

GEF EO Terminal Evaluation Review Form

1. PROJECT DATA				
GEF Project ID: 1045		Review date:		
IA/EA Project ID: 2190		<u>at endorsement</u> (Million US\$)	<u>at completion</u> (Million US\$)	
Project Name: Biodiversity Protection in North Vidzeme Biosphere Reserve		GEF financing:	2.66	2.66
		IA/EA own:	0.17	0.15
Country: Latvia		Government:	0.63	1.73
		Other*:	10.11	**57.79
		Total Cofinancing	10.74	59.67
Operational Program: OP2: Coastal and Marine Freshwater Ecosystems; Focal area: Biodiversity		Total Project Cost:	13.4	62.35
IA	UNDP	<u>Dates</u>		
Partners involved:	Govt. of Latvia, WWF, Baltic Environmental Forum, EU Instrument for Accession States	Effectiveness/ Prodoc Signature (i.e. date project began)		Aug 14, 2004
		Closing Date	Proposed: Sept 2009	Actual: Nov 2009
TER Prepared by: Pallavi Nuka	TER peer reviewed by:	Duration between effectiveness date and original closing (in months): 60	Duration between effectiveness date and actual closing (in months): 62	Difference between original and actual closing (in months): 2
Author of TE: Dr. Phillip Edwards Ms. Maija Kurte		TE completion date: Sept. 2009	TE submission date to GEF EO:	Difference between TE completion and submission date (in months):

* Other is referred to contributions mobilized for the project from other multilateral agencies, bilateral development cooperation agencies, NGOs, the private sector and beneficiaries.

**This includes a \$46.35 M grant from the EU Rural Development Fund to the Latvian Ministry of Agriculture.

2. SUMMARY OF PROJECT RATINGS AND KEY FINDINGS

Please refer to document GEF Office of Evaluation Guidelines for terminal evaluation reviews for further definitions of the ratings.

Performance Dimension	Last PIR	IA Terminal Evaluation	IA Evaluation Office evaluations or reviews	GEF EO
2.1a Project outcomes	S	HS	N/A	HS
2.1b Sustainability of Outcomes	N/A	L	N/A	ML
2.1c Monitoring and evaluation	N/A	HS	N/A	S
2.1d Quality of implementation and Execution	HS	HS	N/A	HS
2.1e Quality of the evaluation report	N/A	N/A	N/A	HS

2.2 Should the terminal evaluation report for this project be considered a good practice? Why?

Yes, the TE report provides a detailed and comprehensive assessment of outcomes, performance, and risks to sustainability. The report also provides detailed evaluation of the M&E system, level of country ownership, and a detailed breakdown of costs.

2.3 Are there any evaluation findings that require follow-up, such as corruption, reallocation of GEF funds, mismanagement, etc.?

No such findings were noted in the TE report.

3. PROJECT OBJECTIVES

3.1 Project Objectives

a. What were the Global Environmental Objectives of the project? Were there any changes during implementation?

As stated in the ProDoc the immediate objective of the project was “to ensure conservation of globally significant biodiversity in the North Vidzeme Biosphere Reserve (NVBR) by implementing a set of initiatives required to integrate biodiversity conservation principles and practices into the planning, management and sustainable use of the Reserve.”

b. What were the Development Objectives of the project? Were there any changes during implementation? (describe and insert tick in appropriate box below, if yes at what level was the change approved (GEFSEC, IA or EA)?)

As stated in the Project Document (ProDoc), the development objective is “to optimize biodiversity conservation practice in Latvia’s protected areas and associated landscapes.” The project aimed to integrate biodiversity conservation into the planning, management and sustainable use of the National Vidzeme Biosphere Reserve (NVBR), which comprises 6% of Latvia’s territory. It was designed to enhance “the institutional, managerial and financial sustainability of this system of protected areas through legislation and policy analysis, and strengthening of institutional and stakeholder capacities.” As the NVBR contains a representative selection of the threats and opportunities found in other areas of Latvia, the project also sought to develop a set of lessons and best practices which could be disseminated to strengthen other Protected Areas outside the NVBR.

The ProDoc does lists a set of eight expected outcomes (called ‘outputs’ in ProDoc), which correspond to project components.

1. Improved information on the NVBR and its biodiversity, as well as the information’s management and use in decision-making;
2. Strengthened institutional capacity and multi-sectoral and participatory mechanisms for governance and management of the Reserve;
3. Identification of potential reforms to existing policies, legislation and incentive/regulatory frameworks for resource use, with the aim of stimulating or supporting biodiversity-friendly behavior;
4. Integrated ecological landscape planning for the NVBR;
5. Demonstration of alternative biodiversity-supporting economic development activities for local communities in forestry, agriculture and tourism;
6. Increased awareness of and support for biodiversity conservation and sustainable development among all stakeholders;
7. Habitat restoration at selected sites to maintain and enhance globally significant biodiversity;
8. Systematic identification and dissemination of lessons learned and best practices through ministerial and NGO channels throughout Latvia.

There were no changes in development objectives or outcomes during implementation, but a 9th component was added for project management and administration.

Overall Environmental Objectives	Project Development Objectives	Project Components	Any other (specify)
		X	

c. If yes, tick applicable reasons for the change (in global environmental objectives and/or development objectives)

Original objectives not sufficiently articulated	Exogenous conditions changed, due to which a change in objectives was needed	Project was restructured because original objectives were over ambitious	Project was restructured because of lack of progress	Any other (specify)
				A 9 th component was added for project management and administration.

4. GEF EVALUATION OFFICE ASSESSMENT OF OUTCOMES AND SUSTAINABILITY

4.1.1 Outcomes (Relevance can receive either a satisfactory rating or an unsatisfactory rating. For effectiveness and cost efficiency a six point scale 6= HS to 1 = HU will be used)

a. Relevance	Rating: S
<p>The North Vidzeme Biosphere Reserve (NVBR) covers 6% of the territory of Latvia and consists of a network of protected areas - three core zones and 36 other sites designated for special protection - nested in a landscape of productive uses. The reserve contains areas of globally significant biodiversity and project outcomes are highly relevant to the GEF's Biodiversity Focal area. Project outcomes are consistent with the goals of Operational Program #2 "Coastal Marine and Freshwater Ecosystems." The project has restored damaged habitats, and succeeded in mitigating threats to biodiversity in targeted areas by mainstreaming biodiversity protection with socio-economic goals. The project has built-in mechanisms for monitoring outcomes, both in terms of ecosystem structure/function and sustainable use by local populations.</p> <p>Project outcomes are also consistent with national goals and priorities. Project outcomes were in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Plan, the National Programme on Biological Diversity, The Latvian Strategy for Sustainable Development, and the law "On North Vidzeme Biosphere Reserve" (1997), which sought to restore damaged ecosystems and promote sustainable economic and social development in the area. The project is consistent with the MoE action plans for the area: "Habitat Conservation Action Plan for Coastal Dunes" and "Action Plan for the Management of the Relationship Between Cranes and Agriculture". The Project also is consistent with the aims of the MoE-endorsed and European Union-funded project "Protection and Management of Coastal Habitats in Latvia."</p>	
b. Effectiveness	Rating: S
<p>The project has successfully achieved expected outputs and outcomes with a very high level of stakeholder participation. The TE report notes that the project has not had any major shortcomings and suggests that the project be considered a "good practice." The UNDP Country Office and RTA in the last PIR also note that the project has been "highly satisfactory in meeting the objectives of securing biodiversity values which is demonstrated through the indicators on the important species and management areas targeted by the project." The project has fostered public involvement in conservation and garnered strong stakeholder support. The only shortcomings in outcomes as pinpointed in the TE report and in the PIR are the lack of activities to boost capacity in the NVRB administration and concerns about financial sustainability going forward.</p> <p>The NVBR area includes multiple local governments, which at the start of the project had fragmented and sometimes conflicting resource use policies. This project has strengthened participatory mechanisms to ensure more coherent governance and management of the Reserve. The project has established an NVBR Consultative Board, including local and national representatives, to coordinate environmental protection and socio-economic development issues in the NVBR and integrated biodiversity conservation into regional and municipal development plans. The project has also developed EcoWatch, a community based biodiversity monitoring program and piloted a conflict mediation mechanism. The project has conducted capacity assessments of the NVBR administration, but the TE report notes that it is not clear whether any capacity building activities have been undertaken as a result of these assessments.</p> <p>An integrated Landscape Ecological Plan (LEP) for the NVBR was elaborated through extensive stakeholder consultation, training, and education. Although the Plan has not yet become legally binding and the NVBR area has not been re-zoned (as envisioned in the ProDoc), the LEP guidelines have been incorporated into several district and municipal spatial plans, and into the management of state-owned forests. Parts of this plan have also been incorporated into environmental regulations governing the area. With regard to reforms in existing policies, the project analyzed existing rules and regulations on resource use and requirements for more biodiversity-friendly legislation. No legislative changes were recommended as a result of this analysis, but several incentive and compensation mechanisms to promote sustainable land-use were identified and incorporated into demonstration projects.</p> <p>The project established a Small Grants Program (SGP) to support biodiversity conservation while encouraging economic development. A total of 41 small grants were awarded for conservation friendly business ideas. Follow-up after 12 months showed that 66% of the grant funded projects were profitable, meaning that the returns exceeded investments, and 50% had hired additional employees. In addition to the SGP, seven demonstration projects were launched to highlight how private landowners could apply innovative land management techniques to maintain key habitats while generating some additional income. These demonstration projects were well-documented (for replication at other sites in Latvia) and accompanied by extensive local publicity.</p> <p>Environmental outcomes include the implementation of a River Basin Management Plan for the Salaca River and restoration and rehabilitation of important habitats in the NVRB. Activities have led to improved conditions in Lake Burtnieki, restoration of salmon and lamprey spawning waters and removal of barriers to migration, and control of invasive flora and fish species. Five floodplains have been restored and are being managed through a combination of compensation mechanisms and education for the landowners and public.</p>	

Project activities have significantly improved the quantity and quality of information available on the NVBR and its biodiversity, as well as the information's management and use in decision-making. The project team has collected and compiled data on biological and socio-economic and made it available through an online database system. The environment M&E system developed by the project is "highly innovative" in its use of experts and local residents in data collection. The system is also well integrated into the policy and planning framework and it is already providing inputs into decision-making in managing the NVBR.

The project's communications and education strategy is cited as a "best practice" which contributed to expanding local knowledge and awareness of the goals of the NVBR. Awareness of the NVBR has risen from 30% to 80% and support for biodiversity conservation has increased to 86%. The EcoWatch program has over 400 participants and attendance at NVBR events has numbered over 2000. Project funded studies and reports have been widely disseminated through websites and print.

c. Efficiency (cost-effectiveness)

Rating: HS

The project has achieved all of its intended outcomes (excepting the minor shortcomings noted above) within the proposed timeframe. 97% of the GEF grant was expended and significant progress was made towards achievement of GEOs using some innovative strategies, with impacts already evident by project closing. Project outputs have been prolific (reports, studies, databases, meetings) and of a very high caliber. The project closed two months later than expected, but as noted in the final PIR, this time was necessary to implement some of the recommendations of the final evaluation and transfer activities to the NVBR administration. Project activities were exceptionally well managed and project efficiency is rated highly in both the FE report and the final PIR.

4.2 Likelihood of sustainability. Using the following sustainability criteria, include an assessment of risks to sustainability of project outcomes and impacts based on the information presented in the TE. Use a four point scale (4= Likely (no or negligible risk); 3= Moderately Likely (low risk); 2= Moderately Unlikely (substantial risks) to 1= Unlikely (High risk)). The ratings should be given taking into account both the probability of a risk materializing and the anticipated magnitude of its effect on the continuance of project benefits.

a. Financial resources

Rating: L

The TE report notes that the long-term financial sustainability of outcomes is likely, but that in the intermediate term the NVBR administration may face some cuts. The global financial crisis has led to reduced government expenditure and forced a significant re-organization to the institutional framework of environmental protection. Previously, the NVBRA had an independent budget supplied through the MoE, but from now on funding will come from the centralized budget of the National Parks Agency (NPA). Current staffing rates of the NVBRA appear to be guaranteed, but, EcoWatch, the public monitoring program may lose funding. The nature concert hall program is already financially sustainable. Increased public awareness of the NVBR and increasing identity of it, both significant Project successes, mean also that there is increased public demand to maintain adequate financing of its Administration.

The SGP program has been very effective, and the results are likely to be sustained as 66% of the funded projects have proved to be profitable.

b. Socio-political

Rating: L

Based on the assessment in the TER report socio-political risks to sustainability are negligible. A number of high profile activities such as the nature concert halls and public monitoring program combined with lower profile awareness raising, have helped the local public identify with NVBR. Awareness and support for NVBR activities have risen significantly. The Project has worked hard with a number of stakeholder institutions including District and Municipal Councils. Local educational institutes and libraries were involved in an information campaign to raise awareness about the project's biodiversity database and to ensure its widespread availability at the local level.

c. Institutional framework and governance

Rating: ML

The national Government continues to show commitment to biodiversity conservation to meet international, particularly EU, obligations. The local institutional and governance frameworks will likely support sustainability of outcomes. Local government reform has consolidated the 41 Municipalities covering the NVBR into 10 Counties. These counties will be required to develop new spatial plan integrating the Landscape Ecological Plan.

The only risk to sustainability of outcomes identified in the TE report is the weak capacity of the NVBRA staff to use the new tools and mechanisms developed under this project and continue project activities such as updating the LEP, organizing public events, and making effective use of the database.

d. Environmental

Rating: ML

Project activities have minimized some environmental risks. The JSC (Latvia State Forests) is attempting to integrate the LEP into its own operations and as a result is exploring the benefits of sustainable forests certification schemes such as that run by the Sustainable Forestry Initiative. The Project has also demonstrated a number of habitat management techniques for landowners that are both good for biodiversity and provide economic benefits, e.g. forest thinning in the coastal belt, and river bank management. While the demonstration plots are small in scale, they have wide relevance and have generated interest among some landowners since they will provide a profitable return from land that otherwise generates almost no income.

Other (less significant) environmental risks remain. An obstruction to migrating salmon in the Salaca River has not been removed, and this poses a risk to salmon populations in the NVBR. However, the TE report notes that the importance of this obstruction to salmon migration may have been overstated. Another risk is the level of illegal fishing in the NVBR. The TE report notes that the number of fishing violations in the Salaca River has increased, largely due to the economic downturn.

4.3 Assessment of processes and factors affecting attainment of project outcomes and sustainability.

a. Co-financing. To what extent was the reported cofinancing (or proposed cofinancing) essential to achievement of GEF objectives? Were components supported by cofinancing well integrated into the project? If there was a difference in the level of expected co-financing and actual co-financing, then what were the reasons for it? Did the extent of materialization of co-financing affect project's outcomes and/or sustainability? If it did, then in what ways and through what causal linkages?

Co-financing was essential to achieving project outcomes and objectives. This project garnered extensive cash financing from government, bilateral, and NGO sources, reflective of strong stakeholder participation and support. Cash financing was typically managed by the donors. The high level of realized co-financing has made sustainability of project outcomes very likely. Actual co-financing contributions accounted for 93% of project costs based on final PIR and the TE report. Actual co-financing was much greater than proposed in the ProDoc. The project received cash-financing from the Latvian Environment Protection Fund of \$1.07 M and the EU Fund for Rural Development contributed \$46.35 M to the Ministry of Agriculture. These grants were channeled through the national government so it is not clear how they contributed to actual project costs. The EU Instrument for Pre-Accession contributed \$8.3M in cash financing as proposed. Other state and local government co-financing was \$0.68 M and all other co-financing was \$2.92 M. Based on the ProDoc budget components supported by co-financing were well integrated into the project.

b. Delays. If there were delays in project implementation and completion, then what were the reasons for it? Did the delay affect the project's outcomes and/or sustainability? If it did, then in what ways and through what causal linkages?

There were no delays in project implementation or in completion of activities. The project closed two months later than expected permitting the project team to review the FE and implement some of the recommendations.

c. Country Ownership. Assess the extent to which country ownership has affected project outcomes and sustainability? Describe the ways in which it affected outcomes and sustainability highlighting the causal links.

Country ownership has largely supported project outcomes and sustainability. The Project has worked closely with, and through, a large number of key local stakeholders, including state ministries, the Nature Protection Agency, the Forests Service and Companies, as well as municipal governments and educational institutions. The national government has supported the project through various funding mechanisms, increased staff levels for the NVBR administration, will provide on-going funding for the NVBR administration.

High level political support for the project at the national level was not always evident. The Project Steering Committee (PSC), which provided strategic oversight for the project, did not include a high-ranking member of the MoE, decreasing the project's political clout in some conflicts over habitat restoration.

4.4 Assessment of the project's monitoring and evaluation system based on the information in the TE

a. M&E design at Entry **Rating (six point scale): S**

The Project Document's M&E system included a detailed log-frame and work plan. The M&E also set the requirements for project reporting and monitoring. The ProDoc log-frame specifies relevant indicators or criteria for each proposed output and the overall objective. Methods of verification and assumptions were also identified for each indicator. The term 'output' was changed to 'outcome' after the project started. The indicators selected are suitable for the expected outcomes and activities geared toward those outcomes. These indicators also include both 'output' indicators and 'outcome' indicators.

b. M&E plan Implementation **Rating (six point scale): HS**

The TE report notes that the project’s management and implementation have closely followed the log-frame. The Project team held a series throughout of workshops at the start of implementation to elaborate the project description and the log-frame in detail, and developed a Project Inception Report to guide project implementation. This Report included a comprehensive integrated monitoring program covering 180 indicators (biodiversity, air and water quality, land use, and socio-economic) to provide information to direct decision-making on management.

Internal project monitoring has been well implemented through weekly planning meetings for the project team and the use of software to track progress on activities and outputs. This facilitated coordination and feedback between the various components and enabled milestones to be tracked. Semi-annual planning meetings were held with the NVBRA to determine a common approach. M&E data has been used to adapt project activities throughout implementation. Recommendations from the Mid-term Evaluation were implemented. Quarterly and annual reports were made to the Project Steering Committee and UNDP-CO, in addition to the PIRs.

The TE report also notes that impact monitoring by the project has been particularly strong with data collected on the effectiveness of capacity building activities for the NVBR administration, increases in public awareness, and the number of people participating the EcoWatch program.

4.6 Assessment of Quality of Implementation and Execution

a. Overall Quality of Implementation and Execution (on a six point scale): HS

b. Overall Quality of Implementation – for IA (on a six point scale): S

Briefly describe and assess performance on issues such as quality of the project design, focus on results, adequacy of supervision inputs and processes, quality of risk management, candor and realism in supervision reporting, and suitability of the chosen executing agencies for project execution.

The IA for this project was the UNDP Country Office. The IA provided input and feedback to the executing agency on all aspects of implementation. The level of oversight and supervision was quite thorough. The IA and the project team also had offices in the same building which fostered a close working relationship. Project team members met UNDP staff once or more a week to discuss project progress and specific outcomes. The IA was also able to monitor the project through numerous field visits (at least once a month in 2007-8). Financial monitoring was thorough with quarterly reports on expenditures and procurement. Based on review of the PIRs the quality of risk management was also good. The project risk assessment was updated yearly together with the project team and most identified risks were addressed. One of the identified risks not addressed was the low level of capacity in the NVRBA. Overall, reporting by the IA was detailed and accurate.

The choice of executing agency for the project, the NVRB Administration (through the Ministry of Environment), was suitable given its role in project preparation. The MoE and UNDP CO decided to set up a Project Management Unit (PMU) to operate alongside the NVRB Administration, rather than embedding the PMU within the NVRB Administration. This had led to some questions about the degree of enhanced capacity in the NVRBA and the extent of skills/technology transferred. A related issue is whether the project design should have placed more emphasis on bolstering capacities in the NVRBA. The TE report argues that this is the case, but review of the ProDoc shows that capacity building is indeed a main component. Several capacity assessments were conducted during implementation and the IA could have pushed the PMU and the NVRBA to take more actions based on the results of these assessments.

The Project Steering Committee provided strategic oversight for the project. Based on the TE report, the PSC met at least twice a year and was very effective in providing guidance that was “both timely and relevant.”

c. Quality of Execution – for Executing Agencies¹ (rating on a 6 point scale) HS

Briefly describe and assess performance on issues such as focus on results, adequacy of management inputs and processes, quality of risk management, and candor and realism in reporting by the executive agency.

The project was executed under the National Execution (NEX) modality, through the Ministry of Environment (MOE), and implemented by the North Vidzeme Biosphere Reserve Administration (NVBRA). Overall direction of the project was the responsibility of the National Project Director (NPD), a post held by the Director of the North Vidzeme Biosphere Reserve Administration. The NPD was responsible for overseeing the execution of the Project on behalf of the Government. Day-to-day implementation has been the responsibility of the Project Management Unit (PMU), headed by a full-time National Project Manager (NPM), with offices in the NVBRA headquarters and in the UNDP CO

¹ Executing Agencies for this section would mean those agencies that are executing the project in the field. For any given project this will exclude Executing Agencies that are implementing the project under expanded opportunities – for projects approved under the expanded opportunities procedure the respective executing agency will be treated as an implementing agency.

office.

The TE report notes that project execution has been outstanding despite an institutional context “that has not been wholly conducive to efficient implementation with low capacity within the NVBRA and other stakeholders, and an initially low level of public awareness towards the aims of the Biosphere Reserve and the Project itself.” The PMU was particularly well-organized, highly motivated, and led by a strong NPM with a scientific background. External consultants and contractors have been tied to results-based contracts with payments dependent upon satisfactory deliverables or milestones. Reporting by the PMU was regular and realistic. The TE report also commends the PMU for its “innovative” approach to implementation and for “very good” adaptive management. As noted above, the PMU and UNDP CO had a close working relationship and shared offices, which contributed to very smooth start-up and implementation.

Sustainability of project outcomes has been a priority. The 2010 PIR notes that the PMU was “engaged on the highest level with top ministry officials and the Minister of Environment to secure the status and initiatives of the BR.” The PMU has also highlighted local participation as a key element of sustainability and has successfully worked with all stakeholders to generate support for outcomes.

5. PROGRESS TOWARDS IMPACT

a. What is the *outlined* outcomes-to-impact pathway?

Briefly describe the logical sequence of means-to-end linkages underlying a project (Outcome to impact pathways are the means-ends relationships between project outcomes and the intended impacts – i.e. the logical results chain of activity, output, outcome and impact)

Activities	Outputs	Outcomes	Impacts
Provision of management tools: Data collection, information management, biodiversity monitoring system design.	Improved information on the NVBR and its biodiversity for use in decision-making	An effective enabling policy and regulatory and incentive environment for biodiversity conservation developed in partnership with all stakeholders.	Expanded conservation areas: Increase in core reserve areas. Restored habitats under conservation.
Focus on reforms to policy, planning, and legal frameworks to support biodiversity conservation.	Strengthened institutional capacity and participatory mechanisms for governance and management of the Reserve.	Stronger institutions and mechanisms for participatory, multi-sectoral planning and management of the NVBR.	Improved socio-economic conditions as communities realize benefits from sustainable management.
Activities to raise public awareness and participation in biodiversity conservation.	Legal, regulatory, planning reforms identified and implemented to support biodiversity conservation.	Private lands under sustainable management.	
Support to develop an integrated ecological landscape plan through a highly participative process.	Integrated ecological landscape planning is implemented for the NVBR.	Enhanced capacities of local stakeholders to identify and adapt best resource management practices aimed at optimizing biodiversity and economic development.	
Restoration of key habitats and infrastructure investments.	Demonstration of alternative biodiversity-supporting economic development activities for local communities in forestry, agriculture and tourism.		
	Increased awareness of and support for biodiversity conservation		

	<p>and sustainable development among all stakeholders</p> <p>Habitat restoration at selected sites to maintain and enhance globally significant biodiversity</p> <p>Systematic identification of lessons learned and best practices and dissemination through ministerial and NGO channels throughout Latvia</p>		
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b. What are the actual (*intended or unintended*) impacts of the project?

Based on the assessment of outcomes [4.1.1] explain to what extent the project contributed to or detracted from the path to project impacts and to *impact drivers* (Impact drivers are the *significant factors* that, if present, are expected to contribute to the ultimate realization of project impacts and that are within the ability of the project to influence

The project has already realized some environmental impacts including an increase in core Reserve areas from 4% at the start of the project to 7.7% by 2009 through the legal designation of Strictly Protected Areas within the NVBR. Areas of threatened habitats now restored and under conservation management now include 622 ha of floodplain grasslands and 32 ha of river rapids as spawning areas for Atlantic salmon and lampreys. Key woodland habitats under conservation have increased from 409 ha to 2,276 ha. Populations of key indicator species (wolves, lynx, and salmon) have been maintained at or above the baseline level.

The Small Grants Program has resulted in increased profitability for local businesses and increased employment. The sustainable land management demonstration projects have not had immediate impacts, but they do provide an example to private landowners of how new management techniques can support both biodiversity conservations and income generation.

NVBR has become an outstanding example for innovative public awareness programs (Eco-watch, NGO-forums, nature concert hall). These activities have served as best practices and are being replicated at other parks and reserves in Latvia. The Landscape Ecological Plan (LEP) was the first of its kind in Latvia and the experience from designing and implementing this plan is being used to draw up plans for other areas. The project has also developed a biodiversity monitoring and management tool which will be used in future decision-making.

Impact drivers: The integration of the LEP into County level spatial development plans is an important factor affecting realization of future impacts. This would give the LEP some legal foundation and make accordance with LEP guidelines a legal obligation for private landowners and developers. Similarly adoption of LEP principles by the State Forests Service and Forest Companies would help enlarge the area of sustainably managed biodiversity. These agencies have already taken steps in this direction. Another factor is the capacity and legal mandate of the NVRBA to continue project activities and sustain outcomes. Achievement of future impact rests on the assumptions that the NVRBA will become a more pro-active organization that it is currently.

c. Drawing on the assessment of the likelihood of outcome sustainability [4.2], what are the apparent risks to achieved impacts being sustained and likely impacts being achieved?

As noted under impact drivers, the likelihood of impacts being achieved rests on the assumptions that the NVRBA will become a more pro-active organization that it is currently. The weak capacity of the NVRBA is noted as a risk to sustainability in both the TE report and the PIRs. Other risks to the sustainability of impacts arise from economic factors which may lead to increases in natural resource exploitation. The TE report notes that illegal fishing has increased following the economic downturn. If this activity becomes widespread it may pose a risk to sustainability of some project impacts.

d. Evidence of Impact

Question	Yes	No	UA
i. Did the evaluation report on <i>stress reduction</i> ² at the <u>local level</u> (i.e. at the demonstration-pilot level, etc)?	X		
ii. If yes, describe the evidence that was provided whenever possible quoting quantitative evidence. Also discuss the scope ³ of such reductions given the range of concerns targeted by the project. Areas of threatened habitats now restored and under conservation management now include 622 ha of floodplain grasslands and 32 ha of river rapids as spawning areas for Atlantic salmon and lampreys. Reductions were limited to the project area consistent with objectives.			
iii. Did the evaluation report stress reduction at the broader <u>systemic level</u> ?			
iv. If yes, describe the evidence that was provided whenever possible quoting quantitative evidence. Also discuss the scope of such reductions given the range of concerns targeted by the project.			
v. Did the evaluation report change in the <i>environmental status</i> at the local level (i.e. at the demonstration - pilot level, etc)	X		
vi. If yes, describe the evidence that was provided whenever possible quoting quantitative evidence. Also discuss the scope of change given the range of concerns targeted by the project. The report highlights that core Reserve areas increased from 4% at the start of the project to 7.7% by 2009. Key woodland habitats under conservation have increased from 409 ha to 2,276 ha. Populations of key indicator species (wolves, lynx, and salmon) have been maintained at or above the baseline level. Changes were limited to the project area consistent with objectives.			
vii. Did the evaluation report change in the environmental status at the broader systemic level?		X	
viii. If yes, describe the evidence that was provided whenever possible quoting quantitative evidence. Also discuss the scope of such change given the range of concerns targeted by the project.			
ix. Did the evaluation report change in the socioeconomic status at the local level?	X		
x. If yes, describe the evidence that was provided whenever possible quoting quantitative evidence. Also discuss the scope of change given the range of concerns targeted by the project. The report states that the SGP has improved business profitability and created new jobs. 66% of the SGP funded businesses have received a return on investment, and 50% have hired additional staff.			
xi. Did the evaluation report change in the socio-economic status at the systemic level?		X	
xii. If yes, describe the evidence that was provided whenever possible quoting quantitative evidence. Also discuss the scope of change given the range of concerns targeted by the project.			
xiii. Did the evaluation provide evidence of any negative impacts (on drivers toward the projects intended impact, environmental status, socioeconomic status)? Describe the impacts that were documented and how severe were these impacts? No negative impacts were noted.			
e. Monitoring of impacts			
i. Are arrangements/institutions in place to monitor stress reduction/improvement in the environment and/or socio-economic conditions at the local level after project completion?	X		
ii. Are arrangements/institutions in place to monitor stress reduction/improvement in the environment and/or socio-economic conditions at the systemic level after project completion?		X	

6. LESSONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Assess the project lessons and recommendations as described in the TE

a. Briefly describe the key lessons, good practice or approaches mentioned in the terminal evaluation report that could have application for other GEF projects

- Innovation involves risk:** Perhaps the main characteristic of this Project has been its innovative approach, trying new things not only in the context of Latvia, but in some cases completely new. The GEF should find

² Stress = Pressure on the environment caused by human activities; Reduction=decrease of this pressure

³ Scope refers to the broadness of results against original objectives,

ways of encouraging innovation without being overly censorious where such attempts fail – as long as the associated risks are managed carefully the benefits would seem to outweigh the costs.

2. **Communication is important; harness its power from the beginning:** The Communication Strategy of this Project was carried out professionally and effectively and the benefits are plain to see. Key lessons are to engage a professional at the earliest opportunity; define the resources available according to reality; develop a strategy early; understand the challenges and risks the project faces; identify the target groups; and use as many means possible of getting messages across. In addition, it is hard to change attitudes purely from a “green” point of view because people don’t listen; it is important not to use scientific language such as “sustainable development” but to use simple concepts instead; and it is important to show people concrete examples – demonstrations and case studies are particularly effective in getting people to understand. Finally, use all of a project’s activities to raise awareness, e.g. the public monitoring system has proved to be a very effective means of communication and has had a snowball effect.
3. **Providing a visual identity or creating a brand for a project or protected area results in increased social capital.** The creation of a visual identity and getting local people to recognize and identify with an idea, a project, or an area of land cannot be over-stated since this is often at the centre of gaining the respect of local communities and local stakeholders and landowners on whose goodwill much of a project’s success may rest.
4. **Increased visual identity brings increased demand for management resources.** As people come to identify more and more with an area, the most prominent managers or administrators of that area come under increased pressure to provide all sorts of support. For example, the NVBRA is constantly being asked to become a partner or take part in actions to develop new projects, assist in the promotion of activities, or just provide basic information. It is important that those in such a role do not underestimate the amount of resources such an increased identity will bring since such a role should not be rejected. Involvement in the local community brings increased influence and awareness-raising opportunities.
5. **Awareness-raising has to be specific as well as general.** It is important that where specific issues are causing, or are likely to cause, a project problems that public awareness raising is done to alleviate the problem and overcome opposition.
6. **Care taken during the inception phase pays dividends.** The inception period for this project was long and carefully considered. Much time was taken in defining the activities from what was considered to be a fairly general description in the Project Document. Later, a lot of care was taken with the process of changing the indicators to make them more quantitative, each being selected carefully to ensure they could be measured accurately. The whole implementation was based on a sound scientific approach with good feedback provided by a precise monitoring program. The result is a highly successful project.
7. **Small grants programs can offer small amounts of money and still be successful.** The present Project showed that a SGP can have significant success even when only small sums are involved and the leverage ratio is high. The key appears to be to make the application process a) easy for the applicant; b) well supported to deal with questions; and c) to have clear and concise aims and criteria.
8. **Capacity building should include a review of an organization’s legal mandate.** Insufficient human resources and the substantive legal mandate inhibit the NVBRA from establishing a more proactive, adaptive, strategic management approach to the Reserve’s management. The supervising institutions’ requirements for reporting, such as to the MOE, unfortunately still demonstrates a limited understanding of the functions of a biosphere reserve (i.e. mostly concentrating on the conservation and compliance functions rather than wider sustainable socio-economic development functions), which creates institutional capacity constraints for the NVBRA to address all of its strategic priorities equally.
9. **Involvement of landowners directly in management or restoration leads to sustainability.** Activities have stimulated local farmers to get more involved in networking and exchange of experiences and triggered a much wider application for EU agri-environment funding for sustainable management. Since they now realize that protected areas may also bring income and not only restrictions they will get used to that income stream and management requirements associated with it, which in turn will make them more likely to re-apply for funding.
10. **Implementation of a landscape ecological plan really requires a legislative base.** The unwillingness of the Ministry of Regional Development and Local Government or the MOE to enact the requisite legislation or regulations to convey the LEP into law has undermined its implementation significantly. While local

governments have seemed ready and willing to incorporate much of it into their development and spatial plans, to a large degree this has arisen because their capacities are low and it is welcomed as saving time and money. However, the State forest managers have integrated it into their plans only on areas with high biodiversity value and then with great difficulty and some reluctance. Private landowners view it with suspicion because of the restrictions it brings and will be unlikely to take account of it except through its integration in the legally binding local government plans.

11. Landscape ecological plans require a higher degree of flexibility when elaborated at a small scale.

Elaboration of the LEP was caught over the problem of scale – 1:10,000 was preferred from a working point of view (e.g. forest compartment maps) and precedents; 1:50,000 was the only practical scale for an area as large as the NVBR. In selecting the practical option, the management guidelines for the various zones were still elaborated with the same level of detail and stringency as if the larger scale had been selected. This has caused significant (and perhaps intractable) problems for the implementation of the LEP, and a higher level of flexibility in the elaboration of a plan at a smaller scale would have been beneficial.

12. Sustainable development profile changes the mindset of protected area managers. Production of a sustainable development profile had unexpected benefits in that it changed managers thinking from solely about nature protection to paying more attention to socio-economic aspects of reserve.

b. Briefly describe the recommendations given in the terminal evaluation

The computer back-up system in the NVBRA’s offices (including lists of computer passwords) should be stored in a fire-proof storage unit, purchased as a matter of urgency.

- The Project/UNDP should continue to engage with the NPA to attempt to embed the Project’s gains into the new institutional framework resulting from the current reforms.
- The concept or brand of the Nature Concert Halls should be legally registered internationally to defend the freedom of its current use; and the possibility of franchising it should also be examined.
- The MOE should be requested to supply an official letter of endorsement supporting “experimental methodology” in implementing the ecological management plan at Seda or at least having no objections to it. A similar approach to leading conservation NGOs may also prove necessary.
- The Project should pressure the new Aloja County Administration to take action over the public safety issues related to the Staicele Dam with a view to getting the owners to repair it, thereby enabling fish migration structures to be included, or agree to accept compensation for its demolition.
- The Project/UNDP should support the NVBRA in repeating the Small Grants Program by seeking funding from the EU and other sources, using the success of this Project’s SGP as evidence of its effectiveness.
- The efficient and supportive role played by the UNDP CO in Latvia to the Project and the reasons behind it, should be documented and the lessons learned shared with other UNDP COs implementing GEF projects.

7. QUALITY OF THE TERMINAL EVALUATION REPORT

7.1 Comments on the summary of project ratings and terminal evaluation findings based on other information sources such as GEF EO field visits, other evaluations, etc.

No other sources were consulted.

Provide a number rating 1-6 to each criterion based on: Highly Satisfactory = 6, Satisfactory = 5, Moderately Satisfactory = 4, Moderately Unsatisfactory = 3, Unsatisfactory = 2 and Highly Unsatisfactory = 1. Please refer to document GEF Office of Evaluation Guidelines for terminal evaluations review for further definitions of the ratings. Please briefly explain each rating.

7.2 Quality of the terminal evaluation report	Ratings
<p>a. To what extent does the report contain an assessment of relevant outcomes and impacts of the project and the achievement of the objectives?</p> <p>The assessment of outcomes and impacts is detailed and comprehensive. Progress towards objectives is discussed with reference to relevant indicators.</p>	HS
<p>b. To what extent the report is internally consistent, the evidence is complete/convincing and the IA ratings have been substantiated? Are there any major evidence gaps?</p> <p>No evidence gaps were noted. The report is internally consistent and the ratings are substantiated</p>	S

by the information on project performance and outcomes.	
c. To what extent does the report properly assess project sustainability and /or a project exit strategy? The report assesses sustainability in detail along four dimensions. Next steps and key issues going forwards are discussed	HS
d. To what extent are the lessons learned supported by the evidence presented and are they comprehensive? The lessons learned are comprehensive and well supported by the evidence on implementation and outcomes.	HS
e. Does the report include the actual project costs (total and per activity) and actual co-financing used? Actual costs and co-financing amounts are presented in total and per activity.	S
e. Assess the quality of the reports evaluation of project M&E systems? The report contains a detailed evaluation of the project's M&E system.	S

8. SOURCES OF INFORMATION FOR THE PRERATATION OF THE TERMINAL EVALUATION REVIEW REPORT EXCLUDING PIRs, TERMINAL EVALUATIONS, PAD.

No other sources were consulted.