defense for biodiversity, but the capacity to revise the Program (change policies) and start off practical changes, is limited.

UNSUSTAINABLE USE BY LOCALS (MEDIUM)

The local population residing near Reserves (there are no settlements within Sporovo, Zvanets and Prostyr reserves, but there are seven villages within Mid-Pripjat) has traditionally used the area for various subsistence and income-generating activities. These include tillage of mineral islands, hunting, fishing and haymaking. The threats and underlying causes of biodiversity loss due to these activities are elaborated below.

(d) Tillage, hunting, fishing

Tillage of mineral islands for crop production: Locals need new areas to rotate their traditional plots on mineral islands, thus resulting in extensification. Mineral islands are unique formations amidst the swamps, and support rare plant species. Extension of tillage leads to changes in plant species composition.

Fishing: Local fishing activity includes non-regulated amateur fishing and illegal fishing that is adversely affecting fish stocks, with declines in populations of species such as pike, ide, pikeperch, and catfish.

Hunting/ poaching: Hunting, primarily for sale or self-consumption, is leading to declines in populations of species such as elk, roe deer, lynx, and badger. This, in turn, is upsetting the population balance between native and introduced species (raccoon dog, American mink). Introduced species are preying on ducks and the gray goose. The influence of these predators on small mammals is also leading to a reduction in the forage base for predatory birds.

Often, visiting of the fen by local residents during spring for poaching, plowing of mineral islands, and moonshining (making of local liquor) disturbs fauna during nesting periods. This leads to a restriction of the number of places favorable for nesting for spotted eagle, see eagle, and eagle owl.

The barriers to promoting sustainable use in the Reserves include the following:

- Due to weaknesses in the Wildlife Protection and Protected Area Acts, Reserves are currently unregulated, with no management plans aimed at regulating the use of mineral islands, or hunting and fishing activity.
- These activities are not monitored and checked due to a lack of Reserve management capacity.
- Locals are not involved in determining how the use of reserves should be regulated; locals continue to be excluded from land use and development decision making leading to inappropriate and illegal activities
- Locals do not have the knowledge, experience, or economic incentives for alternative, sustainable land use options, which could be more economically beneficial than current activities.
- Local population lacks awareness of zoning needs of the Reserve.

(e) Haymaking

One of global threats to biodiversity is the overgrowth of mires and floodplain meadows with shrubs and reeds as a result of stoppage of their traditional use for mowing and cattle grazing. Such threats to unique habitats of globally significant biodiversity are characteristic of Polesie and are present in all the four project sites. The traditional clearing of grass and small bushes, every summer, enabled the fen mire to remain open. However, locals are not engaging in hand haymaking activities. In the absence of clearing, there is superfluous accumulation of old vegetation and intensive willow scrub encroachment on open swamp areas, which is also a limiting factor for the aquatic warbler and several other plant and animal species.

To increase the efficiency of haymaking, locals undertake non-ecological burning of valley vegetation. Instead of going deeper into the fens into relatively inaccessible areas, locals remain on the outskirts and resort to burning of vegetation in spring under the mistaken belief that such burning enhances productivity of haymaking in the summer (scientific evidence suggests no such link). This has an extremely negative impact on plants and animals, especially when spring fires occur in dry weather conditions without spring floods, when, along with the vegetation, the upper soil layer is also totally burned, and plant roots and all insects perish. Most of the bird species cease nesting on such burned swamps. This particularly affects such globally threatened species as the aquatic warbler.

The barriers to increasing sustainable haymaking and clearing in fen mires that is beneficial for biodiversity include:

- There is a reduction in demand for forage at the individual level, due to out-migration of population from villages to cities, and related reduction in cattle breeding.
- Collectives need fen mire biomass for forage, but do not have the expertise to undertake biodiversity-friendly mechanized mowing that would clear the fen mire and generate fodder.
- All economic activity is focused on drained territories where there is an opportunity for mowing with use of standard technical equipment, and locals do not venture deeper inside the reserve.
- Complete ban on burning in all parts of the reserve makes it difficult to use controlled burning as another means (along with sustainable mowing) to keep the fen mire clear.

The barriers to preventing uncontrolled burning include:

- Local population is insufficiently informed about the harm of uncontrolled burning of vegetation.
- There is poor enforcement of the burning ban by MoNREP (through local Environmental Inspections) and there are no reserve management units that can enforce the ban.

UNSUSTAINABLE PRACTICES OF FORESTRY ENTERPRISES (MEDIUM)

Forests cover about 38% of the country, with the highest forest density being in the North and South (Polesie). Overall, the country enjoys considerable annual surplus of growth over harvest, however this masks the issue of unsustainable, traditional Soviet-type forestry being undertaken in and around protected areas, which is

especially acute in Polesie. At the project's demonstration sites, forestry enterprises are the second largest land-user after collective farms. They implement the forestry policies established by MoF. Each forestry enterprise has its own forest management plan, which undergoes "capital" revision once every ten years, but is also reviewed and revised annually for minor adjustments. Each year, as part this review, forestry enterprises receive annual harvest plans from MoF. Harvest planning decisions are made by MoF on its own, mainly on the basis of information communicated by forestry enterprises, as well as in line with need to fulfill the overall national harvest plan.

Forestry enterprises are expected to comply with the established special protection regime at Reserves, and are subject to monitoring by district environmental inspections. However, even when forestry enterprises are in full observance of the protection regime, they continue to significantly undermine the state of biological diversity. This is because forestry management techniques include mass-scale felling, excessive removal of deadwood from forests by burning or taking away, and the damage or extermination of rare protected species and of especially valuable forest communities and biotopes. There is also a high rate of fire in drained peat areas due to unregulated conditions of hydraulic and forest land reclamation systems or impacts from adjacent agricultural areas.

In the case of Belarus, the GOB and national experts have come to understand that in order to achieve full environmental sustainability in forestry at protected areas, the forest management plans themselves have to be revised using new information on globally important biodiversity and innovative approaches that could be beneficial both for biodiversity and forestry. The barrier is not willingness, but the lack of experience, methodologies, and knowledge of exact distribution of endangered species to integrate this level of detail in forest management plans. Barriers to integrating biodiversity conservation parameters into forestry activities include:

- The existing forest management plans focus mainly on forest use, and do not include explicit links between forestry activities and possible damage to biodiversity. For instance, they do not envisage protection of selected tree plots that serve as a key biotope for the globally threatened Greater Spotted Eagle. The existing plans were elaborated on the basis of traditional approaches and under extremely insufficient level of knowledge about existing globally important biodiversity.
- There is no system for monitoring biodiversity components in forest areas.
- Staff of forest protection and management units has insufficient knowledge on wildlife and vegetation.
- Due to absence of the reserve management plans, forestry activity within the reserves is not regulated.
- The Environmental Inspection does not exercise adequate control over the introduction and distribution of invasive species because of weaknesses in the law on protection of wildlife.
- Local level coordination between the forestry enterprises and the district's Environmental Inspections is limited, thus forestry enterprises are not well informed about biodiversity conservation needs and do not exercise necessary control.

THREATS AND IMPACT ON BIODIVERSITY AT EACH SITE

	Proximate threats	Impact on biodiversity
Sporovsky Reserve	THREAT I: CHANGES IN THE HYDROLOGICAL REGIME	
	(a) Lack of annual spring floods in the Yaselda river; decline in groundwater table in the Reserve during the breeding season (April-July); and increased incidence of summer floods due to water exploitation by the Selets fish farm (15 km	Spring floods would normally clear the riverbed of logjams of floating vegetation and aquatic macrophytes. The absence of floods causes the build-up of aquatic macrophyte vegetation in the riverbed and restriction of flow. Decline in groundwater table leads to mire's bush overgrowth, reduction of productivity, reduction of density of all kinds of birds and insects, increased fire danger to fen mires and forest, which destroys populations of numerous birds. Absence of spring high waters results in deterioration

	Proximate threats	Impact on biodiversity
	upstream of the Sporovsky Reserve on the Yaselda River)	<p>of conditions for fish spawning.</p> <p>Lowered water level observed on Lake Sporovsky is a principal cause of fast overgrowth of microphytes and reductions in stocks of fish</p> <p>Floods during the growth period of vegetation bring a sharp fall in hydrochemical parameters of swamp water causing plant associations to shift, particularly the rapid spread of narrow-leaved cat's tail (<i>Typha angustifolia</i>), which then dominates over the primary sedge vegetation, and also brings changes in the composition of invertebrate and bird species.</p> <p>The cover of other sedge species (<i>Carex lasiocarpa</i> Ehrh., <i>C. diandra</i> Schrank, <i>C. rostrata</i> Stokes) decrease abruptly even after brief submergence.</p> <p>Long and high flood that depresses the growth of low-growing species causes an increase in the proportions of reed and reedmace (<i>Typha latifolia</i> L. and <i>T. angustifolia</i> L.). Scrub cover shows some decrease with floods.</p> <p>Floods lead to the abandonment of the site by aquatic warblers & to the significant or complete destruction of populations of globally threatened birds</p>
	THREAT 2: UNSUSTAINABLE USE BY LOCALS	
	(a) Extension of traditional tillage of mineral islands by locals who need new areas to rotate their traditional plots.	Mineral islands, which are unique formations amidst the swamps, support rare plant species. Extension of tillage leads to changes in plant species composition.
	(b) Overall decrease in area on which hay-making occurs	<p>Traditional clearing of grass and small bushes every summer enabled the mire to remain open. In the absence of clearing, there is intensive willow scrub encroachment on open swamp areas, which is also a limiting factor for the aquatic warbler and several other plant and animal species.</p> <p>Absence of clearing results in superfluous accumulation of old vegetation.</p>
	(c) Non-ecological burning of valley vegetation by locals to increase the efficiency of hay-making	<p>This has an extremely negative impact on plants and animals, especially when spring fires occur in dry weather conditions without spring floods, when, along with the vegetation, the upper soil layer is also totally burned. Plant roots and all insects perish.</p> <p>Most of the bird species cease nesting on such burned swamps. This particularly affects such globally threatened species as the aquatic warbler.</p>
	(d) Over-fishing, non-regulated amateur fishing, illegal fishing	Decline in populations of species such as pike, ide, pikeperch, catfish.
	(e) Over-hunting, illegal hunting for sale or self-consumption	Decline in populations of species such as elk, roe deer, lynx, and badger. This, in turn, is upsetting the population balance between native and introduced species (raccoon dog, American mink). Introduced species are preying on all kinds of ducks, and the

	Proximate threats	Impact on biodiversity
		grey goose. Influence of these predators on small mammals is also leading to a reduction in the forage base for predatory birds.
Zvanets Reserve	Threat 1: Changes in the hydrological regime	
	(a) Reduction in area of the fen due to drainage of peripheral sites for agricultural use	Reduction in habitat of globally endangered plants and animal species. Deterioration of habitat conditions of fauna species typical of fen mires.
	(b) Low water level during spring and summer due to unsustainable use of water resources by drainage systems on agricultural lands	In the short-term, lack of water during spring results in decrease of general vegetation productivity, reduction in number of birds, and insects. Lack of water also exacerbates the impact of spring burning of vegetation on flora and fauna. In the long-term, lack of water accelerates overgrowth of open fens by bushes, accompanied by disappearance of biodiversity typical for open fen mires.
	(c) Increased incidence of floods caused by swapping of water in fen mire pump stations of drainage systems to address surplus waters, and also during long periods of high water on the river Pripyat	Inundation during vegetation period leads to drastic worsening of hydrochemical indicators of water quality in the mire, resulting in abnormal vegetation succession (accelerated growth of reed results in oppression of sedge), with subsequent changes in the species composition of insects and birds Floods lead to significant or complete destruction of populations of globally threatened birds, as well as rare plant species
	(e) Reduction in water level in Zvanets fen mire due to a partially blocked drain upstream on the Orekhovsky canal (Ukraine).	This leads to reduction in mire's general productivity, and reduction in numbers of several globally threatened bird species.
	Threat 2: Unsustainable use by local land users	
	(a) Extension of traditional tillage of mineral islands by locals who need new areas to rotate their traditional plots.	Mineral islands, which are unique formations amidst the swamps, support rare plant species. Extension of tillage leads to changes in plant species composition.
	(b) Overall decrease in area on which hay-making occurs	Traditional clearing of grass and small bushes every summer enabled the mire to remain open. In the absence of clearing, there is intensive willow scrub encroachment on open swamp areas, which is also a limiting factor for the aquatic warbler and several other plant and animal species. Absence of clearing results in superfluous accumulation of old vegetation.

	Proximate threats	Impact on biodiversity
	(c) Non-ecological burning of valley vegetation by locals to increase the efficiency of hay-making	This has an extremely negative impact on plants and animals, especially when spring fires occur in dry weather conditions without spring floods, when, along with the vegetation, the upper soil layer is also totally burned. Plant roots and all insects perish. Most of the bird species cease nesting on such burned swamps. This particularly affects such globally threatened species as the aquatic warbler.
	(e) Visitor disturbance to fauna during nesting periods.	Often visiting of the fen by local residents during spring for poaching, plowing of mineral islands, forest cuts, and moonshining (making of local liquor) leads to restriction of the number of places favorable for nesting spotted eagle, see eagle, eagle owl.
	(f) Over-hunting, illegal hunting for sale or self-consumption	Decline in populations of species such as elk, roe deer, lynx, and badger. This, in turn, is upsetting the population balance between native and introduced species (raccoon dog, American mink). Introduced species are preying on all kinds of ducks, and the grey goose. Influence of these predators on small mammals is also leading to a reduction in the forage base for predatory birds.
	Threat 3: Unsustainable forestry	
	(d) Unsustainable forestry that does not take into account biodiversity conservation	On mineral islands of the reserve forest cuts occur in nesting areas of spotted eagle and other predatory birds, and in areas where tree species (oak, linden, maple, elm) that are vital to ecosystem health abound. In the quarter 48, introduced oak <i>Quercus rubra</i> has appeared and is being distributed intensively, which may substantially damage native biodiversity.
Mid Pripyat and Prostyr:	THREAT 1: CHANGES IN THE HYDROLOGICAL REGIME	
	(a) Reduction of the area for key biotopes in the flood plain as a result of construction of embankments/ dykes for flood defense along the river	Decreased habitat area (floodplain lakes, fens, alder forests) for threatened species Increased water level in narrowed floodplain leads to loss of shallow water areas important for waterfowl breeding, fish spawning Change in flood timing has adverse effects on biodiversity, particularly in Turov meadow Flooding and wetting of the most valuable inundated woods as a result of change in flood plain hydrology due to construction of polders.
	(b) Continued agricultural activity on drained lands (perennials, grains)	Shrinking area of natural habitats of floodplain lakes, meadows, fens, and alder forests valuable for a number of threatened bird and fish species Disruptions in the hydrology of the floodplain areas (shallow water areas decreased, worsening of conditions for fish spawning) Changing vegetation on adjacent degraded fields leads to shrub encroachment in reserves
	(c) Changes in spring high	The increase in height and duration of high waters

	Proximate threats	Impact on biodiversity
	waters as a result of increased resistance to water current due to bush overgrowth	between dams results in lack of nesting places for the majority of ground bird species including globally endangered corn crane and great snipe.
	THREAT 2: UNSUSTAINABLE USE BY LOCAL LAND USERS	
	(a) Extension of traditional tillage of mineral islands by locals who need new areas to rotate their traditional plots.	Mineral islands, which are unique formations amidst the swamps, support rare plant species. Extension of tillage leads to changes in plant species composition.
	(b) Overall decrease in area on which hay-making occurs	Traditional clearing of grass and small bushes every summer enabled the mire to remain open. In the absence of clearing, there is intensive willow scrub encroachment on open swamp areas, which is also a limiting factor for the aquatic warbler and several other plant and animal species. Absence of clearing results in superfluous accumulation of old vegetation.
	(d) Visitor disturbance to fauna.	Negative effect on large predatory birds.
	(e) Over-hunting, illegal hunting	Decline in populations of species such as elk, roe deer, wild boar with subsequent impact on river's bird species. This, in turn, is upsetting the population balance between native and introduced species (raccoon dog, American mink). These introduced species are preying on all kinds of ducks, and the grey goose. Influence of these predators on small mammals is also leading to a reduction in the forage base for predatory birds.
	(f) Over-fishing, non-regulated amateur fishing and illegal fishing)	Decline in populations of species such as pike, ide, pike perch, cat fish as a result of unsustainable fishing.
	Threat 3: Unsustainable forestry	
	(c) Unsustainable forestry	Cutting down biotopes for globally threatened biodiversity (such as Greater Spotted Eagle, rare plants). Logging of the most significant for biodiversity forest types, such as ancient oak, ash, and alder forests.

Site	Summary of proposed site-level interventions
Mid-Pripyat	Elimination of several polder systems will help improve hydrological regime; Relocation of planned anti-flood embankments, to meet biodiversity conservation requirements; Restore selected areas of open meadows and fens by removing shrub vegetation. Elimination and change of mode of use of a number of polders will expand habitats for birds and spawning areas for fish; Adopt forestry practices compatible with conservation of biodiversity Compile management plans and set up Protected Area Management Units
Prostyr	Elimination of several polder systems will help improve hydrological regime; Relocation of planned anti-flood embankments, to meet biodiversity conservation

	<p>requirements;</p> <p>Restore selected areas of open meadows and fens by removing shrub vegetation.</p> <p>Elimination and change of mode of use of a number of polders will expand habitats for birds and spawning areas for fish.</p> <p>Compile management plans and set up Protected Area Management Units</p>
Zvanets	<p>Implementation and fine-tuning of engineering construction project to optimize hydrological regime in the mire;</p> <p>Establishment of a legally enforced buffer zone around the reserve;</p> <p>Elaboration and approval of new operational regulations for drainage systems located within the buffer zone;</p> <p>Restore 600 ha of open fen by removing shrubs and reeds through sustainable mowing;</p> <p>Raising local community's awareness as to the adverse impact of tillage on biodiversity;</p> <p>Managed burning of vegetation.</p>
Sporovsky	<p>Ensure approval of the revised operational guidelines for Selets fish-farm;</p> <p>Adjustment of hydrological optimization activities;</p> <p>Restore 600 ha of open fens by removing shrubs and reeds by sustainable mowing;</p> <p>Managed burning of vegetation.</p>

PART VI: RESULTS OF PDF-B ON FEASIBILITY OF ECOTOURISM

The feasibility of ecotourism in support of the UNDP/GEF project ‘Catalyzing sustainability of the wetland protected area system in Belarusian Polesie through increased management efficiency and realigned land use practices’

Background and summary findings

Unsustainable use by locals is identified as an underlying cause of biodiversity loss in the Polesie lowlands and ecotourism is proposed as a means of providing alternative income opportunities compatible with sustainable use and the project’s conservation goals. The target set for ecotourism is given in the Logframe as:

Project Goal - To conserve the biodiversity of the Polesie lowlands				
Outcome 1	Indicator	Baseline	Target	Verification
Reserves are being managed effectively, with the active participation of local stakeholders in the design and implementation aspects	Increased income generating opportunities for local population due to ecotourism	No income generating options associated with ecotourism	By project end, 5-10% of local population involved in ecotourism	Annual project report: mid term evaluation.

The threats analysis identifies a role for ecotourism

Threat 2 – Unsustainable use by locals			
Proximate threats	Impact on biodiversity	Underlying causes	Proposed measures
Extension of tillage of mineral lands by locals who need new areas to rotate their traditional plots	Mineral islands, which are unique formations amidst the swamps, support rare plant species. Extension of tillage leads to changes in plant species composition.	...Locals do not have the knowledge and experience with alternative, sustainable land use options of fen mires (such as ecotourism)Undertake demonstrations of alternative sustainable uses; provide training and raise awareness of locals.



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The report was written in consultation with Natallia Parechina (APB) who provided the technical information in the appendices

19 May 2005

Summary findings

- Yes, ecotourism can be developed in support of the project’s goals;
- The number of international tourists can be increased *but* the potential remains limited;
- There is scope for increasing the number, and the economic value of domestic visitors to the Polesie region;
- Ecotourism can increase the number of local residents benefiting from associated income opportunities and thereby deliver direct benefits to conservation

- While the focus for development should be on private enterprises, ecotourism will increase the returns to state sector enterprises maintaining nature based tourist attractions. This again should raise awareness more broadly about the benefits of improving land management activities and conservation
- While this study supports ecotourism, the limited availability of data mean pre-requisite tasks for the full scale project will include visitor surveys, further market research and detailed programme planning;
- The ecotourism component for the full scale project period should be in a pilot project centered on the four districts around the Mid-Pripyat reserve; and
- The project will necessarily be a partnership between local communities, national and local state enterprises, tourist sector enterprises and NGO's.
- While we are confident that small-scale ecotourism initiatives can succeed in the Polesie, we recommend taking an incremental approach whereby facilities are developed and improved at a rate which generally matches supply to demand. It would be imprudent, in the face of current uncertainties to expand capacity substantially and create unrealistic expectations of income opportunities.

Tourism Trends

According to the World Tourism Organization (WTO), tourism is one of the world's fastest growing industries accounting for more than 10% of total employment, 7% of exports and 6% of global GDP. In 2002, the number of international tourists topped 700 million and, by 2020, total tourist trips are predicted to increase to 1.6 billion. While still relatively small, at around 2-4% of all international travel expenditure, ecotourism is one of the fastest growing segments of the tourism industry¹⁰. The WTO has noted the growth in popularity of vacations to natural areas-particularly dramatic growth rates to National Parks in developing countries. There is little reliable data on tourist trends to Belarus but it is clear from national and WTO data that it attracts far fewer international travelers than the Baltic republics, the Ukraine or other neighboring countries. The table below summarizes recent data.

Tourist arrivals in Belarus

<i>Origin</i>	<i>1992</i>	<i>2000</i>	<i>2003</i>	<i>2004</i>
CIS	-	-	12,000	13,012
Poland	13,732	13,464	10,287	5,563
Other	16,145	34,586	46,313	48,942
Total	-	-	68,600	67,517

Source: Statistical Yearbook of the Republic of Belarus 2004 and 'Tourism and Rest' no. 10(495) March 2005.

These numbers are very modest reflecting the nascent state of the industry. Correspondence with tourist agencies also suggests that a proportion of international visitors are short stay business travelers. The growth trend in non-Polish and CIS travelers does reflect a number of going tourist initiatives and parallels the growth in number of tourist related organizations.¹¹ Overall, though, tourism services account for only 0.5% of the total paid services, and 0.06% of Belarusian GDP.¹²

Can ecotourism contribute to the project's objectives?

Yes, it can make a limited contribution. The overall project objective is to assist the Government of Belarus conserve and sustainably manage globally valuable biodiversity in the Polesie Region. The loss of biodiversity is primarily a consequence of unsustainable and inappropriate forestry; agriculture, drainage and flood defense strategies; management failures rather than problems caused by the activities of local inhabitants. Nonetheless, local communities in the project region contribute to biodiversity loss through illegal hunting, fishing, tillage of forested areas and logging of ancient alder and oak forests. As the lands for the new protected areas will not be fully withdrawn from other economic uses, ecotourism can help increase returns to conservation relative to alternative, less sustainable, land use options.

It should be noted that those involved in damaging activities are not necessarily those most interested in participating in ecotourism projects. Ecotourism should then, be designed to meet the broad objective of helping to generate and distribute economic benefits to local stakeholders to such an extent that increasing numbers of people are motivated to support conservation of the Polesie region. Given that the state sector is, in various guises, a major owner of land and potential tourist facilities, working with selected partners can also be seen as a means of generating incentives to manage resources soundly. As an identified proximate threat to the Mid-Pripyat Reserve is visitor disturbance, the strategy taken must be compatible with broader Reserve management goals. Success with the development of small-scale ecotourism initiatives must ultimately raise awareness of the

¹⁰ The International Ecotourism Society defines ecotourism as responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and sustains the well-being of local people

¹¹ The Swedish Institute for Cultural Development, for example, has recently approved a proposal to develop a joint tourist project around the "Western Dvina River," to be financed by Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency. Ref. <http://belembassy.org/uk/CSwebsite/news/tourism2005.htm>

¹² Reported at <http://belembassy.org/uk/CSwebsite/news/tourism2005.htm> no year given.

value of nature and natural habitats increasing support for the management objectives of the reserves from both local communities and, as importantly, state sector stakeholders.

Is ecotourism a feasible option?

Yes, but on a small scale. There is no reliable regional data available for numbers of domestic or international visitors to the project region and no aggregate information relating to the purpose of tourist visits. There is however some evidence of on-going tourist activities albeit with low numbers, around the Pinsk region. For international visitors, organized trips to the Pripyatsky National Park have been in place since 1997, with one UK based company organizing a winter and spring package tour for small groups. Overall, 93 foreign visitors visited the Park in 2004. Visitors' books at Museums in Turov indicate small numbers of international visitors, from a wide range of countries, to the Project region and the Tourist Agency in Pinsk 'Rosa ветров' state they had 155 foreign visitors last year, mainly on package deals, for religious, nostalgic or ecotourism based holidays. From discussions with forestry officials, there are a number of dedicated hunting tourists from Russia and a number of other western countries. For domestic tourists, the region attracts a number of Belarusians in spring and summer for hunting, fishing and relaxation, who currently rely predominantly on own resources (camping, dachas and relatives) for food and accommodation. There are, therefore, already a number of visitors to the region despite the low level of tourist development or promotion. Further researching the marketability and tourist potential of the Polesie region must be an initial task of the pilot project.

Type of tourist to target

We propose the initial focus should be on domestic visitors who vary from casual day or weekend trippers to dedicated fishers and those on extended trips and family holidays. Outside of hunting lodges and some state facilities such as forestry campsites, there is little evidence of significant numbers of Belarusians using the hotels, cafes or other facilities specifically for leisure trips although nationwide, large numbers regularly visit or holiday in Belarus' natural and wilderness areas. We believe therefore, there is a latent domestic market for ecotourism opportunities and improved leisure facilities, such as boating, horse riding or nature trails.

For international tourists, most are currently part of pre arranged, organized package tours. Dedicated ecotours are generally organized for small groups by small, specialized businesses. Such companies must be cultivated to become key allies in developing and marketing package trips and the Polesie more broadly. There are presently a number of factors limiting the potential for attracting independent international travelers, who would prefer to pursue customized itineraries. By addressing these as part of the project, it is envisaged that such travelers will increase in number, but not substantially, over the project period. While we do not anticipate large numbers of international visitors, compared to domestic travelers, they can generate significantly higher local income opportunities per head given their spending power and the premium attached to ecotourism.

While it is likely that the majority of western tourists will be 'ecotourists' to some degree, that is not necessarily the case for the domestic market who may be less aware of environmental impacts. The strategy must be consistent with the management strategy of the Mid-Pripyat reserve to ensure it does not compromise conservation objectives.

Selling Points (Strengths)

- Natural attractions. The wildlife, waterways and landscapes, in terms of relative uniqueness, migratory trends and species richness have been described elsewhere in the project. There is clearly potential to appeal to both 'nature specialists', such as birders, and more general visitors given a complimentary range of options (boating, horse-riding etc) beyond wildlife watching. It should be noted however that an important draw for international ecotourists *is* the richness of the wildlife experience and there are many other attractive sites in Eastern Europe.
- The rich, distinctive rural culture still prevailing in some Polesie villages is potentially a valuable asset for attracting international tourists. Surveys of ecotourism in other countries often stress experiences of

local traditional life and culture as a highly valued part of the tourist experience. Contacts in the local communities visited expressed an interest in receiving visitors. Traditional rural accommodation and trips by traditional boats and carts could therefore be an important draw for this project.

- Recreational activities. While hunting and fishing are the principal recreational activities at present, there are a range of other recreational opportunities that could be developed and promoted - such as hiking, canoeing, boat trips, cycling and horse riding.
- Other cultural attractions. There are a number of other religious and cultural attractions together with a range of festivities and sports events throughout the year which could be supplementary draws for wildlife watchers. (Appendix 2 lists a range of attractions in the Pinsk region for information).
- Opportunity to enhance educational experiences and real world learning for school groups and general visitors. This should be an important element in gaining long-term support for conservation.
- Potential for using the reserves for participation in conservation activities. There is scope for using the reserves as 'green gyms' providing opportunities for organized groups to participate in conservation activities, perhaps in association with youth or business groups.

Caveats and considerations for attracting international tourists (Possible weaknesses)

- Does Belarus have supportive legislation or are there laws or regulations which obstruct tourism? The current situation is discussed in Appendix 1.
- Travel formalities? Visas for most international visitors are expensive and there are a number of currency and health insurance regulations in force. Border crossings can be lengthy and bureaucratic. When staying in Belarus, foreigners must register, within 3 working days, with the local police in the district they stay in. The travel 'hassle factor' to Belarus is therefore, fairly high and we propose a role in the project for engaging with others to help simplify the procedures and a role to work more strategically with the National Government and others to establish a supportive regulatory and legal framework supportive of ecotourism development.
- Safety and security? Belarus is a safe country to move around in and does not warrant any special attention on the UK's or US's watch list for foreign travel. General perceptions may be different though because of its negative international image associated with recent political developments.
- Health concerns? No. Health risks are relatively low and there is access to basic medical services and a clean water supply. The project site is served by a district hospital, local medical centers and medical care facilities. External perceptions however may still be shaded by the Chernobyl disaster with recent concerns aired about its long-term safety.¹³
- Transport infrastructure? The region has good transportation infrastructure with an international airport within 4 hours drive (Minsk) and good road and rail links to other European countries. The region is near the trans-European transport route from Warsaw through Minsk to Moscow.
- General infrastructure and telecommunications in the area? Reasonable but not geared towards the needs of the hospitality industry.
- Location in relation to established tourist destinations in the country or nearby? Belarus is small enough for visits to the mid-Pripyat region to be combined with visits to other Parks and Reserves and other possible tourist attractions (Minsk and Brest). It could also form part of a package including nature areas in neighboring countries (e.g. Poland, Lithuania, Ukraine)
- Cost of living. Belarus is generally cheap for travel and food. Hotels, however, operate differential pricing policies whereby CIS visitors pay roughly 2 times more than Belarusians and other foreigners can pay between 3 and 5 times as much. It should be noted that cost does not give Belarus a competitive advantage in relation to its neighbors.

¹³ 'A leading Russian scientist has claimed that the sarcophagus entombing Chernobyl's broken nuclear reactor is dangerously degraded and he warned that its collapse could cause a catastrophe on the same scale as the original accident almost 20 years ago.' – report in the Independent newspaper 27 April 2005

- Seasonality? This is an important factor. The tourist season is likely to be short because of the weather and bird migration patterns. The season could last from April to September although discussions with previous visitors suggest the peak summer months will be less attractive than May/June. International tourism is likely to exhibit marked seasonality while domestic patterns may show less variation over the summer months. Ecotourist providers will need to be prepared for catering for varying numbers of tourists.

Elements of an Ecotourism Strategy

Further necessary research

The increasing interest in nature tourism provides the Polesie region with the opportunity to target new niche markets given its array of natural attractions. In order to attract more tourists, however, it is important to know more about the demographic characteristics of current and potential tourists and the trip characteristics and service quality of comparable tourist developments elsewhere which have been successful. More information on the patterns, profiles and interests of existing visitors is needed to inform marketing, training and promotional strategies and guide project priorities. Visitor surveys for both foreign and domestic visitors should be conducted in 2005.

Planning

Prevailing hospitality conditions and service delivery standards are inadequate partly because knowledge about tourism is low and ecotourism has never been actively promoted. It will take time to establish an integrated, high quality product. The planning phase should measure to overcome the shortcomings already identified, build on the findings of the visitor survey and develop a clear programme of work. It will involve further research on which of the natural and cultural resources identified by the field study team, can best be utilized for tourism and what information and promotional mechanisms presently exist in the area. This will establish what existing regional resources can be drawn upon for future development. The planning phase should ensure the programme is compatible with both the abilities and expectations of the local communities. A further necessity at the planning stage is to liaise with the Mid Pripjat Reserve Manager to ensure the strategy is consistent with conservation goals. The goal will be defining a clear programme of work which will ensure that the quality of services and tourist developments initiated meet the needs, and exceed the expectations of the target visitors.

Developing the product

The ecotourism model will be based on developing a local identity for the mid Pripjat region which can be branded and promoted. Currently, virtually the only ecotourists are those on package tours to the National Park where the facilities are of a good standard and some excursions out of the Park are arranged. We believe there is scope to market the location and develop birding or ecological routes and or nature/cultural trips through the region which will link up a number of sites of interest and take advantage of the available attractions. The routes, at a later date, can be integrated into other initiatives (Poland's White Stork route or Belarus' rural tourism sites). Rather than develop a project for the entire project region, we recommend focusing on the four districts which incorporate the Mid Pripjat Reserve. One key element of the pilot project will be to establish a 'one-stop shop' for prospective visitors to the Region. This would, in essence, be a branded, one person travel agency ("Nature Polesie") and would liaise with other operators for pre-paid tours and be responsible for developing customized itineraries for individual travelers. This will necessarily involve close liaison with private and state sector enterprises.

The pilot project will be to develop viable community-based ecotourism projects and help develop some state sector facilities, within four selected districts in the Mid Pripjat region. The pilot will form the basis for expansion of ecotourism to the region more broadly. A second objective should therefore be to develop guidelines incorporating the training methodology and promotional strategy that can be replicated throughout the project region. Two distinguishing features of the proposed strategy are that:

- The project will center on private sector initiatives but will involve working with and supporting state enterprises given their pervasive presence in the project region.
- The strategy will be based around a number of organizational types and not centered on a one particular village or community.

Key supply side measures in support of strategy

Will focus on private and state sector participants in tourist development:

- For community enterprises and individuals, capacity building measures to improve customer service and provide know how for potential small-scale enterprises from guesthouses, boat owners to craft businesses, are critical. The project will need to promote more consumer oriented and entrepreneurial thinking and improve service delivery standards of existing facilities. Capacity building will involve training through workshops.
- In support of capacity building measures, we propose a small grants or loans facility to part fund the upgrade of village accommodation or the establishment of small-scale initiatives, such as guide services or craft production.
- For state enterprises, some project co-financing is proposed to upgrade and refurbish state owned tourist facilities. The region has a number of state owned facilities, such as cruise vessels, steamboats, forest camps and rural cottages that could be improved and utilized as part of the pilot project. We propose developing partnerships with some local authorities that can satisfactorily demonstrate a genuine commitment to the project, to joint fund work to upgrade facilities. Support in tourist initiatives that state enterprises have expressed genuine enthusiasm about promoting could provide further opportunities for promoting the overall conservation goals of the project. An indicative list of some possibilities for the Pinsk region is detailed in Appendix 4.
- Liaising with tour operators, state bodies, local communities and other stakeholders to gain widespread support for the initiative. We envisage the pilot project comprising a partnership between local communities and individuals, private tourist businesses, state enterprises and NGOs.

Key demand side measures

The marketing strategy will be guided by the visitor surveys, which should help establish the relative weight to be given to domestic and international visitors. Marketing will entail the development of a web site and Internet resources, the production of promotional material, guidebooks and advertising. It will establish linkages with other projects, and promotion through national and international tourism campaigns and events. The marketing could involve a certification scheme for accommodation and facilities compatible with other initiatives (Belarus' agro-tourism initiative) and some form of branding for the locality. It will also address communication issues and local information resources to facilitate travel and tours by more independent tourists.

Recommended Activities

1. Recruit full time ecotourism officer for duration of the project. This post would most appropriately be based in Minsk and could be located within an NGO (APB or Agro-Tourism) or conceivably an existing tourist organization. The officer will oversee the programme of work suggested by these activities. Given the scale of work, allowance should also be made for administrative support.
2. Conduct visitor surveys and further market research – Surveys can be both site based, through contact with previous visitors and at other nature attractions. Questions will cover, where do most visitors come from -what attracts them to a destination – and, for visitors elsewhere, what are their motivations and expectations.
3. Plan and co-ordinate capacity building workshops and guide training programmes. Solicit interest from local communities, in pilot project region through the local media and existing project contacts.

4. Engage with the Ministry of Sport and Tourism and other relevant Ministries to promote a strategic, supportive approach to the promotion and regulation of ecotourism and disseminate sound principles of ecotourism.
5. Work with local authorities, collective farms and forestry enterprises that may wish to provide tourism services and other national and international agencies in this field. Seek mutually beneficial collaborative opportunities.
6. Develop the necessary support infrastructure at the Mid-Pripyat Reserve commensurate with the agreed visitor limits and in line with appropriate attractions (visitor center/educational facilities/ information boards etc)
7. Develop links with selected tour operators and travel agents both domestically and internationally. These will be a key outlet for promoting the project and a key source of visitors.
8. Develop website for the pilot project as a marketing tool and as a 'one stop shop' for potential visitors to the region. The website can be linked to other marketing outlets such as national tourist board promotions and tour operator websites.
9. Workshops for local participants expressing an interest in ecotourism. Topics to consider for coverage at local workshops will include:
 - Handling visitors, customer care and hospitality skills;
 - Marketing and communication;
 - Environmental issues
 - Working with tourist businesses and commercial operators;
 - Relevant legal and financial issues;
 - Health and safety issues,
 - Advice on communications and possibly basic language training.

Much of the capacity building will be through on-going contact between the project officer and other specialists and regional stakeholders.
10. Organize guide training. This could be through short courses arranged with Reserve staff and other regional experts with the support of NGOs.
11. Organize a seminar and presentation on ecotourism in the Polesie region for the domestic tourist industry and other stakeholders.
12. Organize a study trip to a comparable developed ecotourism operation for the most engaged local stakeholders. This should be an important and effective way of generating ideas, and illustrating visitor care and service quality issues.
13. Priorities and systematically plan the development of the joint venture initiatives agreed with state enterprises.
14. Establish small grants or soft loan facility to improve local privately owned facilities. The funding of a small grants facility can be on the basis of matching cash or in-kind co-funding. Financing many small-scale initiatives, in the absence of alternative capital sources, should additionally encourage private enterprise and investment. The tourist officer should work with individuals in the community to develop viable, small scale, guesthouses, café tearoom or craft enterprises for consideration.
15. Organize a promotional visit for selected overseas agents and operators. This should include potential allies who know the country or have specialist interests and will therefore be supportive. (International travelers cannot visit destinations before the decision to pay for a trip and word of mouth and advice from tourism experts plays a key role in decisions). It will also provide an opportunity to test the market and be the first opportunity of acquainting some of the host participants with the experience of handling guests. An important element output of the visit will be the feedback received.
16. The tourism officer will need to work with relevant stakeholders and marketing specialists to develop an integrated marketing and branding strategy for the mid-Pripyat region and work with conservation and rural tourism specialists to identify and develop birding and hiking routes and bridleways.

Appendices

Appendix 1	Indicative Budget
Appendix 2	The Government and State attitudes to Tourism
Appendix 3	The pilot project region
Appendix 4	Database of contacts in the pilot region
Appendix 5	Proposals made by Local Authorities for tourism developments
Appendix 6	Study Visit itinerary

Appendix 1

Indicative budget for the ecotourism development component (US\$)

Activity	GEF	Co- Financing	Total
1.1 Planning			
Conduct visitor surveys and further market research	5,000		5,000
1.2. Infrastructure			
1.2.1. Development infrastructure with local authorities	60,000	140,000	200,000
1.2.2. Small Grant Program for local community developments	80,000	-	80,000
1.2.3. Site development at Mid-Pripyat Reserve	8,000		8,000
1.3. Raising capacity building of stakeholders in the region			
1.3.1. Workshops for local stakeholders (6 seminars).	16,000	5,000	21,000
1.3.2. Short courses for training guides	5,000		5,000
1.3.2. Study visit to Poland (Bebza National Park, 12 people, 4 days)	7,500	-	7,500
1.4. Development of product and promotion of ecotourism			
1.4.1. PR, information materials and WEB-site	20,000	8,000	28,000
1.4.2. Presentation for journalists and tourism agencies	5,000	-	5,000
1.4.3. Visit from overseas industry specialists	5,000		5,000
1.5. Recruit specialist in Ecotourism development			
1.5.1. Fees (60 month)	36,000	-	36,000
1.5.2. Traveling costs (60 months)	10,000	-	10,000
1.5.3. Administrative support to specialist	10,000		10,000
TOTAL:	267,050	153,000	420,500

Appendix 2

The Government and State attitudes to Tourism

Belarus is conducting what it describes as an evolutionary reform of the economy with the active participation of the state in the creation of a market infrastructure. The process to date has been somewhat slow and a distinctive feature of the Belarusian economy remains the high degree of state involvement in all sectors of the economy. The difficult political environment and this continued strong state involvement is cited as factors limiting foreign investment private enterprise in the service sector. Government pronouncements have, however, generally been supportive of tourism and, in April 2005, Belarus became a full member of the World Tourism Organization. A total of 678 companies have government licenses to carry out tourist business. It is estimated that less than 10% of agents deal with foreign tourists. There is no system for international marketing or promotion and there has been little engagement with foreign companies and institutions.

Tourism Legislation There is a Law on tourism (1999 № 326-3), which explicitly recognizes environmental tourism. The legislation covers the licensing of travel operator and travel agent activities, the certification of tourist products and the establishment of rules of entrance, departure and stay in the territory of the Republic of Belarus. Data about travel operators and travel agents that have received licenses for implementation of tourist activities are entered on a State Roll of Travel Operators and Travel Agents. This legislation is currently under revision, which is due to be finalized in 2005. The five National Parks are seen as the basis for developing ecotourism further.

There is also a national program of tourism development for 2006-2010, which the Ministry of Sport and Tourism is renewing for the period 2006-2010. The program covers tourist infrastructure development projects, and the development of tourist routes in Belarus and northeastern Europe. It is also planned to introduce new license requirements for travel agencies and operators – apparently because of a low level of customer satisfaction. In 2003, a presidential decree, 'On State Aid for Belarus Tourism,' was also issued.

As with any service sector, tourism activity is subject to an array of indirect legislation from tax and insurance to consumer rights legislation. A recent report has highlighted some of the deficiencies, notably in the areas of licensing tourist enterprises and taxation, which are deemed to hinder tourist development.¹⁴ The 2005 review is an opportunity to ensure that the legislation in place is supportive of ecotourism development.

Recent comments on tourism in Belarus. Sports and Tourism Minister Yury Sivakov told a commission of the lower chamber of the Belarusian parliament in Feb '05 that the Government plans to reorganize the tourist sector. This will involve having a national tour operator, which will 'determine market participants and form the market'. He also said there was a need for an insurance fund because 'We are getting many complaints now'.

The ministry plans to create a board of directors of tourist organizations jointly with the Presidential Property Management Department. "We also need to develop inbound tourism, as only 10% of all travel agencies deal with this kind of tourism today," Sivakov said.

At a sitting of the Public Council on Tourism, the Sport and Tourism Minister Yuri Sivakov said the essence of the state tourism policy is systematic cooperation of the state, public bodies, and business entities for the development and implementation of various methods and mechanisms of tourist development. (<http://belembassy.org/uk/CSwebsite/news/tourism2005.htm>)

Relevant National authorities

¹⁴ Assessment of Capacity Building needs for Biodiversity. Participation in the Clearing-House mechanism of the UN convention on Biological Diversity. UNEP, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment Protection of Belarus. Minsk 2004 (page 81)

Successful tourism will also depend in part on the activities of an array of government departments and organizations at the national, regional and district level. Some of the key ones include.

The Ministry of Sport and Tourism is responsible for implementing state policy in relation to tourism and the general regulation and administration of the sector. There is a director of the Tourism Administration who is currently Cheslav Shulga.

Forests. The state agency supervising implementation of forestry policy is *Ministry of Forestry*, which is working locally through a network of forest enterprises. They own houses and a number of facilities such as summer camps.

Agriculture. *The Ministry of Agriculture* supervises agricultural activities in the country. It has a controlling power over the local state *collective farms*, and interacts with *State Belmeliovodkhoz Concern* that is in charge of land amelioration activities which, in its turn, has supervising authority over *local amelioration companies* in charge of maintenance and servicing of drainage facilities.

Environment. The *National Assembly* determines major aspects of state environmental policy and adopts the environmental legislation. The *President* issues decrees and orders for the implementation of laws, including those relevant to environment and natural resources. The *Council of Ministers* is the central body of control and has executive powers to implement state environmental policy, coordinate activities of Ministries and of other national bodies of state control in the field of rational use of natural resources and environmental protection.

Under the supervision of the Council of Ministers, the *Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection (MNREP)*, working through its central office, regional committees on environment and district environmental inspections, insures on-the-ground implementation of environmental policy. The strategic role of the Ministry is to enable creation of a system of environmental legislation by lobbying for adoption of environmental laws and by mainstreaming environmental considerations in the various sectoral laws regulating all spheres of state activity.

Appendix 3

The Pilot Project Region

Belarus is divided into **6 regions (oblasts)** - Brest, Vitebsk, Gomel, Grodno, Mogilev, and Minsk which are subdivided into **118 districts (rayons)**. The focus of the pilot project is on the Middle Pripyat Floodplain located in the Brest Region (Stolin, Luninets, Pinsk Districts) and the Gomel Region (Zhitkovichi District) an area of around 90,447 ha. The site is very important for its primeval floodplain forests and meadows. Oak and black alder forests bearing typical Polesian flora and fauna dominate. The floodplain meadows of Mid-Pripyat are typical features of Polesian area. The site still retains a large share of Europe's remaining fen mires and features a number of picturesque lakes and oxbows, and the impressive channel of the Pripyat itself.

Current accommodation facilities in Pinsk, the major town within the pilot area, include 4 hotels with the total capacity up to 500 places. Overall, the project area currently has 800 hotel places spread amongst Stolin, Luninets, Zhitkovichi and Veresnitsa (near Turov). The hotels are generally two-star, soviet style and state run. Private hotels in Pinsk and in the village of Veresnitsa are better quality. Forest Authorities have guesthouses, generally 1 or 2 per forestry or fishery unit. These houses commonly cater for up to eight persons. There are about 20 food outlets of varying quality in Pinsk, Stolin, Luninets, Zhitkovichi, and Turov. 4 are privately owned. The Pinsk District has 13 tourism firms though only 1 focuses on foreign tourists. These existing facilities, taken together, can form the basis for progressive development but the service quality and delivery standards will need to be improved as part of the capacity building process.

There are a number of other facilities that could be utilized by the tourist sector. These include two steam boats (moored in Pinsk and Mikashevichi) that can be used on the Pripyat River, and three large cruise boats, all, however, in need of repair. These could be used for one-day cruises or longer trips. Most forestry enterprises have horses and could therefore offer horse riding excursions. All lakes located within the project area have both motor and rowing boats (owned by forestry and fishery enterprises). Forestry enterprises also have a number of watchtowers and hides for wildlife watching. There are a number of traditional houses, both privately and state owned which, if upgraded, could prove very attractive for tourists.

The region has a number of supplementary attractions, those of the Pinsk and Stolin districts are listed in the table below.

Attractions of the Pinsk District

	Location	Feature	Year constructed
1	Village of Albrekhtov	Skirmunts' Estate	19 th century
2	Village of Bizherevichi	Ordy Estate Park	19 th century
3	Village of Borki	Church	19 th century
4	Village of Beriozovichi	Church of Holy Virgin Protection (wooden)	1878
5	Village of Berduny	Kionovskis' Estate Park	19 th century
6	Village of Ostrov	Church of Holy Communion	1720
7	Village of Vuivichi	St. Elias Church	1788
8	Vydarka	Park	19 th century
9	Village of Vyzhlovichi	Hrzanowskis' Estate Park	19 th century
10	Village of Vylazy	Church of Birth of Holy Virgin	1787
11	Village of Veliatichi	Skirmunts' Estate Park	19 th century
12	Village of Veliatichi	Church of Birth of Holy Virgin	1826
13	Village of Gorodishche	Benedictine Monastery	1774
14	Village of Gorodishche	St. Ann Cathedral	1774
15	Village of Dobroslavka	Holy Trinity Church	1758

16	Gorodishche	St. Nicholas Church	1874
17	Village of Duboi	Kuzhanetsky's Estate Park (silver fir)	18 th century
18	Village of Gorodishche	Chapel	18 th century
19	Village of Gorodishche	Church of Birth of Holy Virgin	1811
20	Village of Zhabchitsy	St. Praskovia Church	1788
21	Village of Zhidche	St. Praskovia Church	19 th century
22	Village of Zhitnovichi	Rydewskis' Estate Park	19 th century
23	Village of Zapolie	Pleterovs' Estate Park	1920
24	Village of Kolby	Chapel	19 th century
25	Village of Kamen	Jewish Cemetery	19 th century
26	Village of Kamen	Angel Michael Church	1779
27	Village of Kashevichi	Church	19 th century
28	Village of Kupyatichi	St. Nicholas Church	1867
	Village of Logishin	Estate of Albrecht Radzivil, Chancellor of the Great Principality of Lithuania	1643
29	Township of Logishin	St. Peter and Paul Cathedral (icon of the Holy Virgin of Logishin, Queen of Polesie)	1907
30	Gorodishche	Jewish Cemetery	19 th century
31	Gorodishche	Holy Trinity Church	19 th century
32	Village of Lemeshevichi	Church of Birth of Holy Virgin	1855
33	Village of Lasitsk	Chapel (wooden)	19 th century
34	Village of Lyshcha	Holy Dormition Monastery (wooden)	11 th century
35	Village of Mestkovichi	Holy Trinity Church	1875
36	Village of Mesyatchi	St. Praskovia Church	1794
37	Village of Nevel	Holy Cross Church (wooden)	1875
38	Village of Novy Dvoretz	Anihimowskis' Estate Park	19 th century
39	Village of Pinkovichi	Church of Holy Virgin Protection (wooden)	1830
40	Village of Pogost Zagorodsky	Synagogue	19 th century
41	Village of Pogost Zagorodsky	Temple of St. Cyril and Methodius	19 th century
42	Village of Parokhonsk	Church of Birth of Holy Virgin	1888
43	Village of Pare	St. Nicholas Chapel	1902
44	Village of Porechie	Old Christian cemetery	
45	Village of Porechie	Skirmunts' Estate Park	19 th century
46	Village of Porechie	Church of Birth of Holy Virgin	1912
47	Village of Porechie	Cathedral	1907
48	Village of Porechie	Skirmunts' Palace	19 th century
49	Village of Pochapov	Palkozichi-Svezhinskis' Estate Park	19 th century
50	Polozovshchina	Wooden church	17 th century
51	Village of Osnezhitsy	Memorial column	18 th century
52	Village of Okhovo	Holy Cross Church	1758
53	Village of Soshno	Stables	Early 20 th century
54	Village of Soshno	Benedictine Church	17 th century
55	Village of Stavok	Church of Ascension of Christ	1853
56	Village of Stoshany	Korsaks' Palace and Part Estate	19 th century
	Telkehany	Hetman Oginskis' Palace and faience workhouse	1779
57	Village of Kholozhin	Korsaks' Palace and Part Estate	19 th century
58	Village of Khoyno	Holy Resurrection Church	1872
59	Village of Cherneievichi	Skirmunts' Estate Park	19 th century

Overall, the Pinsk District has 225 historical, architectural and cultural monuments (according to data of the District Executive Committee)

Nature reserves and other sites:

- Special reserve “Prostyr”
- Special reserve “Yaselda River Lower Reaches”
- Special reserve “Tyrvovichi”
- Park “Porechie”
- Silver fir plantations near the Village of Duboi

Festivals and Feast days

- Annually - Autumn Fair
- Poetry and arts festivals associated with literary figures “A. Blok, E. Yanishtchits, Ya. Kolas
- Religious festivals include Christmas, Shchodryk, Easter, Whit Sunday, St. John’s Day.
- Polesie Khorovod” (traditional dance), once every 2 years
- Pinsk City day, the first Sunday in October
- Liberation Day, Pinsk, 14 July
- Jewish St. Bobol festival, 16 May

Craft museums and houses:

- House of folklore, Vyzhlovichi
- House of craft, Osnezhitsy
- House of people’s crafts, Kolodeievichi
- Museum, Zhabchitsy
- Museum of the Russian poet A. Blok, Lopatino,
- Museum of the Belarusian Poetess E. Yanishchits Porechie,
- Museum of the Belarusian writer Yakub Kolas Pinkovichi,
- Museum “Household of Polesie dwellers of the 19th century”, Porechie,
- Museum of history of collective farms in the Pinsk District, OJSC “Osnezhitskoie”.

Village crafts and contacts:

- Weaving and embroidery: Merchitsky Rural Council, Okhovsky Rural Council, Gorodischensky Rural Council, Duboisky Rural Council;
- Wood carving: Okhovsky Rural Council, Gorodischensky Rural Council;
- Beekeeping: village of Tobulki;
- Wicker craft: Duboisky Rural Council
- Potter trade is still practiced in the villages of Gorodnya, Pogost and Stavok.

Scholars of local legends:

- GULEVICH Nadezhda Vasilievna, Duboisky Rural Council, phone 305935
- ZHOGALSKAYA Raisa Gerasimovna, Duboisky Rural Council, phone 305935

Guides:

- DUBROVSKY Aleksey Nikolayevich, Pinsk, phone 334053

Local activists in environmental issues:

- SIDORUK Antonina Pavlovna, Porechsky Rural Executive Committee, phone 397435
- RYZHKO Grigori Nikolaievich, Porechsky Rural Executive Committee, phone 397435
- CHASTOV Gennady Aleksandrovich, Novodvorsky Rural Council, phone 399135
- School Director, Kalaurovichsky Rural Council, phone 396335
- KACHANOSVKY Nikolay Nikolayevich, Kochanovichi (parents)

Appendix 4

Database of contacts in the pilot project region

(Pinsk, Stolin Districts)

1	SASHKO Viacheslav Vasilievich	Chairperson, Pinsk District Executive Committee	+375 165 353920; fax 350643
2	KURGUN Viacheslav Ivanovich	Manager, Department on Physical Culture, Sport and Tourism	+375 165 350578
3	KIEVETS Ivan Mikhailovich	Director, Republican Unitary Operation and Construction Enterprise “Dnepr-Bug Waterway”	+375 165 353066, fax 351674,
4	GOROSHKO Aleksandr Vasilievich	Manager, City District Inspection of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection	phone/fax +375 165 351808
5	KHVAGINA Tatiana Arkadiievna	Manager, Tourism Department of OJSC “Pripyat” Hotel Facilities	+375 165 359766, fax 359630, e-mail: pripat2004@tut.by
6	DURNOPEYKO Yefim Maratovich	Director, Tourism Firm “Roza Vetrov” Ltd.	+375 165
7	LAZYUK Svetlana Mikhailovna	Deputy Director, Museum of Belarusian Polesie	+375 165 354986
8	TOLOMAY Yevgeni Vladimirovich	Commercial Director, Restaurant “Pinskaia Shliakhta”	+375 165 351659, 6370343
9	LEMESHEVSKY Viktor Matveievich	General Director, “Belinvestorg” Ltd., “First Battery Company”	
10	DUBNOVITSKY Yuri	Specialist on ancient music instruments	+375 165 324768
11	CHASTOV Gennadi Aleksandrovich	Director, Fishery Cooperative “Polesie”	+375 165 387929
12	NAVNYKO Vladimir Vladimirovich	Kalaurovichsky Rural Council	+375 165 396335
13	FABISHEVSKAYA Galina Vasilievna	Duboisky Rural Council	+375 165 305935
14	YORSH Yakov Nikolaievich	Novodvorsky Rural Council	+375 165399135
15	GRUSHEVSKAYA Svetlana Dmitrievna	Gorodishchensky Rural Executive Committee	+375 165 385635
16	BELOVEZHA Maria Mikhailovna	Okhovsky Rural Executive Committee	+375 165 383535
17	MOYSEYANCHIK Aleksandr Vladimirovich	Lopatiksky Rural Executive Committee	+375 165 394935
18	PISKUN Anna Ivanovna	Merchitsky Rural Council	+375 165 396435
19	VIRKOVSKY Mikhail Andreievich	Porechsky Rural Executive Committee	+375 165 397435
20	MELYAKH Yuri Vasiliyevich	Chief Forestry Administration “Pinsk District Forestry”	+375 165 323506
21	LINKEVICH A.V.	Chief Forestry Administration “Telekhany District Forestry”	+375 165 3119...
22	KUKHARCHUK A.V.	Union of Entrepreneurs, Pinsk District, Director of “Svitiaz” Ltd.	+375 165
23	SAVITSKAYA Liyubov	Manager, Waterworks Facility	+375 165 397919

	Adamovna	“Kachanovichi”	397989
24	RUSAK L.A.	ЧПК “Okhovo”	+375 165 383532
25	ANDRIEVICH Aleksandr Leontievich	ЧПК “Valishche”	+375 165 385132
26	BELOUS Viktor Grigorievich	ЧПК “Logishin”	+375 165 381141

Stolin District (rayon)

1	Aleksey Alekseevich	Chairperson, District Executive Committee	+375 1655 24242
2	PROTOSOVITSKY Grigory Vasilievich		+375 1655 fax 21441
3	LITVINKO Aleksandr Leontievich	Acting Manager, City District Inspection of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection	+375 1655 22244
4	LEONOVETS Nikolay Vasilievich	Chief Forest Manager, District Forestry Administration	+375 1655 23417
5	MASLYAKEVICH Aleksandr Stakheievich	Chief Game Warden, District Forestry Administration 28618	+375 1655 24134
6	PYSHNYAK Elena Danilovna	Berezhnovsky Rural Council	+375 1655 31235
7	LICHEVSKY Nikolay Vasilievich	Gorodniatsky Rural Council	+375 1655 66235
8	SHPAKEVICH Miron Petrovich	Remelsky Rural Council	+375 1655 93235
9	ADAMOVICH Olga Stepanovna	Mankovichsky Rural Executive Committee	+375 1655 23114
10	BYBA Nikolay Konstantinovich	Olshansky Rural Council	+375 1655 56235
11	SAKHARCHUK Anna Petrovna	Olshansky Rural Council	+375 1655 56235
12	KURGAN Igor Nikolaievich	Rechitsa Executive committee	+375 1655 25135
13	VERENICH Vasily Andreievich	Plotnitsky Rural Executive Committee	+375 1655 43235
14	KLIMOVICH Nikolay Fiodorovich	Fedorsky Rural Council	+375 1655 70235
15	GUTSKO Aleksey Vladimirovich	Glinkovsky Rural Executive Committee	+375 1655 30235
16	TKACH Aleksandr Aleksandrovich	Khoromsky Rural Executive Committee	+375 1655 58230
17	PASHKEVICH Svetlana Vasilievna	Velemichsky Rural Executive Committee	+375 1655 90235
18	KOLEDA Anatoly Aleksandrovich	Rubelsky Rural Executive Committee	+375 1655 38235
19	YASNYUK Vasili Stanislavovich	Chief Specialist of the Executive Committee on Chernobyl Accident	+375 1655 23131
20	NESTEROVICH Mikhail Fillipovich	Deputy Chairperson, Executive Committee	+375 1655 24242
21	POTORSKY Vitali Aleksandrovich	Director, Farming Unit	+375 1655 56235

Appendix 5

Proposals made by local authorities in the Pinsk District for tourism developments which could potentially be joint funded

Nos.	Activities	Period	Costs Total (US\$)	Funding	
				Own funds	GEF
1	Arrangement of piers at the Dnepr-Bug Waterway (3), organization of the bank strip	2006 – 2010	12,600	Republican Unitary Operation and Construction Enterprise “Dnepr-Bug Waterway”	4,200
2	Repair of houses (2) and organization of the area “Kachanovichi”	2006 – 2007	14,100	Republican Unitary Operation and Construction Enterprise “Dnepr-Bug Waterway”	4,700
3	Construction and equipment of saunas at waterworks facilities No. 11 “Kachanovichi”, No. 12 “Stakhovo”, No. 5 “Lyakhovichi”, No. 9 “Novosady”	2 – 3 quarters, 2005	3,300	Republican Unitary Operation and Construction Enterprise “Dnepr-Bug Waterway”	1,100
4	Construction of the navigation lock on the transboundary section of the Bug River	2006 – 2008	3000,000	National programme	
5	Making and installation of information boards in approach roads to the reserve (4), and trails marking (3)	2006 – 2007	4,500	Pinsk District and City Inspection	1,500
6	Art arrangement of environmental exhibition and update of exhibits for the Museum of Belarusian Polesie	2005 – 2007	12,000	Pinsk District and City Inspection	4,000
7	Making and arrangement of watch towers (3), and boards (2)	2006 – 2008	6,900	Pinsk District Forestry Administration	2,300
8	Arrangement of recreational sites for tourists (10)	2006 – 2010	9,900	Pinsk District Forestry Administration	3,300
9	Repair and arrangement of the fishers’ house (1) and purchase of boats (4)	2006 2007	2,400 5,100	Fishery management unit “Polesie”	800 1,700
10	Purchase of new tourist equipment for organization of its rental to tourists (village of Stavok)	2006 – 2010	12300	Pinsk District Executive Committee	4100
10	Organization of facilities for hire of horses, purchase of equipment and training	2006 – 2007	9,900	СІІК “Okhovo”	3,300
12	Organization of the tourism information centre	2006 – 2010	9,000	OJSC “Pripyat” Hotel Facilities	3,000
	Total:		102,000		34,000

Appendix 6

Study visit to Polesie Region (April, 4th-7th 2005)

The Study Team comprised:

Natallia Parechina, GEF-UNDP project expert, APB.

Paul Morling, Economist, RSPB.

Sergey Doroshko, GEF-UNDP project expert, Turov district.

April, 4th

1. Meeting with Director, Republican Unitary Operation and Construction Enterprise “Dnepr-Bug Waterway” KIEVETS Ivan Mikhailovich
2. Meeting with Director, Tourism Firm “Roza Vetrov” Ltd. DURNOPEYKO Yefim Maratovich
3. Dinner in private restaurant “Pinskaia Shliakhta”
4. Accommodation in the hotel “Volna”

April, 5th

1. Meeting with Alexey Dubrovsky (nature guide), we visited next villages: Kuradovo, Ploshevo, Kudrichi
2. Excursion and meeting with Manager of Waterworks Facility “Kachanovichi” SAVITSKAYA Liyubov Adamovna, departure to Luninets
3. Meeting with Luninets Vicedepute District Executive Committee Gopko Vladimir Ivanovich, Manager of Department on Physical Culture, Sport and Tourism Klevgic Ivan Nikolaevich, visit to summer camp.
4. Meeting with Chief Forest Manager, District Forestry Administration Torchik Vyacheslav Ivanovich, dinner and accommodation in the forest house on the Pripyat river (with Lars, Nicola and other).

April, 6th

1. Departure to Mikashevichi river port, excursion on the river ship, dinner in small café, excursion on the State Enterprise “Granit”
2. Departure to Turov, excursion to the ethnographic Museum, accommodation in the hotel “Veresnitsa”

April, 7th

1. Excursion to the Museum of National Park “Pripyatsky”
2. Boat trip on the “Turovskiy meadow” and bird watching near the Turov
3. Departure to Minsk

PART VII: COMPOSITION OF THE NATIONAL COMMISSION ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

(In no priority order except first 6 persons)

Vladimir Drazhin, Deputy Prime Minister of the Republic of Belarus, Head of the Commission
Nikolai Zaichenko, First Deputy Minister of Economy, Deputy Head of the Commission
Vasily Podoliako, First Deputy Minister of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection, **GEF Political and Operational Focal Point**, Deputy Head of the Commission
Alexander Sytchiiov, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Deputy Head of the Commission
Alexei Raiman, First Secretary of the Department for Humanitarian, Environmental, and Scientific Cooperation, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Secretary of the Commission
Alexander Ratchevski, Head of International Department, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection, Secretary of the Commission
Anatoly Bogdanovich, Deputy Director of the Institute of Economic Studies under the Ministry of Economy
Boris Ivanov, Deputy Minister of Education
Igor Katchanovski, Head of Department for Environment and Forestry of the Agro-Industrial Sector, Council of Ministers of Belarus
Valeri Kliuchenovich, Deputy Minister of Health
Lioudmila Lozlovskaja, Head of Economic Geography Chair, Belarusian State University
Elena Kolos, First Deputy Minister of Labor and Social Welfare
Vladimir Korduba, Vice-President of State Energy Concern
Alexander Kurlyko, Deputy Minister of Finance
Viktor Melnikov, Head of Logistics Department, Ministry of Internal Affairs
Piotr Nikitenko, Director of Economic Institute of the National Academy of Sciences
Stanislav Nitchkasov, First Deputy Minister of Architecture and Construction
Valery Parkhots, Head of Economic Department, Minister of Defense
Vladimir Samosiuk, Head of Investment and Constructions Department, Minister of Agriculture and Foodstuffs
Nikolai Smirnov, Chief Advisor, Department of International Cooperation, Council of Ministers of Belarus
Igor Tushinski, Head of Department on Economic, Financial and Tax Law, Ministry of Justice
Vladimir Ulasen, Deputy Minister of Transport and Communications
Nikolai Ushkevich, Deputy Minister of Forestry of Belarus

PART VIII. RESOLUTION AND ACTION PLAN OF THE SECOND INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON CONSERVATION OF FLOODPLAINS AND FEN MIRES OF THE BELARUSIAN POLESIE

**Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection of the Republic of Belarus
United Nations Office in Belarus
National Academy of Sciences of Belarus
Darwin Initiative for the Survival of Species (UK)
Michael Otto Foundation for Environmental Protection (Germany)
Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (UK)
APB-BirdLife Belarus**

**RESOLUTION
of the
Second International Conference on the Ecology and
Conservation of Floodplains and Lowland Mires in the Polesie Region**

May 22-24, 2002

Minsk, Belarus

The Second International Conference on the Ecology and Conservation of Floodplains and Lowland Mires in the Polesie region was held in Minsk on May 23-24, 2002, with participation of skilled experts and representatives of ministries and agencies, international conservation organizations and foundations who came together to review the action plan for further activities on conservation and sustainable use of the region's natural resources.

The Conference participants emphasize the uniqueness of Polesie's intact mires and floodplain ecosystems, which are crucial for the conservation of the global and European natural heritage. The conservation of floodplains and mires in Polesie shall be considered a significant contribution to the sustainable development of Europe.

The Conference participants have highly appreciated the progress demonstrated by Belarus and Ukraine in the implementation of the final document of the First International Conference on the Ecology and Conservation of Floodplains and Lowland Mires in the Polesie region.

The Conference participants have looked into the current status of Polesie environment, considered its major issues and defined priority objectives for ensuring conservation and sustainable use of the region's unique natural resources

Realizing the fact that the majority of present problems in Polesie stem from adverse hydrological changes, the Conference participants have agreed that the adjustment of the basin-based water management system for Pripyat and the environmental assessment of all natural wetlands and drainage facilities shall be given top priority in conservation and sustainable use of the region's natural resources.

Large-scale drainage campaigns and other economic activities in the Polesie region cause accelerated peatlands degradation and intensified threats to the biodiversity. Therefore, a National Action Plan to Combat Land Degradation as well as rehabilitation of parts of anthropogenically disturbed peatlands shall be put high on the conservation agenda.

Acknowledging the importance of Polesie forests for biodiversity conservation, the Conference participants attach utmost priority to their evaluation and monitoring, and adoption of environmentally compatible forestry techniques and methods that are listed in the Action Plan of the present Resolution.

Expressing support for the activities of Belarus, Ukraine and Poland on the preservation of natural ecosystems of the Polesie region, the conference participants recommend the establishment of international transboundary protected areas.

The Conference participants view an inventory of the existing and potential protected areas is crucial for the conservation of the unique natural complexes of Polesie. Such an inventory will then form a basis for a Scheme of Efficient Distribution of Nature Protected Areas for 2006-2012. The identification of potential protected areas shall to be guided by the results of the search for Ramsar sites and Important Bird Areas.

The Conference participants consider management planning and implementation an effective means of conservation and sustainable use of protected areas. The implementation of the first management plans for key fen mires in the Polesie region is to be a top objective, with potential for further replication on other protected sites.

Future development plans for Polesie shall take into account both socio-economic and environmental issues in the region.

Recalling the international importance of the Polesie region and the urgent need to elaborate scientifically grounded management plans for protected areas, the Conference participants call for extending and intensifying research into the status and evolution of vegetation and landscape complexes, flora and fauna of the mire and floodplain ecosystems.

Organization and development of ecotourism infrastructure in Polesie can play a key role in nature conservation. Ecotourism can provide funding in support of conservation organizations and nature protection in Polesie.

Nature conservation organizations acknowledge the importance of national efforts and initiatives in Belarus, Ukraine and Poland toward nature conservation in the Polesie region; a substantial part of the remaining fen mires and parts of the floodplains have been designated as protected areas. The Second International Conference on the Ecology and Conservation of Floodplains and Lowland Mires in the Polesie Region, held in Belarus, is an example of such initiatives that contribute toward the conservation of nature in Europe.

Convinced that the conservation efforts by the countries of the Polesie region should be supported by international co-operation, the Conference participants appeal to international conservation agencies for assistance in securing international support, particularly financial, for the implementation of the attached conservation plan for Polesie fen mires and floodplains.

The Conference participants recommend that a steering group be set up consisting of representatives of governmental and nongovernmental organizations, including international ones, with a view to decide on future conservation activities in the region. A number of co-ordination committees in specific subject areas should also be set up.

The Conference participants express their sincere gratitude to the Michael Otto Foundation for Environmental Protection, United Nations Office in Belarus, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, Darwin Initiative for the Survival of Species and OMPO for their support of conservation activities in Polesie and for their initiative to run the present Conference, as well as to conference hosts – Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection of the Republic of Belarus, National Academy of Sciences of Belarus and APB-BirdLife Belarus.

Action Plan for the Conservation of Polesie Floodplains and Fen Mires

1. Sustainable use of Polesie water resources

Adjustment of the basin-based conservation-minded scheme of management of Pripyat water resources with due regard to biodiversity conservation and economic development in the region;

Design and implementation of activities within the National Program on Installation of Engineering Facilities for Protection of Dwellings and Agricultural Lands from Floods in Critical Locations of the Polesie Region, for 1999-2004 shall be primarily guided by the principles of biodiversity conservation;

Hydrological assessment of the most valuable protected areas and working out of recommendations on optimization of their hydrological regime;

Comprehensive inventory of all Polesie wetlands;

Assessment of current hydrological status of the most valuable nature protected areas of Polesie and elaboration of recommendations for improvement of their hydrology;

Estimation of the status of small rivers of the Polesie.

2. Prevention of land degradation

Estimation of the current level of land degradation in Polesie, as well as relevant environmental and social-economic threats to the region's sustainable development;

Elaboration of a regional scheme of wise use and conservation of Polesian lands, as part of the National Action Program to Combat Land Degradation;

Improvement of the structure and contents of the land-cadastral data on the degraded lands in Polesie;

Introduction of environmentally friendly rules and regulations for the use of drained wetlands with a view to slowing down of peatlands mineralization;

Elaboration and implementation of projects on removing from economic activities and re-swamping or reforestation of inefficient drained areas and anthropogenically disturbed peat lands.

3. Improvement of forest management

Estimation of the present-day status of vegetation of floodplain forests, meadows and mires of Polesie;

Ensuring optimal forest distribution across the country;

Restoration of oak woods and other deciduous forests that underwent degradation in the 20th century;

Raising the share of selective forest logging up to 50% of the overall cutting areas over 10 years, and their complete prohibition in floodplain forests;

Promotion of conservation-minded forest planning and management, as well as utilization of meadows and mires, in order to protect rare and threatened species and communities of plants and animals;

Initiate and implement a pilot project on environmentally-minded forest management in one of forestry units in the Pripyat Polesie.

Removal of all raised bogs and valuable wetlands of other types from the list of lands subject to drainage;

4. Improvement of network of protected areas

Comprehensive inventory of all protected areas to refine their borders and status, as well as to assess their current status;

Ensuring a national protection status for the areas of international importance for biodiversity conservation (Ramsar sites and Important Birds Areas);

Establishment of transboundary protected areas with Poland and Ukraine;

Elaboration of the region's ecological network as part of National Ecological Network of Belarus;

Elaboration of a Network of Efficient Distribution of Nature Protected Areas for 2006-2012.

5. Management of protected areas

Establishment of management units for internationally significant protected areas;
Implementation of management plans for key fen mires of Polesie – Zvanets, Sporovo and Dikoe;
Management planning for the most valuable and critical nature protected areas;
Conservation-oriented planning of social-economic development of the regions.

6. Environmental Research and Monitoring

Development of a national environmental monitoring system in terms of maximal coverage of floodplain and mire ecosystems and rivers in the basis of Pripyat and Bug;
Elaboration of National Action Plans for Conservation of Threatened Species based on the survey of their ecology and identification of their habitats;
Scientific and administrative backup for environmental conventions;
Study of invasive and introduced species, development of recommendations for reducing their negative impact on indigenous flora and fauna.

7. Development of international conservation initiatives since the First Polesie Conference in 1997

Set up an agency to coordinate and promote Polesie conservation. The agency shall comprise representatives of governmental institutions, international development organizations, National Academy of Sciences of Belarus, national and international NGOs.
Further coordination and cooperation between government agencies, National Academy of Sciences of Belarus and NGOs involved in nature conservation activities in Polesie;
Ensure further implementation of the Biodiversity Convention, Ramsar Convention and Memorandum of Understanding on Conservation of the Aquatic Warbler as part of the Bonn Convention;
Envisage Third International Polesie Conference for 2007, vesting its preparation with APB-BirdLife Belarus;
Support the idea of a conservation fund “Polesie” to assist in the solution of environmental issues in Polesie;
Set up a Coordinating Board affiliated with the United Nations Office in Belarus, to coordinate international projects aimed at conservation of Polesie.

PART IX. SUSTAINABLE HAY HARVESTING IN FEN MIRES AND FLOODPLAIN MEADOWS

Overgrowth of fen mires and floodplain meadows with bush and reeds is a global threat for the majority of rare animal and plant species, especially for a number of globally endangered bird species like aquatic warbler, great snipe and crane. The main cause for the spread of bush over fens and meadows is termination of the traditional use of these biotopes by man for manual haymaking and cattle pasture. Termination of haymaking in natural fens was the result of extensive land reclamation over large areas which possible using hay harvesting machines and lack of experience related to the use of high-floatation machinery for harvesting hay in wetland areas. Overgrowth of fens and flood meadows results not only in reduced biodiversity, but also in increased resistance to water flow and higher flood levels. Besides, significant reserves of cattle fodder are used insufficiently.

Failure to apply haymaking practiced even in open meadows creates a series of problems for a number of plant and animal species. Accumulation of dry grass over a lengthy period of time creates a layer of dry vegetation covering the soil surface. Lack of light suppresses new vegetation that cannot grow through the dry vegetation, which in turn results in a sharp decline of the total ecosystem productivity and reduction of the density of aquatic warble population – this species is an indicator of the ecosystem status in fen mires.

The only method for sustainable maintenance of mires and meadows in the open condition is application of haymaking practices every year. Currently, Belarus has prerequisites for resumption of hay harvesting in fen mires and flood meadows: special methods have been developed for increasing the floatation of the available hay harvesting machinery, as well as for reducing the degradation and the loss of productivity of the haymaking areas located on the reclaimed land. As regards the Sporovsky mire, there is experience of hay harvesting in flooded mires by using specially equipped machinery. As a result, the collective farm harvested grass over about 200 ha of land, thus creating optimum conditions for habitation of aquatic warbler (the density of the species is 115 males per 100 ha). Hay harvesting was organized only in dry areas, because available machines were not quite suitable or had low floatation. Provided available machines are improved (the “Belarus” tractors), this collective farm may be able to harvest grass from more than 400 ha and to eradicate bushes over the area of more than 1000 ha. It is important to note that it is more cost-effective for the collective farm to harvest hay in the mire and use the grass as fodder for animals.

The main idea of the project is to provide financial support to several collective farms for reequipping their machinery to organize regular hay harvesting in mires and clearing of mires from bush and reeds. These farms are: Mizhlesse in Berioza District; Radostovsky in Drogichin District; and “Kozhan-Gorodok” in Luninets District. After the entire range of hay harvesting operations has been completed, cost-effectiveness will be calculated and recommendations on dissemination of experience related to sustainable management of wetland meadows over other wetland meadows of Belarus will be developed.

Reequipping of machinery will be made in the following way. The project resources will be used to purchase parts required to increase the floatation of all machines used for hay harvesting and transport. The collective farm will use its own resources to buy fuel and pay wages to employees for reequipping of machines and performance of all work operations. To organize pilot hay harvesting, the following land areas have been selected:

- The section of the fen mire Sporovsky (600 ha), characterized by the initial stage of bush overgrowth, which has resulted in disappearance of aquatic warbles which had a high population density in the past.
- The section of the fen mire Zvanets (600 ha) strongly overgrown with reeds. At present, to prevent its massive overgrowth, they applied annual burning of vegetation, which does not allow achieving the maximum population of aquatic warble and great snipe.
- Sections of flood meadows (600 ha) in drained land systems now turned into polder reclamation systems (Lakhovka, 416 ha; and Kozhan-Gorodok, 358 ha). At present, these polder systems will be transformed within the project for their annual flooding with a layer of water up to 70 cm. maintenance of the required water conditions in these areas will allow the establishment of spawning places for various fish species, and places for feeding and nesting of migratory and nestling water birds. To maintain high significance of these areas for fish spawning and bird nestling, they should be kept in the open condition by applying annual hay harvesting practices.

- Sections of natural flood meadows (200 ha) that represent essential spawning places for fish. In the recent years, these areas have been gradually overgrown with bush, thereby losing their importance as fish spawning and bird nestling areas.

Project objectives and tasks

- To procure parts required for reequipping all machinery used for hay harvesting (wheels and spare parts for their installation on three “Belarus” tractors, three rotor grass-cutting machines, three trolleys for grass collection and shredding).
- To harvest hay and clear mires from bush in the area about 1200 ha.
- To harvest hay and clear flood meadows from bush in the area about 800 ha
- To harvest hay annually over the selected areas, at least for 4 years.
- To organize annual monitoring of vegetation, the species composition of birds and the density of aquatic warble in the harvested areas.
- To elaborate recommendations taking into account cost-effectiveness of dissemination of the experience related to sustainable mire management, and to lobby its application in other mires and meadows on Belarus that have essential importance for conservation of biodiversity.

Methods and the technological process

The project will be implemented as follows. The project management group during the first year of the project will purchase spare parts for reequipping of machinery according to agreement with the collective farm (3 tractors, 3 trolleys, and 3 grass cutters). During the winter season, collective farmers will reequip these tractors, grass cutters and trolleys so that they can be used for hay harvesting in wetland areas. Project experts, including botanists and zoologists, will make a standard geobotanic description of the vegetation for the planned haymaking areas where it is planned to organize, during 4 years, monitoring of the vegetation cover, the species composition and the bird populations. In the future, monitoring will be made using resources from other projects.

Collective farms will harvest hay in the mires over 4 years. Project experts will develop recommendations and calculate cost-effectiveness of dissemination of the experience related to sustainable mire use and will lobby its introduction in other mires and meadows in Belarus that have essential importance for conservation of biodiversity.

Calculation of cost-effectiveness of production of green material in wetland areas

The market cost of 1 ton of green grass makes around US\$ 15. The average yield of green grass per hectare makes 4 tons. The market cost of green grass per hectare makes US\$ 60 (US\$ 15 x 4 tons). The cost of harvesting and production of green grass per hectare makes US\$ 30. Final profit per hectare will make US\$ 30 (60-30=30).

Hay harvesting in wetland areas can be organized from August till the end of September. During this period, hay harvesting causes minimum damage to biodiversity (the end of the nestling season), and this is the period of the lowest water (hence, accessibility of wetland area is higher).

One machine for collection and compression of green material can harvest hay from 5 ha per day; hence, up to 150 ha during 30 days.

Project Budget for 4 years

Activities	Co-funding	GEF	Total
Reequipping of haymaking machines (additional wheels and spare parts for the tractor and the rotor grass-cutting machine) (24000 per one organization x 3 organizations = 72000)		72,000	72,000

Activities	Co-funding	GEF	Total
Machine for collection, shredding and compression of green material (20000 for one machine x 3 machines = 60000)		60,000	60,000
Expenditures of the collective farms during 4 years for harvesting 2000 ha of wetland areas and production of green material (cost of haymaking per hectare is 30 \$, the yield is 4 tons per hectare a year: 30\$ x 2000 ha = 60.000 \$ x 4 years = 240,000 \$)	240,000		240,000
Total	240,000	132,000	372,000

PART X. FOREST CERTIFICATION IN BELARUS

Forest certification becomes an essential non-tariff trade barrier in forest trade in European markets. It is becoming all the more problematic to sell in the European forest markets timber and other forest products and services without certification confirming that they have been obtained in conditions of sustainable forest management and forestry use.

Export of forest products from the Republic of Belarus is one of the most dynamic lines of the foreign trade: only from 1996 till 2004, its scope went up more than three times (from US\$ 19.6 million to US\$ 61.9 million). In the year 2004 alone, the export growth rates of forest product and services made 139.5% of the 2003 scope.

Among the main partners of the Republic of Belarus in the field of forest trade, the majority of the partners are oriented towards procurement of predominantly certified products: Germany (15.9% of the total forest export), Latvia (17.9%), Poland (13.6%), Belgium (4.2%), Lithuania (6.8%), Finland (5.3%), Sweden (6.0%), and Holland (5.8%). Today, Belarusian forest export is in fact closed to a number of markets because of the absence of certification, including Great Britain (0.06% of the total forest export), and Switzerland (0.01%). During the next 3-5 years, the potential losses due to the absence of certification in the Republic of Belarus may make:

- Due to the loss of the available forest product markets in European countries: up to US\$ 40.3 million per annum (starting from 2008);
- Due to losses for the development of forest trade in the western: additionally US\$1 10-20 million per annum (starting from 2007);

On the other hand, the Republic of Belarus is an active participant in the so-called ministerial process for the conservation of European forests (the Helsinki process). Through this process, managers of the forestry sector of the country have repeatedly confirmed their commitment to principles of sustainable forest management, in which forest certification represents an essential component.

The strategic plan for the development of forestry in the Republic of Belarus, developed in 1997 and approved as the strategic directive document for the sector, stipulates forestry certification; by 2010, 70% of all wooded areas should be certified; and by 2015 this figure should be 100%.

The Republic of Belarus, being a party to the Convention on biodiversity, has committed itself to conserve and increase its basic biodiversity values in its territory. The forest certification is one of the effective mechanisms for such conservation.

Stages of introduction of forest certification in the forestry management system of Polesie region

Activities	Stage B	Full stage	Subsequent period (till 2010)
Full certification according to the national certification system	Luninets forestry unit	Zhitkovichi, Pinsk, Stolin, Ivatsevichi, Drogichin	Other 15 forestry units of the district
Preliminary auditing according to the international certification (FSC)	Ivatsevichi and Luninets forestry management units (2005)		
Preliminary auditing according to the international certification (PEFC)	Luninets forestry management unit (2005)		
Full certification according to the international certification (FSC)		Ivatsevichi and Luninets forestry management units (2006)	Other 5 forestry units of the district
Full certification according to the international certification (PEFC)		Ivatsevichi forestry management unit (2006)	

Activities	Stage B	Full stage	Subsequent period (till 2010)
Belarus becomes member of the PEFC, and as a result the national system is integrated into the international certification PEFC		2006	
National certificates are used together with certification of the system PEFC		Luninets, Ivatsevichi, Zhitkovichi, Pinsk, Stolin, Drogichin	Other 15 forestry units of the district

Organization involved into the certification of forestry units:

- Design and survey unitary enterprise “Belgiproles” (development of forestry certification standards and certification according to the national system);
- Design and survey unitary enterprise “Belgosles” (special forestry planning);
- State Research Institute of Experimental Botany of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus (participation in the standard development, forest certification, development of scientific principles for conservation of biodiversity in the forest management sector);
- Belarusian State Technological University (the Forestry Management Department): teaching of the forestry certification principles to students specializing in forestry management;
- National Training Center of the Ministry of Forestry of Belarus: training of forestry personnel in forest certification principles through refreshment courses.

PART XI. TERMS OF REFERENCE AND COMPOSITION OF INTERSECTORAL RAMSAR COMMITTEE

Excerpts from the Terms of Reference of the Intersectoral Committee to coordinate the implementation of the Ramsar Convention in Belarus, affiliated with the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection of Belarus

1. The Intersectoral Committee to coordinate the implementation of the Ramsar Convention in Belarus, affiliated with the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection of Belarus (hereinafter, Intersectoral Ramsar Coordinating Committee) is a standing body set up to coordinate the activities of various governmental institutions and other organizations in implementation of the Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar Convention) in Belarus, to which Belarus acceded through Presidential Decree #292 dated May 25, 1999.
...
3. The main tasks of the Intersectoral Ramsar Coordinating Committee are:
 - Review of proposals on the national policy on conservation and sustainable use of wetlands;
 - Identification of priority areas for scientific research in the conservation and sustainable use of wetlands;
 - Coordination of activities of state agencies and other organizations with a view to assisting Belarus in fulfilling its obligations under the Ramsar Convention;
 - Fostering exchange of Ramsar-related information between state institutions and other organizations;
 - Informing the general public about the issues related to wetland conservation and sustainable use.
4. In line with its tasks, the Intersectoral Ramsar Coordinating Committee:
 - Elaborates a set of measures for implementation of the Ramsar Convention in Belarus;
 - Proposes amendments to the legal framework on wetland conservation and sustainable use;
 - Proposes subjects for research into wetland conservation and sustainable use;
 - Manages and controls execution of projects and activities to implement the Ramsar Convention;
 - Reviews proposals on designation of Ramsar sites;
 - Reviews project proposals for Ramsar Small Grants facility;
 - Coordinates projects aimed at conservation and sustainable use of wetlands;...
6. The Intersectoral Ramsar Coordinating Committee is formed by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection to include managers and experts from the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Forestry, Land Resources Committee under the Cabinet of Ministers of Belarus, State Concern BelMeliovodkhoz, National Academy of Sciences of Belarus, Belarusian State University, Central Research Institute of Complex Use of Water Resources, NGO APB-BirdLife Belarus, NGO Ecological Initiative...
7. The Intersectoral Ramsar Coordinating Committee holds meetings as often as required, but no less than once a year.
8. Meetings of the Intersectoral Ramsar Coordinating Committee are presided over by the Chair, or, in his/her absence, by the Deputy Chair.
...

10. Meetings of the Intersectoral Ramsar Coordinating Committee are attended by the member of the committee, as well as invited representatives of other state agencies and organizations concerned.
11. At least half of all members of the Intersectoral Ramsar Coordinating Committee make up the quorum.
12. Decisions of the Intersectoral Ramsar Coordinating Committee are made through open equal voting, in case over 50% of the attending members vote in favor... Only members of the Committee are allowed to vote.
- ...
16. Enforcement of decisions of the Intersectoral Ramsar Coordinating Committee is vested in the Chair.
17. The Intersectoral Ramsar Coordinating Committee can set up task forces to deal with particular operational issues. Formed by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection and approved by the Committee, the task force includes experts of governmental agencies and other organizations dealing with conservation and sustainable use of wetlands. Specific tasks undertaken by the task force are: elaboration of recommendations on the implementation of the Ramsar Convention; working meetings to discuss issues related to the implementation of the Ramsar Convention; participation in drafting of legal instruments on conservation and sustainable use of wetlands; analysis of the international experience on the conservation and sustainable use of wetlands; preparation of materials for review by the Intersectoral Ramsar Coordinating Committee.
18. The Intersectoral Ramsar Coordinating Committee is supported organizationally by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection.

**Composition of the Intersectoral Committee to
coordinate the implementation of the Ramsar Convention in Belarus,
affiliated with the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection of Belarus**

- **Valentin Malishevsky** – Deputy Minister of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection of Belarus, National Coordinator of the Ramsar Convention, Chair;
- **Mikhail Nikiforov** – Director of Institute of Zoology of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus (Deputy Chair);
- **Olga Beliakova** – Chief Expert of Reserves Department, Inspection on Wildlife, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection of Belarus, Ramsar Operational Focal Point (Secretary);
- **Mikhail Areshko** – Head of Inspection on Wildlife, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection of Belarus
- **Nikolai Bambalov** – Head of Laboratory of Landscape Biogeochemistry, Institute of Problems of Use of Natural Resources and Ecology of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus;
- **Alexandre Vintchevski** – Director of NGO APB-BirdLife Belarus;
- **Boris Vlasov** – Head of Lake Research Laboratory of Belarusian State University;
- **Andrey Goldenkov** – Head of Reserves Department, Inspection on Wildlife, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection of Belarus;

- **Svetlana Dashinskaya** – Chief Expert of Legal and Human Resources Department, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection of Belarus; Ramsar Convention Coordinator on information, education and public relations;
- **Alexander Dolzhenkov** – Head of Cadaster Department, Land Resources Committee under the Cabinet of Minister of Belarus;
- **Vladimir Evpak** – Deputy Director of Drainage and Water Industry Department, Ministry of Agriculture of Belarus;
- **Mikhail Kalinin** – Director of Central Research Institute of Complex Use of Water Resources;
- **Alexander Kozulin** – Senior Researcher of the Institute of Zoology of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus; Ramsar Convention Coordinator on Scientific and Technical Assistance;
- **Elena Kupchina** – Head of Humanitarian Cooperation Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Belarus
- **Natalia Pobirushko** – Senior Expert of Forest Cadaster and Use Department, Ministry of Forestry of Belarus;
- **Alexander Rachevsky** – Head of International Department, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection of Belarus;
- **Boris Sidorovich** – Deputy Chair of State Concern BelMeliovodkhoz;
- **Yuri Soloviev** – Chair of Board, Belarusian Public Association "Ecological Initiative", Ramsar Convention Coordinator on Information, Education and Public Relations (in NGO capacity)

PART XII. MANAGEMENT EFFECTIVENESS TRACKING TOOL

**Tracking Tool for GEF Biodiversity Focal Area Strategic Priority One:
Catalyzing Sustainability of Protected Areas**

Section One: Project General Information

1. Project name: Catalyzing sustainability of the wetland protected area system in Belarusian Polesie through increased management efficiency and realigned land use practices

2. Country (ies): Belarus

National Project: Regional Project: _____ Global Project: _____

3. Name of reviewers completing tracking tool and completion dates:

	Name	Title	Agency
Work Program Inclusion	Alexander Kozulin	Project Biodiversity Advisor	UNDP project personnel
Project Mid-term			
Final Evaluation/project completion			

4. Funding information

GEF support: US\$ 2,191,500
 Co-financing: US\$ 9,094,000
 Total Funding: US\$ 11,285,500

5. Project duration: **Planned** 5 years **Actual** _____ years

6. a. GEF Agency: UNDP UNEP World Bank ADB AfDB
 IADB EBRD FAO IFAD UNIDO

6. b. Lead Project Executing Agency (ies): Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection of Belarus

7. GEF Operational Program:

- drylands (OP 1)
- coastal, marine, freshwater (OP 2)
- forests (OP 3)

- mountains (OP 4)
- agro-biodiversity (OP 13)
- integrated ecosystem management (OP 12)
- sustainable land management (OP 15)

Other Operational Program not listed above: _____

8. Project Summary (one paragraph): This project aims to enhance Belarus' capacity to conserve wetland biodiversity harbored in its network of wetland reserves by improving the management efficiency of reserves, while at the same time integrating biodiversity conservation concerns in agricultural, forestry and flood protection activities that occur in and around wetland reserves, to ensure sustainability of conservation efforts. This will be achieved through the demonstration of this approach at four wetland reserves in the Polesie lowland, which is a unique biogeographical area spanning southern Belarus, Northern Ukraine and parts of Poland and Russia. These demonstrations will lead to the development of policies, tools, and methodologies, and these will be institutionalized within the ongoing planning and policy framework of key government bodies.

9. Project Development Objective: to catalyze sustainability and effectiveness of Belarus' national system of protected areas with the emphasis on its network of wetland Reserves.

10. Project Purpose/Immediate Objective: to catalyze sustainability of the wetland protected area system in Belarusian Polesie through increased management efficiency, and aligning the land use framework in and around protected areas with conservation objectives.

11. Expected Outcomes (GEF-related):

Outcome 1: Reserves are being managed effectively, with the active participation of local stakeholders in design and implementation aspects

Outcome 2: Agricultural activity in and around the Reserves is modified to reduce adverse impacts on biodiversity

Outcome 3: Forestry activity in and around the Reserves is modified to reduce adverse impacts on biodiversity

Outcome 4: Flood protection program in and around the Reserves is modified to reduce adverse impacts on biodiversity

Outcome 5: Tools and methodologies developed at project sites for integrating biodiversity conservation, economic activities and human security in wetland reserves are applied to other similar areas within the national protected areas system

12. Types of Protected Area Activities Supported:

12. a. Please select all activities that are being supported through the project.

 Enabling Environment (please check each activity below)

Policy, legislation, regulation

Capacity building
Capacity building budget: _____

(Please record budgets for capacity building if they are clearly identified as a discrete budget line.)

Comments on Capacity Building: Please note if capacity building is geared towards indigenous and local communities:

Education and awareness raising
 Institutional arrangements

Finance and incentives

Replication and scaling up

Management practices related to status of biodiversity

12. b. Is carbon sequestration an objective of the project (This question is included for purposes related to the GEF-3 targets for the Climate Change focal area)

Yes No

The estimated amount of carbon sequestered is: _____

13. Project Replication Strategy

13. a . Does the project specify budget, activities, and outputs for implementing the replication strategy? Yes No

13. b. For all projects, please complete box below. An example is provided.

Replication Quantification Measure	Replication Target Foreseen at project start	Achievement at Mid-term Evaluation of Project	Achievement at Final Evaluation of Project
To establish regional centres for protected areas management	None	In 2 regions	In 6 regions
To develop a regulatory document on assignment and the conditions of use of buffer zones in protected areas.	None	Preparation stage completed	The methodology approved and applied in 6 areas
To organize seminars for exchange of experience in the establishment and management of transboundary wetlands	1 seminar	2 seminars	4 meetings
Methodological Guidebook on sustainable agriculture policy developed and the experience disseminated	1 seminar	2 seminars	4 meetings

Training of staff of 15 forestry management units of Polesie region in the principles of sustainable forest management and use	0 forestry management units have received training	6 forestry management units have received training	15 forestry management units have received training
National certification of 15 forestry management units of the Polesie region using methodologies and regulatory documents developed throughout the project.	0 forestry management units have been certified	6 forestry management units have been certified	15 forestry management units have been certified
Establishment of a forestry training centre in one of the forestry management units	0	0	1
Use of the project area as a demonstration facility on sustainable land use	0 persons have been trained	40 persons have been trained	80 persons have been trained

14. Scope and Scale of Project:

Please complete the following statements.

14.a. The project is working in:

- a single protected area
 multiple protected areas
 national protected area system

14.b. The level of the intervention is:

- global
 regional
 national
 subnational

14. c. Please complete the table below.

Targets and Timeframe	Foreseen at project start	Achievement at Mid-term Evaluation of Project	Achievement at Final Evaluation of Project
Project Coverage			
Extent in hectares of protected areas targeted by the project	123,731 hectares	129,144 hectares	133,304 hectares

14. d. Please complete the table below for the protected areas that are the target of the GEF intervention. Use NA for not applicable. Examples are provided below.

Name of Protected Area	Is this a new protected area? Please answer yes or no.	Area in Hectares	Global designation or priority lists (E.g., Biosphere Reserve, World Heritage site, Ramsar site, WWF Global 200, , etc.)	Local Designation of Protected Area (E.g, indigenous reserve, private reserve, etc.)	IUCN Category for each Protected Area ¹⁵					
					I	II	III	IV	V	VI
1. Sporovsky reserve	No	19,384	Ramsar site	National zakaznik				X		
2. Zvanets reserve	No	10,460	Ramsar site	National zakaznik				X		
3. Mid-Pripyat reserve	No	90,447	Ramsar site	National zakaznik				X		
4. Prostyr reserve	No	3,440	NA	National zakaznik				X		

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- I. Strict Nature Reserve/Wilderness Area: managed mainly for science or wilderness protection
- II. National Park: managed mainly for ecosystem protection and recreation
- III. Natural Monument: managed mainly for conservation of specific natural features
- IV. Habitat/Species Management Area: managed mainly for conservation through management intervention
- V. Protected Landscape/Seascape: managed mainly for landscape/seascape protection and recreation
- VI. Managed Resource Protected Area: managed mainly for the sustainable use of natural ecosystems

Section Two: World Bank/WWF Site-Level Management Effectiveness
Tracking Tool for Protected Areas

Reporting Progress in Protected Areas: Data Sheet

Name of protected area	Sporovsky	
Location of protected area (country, ecoregion, and if possible map reference)	Belarus, Polesie ecoregion	
Date of establishment (distinguish between agreed and gazetted*) or formally established in the case of private protected areas	Agreed 1991	Gazetted 1991
Ownership details (i.e. owner, tenure rights etc)	State property under lease to collective farms and forestry	
Management Authority	Sporovsky Reserve Management Unit	
Size of protected area (ha)	19,384	
Number of staff	Permanent 2	Temporary 0
Annual budget, US\$	4,000	
Designations (IUCN category, World Heritage, Ramsar etc)	IUCN category – IV, Ramsar site	
Reasons for designation	<p align="center">Criterion 1</p> <p>It is a particularly good representative example of sedge-<i>Hypnum</i> fen mires typical of the Polesie biogeographic district.</p> <p align="center">Criterion 2</p> <p>The site hosts Europe’s largest population of the globally threatened (species identified as vulnerable IUCN Red List) Aquatic Warbler <i>Acrocephalus paludicola</i> (11% of the European population)</p>	
Brief details of World Bank funded project or projects in PA	Not necessary for GEF-funded projects	
Brief details of WWF funded project or projects in PA	Not necessary for GEF-funded projects	
Brief details of other relevant projects in PA	UNDP-RSPB project elaborated a management plan for the site and is implementing its top priority interventions	
List the two primary protected area objectives		
Objective 1	Conservation of one the largest sedge fens of Belarus and Europe.	

Objective 2	Conservation of one the world largest population of the globally endangered bird species, aquatic warbler.
List the top two most important threats to the PA (and indicate reasons why these were chosen)	
Threat 1	Disturbance of the fen hydrological conditions resultant in degradation of ecosystems, reduction of biodiversity and decrease of the population of the globally endangered bird species, aquatic warbler.
Threat 2	Overgrowth of open fen bogs with bushes leading to vanishing og unique flora and fauna in open sedge fens.
List top two critical management activities	
Activity 1	To establish an optimal sustainable hydrological regime for the Sporovsky fen mire to safeguard the internationally important biodiversity and key habitat of the globally threatened aquatic warbler.
Activity 2	To develop and implement measures to control existing scrub, and to prevent further scrub encroachment on open mires.

Name/s of assessor (including people consulted): Alexander Kozulin

Contact details (email etc.): kozulin@biobel.bas-net.by

Date assessment carried out (Day/Month/Year): 20/05/2005

* Or formally established in the case of private protected areas

Issue	Criteria	Score	Comments	Next steps
1. Legal status	The protected area is not gazetted	0	<i>Note:</i> see fourth option for private reserves Decision of the Council of Ministers #315 dated 15.08.1991	The reserve regulations approved the area protection and use status; however the land and forest planning has not been amended accordingly.
Does the protected area have legal status?	The government has agreed that the protected area should be gazetted but the process has not yet begun	1		
	The protected area is in the process of being gazetted but the process is still incomplete	2		
<i>Context</i>	The protected area has been legally gazetted (or in the case of private reserves is owned by a trust or similar)	3		
2. Protected area regulations	There are no mechanisms for controlling inappropriate land use and activities in the protected area	0	The main condition disturbances include plowing of island and poaching; these types of activities are traditional, therefore not only strict supervision is required, but rather territorial planning and organization ranger services	It is projected to develop a plan for the organisation of the reserve area, a new forest plan, and rules for water resources management.
Are inappropriate land uses and activities (e.g. poaching) controlled?	Mechanisms for controlling inappropriate land use and activities in the protected area exist but there are major problems in implementing them effectively	1		
	Mechanisms for controlling inappropriate land use and activities in the protected area exist but there are some problems in effectively implementing them	2		
<i>Context</i>	Mechanisms for controlling inappropriate land use and activities in the protected area exist and are being effectively implemented	3		
3. Law enforcement	The staff have no effective capacity/resources to enforce protected area legislation and regulations	0	<i>Possible issue for comment:</i> What happens if people are arrested? The staff members do not have sufficient powers and resources for exercising control over the reserve conditions.	It is planned to alter the legislation and specify powers of personnel; also, to recruit the required personnel.
Can staff enforce protected area rules well enough?	There are major deficiencies in staff capacity/resources to enforce protected area legislation and regulations (e.g. lack of skills, no patrol budget)	1		
	The staff have acceptable capacity/resources to enforce protected area legislation and regulations but some deficiencies remain	2		
<i>Context</i>	The staff have excellent capacity/resources to enforce protected area legislation and regulations	3		
4. Protected area objectives	No firm objectives have been agreed for the protected area	0	It happens due to low capacity of the exiting reserve management unit.	It is planned to implement all basic recommendations of the management plan.
Have objectives	The protected area has agreed objectives, but is not managed according to these objectives	1		

Issue	Criteria	Score	Comments	Next steps
been agreed?	The protected area has agreed objectives, but these are only partially implemented	2		
<i>Planning</i>	The protected area has agreed objectives and is managed to meet these objectives	3		
5. Protected area design	Inadequacies in design mean achieving the protected areas major management objectives of the protected area is impossible	0	<i>Possible issue for comment:</i> does the protected area contain different management zones and are these well maintained? It is planned to extend the protected area including the entire fen territory.	It is planned to specify a buffer zone of the reserve and develop conditions for its use.
Does the protected area need enlarging, corridors etc to meet its objectives?	Inadequacies in design mean that achievement of major objectives are constrained to some extent	1		
	Design is not significantly constraining achievement of major objectives, but could be improved	2		
	Reserve design features are particularly aiding achievement of major objectives of the protected area	3		
<i>Planning</i>				
6. Protected area boundary demarcation	The boundary of the protected area is not known by the management authority or local residents/neighbouring land users	0	There are few marks on the border of the reserve, but in general the reserve is not demarcated properly.	The required boundary will be demarcated on the site.
Is the boundary known and demarcated?	The boundary of the protected area is known by the management authority but is not known by local residents/neighbouring land users	1		
	The boundary of the protected area is known by both the management authority and local residents but is not appropriately demarcated	2		
	The boundary of the protected area is known by the management authority and local residents and is appropriately demarcated	3		
<i>Context</i>				
7. Management plan	There is no management plan for the protected area	0	The management plan developed and is implemented; however such plans are not compulsory according to the current legislation.	Amendments to the legislation will be made; after this management plans will become compulsory for international reserves.
Is there a management plan and is it being implemented?	A management plan is being prepared or has been prepared but is not being implemented	1		
	An approved management plan exists but it is only being partially implemented because of funding constraints or other problems	2		

Issue	Criteria	Score	Comments	Next steps
<i>Planning</i>	An approved management plan exists and is being implemented	3		
Additional points	The planning process allows adequate opportunity for key stakeholders to influence the management plan	+1	All relevant stakeholders participated in the management planning process.	System of periodic review introduced to update plans
	There is an established schedule and process for periodic review and updating of the management plan	+1		
	The results of monitoring, research and evaluation are routinely incorporated into planning	+1		
<i>Planning</i>				
8. Regular work plan	No regular work plan exists	0	Management staff duties are specified and work plans are developed.	Annual plans will be approved by district authorities and coordinated with the Ministry of Natural Resources.
Is there an annual work plan?	A regular work plan exists but activities are not monitored against the plan's targets	1		
	A regular work plan exists and actions are monitored against the plan's targets, but many activities are not completed	2		
	A regular work plan exists, actions are monitored against the plan's targets and most or all prescribed activities are completed	3		
<i>Planning/Outputs</i>				
9. Resource inventory	There is little or no information available on the critical habitats, species and cultural values of the protected area	0	General data on biodiversity distribution received at the management plan development stage.	It is planned to organise a detailed inventory of biodiversity to mainstream this knowledge into the forest and land management plans.
Do you have enough information to manage the area?	Information on the critical habitats, species and cultural values of the protected area is not sufficient to support planning and decision making	1		
	Information on the critical habitats, species and cultural values of the protected area is sufficient for key areas of planning/decision making but the necessary survey work is not being maintained	2		
	Information concerning on the critical habitats, species and cultural values of the protected area is sufficient to support planning and decision making and is being maintained	3		
<i>Context</i>				
10. Research	There is no survey or research work taking place in the protected area	0	The programme does exist, however it is necessary to	As new recommendations of the management plans

Issue	Criteria	Score	Comments	Next steps
Is there a programme of management-orientated survey and research work? <i>Inputs</i>	There is some <i>ad hoc</i> survey and research work	1	extend research areas.	are put into practice, it is necessary to organise monitoring of their successful implementation (haymaking, bush control, controlled vegetation burning, etc.).
	There is considerable survey and research work but it is not directed towards the needs of protected area management	2		
	There is a comprehensive, integrated programme of survey and research work, which is relevant to management needs	3		
11. Resource management Is the protected area adequately managed (e.g. for fire, invasive species, poaching)? <i>Process</i>	Requirements for active management of critical ecosystems, species and cultural values have not been assessed	0	Priority activities of the management plans are implemented to optimise hydrological conditions.	It is planned to put in to operation sustainable haymaking to prevent overgrowth of open fens with bush, and perform other activities for sustainable use of fens.
	Requirements for active management of critical ecosystems, species and cultural values are known but are not being addressed	1		
	Requirements for active management of critical ecosystems, species and cultural values are only being partially addressed	2		
	Requirements for active management of critical ecosystems, species and cultural values are being substantially or fully addressed	3		
12. Staff numbers Are there enough people employed to manage the protected area? <i>Inputs</i>	There are no staff	0	At the moment there are two persons. Optimum number is four.	The staff number remains the same. However, hunting rangers' service will be established to improve protection.
	Staff numbers are inadequate for critical management activities	1		
	Staff numbers are below optimum level for critical management activities	2		
	Staff numbers are adequate for the management needs of the site	3		
13. Personnel management Are the staff managed well enough? <i>Process</i>	Problems with personnel management constrain the achievement of major management objectives	0	There is a problem with insufficient specific qualification of the personnel.	Corresponding training programme will be developed.
	Problems with personnel management partially constrain the achievement of major management objectives	1		
	Personnel management is adequate to the achievement of major management objectives but could be improved	2		
	Personnel management is excellent and aids the achievement major management objectives	3		

Issue	Criteria	Score	Comments	Next steps
14. Staff training	Staff are untrained	0	At the moment staff missing specifically knowledge in law enforcement, environmental legislation and ecotourism management within the reserve	Members of the staff should have additional training in organisation of reserves management. To this end, special training courses will be organised through regional centres.
Is there enough training for staff?	Staff training and skills are low relative to the needs of the protected area	1		
<i>Inputs/Process</i>	Staff training and skills are adequate, but could be further improved to fully achieve the objectives of management	2		
	Staff training and skills are in tune with the management needs of the protected area, and with anticipated future needs	3		
15. Current budget	There is no budget for the protected area	0	Staff members are temporarily paid from the international project resources	It is planned to make such payments from government budget resources after the end of year 1.
Is the current budget sufficient?	The available budget is inadequate for basic management needs and presents a serious constraint to the capacity to manage	1		
<i>Inputs</i>	The available budget is acceptable, but could be further improved to fully achieve effective management	2		
	The available budget is sufficient and meets the full management needs of the protected area	3		
16. Security of budget	There is no secure budget for the protected area and management is wholly reliant on outside or year by year funding	0	Staff members are temporarily paid from the international project resources.	It is planned to make such payments from government budget resources after the end of year 1.
Is the budget secure?	There is very little secure budget and the protected area could not function adequately without outside funding	1		
<i>Inputs</i>	There is a reasonably secure core budget for the protected area but many innovations and initiatives are reliant on outside funding	2		
	There is a secure budget for the protected area and its management needs on a multi-year cycle	3		
17. Management of budget	Budget management is poor and significantly undermines effectiveness	0	The budget is calculated only for wages and petrol.	It is required to increase the budget to buy equipment, computers and organise the information
Is the budget	Budget management is poor and constrains effectiveness	1		

Issue	Criteria	Score	Comments	Next steps
managed to meet critical management needs? <i>Process</i>	Budget management is adequate but could be improved	2		centre.
	Budget management is excellent and aids effectiveness	3		
18. Equipment Is equipment adequately maintained? <i>Process</i>	There is little or no equipment and facilities	0		It is required to increase the budget to buy equipment, computers and organise the information centre.
	There is some equipment and facilities but these are wholly inadequate	1		
	There is equipment and facilities, but still some major gaps that constrain management	2		
	There is adequate equipment and facilities	3		
19. Maintenance of equipment Is equipment adequately maintained? <i>Process</i>	There is little or no maintenance of equipment and facilities	0		
	There is some <i>ad hoc</i> maintenance of equipment and facilities	1		
	There is maintenance of equipment and facilities, but there are some important gaps in maintenance	2		
	Equipment and facilities are well maintained	3		
20. Education and awareness programme Is there a planned education programme? <i>Process</i>	There is no education and awareness programme	0	The number of activities is rather sufficient; however, there is no integrated action program.	It is planned to draft an integrated programme to ensure the fulfilment of the management plan.
	There is a limited and <i>ad hoc</i> education and awareness programme, but no overall planning for this	1		
	There is a planned education and awareness programme but there are still serious gaps	2		
	There is a planned and effective education and awareness programme fully linked to the objectives and needs of the protected area	3		

Issue	Criteria	Score	Comments	Next steps
21. State and commercial neighbours Is there co-operation with adjacent land users? <i>Process</i>	There is no contact between managers and neighbouring official or corporate land users	0	There are contacts between reserve staff and members of local organisations.	It is planned to set up a special supervisory board for the reserve management, which should include representatives of the majority of local organizations.
	There is limited contact between managers and neighbouring official or corporate land users	1		
	There is regular contact between managers and neighbouring official or corporate land users, but only limited co-operation	2		
	There is regular contact between managers and neighbouring official or corporate land users, and substantial co-operation on management	3		
22. Indigenous people Do indigenous and traditional peoples resident or regularly using the PA have input to management decisions? <i>Process</i>	Indigenous and traditional peoples have no input into decisions relating to the management of the protected area	0	Local organisations and communities are involved into implementation of some management plans' activities.	It is planned to involve local communities on a broader basis into planning and implementation of management plans (on haymaking, reed harvesting, tourist accommodations, etc.).
	Indigenous and traditional peoples have some input into discussions relating to management but no direct involvement in the resulting decisions	1		
	Indigenous and traditional peoples directly contribute to some decisions relating to management	2		
	Indigenous and traditional peoples directly participate in making decisions relating to management	3		
23. Local communities Do local communities resident or near the protected area have input to management decisions? <i>Process</i>	Local communities have no input into decisions relating to the management of the protected area	0	Same as in p.22	
	Local communities have some input into discussions relating to management but no direct involvement in the resulting decisions	1		
	Local communities directly contribute to some decisions relating to management	2		
	Local communities directly participate in making decisions relating to management	3		
Additional points Additional points <i>Outputs</i>	There is open communication and trust between local stakeholders and protected area managers	+1	Reserve managers keeps regular contact with the local community through visits, meetings, etc.	
	Programmes to enhance local community welfare, while conserving protected area resources, are being implemented	+1		

Issue	Criteria	Score	Comments	Next steps
24. Visitor facilities Are visitor facilities (for tourists, pilgrims etc) good enough? <i>Outputs</i>	There are no visitor facilities and services	0		Tourism development plans should be cautious in terms of possible damage to the reserve through unregulated activities
	Visitor facilities and services are inappropriate for current levels of visitation or are under construction	1		
	Visitor facilities and services are adequate for current levels of visitation but could be improved	2		
	Visitor facilities and services are excellent for current levels of visitation	3		
25. Commercial tourism Do commercial tour operators contribute to protected area management? <i>Process</i>	There is little or no contact between managers and tourism operators using the protected area	0	At the moment only formal relations have been established and occasional tourists were accepted. This is due to the necessity of development of the tourist trails, corresponding infrastructure, guides, etc.	
	There is contact between managers and tourism operators but this is largely confined to administrative or regulatory matters	1		
	There is limited co-operation between managers and tourism operators to enhance visitor experiences and maintain protected area values	2		
	There is excellent co-operation between managers and tourism operators to enhance visitor experiences, protect values and resolve conflicts	3		
26. Fees If fees (tourism, fines) are applied, do they help protected area management? <i>Outputs</i>	Although fees are theoretically applied, they are not collected	0	For the same reason as above	
	The fee is collected, but it goes straight to central government and is not returned to the protected area or its environs	1		
	The fee is collected, but is disbursed to the local authority rather than the protected area	2		
	There is a fee for visiting the protected area that helps to support this and/or other protected areas	3		
27. Condition assessment Is the protected area being managed consistent	Important biodiversity, ecological and cultural values are being severely degraded	0	<i>Possible issue for comment:</i> It is important to provide details of the biodiversity, ecological or cultural values being affected	
	Some biodiversity, ecological and cultural values are being severely degraded	1		
	Some biodiversity, ecological and cultural values are being partially degraded but the most important values have not been significantly impacted	2		

Issue	Criteria	Score	Comments	Next steps
to its objectives? <i>Outcomes</i>	Biodiversity, ecological and cultural values are predominantly intact	3	Disturbance of hydrological conditions and increase of bush density lead to the decrease of the aquatic warble population.	
Additional points <i>Outputs</i>	There are active programmes for restoration of degraded areas within the protected area and/or the protected area buffer zone	+1		
28. Access assessment	Protection systems (patrols, permits etc) are ineffective in controlling access or use of the reserve in accordance with designated objectives	0	National environmental legislation secures necessary regulatory framework	
Are the available management mechanisms working to control access or use?	Protection systems are only partially effective in controlling access or use of the reserve in accordance with designated objectives	1		
<i>Outcomes</i>	Protection systems are moderately effective in controlling access or use of the reserve in accordance with designated objectives	2		
	Protection systems are largely or wholly effective in controlling access or use of the reserve in accordance with designated objectives	3		
29. Economic benefit assessment	The existence of the protected area has reduced the options for economic development of the local communities	0	<i>Possible issue for comment:</i> how does national or regional development impact on the protected area? It is planned to have income from haymaking in the fen	
Is the protected area providing economic benefits to local communities?	The existence of the protected area has neither damaged nor benefited the local economy	1		
<i>Outcomes</i>	There is some flow of economic benefits to local communities from the existence of the protected area but this is of minor significance to the regional economy	2		
	There is a significant or major flow of economic benefits to local communities from activities in and around the protected area (e.g. employment of locals, locally operated commercial tours etc)	3		
30. Monitoring and evaluation	There is no monitoring and evaluation in the protected area	0	A system of monitoring of the water level and the status of the aquatic warble population is in place; the	
	There is some <i>ad hoc</i> monitoring and evaluation, but no overall strategy and/or no regular collection of results	1		

Issue	Criteria	Score	Comments	Next steps
<i>Planning/Process</i>	There is an agreed and implemented monitoring and evaluation system but results are not systematically used for management	2	monitoring data allow making of adjustments in the plan implementation schedules.	
	A good monitoring and evaluation system exists, is well implemented and used in adaptive management	3		
TOTAL SCORE		48		

Reporting Progress in Protected Areas: Data Sheet

Name of protected area	Zvanets		
Location of protected area (country, ecoregion, and if possible map reference)	Belarus, Polesie ecoregion		
Date of establishment (distinguish between agreed and gazetted*) or formally established in the case of private protected areas	Agreed: 1996	Gazetted: 1996	
Ownership details (i.e. owner, tenure rights etc)	State property under lease to collective farms and forestry		
Management Authority	Zvanets Reserve Management Unit		
Size of protected area (ha)	10,460		
Number of staff	Permanent 2	Temporary 0	
Annual budget, US\$	4,000		
Designations (IUCN category, World Heritage, Ramsar etc)	IUCN category – IV, Ramsar site		
Reasons for designation	<p>Criterion 1 It is a particularly good representative example of sedge-<i>Hypnum</i> fen mires typical of the Polesie biogeographic district.</p> <p>Criterion 2 The site hosts Europe's largest population of the globally threatened (species identified as vulnerable IUCN Red List) Aquatic Warbler <i>Acrocephalus paludicola</i> (16% of the European population).</p> <p>Criterion 3 The Zvanets mire is a nesting site of 21 bird species listed in the National Red Data Book of Belarus. 10 vegetation communities formerly widespread across Polesie fen mires, now rare for Belarus and Europe, are found here. Quite a big group of plants among those recorded in Zvanets belongs to the category of rare and/or protected. 23 species belong to categories I-IV of the National Red Data Book (Red Data Book of Belarus).</p>		
Brief details of World Bank funded project or projects in PA	Not necessary for GEF-funded projects		
Brief details of WWF funded project or projects in PA	Not necessary for GEF-funded projects		
Brief details of other relevant projects in PA	UNDP-RSPB project elaborated a management plan for the site and is implementing its top priority interventions		
List the two primary protected area objectives			

Objective 1	Conservation of one the largest sedge fens of Belarus and Europe.
Objective 2	Conservation of one the world largest population of the globally endangered bird species, aquatic warbler.
List the top two most important threats to the PA (and indicate reasons why these were chosen)	
Threat 1	Disturbance of the fen hydrological conditions resultant in degradation of ecosystems, reduction of biodiversity and decrease of the population of the globally endangered bird species, aquatic warbler.
Threat 2	Overgrowth of open fen bogs with bushes leading to vanishing of unique flora and fauna in open sedge fens.
List top two critical management activities	
Activity 1	To establish an optimal sustainable hydrological regime for the Zvanets fen mire to safeguard the internationally important biodiversity and key habitat of the globally threatened aquatic warbler.
Activity 2	To develop and implement measures to control existing scrub, and to prevent further scrub encroachment on open mires.

Name/s of assessor (including people consulted): Alexander Kozulin

Contact details (email etc.): kozulin@biobel.bas-net.by

Date assessment carried out (Day/Month/Year): 20/05/2005

* Or formally established in the case of private protected areas

Issue	Criteria	Score	Comments	Next steps
1. Legal status	The protected area is not gazetted	0	<i>Note:</i> see fourth option for private reserves Decision of the Council of Ministers # 257, dated 11/04/1996	The reserve regulations approved the area protection and use status; however this status has not been included into the land and forest planning documents.
Does the protected area have legal status?	The government has agreed that the protected area should be gazetted but the process has not yet begun	1		
	The protected area is in the process of being gazetted but the process is still incomplete	2		
<i>Context</i>	The protected area has been legally gazetted (or in the case of private reserves is owned by a trust or similar)	3		
2. Protected area regulations	There are no mechanisms for controlling inappropriate land use and activities in the protected area	0	The main condition disturbances include plowing of island and poaching; these types of activities are traditional, therefore not only strict supervision is required, but rather territorial planning and organization ranger services.	It is projected to develop a plan for the organisation of the reserve area, a new forest plan, and rules for water resources management.
Are inappropriate land uses and activities (e.g. poaching) controlled?	Mechanisms for controlling inappropriate land use and activities in the protected area exist but there are major problems in implementing them effectively	1		
	Mechanisms for controlling inappropriate land use and activities in the protected area exist but there are some problems in effectively implementing them	2		
<i>Context</i>	Mechanisms for controlling inappropriate land use and activities in the protected area exist and are being effectively implemented	3		
3. Law enforcement	The staff have no effective capacity/resources to enforce protected area legislation and regulations	0	<i>Possible issue for comment:</i> What happens if people are arrested? The staff members do not have sufficient powers and resources for exercising control over the reserve conditions.	It is planned to alter the legislation and specify powers of personnel; also, to recruit the required personnel.
Can staff enforce protected area rules well enough?	There are major deficiencies in staff capacity/resources to enforce protected area legislation and regulations (e.g. lack of skills, no patrol budget)	1		
	The staff have acceptable capacity/resources to enforce protected area legislation and regulations but some deficiencies remain	2		
<i>Context</i>	The staff have excellent capacity/resources to enforce protected area legislation and regulations	3		
4. Protected area objectives	No firm objectives have been agreed for the protected area	0	It happens due to low capacity of the exiting reserve management unit.	It is planned to implement all basic recommendations of the management plan.
Have objectives	The protected area has agreed objectives, but is not managed according to these objectives	1		

Issue	Criteria	Score	Comments	Next steps
been agreed?	The protected area has agreed objectives, but these are only partially implemented	2		
<i>Planning</i>	The protected area has agreed objectives and is managed to meet these objectives	3		
5. Protected area design	Inadequacies in design mean achieving the protected areas major management objectives of the protected area is impossible	0	<i>Possible issue for comment:</i> does the protected area contain different management zones and are these well maintained? It is planned to extend the protected area including the entire fen territory.	It is planned to specify a buffer zone of the reserve and develop conditions for its use.
Does the protected area need enlarging, corridors etc to meet its objectives?	Inadequacies in design mean that achievement of major objectives are constrained to some extent	1		
	Design is not significantly constraining achievement of major objectives, but could be improved	2		
	Reserve design features are particularly aiding achievement of major objectives of the protected area	3		
<i>Planning</i>				
6. Protected area boundary demarcation	The boundary of the protected area is not known by the management authority or local residents/neighbouring land users	0	There are few marks on the border of the reserve, but in general the reserve is not demarcated properly.	The required boundary will be demarcated on the site.
Is the boundary known and demarcated?	The boundary of the protected area is known by the management authority but is not known by local residents/neighbouring land users	1		
	The boundary of the protected area is known by both the management authority and local residents but is not appropriately demarcated	2		
	The boundary of the protected area is known by the management authority and local residents and is appropriately demarcated	3		
<i>Context</i>				
7. Management plan	There is no management plan for the protected area	0	The management plan developed and is implemented within the international project; however such plans are not compulsory according to the current legislation.	Amendments to the legislation will be made; after this management plans will become compulsory for international reserves.
Is there a management plan and is it being implemented?	A management plan is being prepared or has been prepared but is not being implemented	1		
	An approved management plan exists but it is only being partially implemented because of funding constraints or other problems	2		

Issue	Criteria	Score	Comments	Next steps
<i>Planning</i>	An approved management plan exists and is being implemented	3		
Additional points	The planning process allows adequate opportunity for key stakeholders to influence the management plan	+1	All relevant stakeholders participating in the management planning process	System of periodic review introduced to update plans
	There is an established schedule and process for periodic review and updating of the management plan	+1		
	The results of monitoring, research and evaluation are routinely incorporated into planning	+1		
<i>Planning</i>				
8. Regular work plan	No regular work plan exists	0	Management staff duties are specified and work plans are developed	Annual plans will be approved by district authorities and coordinated with the Ministry of Natural Resources.
Is there an annual work plan?	A regular work plan exists but activities are not monitored against the plan's targets	1		
	A regular work plan exists and actions are monitored against the plan's targets, but many activities are not completed	2		
	A regular work plan exists, actions are monitored against the plan's targets and most or all prescribed activities are completed	3		
<i>Planning/Outputs</i>				
9. Resource inventory	There is little or no information available on the critical habitats, species and cultural values of the protected area	0	Additional surveys are required so as to include such inventory data into the area forest management plans.	It is planned to organise a detailed inventory of biodiversity to mainstream this knowledge into the forest and land management plans.
Do you have enough information to manage the area?	Information on the critical habitats, species and cultural values of the protected area is not sufficient to support planning and decision making	1		
	Information on the critical habitats, species and cultural values of the protected area is sufficient for key areas of planning/decision making but the necessary survey work is not being maintained	2		
	Information concerning on the critical habitats, species and cultural values of the protected area is sufficient to support planning and decision making and is being maintained	3		
<i>Context</i>				
10. Research	There is no survey or research work taking place in the protected area	0	Planned hydrological surveys are made as well as	As new recommendations of the management plans

Issue	Criteria	Score	Comments	Next steps
Is there a programme of management-orientated survey and research work? <i>Inputs</i>	There is some <i>ad hoc</i> survey and research work	1	research of the biodiversity status so as to make adjustments of the management plans.	are put into practice, it is necessary to organise monitoring of their successful implementation (haymaking, bush control, controlled vegetation burning, etc.).
	There is considerable survey and research work but it is not directed towards the needs of protected area management	2		
	There is a comprehensive, integrated programme of survey and research work, which is relevant to management needs	3		
11. Resource management Is the protected area adequately managed (e.g. for fire, invasive species, poaching)? <i>Process</i>	Requirements for active management of critical ecosystems, species and cultural values have not been assessed	0	Priority activities of the management plans are implemented to optimize hydrological conditions	It is planned to put in to operation sustainable haymaking to prevent overgrowth of open fens with bush, and perform other activities for sustainable use of fens.
	Requirements for active management of critical ecosystems, species and cultural values are known but are not being addressed	1		
	Requirements for active management of critical ecosystems, species and cultural values are only being partially addressed	2		
	Requirements for active management of critical ecosystems, species and cultural values are being substantially or fully addressed	3		
12. Staff numbers Are there enough people employed to manage the protected area? <i>Inputs</i>	There are no staff	0	At the moment there are two persons. Optimum number is four.	The staff number remains the same. However, hunting rangers' service will be established to improve protection.
	Staff numbers are inadequate for critical management activities	1		
	Staff numbers are below optimum level for critical management activities	2		
	Staff numbers are adequate for the management needs of the site	3		
13. Personnel management Are the staff managed well enough? <i>Process</i>	Problems with personnel management constrain the achievement of major management objectives	0	Staff qualification is still insufficient.	Corresponding training programme will be developed.
	Problems with personnel management partially constrain the achievement of major management objectives	1		
	Personnel management is adequate to the achievement of major management objectives but could be improved	2		
	Personnel management is excellent and aids the achievement major management objectives	3		

Issue	Criteria	Score	Comments	Next steps
14. Staff training	Staff are untrained	0	At the moment staff missing qualification in law enforcement, environmental legislation, ecotourism management.	Members of the staff should have additional training in organisation of reserves management. To this end, special training courses will be organised through regional centres.
Is there enough training for staff?	Staff training and skills are low relative to the needs of the protected area	1		
<i>Inputs/Process</i>	Staff training and skills are adequate, but could be further improved to fully achieve the objectives of management	2		
	Staff training and skills are in tune with the management needs of the protected area, and with anticipated future needs	3		
15. Current budget	There is no budget for the protected area	0	Staff members are temporarily paid from the international project resources	It is planned to make such payments from government budget resources after the end of year 1.
Is the current budget sufficient?	The available budget is inadequate for basic management needs and presents a serious constraint to the capacity to manage	1		
<i>Inputs</i>	The available budget is acceptable, but could be further improved to fully achieve effective management	2		
	The available budget is sufficient and meets the full management needs of the protected area	3		
16. Security of budget	There is no secure budget for the protected area and management is wholly reliant on outside or year by year funding	0	Staff members are temporarily paid from the international project resources.	It is planned to make such payments from government budget resources after the end of year 1.
Is the budget secure?	There is very little secure budget and the protected area could not function adequately without outside funding	1		
<i>Inputs</i>	There is a reasonably secure core budget for the protected area but many innovations and initiatives are reliant on outside funding	2		
	There is a secure budget for the protected area and its management needs on a multi-year cycle	3		
17. Management of budget	Budget management is poor and significantly undermines effectiveness	0	Management plans are basically financed from the international funds' resources. After alteration	It is required to increase the budget to buy equipment, computers and organise the information
Is the budget	Budget management is poor and constrains effectiveness	1		

Issue	Criteria	Score	Comments	Next steps
managed to meet critical management needs? <i>Process</i>	Budget management is adequate but could be improved	2	of the legislation, it is planned to change the procedure for funding of management plans.	centre.
	Budget management is excellent and aids effectiveness	3		
18. Equipment Is equipment adequately maintained? <i>Process</i>	There is little or no equipment and facilities	0		It is required to increase the budget to buy equipment, computers and organise the information centre.
	There is some equipment and facilities but these are wholly inadequate	1		
	There is equipment and facilities, but still some major gaps that constrain management	2		
	There is adequate equipment and facilities	3		
19. Maintenance of equipment Is equipment adequately maintained? <i>Process</i>	There is little or no maintenance of equipment and facilities	0		
	There is some <i>ad hoc</i> maintenance of equipment and facilities	1		
	There is maintenance of equipment and facilities, but there are some important gaps in maintenance	2		
	Equipment and facilities are well maintained	3		
20. Education and awareness programme Is there a planned education programme?	There is no education and awareness programme	0	The number of activities is rather sufficient; however, there is no integrated action program	It is planned to draft an integrated programme to ensure the fulfilment of the management plan.
	There is a limited and <i>ad hoc</i> education and awareness programme, but no overall planning for this	1		
	There is a planned education and awareness programme but there are still serious gaps	2		

Issue	Criteria	Score	Comments	Next steps
<i>Process</i>	There is a planned and effective education and awareness programme fully linked to the objectives and needs of the protected area	3		
21. State and commercial neighbours Is there co-operation with adjacent land users? <i>Process</i>	There is no contact between managers and neighbouring official or corporate land users	0	There are contacts between reserve staff and members of local organisations.	It is planned to set up a special supervisory board for the reserve management, which should include representatives of the majority of local organizations.
	There is limited contact between managers and neighbouring official or corporate land users	1		
	There is regular contact between managers and neighbouring official or corporate land users, but only limited co-operation	2		
	There is regular contact between managers and neighbouring official or corporate land users, and substantial co-operation on management	3		
22. Indigenous people Do indigenous and traditional peoples resident or regularly using the PA have input to management decisions? <i>Process</i>	Indigenous and traditional peoples have no input into decisions relating to the management of the protected area	0	Local organisations and communities are involved into implementation of some management plans' activities.	It is planned to involve local communities on a broader basis into planning and implementation of management plans (on haymaking, reed harvesting, tourist accommodations, etc.).
	Indigenous and traditional peoples have some input into discussions relating to management but no direct involvement in the resulting decisions	1		
	Indigenous and traditional peoples directly contribute to some decisions relating to management	2		
	Indigenous and traditional peoples directly participate in making decisions relating to management	3		
23. Local communities Do local communities resident or near the protected area have input to management decisions? <i>Process</i>	Local communities have no input into decisions relating to the management of the protected area	0	Same as in p.22	
	Local communities have some input into discussions relating to management but no direct involvement in the resulting decisions	1		
	Local communities directly contribute to some decisions relating to management	2		
	Local communities directly participate in making decisions relating to management	3		

Issue	Criteria	Score	Comments	Next steps
Additional points Additional points <i>Outputs</i>	There is open communication and trust between local stakeholders and protected area managers	+1	Reserve managers keeps regular contact with the local community through visits, meetings, etc.	
	Programmes to enhance local community welfare, while conserving protected area resources, are being implemented	+1		
24. Visitor facilities Are visitor facilities (for tourists, pilgrims etc) good enough? <i>Outputs</i>	There are no visitor facilities and services	0		Tourism development plans should be cautious in terms of possible damage to the reserve through unregulated activities
	Visitor facilities and services are inappropriate for current levels of visitation or are under construction	1		
	Visitor facilities and services are adequate for current levels of visitation but could be improved	2		
	Visitor facilities and services are excellent for current levels of visitation	3		
25. Commercial tourism Do commercial tour operators contribute to protected area management? <i>Process</i>	There is little or no contact between managers and tourism operators using the protected area	0	At the moment only formal relations have been established and occasional tourists were accepted. This is due to the necessity of development of the tourist trails, corresponding infrastructure, guides, etc.	
	There is contact between managers and tourism operators but this is largely confined to administrative or regulatory matters	1		
	There is limited co-operation between managers and tourism operators to enhance visitor experiences and maintain protected area values	2		
	There is excellent co-operation between managers and tourism operators to enhance visitor experiences, protect values and resolve conflicts	3		
26. Fees If fees (tourism, fines) are applied, do they help protected area management? <i>Outputs</i>	Although fees are theoretically applied, they are not collected	0	For the same reasons as above	
	The fee is collected, but it goes straight to central government and is not returned to the protected area or its environs	1		
	The fee is collected, but is disbursed to the local authority rather than the protected area	2		
	There is a fee for visiting the protected area that helps to support this and/or other protected areas	3		
27. Condition assessment	Important biodiversity, ecological and cultural values are being severely degraded	0	<i>Possible issue for comment:</i> It is important to provide details of the biodiversity,	
	Some biodiversity, ecological and cultural values are being severely degraded	1		

Issue	Criteria	Score	Comments	Next steps
Is the protected area being managed consistent to its objectives? <i>Outcomes</i>	Some biodiversity, ecological and cultural values are being partially degraded but the most important values have not been significantly impacted	2	ecological or cultural values being affected Disturbance of hydrological conditions and increase of bush density lead to the decrease of the aquatic warble population.	
	Biodiversity, ecological and cultural values are predominantly intact	3		
Additional points <i>Outputs</i>	There are active programmes for restoration of degraded areas within the protected area and/or the protected area buffer zone	+1	UNDP-RSPB project activities specifically aim to improve hydrological conditions in the reserve	
28. Access assessment	Protection systems (patrols, permits etc) are ineffective in controlling access or use of the reserve in accordance with designated objectives	0	National environmental legislation secures necessary regulatory framework	
Are the available management mechanisms working to control access or use?	Protection systems are only partially effective in controlling access or use of the reserve in accordance with designated objectives	1		
	Protection systems are moderately effective in controlling access or use of the reserve in accordance with designated objectives	2		
<i>Outcomes</i>	Protection systems are largely or wholly effective in controlling access or use of the reserve in accordance with designated objectives	3		
29. Economic benefit assessment	The existence of the protected area has reduced the options for economic development of the local communities	0	<i>Possible issue for comment:</i> Status of the reserve implies on local land-users several limitations in agriculture practice and forestry. Traditional agricultural practices by local community still continue in the reserve.	It is planned to have incomes from haymaking in the fen
Is the protected area providing economic benefits to local communities?	The existence of the protected area has neither damaged nor benefited the local economy	1		
	There is some flow of economic benefits to local communities from the existence of the protected area but this is of minor significance to the regional economy	2		
<i>Outcomes</i>	There is a significant or major flow of economic benefits to local communities from activities in and around the protected area (e.g. employment of locals, locally operated commercial tours etc)	3		

Issue	Criteria	Score	Comments	Next steps
30. Monitoring and evaluation <i>Planning/Process</i>	There is no monitoring and evaluation in the protected area	0	A system of monitoring of the water level and the status of the aquatic warble population is in place; the monitoring data allow making of adjustments in the plan implementation schedules	To continue work in the equipped monitoring sites and points.
	There is some <i>ad hoc</i> monitoring and evaluation, but no overall strategy and/or no regular collection of results	1		
	There is an agreed and implemented monitoring and evaluation system but results are not systematically used for management	2		
	A good monitoring and evaluation system exists, is well implemented and used in adaptive management	3		
TOTAL SCORE		48		

Reporting Progress in Protected Areas: Data Sheet

Name of protected area	Mid Pripyat		
Location of protected area (country, ecoregion, and if possible map reference)	Belarus, Polesie ecoregion		
Date of establishment (distinguish between agreed and gazetted*) or formally established in the case of private protected areas	Agreed 1999	Gazetted 1999	
Ownership details (i.e. owner, tenure rights etc)	State property under lease to collective farms and forestry		
Management Authority	N/A		
Size of protected area (ha)	90,447		
Number of staff	Permanent 0	Temporary 0	
Annual budget, US\$	0		
Designations (IUCN category, World Heritage, Ramsar etc)	IUCN category – IV, Ramsar site		
Reasons for designation	<p>Criterion 1 It is a particularly good representative example of floodplain with meadows and alluvial forest typical of the Polesie biogeographic district.</p> <p>Criterion 2 It supports an appreciable assemblage of rare and vulnerable species of plants and animals. Throughout the history of scientific research in the Mid Pripyat Reserve 52 National Red Data Book species were registered in the area, of which 39 are breeding here.</p> <p>Criterion 3 It regularly supports 20,000 and more waterbirds. More than 1 % of the European population of the following bird species breed here: Bittern <i>Botaurus stellaris</i> (300 males), Black Stork <i>Ciconia nigra</i> (50-70 pairs), Garganey <i>Anas querquedula</i> (10,562 pairs), Gadwall <i>Anas strepera</i> (688 pairs), Black Tern <i>Chlidonias niger</i> (500-1000 pairs), White-winged Black Tern <i>Chlidonias leucopterus</i> (3000-7000 pairs).</p>		
Brief details of World Bank funded project or projects in PA	Not necessary for GEF-funded projects		
Brief details of WWF funded project or projects in PA	Not necessary for GEF-funded projects		
Brief details of other relevant projects in PA			

List the two primary protected area objectives	
Objective 1	Established on the European largest natural river flood bed with its typical sceneries.
Objective 2	Conservation of the Red Book species.
List the top two most important threats to the PA (and indicate reasons why these were chosen)	
Threat 1	Disturbance of the river hydrological as a result of the river bed dyking, leading to vanishing of fish spawning places and rare animal habitats.
Threat 2	Overgrowth of open flood bed meadows with bushes leading to vanishing of unique flora and fauna; environmentally unsustainable activities in forests.
List top two critical management activities	
Activity 1	To extend the river flood bed by restoring its natural hydrological conditions in the adjacent land-reclamation systems that are used unstably both in economic and environmental terms.
Activity 2	To take inventory of biodiversity; to develop and use in economic activities recommendations for conservation of rare flora and fauns species habitats.

Name/s of assessor (including people consulted): Alexander Kozulin

Contact details (email etc.): kozulin@biobel.bas-net.by

Date assessment carried out (Day/Month/Year): 20/05/2005

* Or formally established in the case of private protected areas

Issue	Criteria	Score	Comments	Next steps
1. Legal status	The protected area is not gazetted	0	<i>Note:</i> see fourth option for private reserves Decision of the Council of Ministers #1105 dated 19.07.1999	The reserve regulations approved the area protection and use status; however the land and forest planning has not been amended accordingly.
Does the protected area have legal status?	The government has agreed that the protected area should be gazetted but the process has not yet begun	1		
	The protected area is in the process of being gazetted but the process is still incomplete	2		
<i>Context</i>	The protected area has been legally gazetted (or in the case of private reserves is owned by a trust or similar)	3		
2. Protected area regulations	There are no mechanisms for controlling inappropriate land use and activities in the protected area	0	There is no reserve management unit; the protection conditions are developed, but they are not included into economic plans of the organizations.	It is planned to include protection conditions into plans of economic and business use of forestry management units and collective farms.
Are inappropriate land uses and activities (e.g. poaching) controlled?	Mechanisms for controlling inappropriate land use and activities in the protected area exist but there are major problems in implementing them effectively	1		
	Mechanisms for controlling inappropriate land use and activities in the protected area exist but there are some problems in effectively implementing them	2		
<i>Context</i>	Mechanisms for controlling inappropriate land use and activities in the protected area exist and are being effectively implemented	3		
3. Law enforcement	The staff have no effective capacity/resources to enforce protected area legislation and regulations	0	There is no special management staff.	It is planned to set up the reserve management unit and provide it with the required equipment for the implementation of duties for the reserve protection.
Can staff enforce protected area rules well enough?	There are major deficiencies in staff capacity/resources to enforce protected area legislation and regulations (e.g. lack of skills, no patrol budget)	1		
	The staff have acceptable capacity/resources to enforce protected area legislation and regulations but some deficiencies remain	2		
<i>Context</i>	The staff have excellent capacity/resources to enforce protected area legislation and regulations	3		
4. Protected area objectives	No firm objectives have been agreed for the protected area	0	The management plan is under development.	During the development of the management plan, objectives for the protected area will be specified.
Have objectives	The protected area has agreed objectives, but is not managed according to these objectives	1		

Issue	Criteria	Score	Comments	Next steps
been agreed? <i>Planning</i>	The protected area has agreed objectives, but these are only partially implemented	2		
	The protected area has agreed objectives and is managed to meet these objectives	3		
5. Protected area design Does the protected area need enlarging, corridors etc to meet its objectives? <i>Planning</i>	Inadequacies in design mean achieving the protected areas major management objectives of the protected area is impossible	0	<i>Possible issue for comment:</i> does the protected area contain different management zones and are these well maintained?	It is planned to identify the reserve areas and specify the protected area.
	Inadequacies in design mean that achievement of major objectives are constrained to some extent	1		
	Design is not significantly constraining achievement of major objectives, but could be improved	2		
	Reserve design features are particularly aiding achievement of major objectives of the protected area	3		
6. Protected area boundary demarcation Is the boundary known and demarcated? <i>Context</i>	The boundary of the protected area is not known by the management authority or local residents/neighbouring land users	0	There are few marks on the border of the reserve, but in general the reserve is not demarcated properly.	It is planned to make additional border demarcation operations and arrange posts.
	The boundary of the protected area is known by the management authority but is not known by local residents/neighbouring land users	1		
	The boundary of the protected area is known by both the management authority and local residents but is not appropriately demarcated	2		
	The boundary of the protected area is known by the management authority and local residents and is appropriately demarcated	3		
7. Management plan Is there a management plan and is it being implemented?	There is no management plan for the protected area	0	There is no management plan, however, the information on biodiversity collected, problems identified, and a plan of actions drafted.	The management plan will be drafted for the 2 nd project year; and by the 4 th year some of the priority activities will be implemented.
	A management plan is being prepared or has been prepared but is not being implemented	1		
	An approved management plan exists but it is only being partially implemented because of funding constraints or other problems	2		

Issue	Criteria	Score	Comments	Next steps
<i>Planning</i>	An approved management plan exists and is being implemented	3		
Additional points	The planning process allows adequate opportunity for key stakeholders to influence the management plan	+1		
	There is an established schedule and process for periodic review and updating of the management plan	+1		
	The results of monitoring, research and evaluation are routinely incorporated into planning	+1		
<i>Planning</i>				
8. Regular work plan	No regular work plan exists	0	The operations plan compiled; but it should be detailed for some types of work.	A detailed work plan as well as its implementation monitoring plan will be compiled.
Is there an annual work plan?	A regular work plan exists but activities are not monitored against the plan's targets	1		
	A regular work plan exists and actions are monitored against the plan's targets, but many activities are not completed	2		
	A regular work plan exists, actions are monitored against the plan's targets and most or all prescribed activities are completed	3		
<i>Planning/Outputs</i>				
9. Resource inventory	There is little or no information available on the critical habitats, species and cultural values of the protected area	0	Additional research is required to make use of the inventory data and their inclusion into the area forestry planning.	By the end of the 2 nd year of the project, full information on the state of land will be collected so as to arrange work planning.
Do you have enough information to manage the area?	Information on the critical habitats, species and cultural values of the protected area is not sufficient to support planning and decision making	1		
	Information on the critical habitats, species and cultural values of the protected area is sufficient for key areas of planning/decision making but the necessary survey work is not being maintained	2		
	Information concerning on the critical habitats, species and cultural values of the protected area is sufficient to support planning and decision making and is being maintained	3		
<i>Context</i>				
10. Research	There is no survey or research work taking place in the protected area	0	Scientific survey of the reserve was made within	The degree of the area study has been assessed;

Issue	Criteria	Score	Comments	Next steps
Is there a programme of management-orientated survey and research work? <i>Inputs</i>	There is some <i>ad hoc</i> survey and research work	1	the preparation of feasibility study for the establishment of the protected area; after that data were in part updated.	by the end of the 2 nd year of the project, the majority of gaps were filled for planning of environmental protection activities.
	There is considerable survey and research work but it is not directed towards the needs of protected area management	2		
	There is a comprehensive, integrated programme of survey and research work, which is relevant to management needs	3		
11. Resource management Is the protected area adequately managed (e.g. for fire, invasive species, poaching)? <i>Process</i>	Requirements for active management of critical ecosystems, species and cultural values have not been assessed	0	There are services for protection of fish and game; however, there is no system for protection and management of their habitats.	It is planned to employ staff for the reserve management unit.
	Requirements for active management of critical ecosystems, species and cultural values are known but are not being addressed	1		
	Requirements for active management of critical ecosystems, species and cultural values are only being partially addressed	2		
	Requirements for active management of critical ecosystems, species and cultural values are being substantially or fully addressed	3		
12. Staff numbers Are there enough people employed to manage the protected area? <i>Inputs</i>	There are no staff	0	There is no staff	It is planned to employ staff by the end of the 1 st year of the project.
	Staff numbers are inadequate for critical management activities	1		
	Staff numbers are below optimum level for critical management activities	2		
	Staff numbers are adequate for the management needs of the site	3		
13. Personnel management Are the staff managed well enough? <i>Process</i>	Problems with personnel management constrain the achievement of major management objectives	0	There is no staff. Standard duties of personnel developed for the protected area management units.	The annual work plans for staff members will be drafted; their control will be exercised by the Ministry of Natural Resources.
	Problems with personnel management partially constrain the achievement of major management objectives	1		
	Personnel management is adequate to the achievement of major management objectives but could be improved	2		
	Personnel management is excellent and aids the achievement major management objectives	3		

Issue	Criteria	Score	Comments	Next steps
14. Staff training	Staff are untrained	0		Targeted staff training is planned.
Is there enough training for staff?	Staff training and skills are low relative to the needs of the protected area	1		
	Staff training and skills are adequate, but could be further improved to fully achieve the objectives of management	2		
<i>Inputs/Process</i>	Staff training and skills are in tune with the management needs of the protected area, and with anticipated future needs	3		
15. Current budget	There is no budget for the protected area	0	There is no staff. A plan for paying members in the protected area management units is compiled.	After making of amendments in the law on protected areas, staff members will be paid from the budget and the nature protection fund.
Is the current budget sufficient?	The available budget is inadequate for basic management needs and presents a serious constraint to the capacity to manage	1		
	The available budget is acceptable, but could be further improved to fully achieve effective management	2		
<i>Inputs</i>	The available budget is sufficient and meets the full management needs of the protected area	3		
16. Security of budget	There is no secure budget for the protected area and management is wholly reliant on outside or year by year funding	0	There is no staff. A plan for paying members in the protected area management units is compiled.	After making of amendments in the law on protected areas, staff members will be paid from the budget and the nature protection fund.
Is the budget secure?	There is very little secure budget and the protected area could not function adequately without outside funding	1		
	There is a reasonably secure core budget for the protected area but many innovations and initiatives are reliant on outside funding	2		
<i>Inputs</i>	There is a secure budget for the protected area and its management needs on a multi-year cycle	3		
17. Management of budget	Budget management is poor and significantly undermines effectiveness	0	There is no management staff.	
Is the budget	Budget management is poor and constrains effectiveness	1		

Issue	Criteria	Score	Comments	Next steps
managed to meet critical management needs? <i>Process</i>	Budget management is adequate but could be improved	2		
	Budget management is excellent and aids effectiveness	3		
18. Equipment Is equipment adequately maintained? <i>Process</i>	There is little or no equipment and facilities	0	There are no facilities.	
	There is some equipment and facilities but these are wholly inadequate	1		
	There is equipment and facilities, but still some major gaps that constrain management	2		
	There is adequate equipment and facilities	3		
19. Maintenance of equipment Is equipment adequately maintained? <i>Process</i>	There is little or no maintenance of equipment and facilities	0		
	There is some <i>ad hoc</i> maintenance of equipment and facilities	1		
	There is maintenance of equipment and facilities, but there are some important gaps in maintenance	2		
	Equipment and facilities are well maintained	3		
20. Education and awareness programme Is there a planned education programme? <i>Process</i>	There is no education and awareness programme	0		It is planned to develop and implement an education and awareness programme
	There is a limited and <i>ad hoc</i> education and awareness programme, but no overall planning for this	1		
	There is a planned education and awareness programme but there are still serious gaps	2		
	There is a planned and effective education and awareness programme fully linked to the objectives and needs of the protected area	3		

Issue	Criteria	Score	Comments	Next steps
21. State and commercial neighbours Is there co-operation with adjacent land users? <i>Process</i>	There is no contact between managers and neighbouring official or corporate land users	0		Contacts will be made between managers and neighbouring official or corporate land users
	There is limited contact between managers and neighbouring official or corporate land users	1		
	There is regular contact between managers and neighbouring official or corporate land users, but only limited co-operation	2		
	There is regular contact between managers and neighbouring official or corporate land users, and substantial co-operation on management	3		
22. Indigenous people Do indigenous and traditional peoples resident or regularly using the PA have input to management decisions? <i>Process</i>	Indigenous and traditional peoples have no input into decisions relating to the management of the protected area	0		It is planned to have peoples directly involved in making of decisions relating to management
	Indigenous and traditional peoples have some input into discussions relating to management but no direct involvement in the resulting decisions	1		
	Indigenous and traditional peoples directly contribute to some decisions relating to management	2		
	Indigenous and traditional peoples directly participate in making decisions relating to management	3		
23. Local communities Do local communities resident or near the protected area have input to management decisions? <i>Process</i>	Local communities have no input into decisions relating to the management of the protected area	0		
	Local communities have some input into discussions relating to management but no direct involvement in the resulting decisions	1		
	Local communities directly contribute to some decisions relating to management	2		
	Local communities directly participate in making decisions relating to management	3		
Additional points Additional points <i>Outputs</i>	There is open communication and trust between local stakeholders and protected area managers	+1		
	Programmes to enhance local community welfare, while conserving protected area resources, are being implemented	+1		

Issue	Criteria	Score	Comments	Next steps
24. Visitor facilities Are visitor facilities (for tourists, pilgrims etc) good enough? <i>Outputs</i>	There are no visitor facilities and services	0	There are several visitor facilities in the reserve belonging to the different owners. At the same time there is a massive flow of unorganized tourist.	A plan for the construction of infrastructure to receive visitors was drafted.
	Visitor facilities and services are inappropriate for current levels of visitation or are under construction	1		
	Visitor facilities and services are adequate for current levels of visitation but could be improved	2		
	Visitor facilities and services are excellent for current levels of visitation	3		
25. Commercial tourism Do commercial tour operators contribute to protected area management? <i>Process</i>	There is little or no contact between managers and tourism operators using the protected area	0	<i>Possible issue for comment:</i> examples of contributions Commercial tour operators use the protected area, but they do not make input into its development because there is not system for management and relations, including tackling of financial issues.	It is planned to develop a system for involvement of commercial tour operators into the area management activities.
	There is contact between managers and tourism operators but this is largely confined to administrative or regulatory matters	1		
	There is limited co-operation between managers and tourism operators to enhance visitor experiences and maintain protected area values	2		
	There is excellent co-operation between managers and tourism operators to enhance visitor experiences, protect values and resolve conflicts	3		
26. Fees If fees (tourism, fines) are applied, do they help protected area management? <i>Outputs</i>	Although fees are theoretically applied, they are not collected	0	There is no reserve management unit.	
	The fee is collected, but it goes straight to central government and is not returned to the protected area or its environs	1		
	The fee is collected, but is disbursed to the local authority rather than the protected area	2		
	There is a fee for visiting the protected area that helps to support this and/or other protected areas	3		
27. Condition assessment Is the protected area being managed consistent	Important biodiversity, ecological and cultural values are being severely degraded	0	<i>Possible issue for comment:</i> It is important to provide details of the biodiversity, ecological or cultural values being affected	The main management objectives will be restoration of shall water areas, combating overgrowth of meadows with bush, and prevention of adverse impact of
	Some biodiversity, ecological and cultural values are being severely degraded	1		
	Some biodiversity, ecological and cultural values are being partially degraded but the most important values have not been significantly impacted	2		

Issue	Criteria	Score	Comments	Next steps
to its objectives? <i>Outcomes</i>	Biodiversity, ecological and cultural values are predominantly intact	3	The river flood bed ecosystem is relatively natural; however there are problems of decrease of shall water areas and overgrowth of open meadows with bush.	forestry activities on biodiversity.
Additional points <i>Outputs</i>	There are active programmes for restoration of degraded areas within the protected area and/or the protected area buffer zone	+1		It is planned to restore hydrological conditions in more than 4000 ha of land adjacent to the protected area.
28. Access assessment	Protection systems (patrols, permits etc) are ineffective in controlling access or use of the reserve in accordance with designated objectives	0	There is no the reserve management unit	
Are the available management mechanisms working to control access or use?	Protection systems are only partially effective in controlling access or use of the reserve in accordance with designated objectives	1		
	Protection systems are moderately effective in controlling access or use of the reserve in accordance with designated objectives	2		
<i>Outcomes</i>	Protection systems are largely or wholly effective in controlling access or use of the reserve in accordance with designated objectives	3		
29. Economic benefit assessment	The existence of the protected area has reduced the options for economic development of the local communities	0	<i>Possible issue for comment:</i> how does national or regional development impact on the protected area? The river flood area is actively used for pasture, haymaking and industrial and amateur fishing.	It is planned to extend areas for haymaking, pasture and increase sustainability of forestry, fishery and hunting facilities.
Is the protected area providing economic benefits to local communities?	The existence of the protected area has neither damaged nor benefited the local economy	1		
	There is some flow of economic benefits to local communities from the existence of the protected area but this is of minor significance to the regional economy	2		
<i>Outcomes</i>	There is a significant or major flow of economic benefits to local communities from activities in and around the protected area (e.g. employment of locals, locally operated commercial tours etc)	3		

Issue	Criteria	Score	Comments	Next steps
30. Monitoring and evaluation <i>Planning/Process</i>	There is no monitoring and evaluation in the protected area	0	A system for monitoring water quality and quantity is in place.	It is planned to establish a system for monitoring of all essential parameters: animals, vegetation and ecosystems
	There is some <i>ad hoc</i> monitoring and evaluation, but no overall strategy and/or no regular collection of results	1		
	There is an agreed and implemented monitoring and evaluation system but results are not systematically used for management	2		
	A good monitoring and evaluation system exists, is well implemented and used in adaptive management	3		
TOTAL SCORE		21		

Reporting Progress in Protected Areas: Data Sheet

Name of protected area	Prostyr		
Location of protected area (country, ecoregion, and if possible map reference)	Belarus, Polesie ecoregion		
Date of establishment (distinguish between agreed and gazetted*) or formally established in the case of private protected areas	Agreed 1994	Gazetted 1994	
Ownership details (i.e. owner, tenure rights etc)	State property under lease to collective farms and forestry		
Management Authority	NO		
Size of protected area (ha)	3,440		
Number of staff	Permanent 0	Temporary 0	
Annual budget, US\$	0		
Designations (IUCN category, World Heritage, Ramsar etc)	IUCN category – IV, Ramsar site		
Reasons for designation	<p>Criterion 1 It is a typical example of a floodplain fen mire preserved in the near-natural condition. Eutrophic floodplain mires have become rare in Belarus, and have practically disappeared in Central Europe.</p> <p>Criterion 2 It supports 30 to 500 pairs of Aquatic Warbler <i>Acrocephalus paludicola</i> – a globally endangered species. The wetland is an important bird area of international significance.</p> <p>Criterion 3 It supports a considerable number of rare and protected, both nationally and regionally, animal and plant species. The National Red Data Book of Belarus contains 22 bird species, 1 reptile, 3 plant species of the site. 18 bird species, 3 mammals, 1 reptile and 1 amphibian, 4 fish species enjoying the IUCN vulnerable and rare status have been recorded within the site. Apart from Aquatic Warbler, other globally endangered European species (I SPEC) breeding in the site include Corncrake <i>Crex crex</i> and Great Snipe <i>Gallinago media</i>; White-tailed Eagle <i>Haliaeetus albicilla</i> and Greater Spotted Eagle <i>Aquila clanga</i> have been recorded here.</p>		
Brief details of World Bank funded project or projects in PA	Not necessary for GEF-funded projects		
Brief details of WWF funded project or projects in PA	Not necessary for GEF-funded projects		

Brief details of other relevant projects in PA	
List the two primary protected area objectives	
Objective 1	Established on the European largest natural river flood bed with its typical sceneries.
Objective 2	Conservation of the Red Book species.
List the top two most important threats to the PA (and indicate reasons why these were chosen)	
Threat 1	Disturbance of the river hydrological as a result of the river bed dyking, leading to vanishing of fish spawning places and rare animal habitats.
Threat 2	Overgrowth of open flood bed meadows with bushes leading to vanishing of unique flora and fauna; environmentally unsustainable activities in forests.
List top two critical management activities	
Activity 1	To organize sustainable haymaking and livestock pasture to prevent overgrowth of meadows with bush.
Activity 2	To have inventory of biodiversity; to develop and use in economic activities recommendations for conservation of rare flora and fauna species habitats.

Name/s of assessor (including people consulted): Alexander Kozulin

Contact details (email etc.): kozulin@biobel.bas-net.by

Date assessment carried out (Day/Month/Year): 20/05/2005

* Or formally established in the case of private protected areas

Issue	Criteria	Score	Comments	Next steps
1. Legal status	The protected area is not gazetted	0	<i>Note:</i> see fourth option for private reserves	
Does the protected area have legal status?	The government has agreed that the protected area should be gazetted but the process has not yet begun	1	Decision of the Council of Ministers #115 dated 28.02.1994	
	The protected area is in the process of being gazetted but the process is still incomplete	2		
<i>Context</i>	The protected area has been legally gazetted (or in the case of private reserves is owned by a trust or similar)	3		
2. Protected area regulations	There are no mechanisms for controlling inappropriate land use and activities in the protected area	0	There is no reserve management unit; the protection conditions are developed, but they are not included into economic plans of the organizations.	It is planned to include protection conditions into plans of economic and business use of forestry management units and collective farms.
Are inappropriate land uses and activities (e.g. poaching) controlled?	Mechanisms for controlling inappropriate land use and activities in the protected area exist but there are major problems in implementing them effectively	1		
	Mechanisms for controlling inappropriate land use and activities in the protected area exist but there are some problems in effectively implementing them	2		
<i>Context</i>	Mechanisms for controlling inappropriate land use and activities in the protected area exist and are being effectively implemented	3		
3. Law enforcement	The staff have no effective capacity/resources to enforce protected area legislation and regulations	0	<i>Possible issue for comment:</i> What happens if people are arrested? There is no special management staff.	It is planned to set up the nature protection institution and provide it with the required equipment for the implementation of duties for the reserve protection.
Can staff enforce protected area rules well enough?	There are major deficiencies in staff capacity/resources to enforce protected area legislation and regulations (e.g. lack of skills, no patrol budget)	1		
	The staff have acceptable capacity/resources to enforce protected area legislation and regulations but some deficiencies remain	2		
<i>Context</i>	The staff have excellent capacity/resources to enforce protected area legislation and regulations	3		
4. Protected area objectives	No firm objectives have been agreed for the protected area	0	The management plan is under development.	During the development of the management plan they will specify the objectives for the protected area and
Have objectives	The protected area has agreed objectives, but is not managed according to these objectives	1		

Issue	Criteria	Score	Comments	Next steps
been agreed?	The protected area has agreed objectives, but these are only partially implemented	2		implement them.
<i>Planning</i>	The protected area has agreed objectives and is managed to meet these objectives	3		
5. Protected area design	Inadequacies in design mean achieving the protected areas major management objectives of the protected area is impossible	0	<i>Possible issue for comment:</i> does the protected area contain different management zones and are these well maintained? The reserve does not include all basic biotopes in the region.	It is planned to extend the reserve area from 3440 to 7600 ha.
Does the protected area need enlarging, corridors etc to meet its objectives?	Inadequacies in design mean that achievement of major objectives are constrained to some extent	1		
	Design is not significantly constraining achievement of major objectives, but could be improved	2		
<i>Planning</i>	Reserve design features are particularly aiding achievement of major objectives of the protected area	3		
6. Protected area boundary demarcation	The boundary of the protected area is not known by the management authority or local residents/neighbouring land users	0	There are few marks on the border of the reserve, but in general the reserve is not demarcated properly.	It is planned to make additional border demarcation operations and arrange posts.
Is the boundary known and demarcated?	The boundary of the protected area is known by the management authority but is not known by local residents/neighbouring land users	1		
<i>Context</i>	The boundary of the protected area is known by both the management authority and local residents but is not appropriately demarcated	2		
	The boundary of the protected area is known by the management authority and local residents and is appropriately demarcated	3		
7. Management plan	There is no management plan for the protected area	0	There is no management plan, however, the information on biodiversity collected, problems identified, and a plan of actions drafted.	The management plan will be drafted for the 2 nd project year; and by the 4 th year some of the priority activities will be implemented.
Is there a management plan and is it being implemented?	A management plan is being prepared or has been prepared but is not being implemented	1		
	An approved management plan exists but it is only being partially implemented because of funding constraints or other problems	2		

Issue	Criteria	Score	Comments	Next steps
<i>Planning</i>	An approved management plan exists and is being implemented	3		
Additional points	The planning process allows adequate opportunity for key stakeholders to influence the management plan	+1		
	There is an established schedule and process for periodic review and updating of the management plan	+1		
	The results of monitoring, research and evaluation are routinely incorporated into planning	+1		
<i>Planning</i>				
8. Regular work plan	No regular work plan exists	0	The operations plan compiled; but it should be detailed for some types of work.	A detailed work plan as well as its implementation monitoring plan will be compiled.
Is there an annual work plan?	A regular work plan exists but activities are not monitored against the plan's targets	1		
	A regular work plan exists and actions are monitored against the plan's targets, but many activities are not completed	2		
	A regular work plan exists, actions are monitored against the plan's targets and most or all prescribed activities are completed	3		
<i>Planning/Outputs</i>				
9. Resource inventory	There is little or no information available on the critical habitats, species and cultural values of the protected area	0	Additional research is required to make use of the inventory data and their inclusion into the area forestry planning.	By the end of the 2 nd year of the project, full information on the state of land will be collected so as to arrange work planning.
Do you have enough information to manage the area?	Information on the critical habitats, species and cultural values of the protected area is not sufficient to support planning and decision making	1		
	Information on the critical habitats, species and cultural values of the protected area is sufficient for key areas of planning/decision making but the necessary survey work is not being maintained	2		
	Information concerning on the critical habitats, species and cultural values of the protected area is sufficient to support planning and decision making and is being maintained	3		
<i>Context</i>				
10. Research	There is no survey or research work taking place in the protected area	0	Scientific survey of the reserve was made within	The degree of the area study has been assessed;

Issue	Criteria	Score	Comments	Next steps
Is there a programme of management-orientated survey and research work? <i>Inputs</i>	There is some <i>ad hoc</i> survey and research work	1	the preparation of feasibility study for the establishment of the protected area; after that data were in part updated.	by the end of the 2 nd year of the project, the majority of gaps were filled for planning of environmental protection activities.
	There is considerable survey and research work but it is not directed towards the needs of protected area management	2		
	There is a comprehensive, integrated programme of survey and research work, which is relevant to management needs	3		
11. Resource management Is the protected area adequately managed (e.g. for fire, invasive species, poaching)? <i>Process</i>	Requirements for active management of critical ecosystems, species and cultural values have not been assessed	0	There are services for protection of fish and game; however, there is no system for protection and management of their habitats.	It is planned to employ staff for the reserve management unit.
	Requirements for active management of critical ecosystems, species and cultural values are known but are not being addressed	1		
	Requirements for active management of critical ecosystems, species and cultural values are only being partially addressed	2		
	Requirements for active management of critical ecosystems, species and cultural values are being substantially or fully addressed	3		
12. Staff numbers Are there enough people employed to manage the protected area? <i>Inputs</i>	There are no staff	0	There are no staff	It is planned to employ staff by the end of the 1 st year of the project..
	Staff numbers are inadequate for critical management activities	1		
	Staff numbers are below optimum level for critical management activities	2		
	Staff numbers are adequate for the management needs of the site	3		
13. Personnel management Are the staff managed well enough? <i>Process</i>	Problems with personnel management constrain the achievement of major management objectives	0	There are no staff. Standard duties of personnel developed for the protected area management units.	The annual work plans for staff members will be drafted; their control will be exercised by the Ministry of Natural Resources.
	Problems with personnel management partially constrain the achievement of major management objectives	1		
	Personnel management is adequate to the achievement of major management objectives but could be improved	2		
	Personnel management is excellent and aids the achievement major management objectives	3		

Issue	Criteria	Score	Comments	Next steps
14. Staff training	Staff are untrained	0	There are no staff	Targeted staff training is planned.
Is there enough training for staff?	Staff training and skills are low relative to the needs of the protected area	1		
	Staff training and skills are adequate, but could be further improved to fully achieve the objectives of management	2		
	Staff training and skills are in tune with the management needs of the protected area, and with anticipated future needs	3		
<i>Inputs/Process</i>				
15. Current budget	There is no budget for the protected area	0	There are no staff. A plan for paying members in the protected area management units is compiled.	After making of amendments in the law on protected areas, staff members will be paid from the budget and the nature protection fund.
Is the current budget sufficient?	The available budget is inadequate for basic management needs and presents a serious constraint to the capacity to manage	1		
	The available budget is acceptable, but could be further improved to fully achieve effective management	2		
	The available budget is sufficient and meets the full management needs of the protected area	3		
<i>Inputs</i>				
16. Security of budget	There is no secure budget for the protected area and management is wholly reliant on outside or year by year funding	0	There are no staff . A plan for paying members in the protected area management units is compiled.	After making of amendments in the law on protected areas, staff members will be paid from the budget and the nature protection fund.
Is the budget secure?	There is very little secure budget and the protected area could not function adequately without outside funding	1		
	There is a reasonably secure core budget for the protected area but many innovations and initiatives are reliant on outside funding	2		
	There is a secure budget for the protected area and its management needs on a multi-year cycle	3		
<i>Inputs</i>				
17. Management of budget	Budget management is poor and significantly undermines effectiveness	0	There is no management staff.	
Is the budget	Budget management is poor and constrains effectiveness	1		

Issue	Criteria	Score	Comments	Next steps
managed to meet critical management needs? <i>Process</i>	Budget management is adequate but could be improved	2		
	Budget management is excellent and aids effectiveness	3		
18. Equipment Is equipment adequately maintained? <i>Process</i>	There is little or no equipment and facilities	0	There are no facilities.	
	There is some equipment and facilities but these are wholly inadequate	1		
	There is equipment and facilities, but still some major gaps that constrain management	2		
	There is adequate equipment and facilities	3		
19. Maintenance of equipment Is equipment adequately maintained? <i>Process</i>	There is little or no maintenance of equipment and facilities	0		
	There is some <i>ad hoc</i> maintenance of equipment and facilities	1		
	There is maintenance of equipment and facilities, but there are some important gaps in maintenance	2		
	Equipment and facilities are well maintained	3		
20. Education and awareness programme Is there a planned education programme? <i>Process</i>	There is no education and awareness programme	0		It is planned to develop and implement an education and awareness programme
	There is a limited and <i>ad hoc</i> education and awareness programme, but no overall planning for this	1		
	There is a planned education and awareness programme but there are still serious gaps	2		
	There is a planned and effective education and awareness programme fully linked to the objectives and needs of the protected area	3		

Issue	Criteria	Score	Comments	Next steps
21. State and commercial neighbours Is there co-operation with adjacent land users? <i>Process</i>	There is no contact between managers and neighbouring official or corporate land users	0		Contacts will be made between managers and neighbouring official or corporate land users
	There is limited contact between managers and neighbouring official or corporate land users	1		
	There is regular contact between managers and neighbouring official or corporate land users, but only limited co-operation	2		
	There is regular contact between managers and neighbouring official or corporate land users, and substantial co-operation on management	3		
22. Indigenous people Do indigenous and traditional peoples resident or regularly using the PA have input to management decisions? <i>Process</i>	Indigenous and traditional peoples have no input into decisions relating to the management of the protected area	0		It is planned to have peoples directly involved in making of decisions relating to management
	Indigenous and traditional peoples have some input into discussions relating to management but no direct involvement in the resulting decisions	1		
	Indigenous and traditional peoples directly contribute to some decisions relating to management	2		
	Indigenous and traditional peoples directly participate in making decisions relating to management	3		
23. Local communities Do local communities resident or near the protected area have input to management decisions? <i>Process</i>	Local communities have no input into decisions relating to the management of the protected area	0		
	Local communities have some input into discussions relating to management but no direct involvement in the resulting decisions	1		
	Local communities directly contribute to some decisions relating to management	2		
	Local communities directly participate in making decisions relating to management	3		
Additional points Additional points <i>Outputs</i>	There is open communication and trust between local stakeholders and protected area managers	+1		
	Programmes to enhance local community welfare, while conserving protected area resources, are being implemented	+1		

Issue	Criteria	Score	Comments	Next steps
24. Visitor facilities Are visitor facilities (for tourists, pilgrims etc) good enough? <i>Outputs</i>	There are no visitor facilities and services	0	<i>Possible issue for comment:</i> Do visitors damage the protected area?	A plan for the construction of infrastructure to receive visitors was drafted.
	Visitor facilities and services are inappropriate for current levels of visitation or are under construction	1		
	Visitor facilities and services are adequate for current levels of visitation but could be improved	2		
	Visitor facilities and services are excellent for current levels of visitation	3		
25. Commercial tourism Do commercial tour operators contribute to protected area management? <i>Process</i>	There is little or no contact between managers and tourism operators using the protected area	0	<i>Possible issue for comment:</i> examples of contributions Commercial tour operators use the protected area, but they do not make input into its development because there is not system for management and relations, including tackling of financial issues.	It is planned to develop a system for involvement of commercial tour operators into the area management activities.
	There is contact between managers and tourism operators but this is largely confined to administrative or regulatory matters	1		
	There is limited co-operation between managers and tourism operators to enhance visitor experiences and maintain protected area values	2		
	There is excellent co-operation between managers and tourism operators to enhance visitor experiences, protect values and resolve conflicts	3		
26. Fees If fees (tourism, fines) are applied, do they help protected area management? <i>Outputs</i>	Although fees are theoretically applied, they are not collected	0	There is no reserve management unit.	
	The fee is collected, but it goes straight to central government and is not returned to the protected area or its environs	1		
	The fee is collected, but is disbursed to the local authority rather than the protected area	2		
	There is a fee for visiting the protected area that helps to support this and/or other protected areas	3		
27. Condition assessment Is the protected area being managed consistent	Important biodiversity, ecological and cultural values are being severely degraded	0	<i>Possible issue for comment:</i> It is important to provide details of the biodiversity, ecological or cultural values being affected	The main management objectives will be restoration of shall water areas, combating overgrowth of meadows with bush, and prevention of adverse impact of
	Some biodiversity, ecological and cultural values are being severely degraded	1		
	Some biodiversity, ecological and cultural values are being partially degraded but the most important values have not been significantly impacted	2		

Issue	Criteria	Score	Comments	Next steps
to its objectives? <i>Outcomes</i>	Biodiversity, ecological and cultural values are predominantly intact	3	The river flood bed ecosystem is relatively natural; however there are problems of decrease of shall water areas and overgrowth of open meadows with bush.	forestry activities on biodiversity.
Additional points <i>Outputs</i>	There are active programmes for restoration of degraded areas within the protected area and/or the protected area buffer zone	+1		It is planned to clear bush in the completely overgrown flooded meadows.
28. Access assessment	Protection systems (patrols, permits etc) are ineffective in controlling access or use of the reserve in accordance with designated objectives	0	There is no the reserve management unit	
Are the available management mechanisms working to control access or use?	Protection systems are only partially effective in controlling access or use of the reserve in accordance with designated objectives	1		
<i>Outcomes</i>	Protection systems are moderately effective in controlling access or use of the reserve in accordance with designated objectives	2		
	Protection systems are largely or wholly effective in controlling access or use of the reserve in accordance with designated objectives	3		
29. Economic benefit assessment	The existence of the protected area has reduced the options for economic development of the local communities	0	<i>Possible issue for comment:</i> how does national or regional development impact on the protected area? The river flood bed is actively used for pasture, haymaking, and for industrial and amateur fishing.	It is planned to extend areas for haymaking, pasture and increase sustainability of forestry, fishery and hunting facilities.
Is the protected area providing economic benefits to local communities?	The existence of the protected area has neither damaged nor benefited the local economy	1		
	There is some flow of economic benefits to local communities from the existence of the protected area but this is of minor significance to the regional economy	2		
<i>Outcomes</i>	There is a significant or major flow of economic benefits to local communities from activities in and around the protected area (e.g. employment of locals, locally operated commercial tours etc)	3		

Issue	Criteria	Score	Comments	Next steps
30. Monitoring and evaluation <i>Planning/Process</i>	There is no monitoring and evaluation in the protected area	0	A system for monitoring water quality and quantity is in place.	It is planned to establish a system for monitoring of all essential parameters: animals, vegetation and ecosystems.
	There is some <i>ad hoc</i> monitoring and evaluation, but no overall strategy and/or no regular collection of results	1		
	There is an agreed and implemented monitoring and evaluation system but results are not systematically used for management	2		
	A good monitoring and evaluation system exists, is well implemented and used in adaptive management	3		
TOTAL SCORE		20		

PART XIII. REPLICATION PLAN FOR INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF PROJECT STRATEGY

The Project has been designed based on a detailed identification and analysis of barriers to effective management of the protected areas and sustainable land use in the Polesie region, and more broadly to address management deficiencies and opportunities in the Belarusian system of natural protected areas (PA). Belarus is just starting to reform its system of management of zakazniks/ reserves and mainstreaming of sustainable development principles in various sectors of land use. These processes could therefore benefit from improved PA management legislation, as well as best-practices and lessons in the integration of biodiversity conservation considerations with economic activities in and around zakazniks generated by the project.

The institutionalization of proposed actions in the national programs and productive sectors is based on the initial application of advanced methods of PA management, forestry, agriculture and flood defense in the project sites. Along with elaboration and testing of the new methods to ensure sustainable land use, the project will incorporate these into the current legal and policy framework. Already at PDF-B stage, the project has initiated drafting of new laws, policy documents and methodological guidelines, which, once adopted, will ensure institutionalization of the proposed actions.

To ensure quick “startup” and implementation of the newly adopted legislative and normative acts, the project envisages a series of promotional actions and workshops to demonstrate project best-practices to various ministries, agencies, enterprises and local community. Specific institutionalization actions for each area of project intervention are detailed in the table below:

Project outcome	Proposed replication strategy
<p>Outcome 1: Reserves are being managed effectively, with the active participation of local stakeholders in design and implementation aspects</p>	<p><u>The capacity of the national system of protected areas</u> will be strengthened, thus providing a mechanism to replicate best-practices, through the elaboration of a number of legislative and policy documents, including amendments to the Law on Protected Areas, which will specifically provide for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Protected area management units</u> The project experience in establishing of PA management units will be replicated by MoNREP throughout the region and entire country, to cover all internationally and nationally valuable sites. • <u>Protected area management plans</u> The experience generated through the project’s specific demonstration sites in the elaboration and implementation of management plans will be internalized and applied to other parts of the PA system, particularly internationally and nationally valuable areas. The project will also generate necessary guidelines, tools, and methodologies to be adopted by relevant government bodies as standard operating procedures. • <u>Financing</u> for protected area management Financial mechanisms for PA management will be developed and tested within the four project sites for subsequent scaling up to the overall national level. Already at the PDF-B stage the relevant amendments have been made to the Regulations of MoNREP’s Nature Protection Fund, and endorsed by the Ministry of Finance. • Designation of <u>buffer zones</u> for protected areas The project will draft and ensure adoption of a special by-law document that will stipulate biodiversity-focused principles for designation of buffer zones around protected areas. The document will also regulate different ways of use of buffer zones around protected areas to avoid or minimize impact on reserves' hydrology from various hydro-technical facilities. <p>The project will develop a procedure and elaborate necessary set of documents for establishment of a <u>transboundary protected area</u> Prostyr-Pripyat-Stokhid. This will provide precedence and lessons for establishment of transboundary protected areas and consolidation of two sub-systems of protected areas in Ukrainian and Belarusian Polesie.</p>
<p>Outcome 2: Agricultural activity in</p>	<p>Institutionalization of <u>sustainable agricultural land use practices</u> will be achieved through mainstreaming of biodiversity into the national program of integrated land-use planning</p>

<p>and around the reserves is modified to diminish threats to biodiversity harbored in reserves.</p>	<p>currently ongoing in Belarus. The program has been designed to cover all administrative districts in the country by 2015. The project intervention in this area comes at an opportune time, as the above program has just started and application of the methods developed by the project would enable integration of the principles of sustainable agriculture, biodiversity conservation and land-use across the whole country. The major tools for increasing sustainability of land use around the reserves will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Methodological guidebook</u> for biodiversity friendly land-use planning The project will support the elaboration and adoption of a methodological guidebook for the assessment of land-use efficiency and development of land-use plans, building on the principles of biodiversity conservation. The guidebook will be developed in close coordination with the Land Resources Committee (as the sole government authority responsible for land-use planning), which would ensure necessary buy-in and subsequent adoption of the guidebook as a sectoral policy document. Demonstration of its application will be achieved through site visits, field seminars on best practices in transferring agricultural land to conservation-oriented uses. • Elaboration of <u>integrated land-use plans</u> for project sites To test the above methodology and ensure large-scale replication, the project will contribute to the elaboration of comprehensive sustainability-minded land-use plans for the administrative districts hosting the project sites. • <u>Water use regulations</u> for fish farms and drainage facilities The project will contribute to the elaboration of amended guidelines for operation of drainage facilities and fish-farm around the reserves in order to minimize adverse impact on reserves' hydrology. The guidelines will be prepared in close coordination with Belmeliovodkhoz concern to ensure subsequent adoption by its respective subsidiaries.
<p>Outcome 3: Forestry activity in and around the reserves is modified to diminish threats to biodiversity harbored in reserves.</p>	<p>The key methods for achieving integration of <u>sustainable forestry practices</u> into the national forestry framework will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Special forest management planning</u> Based on the important biodiversity distribution data, the project will elaborate special forest management plans which incorporates biodiversity conservation needs and to test these in project sites' forestries. Necessary methodology and guidelines will also be developed. In line with the agreement with the Ministry of Forestry and on the basis of their successful application in the project sites, the plans will feed into the national forestry system through a respective set of policy documents to ensure that biodiversity and wetland conservation needs are duly taken into account. • <u>Forest certification</u> in line with national and international standards The Ministry of Forestry has just launched a program on national and international certification of all forestry enterprises in Belarus. As part of its co-financing for the PDF-B stage, the Ministry of Forestry has initiated certification process of Luninets forestry both in FSC and the national system. Certification of Luninets and Ivatsevichi forestries will be completed at the full stage, to be shared and incorporated into the process of development of the national policy in the area of certification to boost the adjustment of national policy to international standards. The replication of project experience in forestry certification will be undertaken using national funds. This will ensure that all future certification and forest management plans take into account biodiversity and wetland conservation needs.
<p>Outcome 4: Flood protection program in and around the Reserves is modified to reduce adverse impacts on biodiversity</p>	<p>Institutionalization of principles of biodiversity conservation in the <u>national flood protection program</u> will be achieved through a series of modifications to the program, designed in collaboration with Belmeliovodkhoz concern responsible for implementing the program. These measures have been incorporated in the large-scale state program that spans across the entire Pripjat River in the Polesie.</p> <p>These will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Summer polders</u> The project has initiated the process of shifting to summer polder system in the Pripjat river floodplain, whereby particularly valuable areas currently embanked (around 4,000 ha) will be linked up to the natural floodplain to allow for their comprehensive use, i.e. improve conditions for biodiversity while still allowing for grassland management.

	<p>Modification of the polder systems for their comprehensive use will require construction of new, and reequipping of existing, water-regulating facilities and dams. The proposed measures have been agreed with the local land-users.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <u>Adjustment of embankment plans</u> In close coordination with Belmeliovodkhoz the flood defense program has been reviewed in terms of identification of conflicts with biodiversity conservation needs and necessary amendments have been introduced. These will result in relocation of several dams to shift from full-length embankment to selective protection of settlements and agricultural lands.<li>• <u>Khotomelsk water channel restoration</u> Restoration of the Khotomelsk water passage from Goryn river to Stviga River will ensure flood protection while not compromising biodiversity. Since the Pripyat floodplain has been narrowed due to construction of full-length embankments, flooding peak heights have increased. These proposed measures will allow minimizing the adverse impact of high flood on the economy and population, while facilitating natural flooding processes.
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PART XIV. CONCLUSIONS OF LPAC MEETING

UNDP/GEF PDF-B Project

"Conservation and sustainable management of Polesie through integration of globally important biodiversity concerns into main areas of economic activity at key sites"

Local Project Appraisal Committee

**Minsk, 25 November 2005
UNDP Office in Belarus**

Minutes of the meeting

Agenda

1. **Discussion of the full size project document "Catalyzing sustainability of the wetland protected area system in Belarusian Polesie through increased management efficiency and realigned land use practices"**

Participants:

1. Mrs. Valentina Stalyho, UNDP Programme Manager
2. Mr. Dmitry Goloubovsky, UNDP Program Officer on Energy and Environment
3. Mr. Alexander Rachevsky, Head of International Cooperation Department, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection of Belarus
4. Mr. Andrey Goldenkov, Head of Reserves Department, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection of Belarus
5. Mr. Ivan Belchik, Deputy Head of Department of Cooperation with International Organisations and Coordination of Technical Assistance, Ministry of Economy of Belarus
6. Mr. Vladimir Shevchenok, Advisor with Department of Cooperation with International Organisations and Coordination of Technical Assistance, Ministry of Economy of Belarus
7. Mrs. Maria Petrova, Advisor with Office of Regional Economy and Environment, Ministry of Economy of Belarus
8. Mr. Alexey Artyushevsky, PDF-B Project Manager
9. Mr. Alexander Kozulin, Leading Researcher with Institute of Zoology of the National Academy of Science of Belarus, Conservation Director of the APB-BirdLife Belarus
10. Mr. Alexander Pomelov, Director of Belnitszem
11. Mr. Alexander Pugachevsky, Deputy Director of Institute of Experimental Botany of the National Academy of Science of Belarus

The representatives of the Ministry of Economy called for the project proponents to double check the project data in several instances and raised the following specific comments:

- It is required to reformulate the project title so as to better reflect the role of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection in the project implementation;
- The sources of national and donor co-funding on the signature page need to be detailed;
- Clarifications are needed as regards UNDP and UNESCO co-financing;
- The section "Management Arrangements" should be elaborated further, so as to clarify responsibilities of UNDP, National Implementing Agency, National Project Director and Project Manager; it is required to clearly differentiate responsibilities of UNDP, National Implementing Agency and Project Management Unit;
- It is necessary to clarify the applicability of the auditing section in part VI "Monitoring and Evaluation";
- The "Monitoring and Evaluation" section should be supplemented with corresponding M&E provisions stipulated by the national legislation;

- It is necessary to clearly define the type of national funding, direct or parallel, since direct co-funding of the project from the national budget must be endorsed by the Ministry of Finance;
- It is required to edit the baseline and alternative sections in the Incremental Costs Assessment and provide confirmation of the national sources finances in Section II Part I Baseline Scenario;
- The title of section III “Total budget and work plan” needs to be corrected, since the table does not provide a work plan, whereas the quarterly work plan will be prepared during the inception workshop.

Representative of UNDP answered the comments as follows:

- It is not possible to radically change the project title because the project has been reviewed and approved by the GEF Council in its present version. The Russian translation of the original English title will be slightly modified and properly agreed.
- The signature page of the project document will be edited so as to detail national and donor's cofinancing in the resources section.
- UNDP co-funding represents resources allocated within the ongoing UNDP project in Belarus “Integrated Management of Key Biodiversity Sites in Polesie” (national registration #2/02/000051 dated 01.10.2002), whose activities support the goals and tasks of the full stage of the present GEF project.
- UNESCO co-funding will be made within a parallel project on the establishment of the regional ecological network in Polesie which should commence in 2006 following the completion of the national registration procedures.
- The “Management Arrangements” section of the project document will clarify the responsibilities and duties of UNDP, National Implementing Agency, National Project Director, and Project Manager.
- In view of the modified NEX project implementation modality supported by UNDP in Belarus, whereby project funds are not transferred to implementing agency's account but rather direct payments are made by the UNDP office, it is not required to make national auditing of the funds. Therefore, it was suggested that this subsection be removed.
- The “Monitoring and Evaluation” section will be supplemented with information on the fulfilment of respective national procedures on project evaluation.
- The entire national contribution into the project, confirmed by the letters of commitment, will be made available as parallel co-funding within the ongoing state programmes and plans, which will be clarified as far as possible in the project document.
- The Russian translation of section III “Total budget and work plan” will be corrected.

Participants expressed their satisfaction with the project document and fully supported it and gave the following recommendation:

The meeting was concluded with the following decision:

- 1. Finalize the project document to reflect the above discussion.**
- 2. The finalized document to be forwarded to the Ministry of Economy by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection for approval and signature.**

This version of project document has taken LPAC meeting's comments into consideration and integrated all the recommendations.