

GEF EO Terminal Evaluation Review Form

1. PROJECT DATA					
GEF Project ID:		129	Review date: 9/12/08		
IA/EA Project ID:		PO44176	at endorsement (Million US\$)		
Project Name:		Biodiversity Conservation Management Project	at completion (Million US\$)		
Country:		Romania	GEF financing:		
			IA/EA own: \$0		
			Government: \$3.3		
			Other*: \$0		
			Total Cofinancing: \$3.3		
Operational Program:		3	Total Project Cost: \$8.8		
IA:		IBRD	Dates		
Partners involved:		Ministry of Agriculture, Forests, and Rural Development; Ministry of Environment and Water Management	Effectiveness/ Prodoc Signature (i.e. date project began)		
			Closing Date	Proposed: 12/31/04	Actual: 9/30/06
Prepared by: Josh Brann		Reviewed by:	Duration between effectiveness date and original closing (in months): 49.5	Duration between effectiveness date and actual closing (in months): 70.5	Difference between original and actual closing (in months): 21
Author of TE: Peter Dewees			TE completion date: September 26, 2006 (IEG review date)	TE submission date to GEF EO: September 2008	Difference between TE completion and submission date (in months): 24 months

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

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	S	S	S
2.1b Sustainability of Outcomes	N/A	L	L	MU
2.1c Monitoring and evaluation	S	NA	Substantial	MS
2.1d Quality of implementation and Execution	NA	NA	NA	S
2.1e Quality of the evaluation report	N/A	N/A	S	MS

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

No. In many places, the TE does not provide sufficient evidence to support its conclusions or assertions. The TE uses the term “adequate” to describe numerous aspects of the project, but does not describe how they were adequate, or if there were considerations that could have resulted in them being anything but adequate. There seem to be many examples of unsubstantiated conclusions. This is not to assert that the conclusions are incorrect, but simply that there is

¹ ICR review states that only 87% of GEF funds were disbursed, but this is not clearly shown in the financing summary tables. The data included here were drawn from the TE text.

not sufficient evidence presented to make the statements in question. Examples (underlined for emphasis):

“The MAFRD’s Project Director provided adequate guidance to the PCT and supported prompt implementation of its operational decisions.”

“The appraisal estimates for prices and contingencies were generally adequate.”

“During supervision, the Bank’s response to implementation risks was adequate.”

“Advice to the recipient and the follow-up on agreed actions was adequate.”

“Arrangements to involve, and cooperate with, the relevant local stakeholders were generally effective.”

“Assessment of the key implementation risks, related to the project sectoral context, was generally reasonable.”

“The repeated institutional reconfigurations has, to some extent, weakened opportunities for institutional capacity building in MEWM in particular, worked against collaboration and cooperation between key stakeholders, and introduced unneeded and somewhat problematic complexities into the dialogue between MAFRD and MEWM. At the same time though, it could be argued that the tensions which resulted have brought about better outcomes than would have otherwise been likely.”

In addition to the issues around incomplete evidence, the TE’s ratings for sustainability of outcomes do not reflect the evidence presented in the TE. There appear to be significant issues surrounding potential financial and institutional sustainability, but the TE gives a sustainability rating of “Likely.” It is impossible for the TE Review to have a true understanding of the potential sustainability of the project without direct knowledge of the project. However, the evidence presented in the TE does not correspond to the sustainability rating given in the TE.

The IA’s TE review also rates sustainability as likely, but notes that there are “significant risks” to “financial sustainability” of the executing agency, and that imminent institutional changes may weaken the developed capacity and therefore the management of the parks. This commentary seems to be in contradiction with a “Likely” rating for sustainability.

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

None noted.

3. PROJECT OBJECTIVES

3.1 Project Objectives

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

According to the TE, the global environment objective of the project was the “sustainable conservation of the biological diversity and ecological integrity of the Romanian forest, alpine and meadow ecosystems of the Carpathian mountain chain.”

No changes during implementation.

b. What were the Development Objectives of the project? Were there any changes during implementation?

According to the TE, the development objective of the project is to “establish effective inter-sectoral, participatory planning and sustainable management of natural ecosystems and associated landscapes at three demonstration sites in the Carpathian mountains and mechanisms to support replication of these activities at other priority conservation sites.”

No changes during implementation.

Overall Environmental Objectives	Project Development Objectives	Project Components	Any other (specify)
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If yes, tick applicable reasons for the change in objectives				
Original objectives not sufficiently articulated	Exogenous conditions changed, causing a change in objectives	Project was restructured because original objectives were over ambitious	Project was restructured because of lack of progress	Any other (specify)

4. GEF EVALUATION OFFICE ASSESSMENT OF OUTCOMES AND SUSTAINABILITY

4.1.1 Outcomes (Relevance can receive either a satisfactory rating or a 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 project was consistent with objectives of the CAS and government development priorities and complied with the applicable safeguard policies of the bank. Also according to the TE review, “The design of the Biodiversity Conservation Project is Substantially Relevant. Part of a second generation portfolio of biodiversity projects designed to deliver small grants, the project provided funding for the development of eco-friendly revenue generating activities, including eco-tourism, traditional handicrafts etc.”</p>	
<p>A.1. What is the relevance of the project outcomes/results to:</p>	
<p>(i) the national sustainable development agenda and development needs and challenges?</p> <p>As stated above, the TE notes that the project was consistent with the CAS. According to the project document, protecting and enhancing the environment is one of four main development challenges identified in the Romania Country Assistance Strategy. In addition, “Additional environmental goals identified in the CAS, which the project will address, include: (a) development of an effective system of protected areas, (b) enhancing environmental regulation capability, and (c) promoting public awareness of environmental issues.”</p>	
<p>(ii) the national environmental framework, agenda and priorities?</p> <p>The project document states that “The top three priorities of the National Biodiversity Conservation Strategy are: (i) development of the legal framework and strengthening the institutional capacity for conservation of biological diversity; (ii) organization of the national systems of protected areas, and (iii) in-situ and ex-situ conservation of threatened, endemic and/or rare species, and those with a high economic value.”</p> <p>The project also supported government priorities for developing sustainable forestry practices.</p>	
<p>(iii) the achievement of the GEF strategies and mandate?</p> <p>As described by the project document, “The project is consistent with the GEF Operational Strategy and especially the Operational Programs on Forest and Montane Ecosystems. The project is also consistent with the Short Term Response Measures under the Operational Strategy.”</p> <p>The TE indicates that this was indeed the case.</p>	
<p>(iv) the implementation of the global conventions the GEF supports (countries obligations and responsibilities towards the convention as well as the achievement of the conventions objectives)</p> <p>According to the project document, “The project will implement priority actions identified in the National Biodiversity Conservation Strategy and Action Plan (1996). Its focus, specifically on in situ conservation, supports implementation of Article 8 of the Convention on Biological Diversity by strengthening support for protected areas and sustainable use in adjacent buffer zones.” The project is also consistent with Agenda 21.</p>	
<p>A2. Did the project promote of International (Regional and / or Global) Cooperation and Partnership²</p>	
<p>“The project will foster international and trans-boundary cooperation in the Carpathian mountains and provide support</p>	

² Please consider for regional and global project only

to three important protected areas that are linked by forest corridors with other reserves in eastern Europe.”

b. Effectiveness

Rating: S

The project appears to have completely or substantially achieved the expected outcomes for all project components. The project results are in line with, or have exceeded those anticipated in the project document. The TE contains a follow-up logframe as Annex 1 which outlines in very specific terms the achievement against objectives of the project. Many of the achievements during the project’s tenure may have been significantly aided by the process of EU accession (in particular the strengthening of the policy framework governing protected areas), but it is not necessary for the project to claim sole attribution for positive outcomes.

As explained by the TE, “project outcomes are rated Satisfactory because they have already substantially shaped the development of the emerging new system of protected area management in Romania and contain all prerequisites for being fully and effectively integrated into this system.”

The TE review agrees, claiming “The project was highly successful in establishing effective, inter-sectoral, participatory planning and sustainable management of natural ecosystems and associated landscapes at three demonstration sites in the Carpathian mountains, and mechanisms to support replication of these activities at other priority conservation sites. Notable achievements include: the support of small-scale testing of voluntary forest certification (31,000 ha) inside and in the immediate vicinity of the Vanatori-Neamt Natural Park which led to certification (through Forest Stewardship Council standards) of about 1.1 million ha of forests elsewhere in the country. Management plans have been developed and approved for the three parks (while an additional 12 plans have been prepared and are waiting approval, and another 5 are under preparation). Baseline ecological surveys have been completed and monitoring protocols developed and implemented, with regular ecological surveys now continuing on an annual basis.”

Project design, implementation and execution were on the whole very good, resulting in the successful achievement of project objectives. There were some issues surrounding delays in the implementation of certain components.

c. Efficiency (cost-effectiveness)

Rating: S

The project appears to have been cost-effective, considering the level of achievement outlined in the project document, and the actual results achieved which included significant progress in replication and scaling up. This was partially due to the strong country-ownership and higher than anticipated levels of co-financing on the part of the recipient. However, if the risks to the sustainability of outcomes are not mitigated, the project could end having been less cost-effective than is currently estimated.

Although the management structure of the project is commended by both the TE and the TE review as being “lean and efficient”, the project management and monitoring component ended up costing approximately 25% more than envisioned in the project document.

According to the TE review, “Neither a FRR or ERR were reported, however the efficiency of the project is rated Substantial. The project was one of the first in Romania to implement a decentralized system of delivery. Project activities were decentralized to the PMAs so that the project maintained a very small and lean Project Coordination unit. The project successfully introduced performance-based contracts for PA management. The project could have increased its efficiency by developing financial mechanisms to compensate private landowners in the park areas for environmental services considering the risks mentioned [previously].”

d. To what extent did the project result in trade offs between environment and development priorities / issues (not to be rated)

The project did not approach conservation issues from the point of view of trade-offs, but rather with the objective of shifting economic activities from resource extraction activities to activities that do not impact, or at least reduce pressure on, environmental resources. For example, according to the TE, “Local communities were involved in sustainable ecotourism activities. Following the Small Grants Program implementation, a certain number of locals developed alternative revenue-generating activities substituting natural resource exploitation. Number [sic] of grazing animals have been reduced in Retezat and Piatra Craiului parks. Local communities decided to preserve pastures for local livestock only, reducing grazing pressure.”

However, the ICR review notes, “Although small grants programs designed to support eco-friendly revenue-generating activities are correctly focused towards developing alternative livelihood approaches in fragile park areas, the scope and scale of such a program should be considered against the livelihood needs of the populations surrounding and

inside parks. Livelihood needs traditionally fulfilled through timber harvesting, grazing, and mineral harvesting are hard pressed to be supplanted by small eco-tourism opportunities. Payments for environmental service schemes aimed particularly in this case at the private landowner could be considered alongside the development of other sustainable livelihood approaches.”

Finally, the ICR review also notes that the TE does not specifically illuminate some likely questions around environment-development trade-offs: “How were basic needs (wood-cutting) and livelihood activities (grazing) managed by the NFA? Have there been disputes regarding land restitution during the project period, particularly in regard to land that lies within the borders of the national parks? The ICR is silent on this issue which is surprising because people/parks conflict has been a frequent issue in other such GEF and Bank projects globally. Equity is an issue particularly in regard to the quality of land parcels that were restituted. User rights are also an issue and whether there was transparent discussion of these rights (logging, grazing, species collection etc) and obligations (costs of reforestation) on land that lies within the borders of the national parks.”

4.1.2 Results / Impacts³ (Describe Impacts) (please fill in annex 1 – results scoresheet and annex 2 – focal area impacts (against GEF Strategic Priority indicators, where appropriate and possible)

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: MU
<p>There seem to be significant potential challenges with regard to the future availability of financing necessary to maintain outcomes. This is apparently due changes in the Law on Land Restitution, and reduction of revenue from state owned forests. The TE does a good job of identifying and describing these issues, but does not appear to consider them of critical importance. According to the TE, “One of [the introduced external shocks] is the new (2005) Law on Land Restitution that allows restitution of land of all categories, including Protected Areas, without limitations on the size of the plots. When fully implemented, it would have a double effect of: (i) significantly increasing the role of private land owners as a critical stakeholder group in achieving the objectives of biodiversity management within the boundaries of formally protected areas; and (ii) diminishing by as much as 40-50% the NFA's current economic base and thus reducing NFA's ability to continue to finance PA operations from its own revenues derived from state-owned forests.”</p> <p>There are some indications that the financing issues can be addressed, but it is far from certain that they will be. As described by the TE, “With respect to the problem of revenue losses resulting from restitution, the Ministry of Public Finance has made a commitment to provide budget financing for protected area management from 2007, which is likely to come through MEWM. The existing management contracts, introduced as a result of legal forms supported by the project, between MEWM and the park administrations include a provision for public financing "when budget funds become available." Until recently, there had been no credible effort by MEWM to seek budget funding for national parks, and so this provision in recent legislation (and an assurance by the Ministry of Public Finance that it will come up with the funds) is a very good thing. In addition, the loss of revenues by NFA is being mitigated by overall institutional changes to improve expenditure efficiency which ensures adequate continuing allocations.”</p> <p>The TE does, however, summarize potential future funding sources and amounts under a section on financial sustainability, and indicates that financial sustainability is likely. It is not clear how these two contrasting points of view should be reconciled, or the degree to which greater significance should be placed on one potential outcome or the other.</p> <p>Also, according to the TE review, “the Land Restitution process introduces a significant risk to the financial sustainability of NFA.”</p>	
b. Socio political	Rating: L
Beyond the socio-political relevance of the financial and institutional sustainability issues, the SGP component of the	

³ Please consider direct and indirect global environmental results; any unexpected results; local development benefits (including results relevant to communities, gender issues, indigenous peoples, NGOs and CBOs)

project relates heavily to this aspect. According to the TE, the SGP “promoted cooperation and involvement of local public administration and local associations and/or NGOs. The experience of the SGP was very satisfactory and significantly contributed to the project goals.”

However, as noted in the ICR review, “Although small grants programs designed to support eco-friendly revenue-generating activities are correctly focused towards developing alternative livelihood approaches in fragile park areas, the scope and scale of such a program should be considered against the livelihood needs of the populations surrounding and inside parks. Livelihood needs traditionally fulfilled through timber harvesting, grazing, and mineral harvesting are hard pressed to be supplanted by small eco-tourism opportunities. Payments for environmental service schemes aimed particularly in this case at the private landowner could be considered alongside the development of other sustainable livelihood approaches.”

c. Institutional framework and governance

Rating: ML

Despite the fact that the National Forest Administration was the executing agency that created the associated protected areas, there are significant institutional risks for the future. As stated in the TE, “In other respects, proposed institutional changes have introduced some uncertainty which could weaken the excellent technical and management capacity of PMAs created by the NFA. In particular, a new National Agency for Protected Areas has been established under MEWM, and there is a debate about the extent to which it will assume NFA's responsibilities for protected area management, or if it will instead have a continuing role (a role currently held by DNBC under MEWM) in providing oversight for the activities of Park Administrations which are providing these services under contractual arrangements between NFA and MEWM. The question is to be resolved during the process of preparing regulatory instruments which are to outline institutional roles and responsibilities for the new Agency.”

However, the TE indicates that institutional sustainability is likely: “The institutional sustainability of project investments is based on the excellent capacity for protected area management and regulatory planning and management which has been built in the NFA and in MEWM. Provided this capacity can be retained in a changing institutional setting, there is little doubt that the overall framework for protected area management (bolstered by the emphasis this is also given as a result of EU accession) is vastly improved from what it was 6 years ago, and is well established.”

Similar to the issues with financial sustainability, it’s not clear which point of view deserves greater emphasis.

The TE review notes a “risk that the newly created National Agency for Protected Areas may potentially weaken the capacity of the PMAs and hence park management.”

d. Environmental

Rating: ML

There are indications based on information in the terminal evaluation that there could be some risk to the established protected areas based on the revised approach to land conservation resulting from the new Land Restitution Law. It seems as though as a result of the land restitution, some of the protected areas may be subject to restitution to private landowners, which will then be responsible for conservation. It is not clear the degree to which this may occur, and the TE identifies the fact that the project could have taken the opportunity to test payments for environmental services to land owners in the later stages of the project.

e. Technological

Rating: L

No significant technological aspects that would be subject to sustainability issues.

4.3 Catalytic role⁴

a. INCENTIVES: To what extent have the project activities provide incentives (socio-economic / market based) to catalyze changes in stakeholders

The main incentive mechanism was the establishment of alternative livelihoods, such as ecotourism, which provided income while reducing pressure on natural resources in protected areas. As previously discussed, the project utilized a small grants mechanism to initiate alternative livelihood activities.

b. INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE: To what extent have the project activities changed institutional behaviors

⁴ Please review the ‘Catalytic Role of GEF: How is it measured and evaluated – A conceptual framework’ prior to addressing this section.

As discussed in the section on institutional sustainability, the project significantly built capacity for effective protected area management within the National Forestry Administration and the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Water Management. However, outside the project, a new national protected areas agency was formed, thus it is unclear what long-term impact the increased capacity in these respective institutions will have.

c. POLICY CHANGE: To what extent have project activities led to policy changes (and implementation of policy)?

According to the TE, “Shortly after the project became effective, Government Ordinance No.236/2000 regarding protected areas, habitats and wildlife conservation, and its amendment by Law No.462/2001 was approved. The project subsequently supported a review of the existing legislation and the development of a new functional legislative and regulatory framework, including:

Government Decision No.230/2003 establishing national and natural parks boundaries and management;
Ministerial Order No.552/2003 establishing internal zoning of national and nature parks;
Ministerial Orders No.850/2003 and 494/2003 delegating management responsibilities;

Other laws were also modified and/or amended (e.g. Environmental Law No.5/2000 etc.) in order to be consistent with the new provisions in relation with biodiversity conservation and protected areas. Following the legal review, national legislation is now, by and large, consistent with the international agreements ratified by Romania and with the requirements of the EU. The new developed laws and regulations provided tools for protected areas management and biodiversity conservation activities – e.g. legal frame for establishing new PAs, clear borders and internal zoning for existing PAs, management and administration, etc.”

d. CATALYTIC FINANCING: To what extent did the project led to sustained follow-on financing from Government and / or other donors? (this is different than co-financing)

As described in the financial sustainability section above, the TE states that follow-on funding from the government has been promised but has yet to be allocated. The TE also notes that some follow-on financing from external initiatives has been leveraged, but does not specify the amount: “The activities at the 3 pilot sites and at the national level which have been supported by the project have also leveraged, and complemented, other national and regional initiatives such as the Carpathian Convention, the above-mentioned activities regarding with forest certification, and the identification and development of the Natura 2000 network. Among other things, the project has leveraged support for highly-competitive EU Life funding at 2 of the 3 project sites and has provided the institutional framework for seeking additional GEF Medium Sized Project (MSP) support for activities at two other protected areas (Macin and Maramures Mountains) through the UNDP.”

e. PROJECT CHAMPIONS: To what extent have changes (listed above) been catalyzed by particular individuals or institutions (without which the project would not have achieved results)?

The TE notes the commitment and quality of work by the executing agency and project coordination team, but does not identify any single individuals as having a disproportionate effect on project success. The TE states that both of the involved government agencies, the National Forest Administration (executing agency) and the Ministry of Environment Protection and Water Management, “exercised outstanding commitment to the objectives of the project and allocated substantial staffing and financial resources to ensure smooth project administration at the national level and in all three demonstration sites. MAFRD also subsequently supported project up-scaling and replication throughout the whole NFA park system. The centrally based Project Coordination team (PCT) operated project accounts, managed GEF-financed contracts, and provided the required administrative support services to the PMA staff at the three project sites. The PCT was exceptionally successful in organizing and maintaining a proper enabling working environment for the PMA teams, which was not a trivial effort given the several reorganizations in the government entities responsible for project implementation.”

4.4 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? 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?

According to the TE, the level of co-financing received has been greater than initially envisioned: “Counterpart co-

financing was estimated at US\$3.3 million, including US\$2.4 million from the central government and US\$0.9 million from the NFA. Given the massive up-scaling of project results undertaken by the NFA even before the project completion, the NFA's total contribution to mainstreaming the project objectives has already reached US\$5.3 million (for the infrastructure and operations of the expanding nationwide system), which significantly exceeded the originally planned amount.”

The increased level of financial commitment on the part of the recipient have contributed greatly to the positive outcomes of the project, in particular the application of project experience and lessons to the national protected area system, as noted in the scaling up and replication sections of this review.

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 delays related to two aspects of the project – the completion of infrastructure contracts for visitor center construction, and with the Small Grants Component. As stated in the TE, “As of the date of the ICR preparation, US\$0.7 million worth of the GEF grant proceeds (or 12.7% of the total amount) still remained undisbursed, mainly due to significant delays with completion of infrastructure contracts for visitor centers under Component B (described in section 4.2), as well as with postponement of the final tranche of the Small Grants Program. It is expected that all planned activities will be completed in full by the final closing date, which will be 19 months later than the original plan.”

However, according to the TE review, “Specifically, there were two extensions of the project's closing date (for a total of 21 months) due to significant delays in the construction of the visitor centers due to setbacks related to land acquisition procedures, design scoping and re-tendering, construction permit approvals, and contractor performance.”

It is not clear why there is a discrepancy of 2 months between the information presented in the TE and the information presented in the TE review.

As a result of the delays and cost overruns in the visitor center construction component, the TE states that the visitor center designs underwent significant redesign in order to re-align with the budget, but it does not indicate how the significant redesign may have affected the objectives of the visitor center establishment.

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.

According to the TE, “The NFA – both at central and country level – demonstrated outstanding commitment to the project and provided substantial co-financing and staff resources to ensure smooth administration of the project activities during start-up and implementation in all three demonstration sites, as well as substantially organized its up-scaling and replication throughout the whole NFA park system.”

In addition, “Government support for the project was consistently strong from all involved ministries, thus creating a positive environment for project implementation. Importantly, this included the Ministry of Public Finance that handled provision of counterpart funding in a regular and predictable manner. The line ministries (MAFRD and MEWM) actively supported the up-scaling of policies and practices adopted under the project.”

However, “On the negative side, after the separation of ministerial functions in 2001, strategic communications between MEWM and MAFRD in the goal-setting for future development of the protected area system were not always effective, which resulted in several missed opportunities.”

4.5 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): 5**

The project M&E system was envisioned according to World Bank and GEF standards at the time. The project document includes a logframe, which includes key performance indicators at the outcome level.

The project coordination team (PCT) was responsible for the M&E process, and was to work with the site-level national project staff to monitor workplans on a biannual basis. According to the project appraisal document, “Monitoring and evaluation of project activities will be undertaken by the PCT and will be subject to periodic review by the Bank. The PCT will establish project monitoring and evaluation procedures acceptable to the Bank, and will furnish the Bank with biannual project progress reports, together with work programs inclusive of detailed monitoring

indicators for the following six-month period. Arrangements for monitoring will be detailed and agreed upon during appraisal and recorded in the minutes of negotiation. In addition, a mid-term evaluation will be prepared in the third year of the project. Lessons learned from implementation will be recorded in a report prepared by the borrower with the assistance of the PCT.”

The indicators described in Annex 2 of the PAD are at the outcome level, but are not always specific or measurable. For example, “Effectively functioning models of conservation management planning established at the field level.”

The PAD also includes a table assessing critical risks. The assessment of risks appears to be realistic, though not extensive.

b. M&E plan Implementation Rating (six point scale): 4

The project M&E procedures were carried out according to World Bank and GEF standards; project reporting was not a problem.

Although project M&E was carried out, the resulting information was not necessarily followed up on. This is highly problematic considering the institutional issues that were not addressed are related to important project outcomes, the sustainability of which is now in jeopardy. According to the TE, “the [first project component] was less successful in supporting the timely elaboration of a common strategic vision among the key government stakeholders (MEWM and MAFRD/NFA) regarding the future development of the national system of protected areas in Romania in response to the new factors of land restitution and EU accession discussed in section 4.1 above. These issues are currently being addressed by the government under significant time pressure, whereas the much earlier project interventions to support independent mediation and facilitation of these discussions (as recommended during Mid-Term Review in 2002) could have allowed to better prepare for the presently needed system adjustments.”

b.1 Was sufficient funding provided for M&E in the budget included in the project document?

The project document includes project M&E within the project management component, and based on the available information, the budget appears to have been sufficient.

b.2a Was sufficient and timely funding provided for M&E during project implementation?

This does not appear to have been an issue, since the project M&E system functioned as envisioned.

b.2b To what extent did the project monitoring system provided real time feed back? Was the information that was provided used effectively? What factors affected the use of information provided by the project monitoring system?

The project monitoring system appears to have functioned well to provide feedback. As previously noted, the main issue is the apparent unresponsiveness to long-term big-picture issues apparently identified in the mid-term review: “A Midterm Review was carried out which identified at an early stage many of the key issues which the project would have to address during the remaining project period, including institutional and financial sustainability, and the tensions which had arisen because of the separation of responsibilities between MAFRD and MEWM. These issues remained a challenge through the project period.”

b.3 Can the project M&E system (or an aspect of the project M&E system) be considered a good practice? If so, explain why.

The project used fairly standard M&E procedures according to World Bank and GEF standards, so in that sense it should be considered a good example, but no different than other projects that also adhere to these standards. One element that should not be considered a good example is the lack of responsiveness to issues identified in the Mid-Term Review, as previously noted.

4.6 Assessment of Quality of Implementation and Execution

a. Overall Quality of Implementation and Execution (on a six point scale): 5

b. Overall Quality of Implementation – for IA (on a six point scale): 5

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.

According to the TE, “The technical design of the project was undertaken through a participatory process that first identified existing and anticipated threats to biodiversity conservation and their underlying causes, and then developed project components to address these root causes. As a result, the project's components were appropriately related to its development and environmental objectives, comprising both the national-level interventions (improvement of legal and regulatory framework, institutional capacity building and public awareness activities) and a critical mass of targeted, site-specific investments (establishment and testing of demonstration models of participatory planning and management of biodiversity at the three selected parks).”

The project preparation paid extensive attention to stakeholder participation, which was impressive. Considering that the project did not experience problems in this area during implementation, this aspect of the project design is especially commendable.

The quality of supervision by the IBRD appears to have been wholly within requirements. According to the TE, “Project implementation progress was reviewed and reported, and the project performance ratings appropriately reflected the performance during the particular rating periods. Implementation problems were identified in a timely manner and were addressed adequately and proactively.”

c. Quality of Execution – for Executing Agencies⁵ (rating on a 6 point scale): 5

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.

From the indications in the TE, the quality of execution was very good, outside of the various project delays, which were not a result of the actions of the Project Coordination Team (PCT). According to the TE, “MEWM and MAFRD (through the NFA), both at central and local levels, has exercised outstanding commitment to the objectives of the project and allocated substantial staffing and financial resources to ensure smooth project administration at the national level and in all three demonstration sites. MAFRD also subsequently supported project up-scaling and replication throughout the whole NFA park system. The centrally based Project Coordination team (PCT) operated project accounts, managed GEF-financed contracts, and provided the required administrative support services to the PMA staff at the three project sites.”

In addition, “The PCT oversaw and supported implementation of all project activities in accordance with agreed monitorable indicators. It worked closely with the county level PMA staff at the three sites and with national project staff, to develop and monitor workplans on a biannual basis. The PCT was particularly successful in organizing and maintaining a proper enabling working environment for the project teams in the field, which was not a trivial effort given the several reorganizations in the government entities responsible for project implementation. Procurement, financial management, accounting and auditing processes in the center and at the field level were organized in full accordance with the Bank requirements and national legislation.”

The main issue in this regard has to do with the project management’s apparent unresponsiveness to the contextual institutional issues identified in the mid-term evaluation that would present problems for the project regarding the long-term sustainability of outcomes. According to the TE, “A Midterm Review was carried out which identified at an early stage many of the key issues which the project would have to address during the remaining project period, including institutional and financial sustainability, and the tensions which had arisen because of the separation of responsibilities between MAFRD and MEWM. These issues remained a challenge through the project period.”

5. 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

The lessons in the TE are similar to those from many other GEF projects, but continue to be relevant.

- Early involvement of key stakeholders in project design, specifically local communities, is essential to ownership and implementation success

⁵ 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.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Conservation strategies must be site-specific, addressing local issues and needs, to ensure sustainability - Where consumptive use of natural resources is an issue, resource users must be substantively involved in the design of sustainable resource management systems, including monitoring and control mechanisms - Small grants programs targeted at local communities can be effective for managing a shift to non-destructive livelihoods in protected areas, but are dependent on community outreach during implementation - “Well designed arrangements for decentralized responsibility in procurement and financial management to the field teams can provide excellent results by encouraging accountable, efficient and technically competent implementation of project activities and increases their longer-term sustainability.” - A centralized institution with strong capacity is important for scaling-up demonstration site successes to the national level - Good project implementation is highly dependent on the capacity of the individuals recruited for the project team - When institutional reorganization takes place during implementation, clear lines of communication must be established between all concerned parties in order to avoid serious disagreements and to ensure the continued success of the project
b. Briefly describe the recommendations given in the terminal evaluation
No additional recommendations included in the TE.

6. QUALITY OF THE TERMINAL EVALUATION REPORT

6.1 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 information sources available.

Provide a number rating 1-6 to each criteria 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.

6.2 Quality of the terminal evaluation report	Ratings
a. To what extent does the report contain an assessment of relevant outcomes and impacts of the project and the achievement of the objectives?	5
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?	3
As noted previously in this review, the TE does not provide complete and convincing evidence for the conclusions and ratings made. This is described in Section 2.2 of this review, with examples cited.	
c. To what extent does the report properly assess project sustainability and /or a project exit strategy?	4
d. To what extent are the lessons learned supported by the evidence presented and are they comprehensive?	5
e. Does the report include the actual project costs (total and per activity) and actual co-financing used?	5
f. Assess the quality of the reports evaluation of project M&E systems?	5

7. SOURCES OF INFORMATION FOR THE PRERATATION OF THE TERMINAL EVALUTION REVIEW REPORT EXCLUDING PIRs, TERMINAL EVALUATIONS, PAD.

World Bank, Implementation Completion Report, “Biodiversity Conservation Management Project” for Romania, June 28, 2006
World Bank, IEG, ICR Review, “Biodiversity Conservation Management Project” for Romania, September 26, 2006
World Bank, Project Document, “Romania: Biodiversity Conservation Management,” May 1999

World Bank, Project Implementation Report, “Biodiversity Conservation Management Project” for Romania, 2001
World Bank, Project Implementation Report, “Biodiversity Conservation Management Project” for Romania, 2002
World Bank, Project Implementation Report, “Biodiversity Conservation Management Project” for Romania, 2003
World Bank, Project Implementation Report, “Biodiversity Conservation Management Project” for Romania, 2004
World Bank, Project Implementation Report, “Biodiversity Conservation Management Project” for Romania, 2005
World Bank, Project Implementation Report, “Biodiversity Conservation Management Project” for Romania, 2006

8 Project stakeholders and Key Contacts (Names, addresses, emails etc – mandatory for field visit countries)

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9. Information Gaps (for Field visit countries only)

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