

Annual Project Report

1. BASIC PROJECT IDENTIFIERS:

Project # and title:	00048429 Polesie FSP (Catalyzing sustainability of the wetland protected area system in Belarusian Polesie through increased management efficiency and realigned land use practices)
National implementing partner:	Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection of Belarus
Donor:	GEF
Period covered:	May 24 – December 31, 2006
Budget:	US\$ 186,400
Expenditure:	US\$ 159,195

2. PROJECT ISSUES:

Project Risks	Risk Level	Update on Risks
Government does no longer play a key role in the economic activities that have an impact on reserves (agriculture, fish farms, drainage, flood protection measures, forestry) and is therefore unable to pursue and sustain the recommended changes	Low	National government long-term policy of state control in land use, forestry and environmental protection implies executing regular control regular over the relevant sectors. Moreover, at the preparatory stage of the project, proposed changes were agreed with relevant state agencies and project implementation unit will monitor it on an ongoing basis.
Lack of effective intersectoral dialog between key project stakeholders and commitment to effecting changes in their policies and operational plans based on successful project demonstrations	Low	Intersectoral dialog between key project stakeholders is ensured through a number of coordination instruments, including the National Ramsar Committee, the Project Steering Committee, and Scientific-Technical Board of the Ministry of Environment.
Government not committed to improved protection of reserves	Low	Commitments to improving protection of reserves are included in a number of national policy and strategic documents, including National Environmental Action Plan 2006-2010, Annual Disbursement Plan for the National Nature Protection Fund for 2007, National Program on Tourism Development 2006-2010, National Program on Environmental Monitoring for 2006-2010 and others. Regular consultations with key state stakeholders will be continued.
Government co-financing commitments are not realized	Low	Commitments are supported by the corresponding state programs as it was confirmed by the corresponding letters at the project's preparatory stage. Government co-financing will be regularly monitored by the project team.
Lack of interest from Ukrainian government in transboundary cooperation for wetland conservation	Low	In 2006, the basis transboundary cooperation was enhanced through signing of a relevant memorandum of understanding by Belarusian and Ukrainian ministries. The MoU calls for establishing a transboundary Ramsar site in 2008 with an agreed common management plan. The Belarusian project will liaise with the Ukrainian counterparts to ensure inclusion of this activity into Ukrainian proposal on Polesie biodiversity conservation to GEF in 2007.
Lack of interest from local communities to	Low	Despite the fact that most of economic activities

Project Risks	Risk Level	Update on Risks
participate in project activities		in the region are carried out by state-owned entities there is a substantial interest from local communities in ecotourism development and sustainable use of local biological resources. The project has established good relations with the local authorities, and will ensure involvement of local communities in project activities.
Economic incentives are not realized during project lifetime and no changes in wetland use are produced	Medium	In 2006, a set of consultations with local stakeholders (authorities, communities) was carried out and significant interest to introduce new economic incentives was expressed. It is planned to organize a number of trainings to stakeholders to transfer positive international experience (ecotourism, sustainable hunting and fishing) on the ground to minimize unsustainable wetland use
The Ministry of Environment is divested of the disbursement authority for the Nature Protection Fund	Medium	The Ministry of Environment is authorized to prepare an annual disbursement plan for the Fund, but the ultimate approving authority is with the President of Belarus. The Ministry of Environment is committed to securing sufficient level of protected areas management unit's funding by including the required expenditures in the disbursement plan of the Nature Protection Fund.
Heavy emphasis by the government on self-sustaining of forestry industry	Low	According to the relevant state program, all forestry enterprises in the project region up to 2009 are expected to undergo national or international forestry certification, where biodiversity concerns are included into the list of certification principles. Moreover, for the every forestry enterprise relevant updates will be done in framework of specialized GIS "Forestry Resources" (at the moment, this exercise has been completed for 3 forestries).

Open Project Issues	Issue Description
UNDP project implementation procedures need to be properly explained to the National Implementation Agency needs to be enhanced	Some mutual misunderstanding arose during inception period as regards specific implementation procedures. It slowed the adoption of annual work plan 2006 and delayed the start of project activities. As a result, most of the contracts will extend into 2007.

3. RESULTS DELIVERY:

Results Expected	Annual Target	Rating ¹ and Status of Achievement
Outcome 1: Reserves are being managed effectively, with the active participation of local stakeholders in design and implementation aspects		
Output 1.1: Legal framework is amended to improve protection level at reserves	Section of the draft Environmental Code on protected areas	PA The contract with a legal expert concluded, result is expected by January 15, 2007
Output 1.2: Capacity of institutions and individuals for		

¹ Indicate one of the following: FA – fully achieved; PA – partially achieved; NA – not achieved, and provide necessary explanations in the same column.

Results Expected	Annual Target	Rating ¹ and Status of Achievement
reserve management is developed		
Output 1.2.1: Preparation of the main sections of the management plan for the Mid-Pripyat reserve, based on analysis and relevance of data on the contemporary state and trends in the development of key biodiversity components	Sections of the Management Plan for Mid-Pripyat reserve, Stolín District ("Biological information", "Evaluation of the area significance", "Management substantiation")	PA The contract with the Institute of Zoology of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus (NASB) concluded, results are expected by February 2, 2007
Output 1.2.2: Organization of the system of monitoring for targeted reserves as part of the comprehensive ecosystem monitoring for Pas	Monitoring network, programs and methods of comprehensive PA monitoring in Zvanets reserve, including faunistic, floristic, hydrobiological, hydrological, distant probing components	PA The contracts with institutes of zoology and botany of NASB as well as with Center for Radiation Control and Environmental Monitoring and Center Ecomir concluded, results are expected by February 1, 2007
Output 1.2.3: Organization of reserve management units (RMU)	Duly equipped acting reserves management units	FA 5 RMUs were equipped with sets of office equipment (computers with auxiliary devices, binoculars, fax, phones, cameras, etc.)
Output 1.2.4: Preparation of information materials about Zvanets reserve, its significance and ensuring of its sustainable operation	Report on current reserve's condition, implementation of the reserve's management plan; Draft of Work Plan for Protected Area Management Unit "Reserve "Zvanets for 2007-2010.	PA The contract with a local expert concluded, results are expected by January 15, 2007
Output 1.2.5: Organization of a training workshop for RMU staff	35 staff members of RMU trained in methods of sustainable financial management	NA National Implementing Agency plans to organize this meeting in February 2007
Output 1.2.6: Analysis of data on Conservation Finance Alliance for ensuring financial sustainability using global experience	Proposals on sustainable funding of RMU	NA National Implementing Agency plans to carry out this assignment in 2007
Output 1.3: Transboundary conservation arrangements are established and coordination is strengthened between Ukrainian and Belarus protected areas in Polesie		
Output 1.3.1: Participation in the seminar on coordination of area parameters and conditions for the "Prostyr" reserve" as an internationally significant ecological corridor within the framework of creation of the regional environmental network in Polesie	Coordinated work plan on organization of the transboundary PA	FA Relevant protocol and work plan on establishment of a transboundary reserve has been signed by representatives of ministries of environment of Belarus and Ukraine.
Output 1.4: Viability of ecotourism as an alternative biodiversity-friendly livelihood is		

Results Expected	Annual Target	Rating ¹ and Status of Achievement
demonstrated		
Output 1.4.1: Analysis of factors of development of ecotourism in Sporovsky reserve (natural, historical and cultural resources, etc.). Study of the modern structure of tourist flows in the region and determination of perspective types of ecotourism. Development of the concept of development of ecotourism in Sporovsky reserve	Practical recommendations and concept of sustainable development of ecological tourism in the Sporovsky reserve	PA The contract with Belarusian State University concluded, results are expected by January 22, 2007
Output 1.4.2: Review of international experience related to development of ecotourism (sustainable development of regions based on ecotourism, market mechanism for development of ecotourism, cooperation between the public and private sectors, development and promotion of regional tourism products, etc.)	Analytical report on foreign experience related to development of ecotourism and possibilities of its use in the Belarusian Polesie region	NA National Implementing Agency plans to carry out this assignment in 2007
Output 1.5: Linking of target reserves within the Polesie bionetwork (supported by UNESCO) concept is achieved		
Output 1.5.1: Sitting of the Specialized scientific-technical commission on the UNESCO project, involving experts and managers of the GEF project to discuss outputs of the implemented work (Stage 1. Coordination of project activities for 1 year of implementation	2007 work plan coordinated with the UNESCO project	FA The 2007 work plan has been agreed with national UNESCO's project implementation body
Outcome 2: Agricultural activity in and around the reserves is modified to diminish threats to biodiversity harboured in reserves		
Output 2.1: Guidelines for the environmental and economic optimization of agricultural land are developed and tested		
Output 2.1.1: Finalization of the Guidelines for the environmental and economic optimization of agricultural land	Methodological approaches and decision-making procedure for improvement of land management	PA The contract with a local expert on land use concluded, results are expected by January 23, 2007
Output 2.1.2: Development of the land management system for the Pinsk administrative district. 1 st stage	List of problems (social, economic, environmental, territorial, etc.), results of analysis and preliminary evaluation of the current land management	PA The contract with Belarusian Land-Use Planning Institute BelNitsZem concluded, results are expected by January 12, 2007
Output 2.2: Impact of drainage		

Results Expected	Annual Target	Rating ¹ and Status of Achievement
systems on project sites is reduced		
Output 2.2.1: Implementation of additional recommendations on optimization of the hydrological conditions in the "Zvanets" reserve	Water lock in the Povitievsky canal and the dam in the bypass canal of the "Novoselki" fish-farm renovated	FA The water-regulating facilities (sluice on Povitievsky canal and the dam on "Novoselki" fish-farm bypass canal) in Zvanets reserve have been renovated by the local Kobrin drainage systems company.
Output 2.2.2: Preparation of materials for the conference on the expediency of construction of a water-regulating structure on the Yaselda River so as to optimize hydrological conditions of the "Sporovsky" reserve	Analytical report on the hydrological conditions of the Yaselda River and land management in its flood bed	PA The contract with a local hydrological feasibility study consultant concluded, results are expected by January 20, 2007
Output 2.3: Viability of haymaking as an alternative biodiversity-friendly use of land owned by collectives is demonstrated	Activities planned for implementation in 2007	
Output 2.4: Adverse impact of water use by upstream fish farms is reduced		
Output 2.4.1: Consultation meeting on the measures required for ensuring optimal water levels in the reserve within the framework of fulfilment of the new rules of management for the fishfarm facility "Selets"	Agreed decision on the measures required for ensuring optimal hydrological conditions in the "Sporovsky" reserve	NA It is planned to carry out this assignment in 2007 upon delivery of results under output 2.2.2.
Outcome 3: Forestry activity in and around the reserves is modified to diminish threats to biodiversity harboured in reserves		
Output 3.1: Forest management plans are revised to integrate biodiversity conservation objectives		
Output 3.1.1: Implementation of the targeted forest management component, and making of amendments and additions in the current Plans of organization and management of forestry in Stolin and Pinsk forestry enterprises	Draft economic decisions (restrictions and activities) for forestry lands in the Mid-Pripyat and Prostyr reserves within Pinsk and Stolin forestries	PA The contract with the Institute of Botany of NASB concluded, results are expected by January 10, 2007
Output 3.1.2: Targeted adaptation of standard software for operation of geoinformation systems (GIS) "Forest Resources" for Stolin and Pinsk forest enterprises	Adapted software	PA The contract with a local forestry GIS expert concluded, results are expected by January 18, 2007
Output 3.2: Certification in line with national standards (6 forestry enterprises) &		

Results Expected	Annual Target	Rating ¹ and Status of Achievement
international standards (2 forestry enterprises) on forest certification is completed, with guidelines for replication		
Output 3.2.1: Organization of the regional training centre in Luninets forestry enterprise for forest certification and forest and environmental education (model of the training class)	Concept of the regional training centre	NA It is planned to carry out this assignment in 2007
Outcome 4: Flood protection program in and around the reserves is modified to diminish threats to biodiversity harboured in reserves		
Output 4.1: Development of recommendations on diminishing threats to biodiversity in Polesie region during fulfillment of hydrotechnical work, using as examples the following facilities: Khotomoelsky water bypass system, Yastrebel (Stolin District of Brest Region), to be used during design of flood-protection installations. Stage 1.	Evaluation of the situation, technical decisions used, recommendations for Yastrebel area as an example	PA The contract with the Belarusian Hydrotechnical Design Enterprise Belgiprovdokhoz concluded, results are expected by January 20, 2007
Output 4.2: Ensuring account of hydrological and environmental requirements during implementation of activities under the state flood-defense program in Polesie". Assessment of the program impact on the hydrological conditions in the Mid-Prityat reserve. Stage 1	Evaluation of the impact of construction of flood-protection facilities on the hydrological conditions of the Mid-Prityat and account of hydrological and environmental requirements during implementation of the program activities in the project region	PA The contract with a local hydrology expert concluded, results are expected by January 20, 2007
Output 4.3: Collection of data on optimization of hydrological conditions in drainage systems adjacent to the targeted reserves; control over hydrological conditions	Data on hydrological conditions of drainage systems, adjacent to the target reserves, used for preparation of the special topic report and recommendations	FA The monitoring data collected at Zvanets reserve showed positive trends in the water regime.
Output 4.4: Measurement of ground water levels in the "Zvanets" reserve	Data on measurement of the ground water level in the "Zvanets" reserve in Nov.2005-Jan.2007	PA The contract with a local hydrological monitoring assistant concluded, results are expected by January 10, 2007
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		
Output 5.1: Management capacity of the national network of wetland reserves is strengthened		
Output 5.1.1: Preparation of the analytical review taking into account international experience related to existing approaches and methods of conservation of habitats and populations of rare and	Draft regulatory document "Regulations on the procedure of identification and protection of wildlife and wild plant habitats, included into the Red Book of the Republic of Belarus"	PA The contract with a local biodiversity conservation expert concluded, results are expected by January 15, 2007

Results Expected	Annual Target	Rating ¹ and Status of Achievement
protected fauna species		
Output 5.2: Implementation of sustainable agriculture policy near wetland reserves strengthened at a national level	Activities planned for implementation in 2007-2009	
Output 5.3: Integration of biodiversity principles in forest management plans at a national level	Activities planned for implementation in 2007-2009	
Output 5.4: Adaptive management and learning		
Output 5.4.1: Participation in the scientific-practical conference "Participation of the Republic of Belarus in international nature-conservation conventions"	Information on the project provided to a broad range of stakeholders	FA The conference was held in September 2006, enabling the project team to share project information to more than 300 environmental specialists from all over Belarus.
Output 5.4.2: Hiring the project management group	Project management group is duly formed	FA In line with UNDP recruitment procedures, a Project Manager, a Scientific Coordinator and an Administrative/Financial Assistant have been recruited with due participation of the Ministry of Environment.
Output 5.4.3: Project outcomes monitoring and evaluation	Regular monitoring and evaluation of project results	FA The Project Steering Committee meeting was held September 14, 2006. The project management group has been monitoring on-the-ground project activities on an ongoing basis.

3. FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE:

Project Outcomes / Atlas Budget Activities	Annual budget, US\$	Annual expenditure, US\$	Delivery, %
Outcome 1: Reserves are being managed effectively, with the active participation of local stakeholders in design and implementation aspects	92,100	78,155	85
Outcome 2: Agricultural activity in and around the reserves is modified to diminish threats to biodiversity harbored in reserves	21,800	19,170	88
Outcome 3: Forestry activity in and around the reserves is modified to diminish threats to biodiversity harbored in reserves	24,800	20,447	82
Outcome 4: Flood protection program in and around the reserves is modified to diminish threats to biodiversity harbored in reserves	7,000	5,908	84
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	40,700	35,916	88
TOTAL	186,400	159,195	85

Note on delivery rates:

- Lower than projected delivery rates under all outcomes are explained by the fact that some of the activities planned for 2006 have been shifted into 2007 due to delayed approval of the annual workplan; actual costs of specific contracts proved lower than projected and travel expenses have been lower than planned.

4. IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES/ CHALLENGES

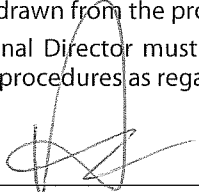
The project has faced the following issues during its first year of implementation:

- The project officially started in June 2005. Due to the necessity of staff recruitment and project's office establishment, project implementation strategy was finalized in August 2006. The annual workplan for 2006 was prepared in September and approved by the National Implementation Agency in October 2006. It caused some delay in contracting of the project consultants and companies, and subsequently the contracts for 2006 are expected to deliver the agreed outputs within January –February 2007.

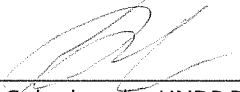
5. LESSONS LEARNED

The key lessons to be drawn from the project implementation during the review period are:

- The Project National Director must have clear understanding of his/her rights and duties and be well informed about UNDP/GEF procedures as regards project implementation, funds disbursement, planning and reporting.



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