

## Terminal Evaluation Review form, GEF Evaluation Office, APR 2013

### 1. Project Data

Summary project data			
GEF project ID		1749	
GEF Agency project ID		P077800	
GEF Replenishment Phase		GEF - 3	
Lead GEF Agency (include all for joint projects)		World Bank	
Project name		Lake Pomorie Conservation, Restoration and Sustainable Management Project	
Country/Countries		Bulgaria	
Region		ECA	
Focal area		Biodiversity	
Operational Program or Strategic Priorities/Objectives		Operational Program: Coastal Marine and Freshwater Ecosystems Strategic Priorities: Mainstreaming Biodiversity in Productive Landscapes and Sectors, and Catalyzing Sustainability of Protected Areas	
Executing agencies involved		Green Balkans Conservation NGO (lead) & Ministry of Environment and Waters	
NGOs/CBOs involvement		Green Balkans Conservation NGO (Executing Agency)	
Private sector involvement		The TE mentions private sector involvement but does not clarify names. Salt manufacturers and ecotourism is mentioned. (Beneficiaries, stakeholders.)	
CEO Endorsement (FSP) /Approval date (MSP)		1/4/2005	
Effectiveness date / project start		03/08/2005	
Expected date of project completion (at start)		2009	
Actual date of project completion		02/01/2010	
Project Financing			
		At Endorsement (US \$M)	At Completion (US \$M)
Project Preparation Grant	GEF funding	.025	.025
	Co-financing	.046	
GEF Project Grant		0.86	0.86
Co-financing	IA/EA own	0.15 (Green Balkans)	0.63 (from Green Balkans)
	Government	0.88	
	Other*	0.02	
Total GEF funding		0.88	0.88
Total Co-financing		1.12	Unable to Assess
Total project funding (GEF grant(s) + co-financing)		2.0	
Terminal evaluation/review information			
TE completion date		07/21/2010	
TE submission date		08/24/2010	
Author of TE		Anna Georgieva	
TER completion date		12/12/2013	
TER prepared by		Dania M Trespalacios	
TER peer review by (if GEF EO review)		Joshua Schneck	

\*Includes contributions mobilized for the project from other multilateral agencies, bilateral development, cooperation agencies, NGOs, the private sector, and beneficiaries.

## 2. Summary of Project Ratings

Criteria	Final PIR	IA Terminal Evaluation	IA Evaluation Office Review	GEF EO Review
Project Outcomes	S	S	--	HS
Sustainability of Outcomes	ML	L	--	L
M&E Design	S	NA	--	S
M&E Implementation	S	S	--	S
Quality of Implementation	S	S	--	HS
Quality of Execution	S	S	--	S
Quality of the Terminal Evaluation Report	NA	NA	--	S

## 3. Project Objectives

### 3.1 Global Environmental Objectives of the project:

This Project aimed to promote the conservation and sustainable management of the Lake Pomorie and the surrounding wetland ecosystem. Lake Pomorie is considered a site of international importance under the Ramsar Convention, hosting globally important bird habitats and unique hyper-saline plant and animal communities. Lake Pomorie and its wetlands are one of two lakes of significantly high biodiversity importance to breeding, wintering and migrating birds in Europe. The area provides a haven for an estimated 70% of the migrating birds that pass through the Pomorie/Burgas Lakes bottleneck. It is critical habitat of key European conservation significance for Central and Eastern Europe and Western Asia.

### 3.2 Development Objectives of the project:

The Objectives of the project were to:

- 1) Support the development and implementation of long-term protected area management plans;
- 2) Restore the ecosystem's natural resources base and hydrological balance;
- 3) Promote the sustainable management of the lake's natural resources through an innovative multi-stakeholder partnership;
- 4) Build awareness among local communities and the tourism sector about the benefits of eco-tourism; and
- 5) Improve collaboration with other wetland restoration sites in Bulgaria.

The expected outcomes of this project included:

- 1) Development of management framework, including development and implementation of Lake Pomorie Management Plan
- 2) Public awareness and education
- 3) Natural resources management and restoration activities
- 4) Monitoring program

The TE also mentions the connections of Lake Pomorie with traditional salt production industries and recent ecological tourism activities. Although development objectives do not seem to be central to this project, they are considered throughout the TE, particularly in the context of development potential enabled by sustainable natural resource use.

3.3 Were there any **changes** in the Global Environmental Objectives, Development Objectives, or other activities during implementation?

No changes in objectives were noted between the Project Document for CEO Approval and the Terminal Evaluation report (TE).

**4. GEF EO assessment of Outcomes and Sustainability**

Please refer to the GEF Terminal Evaluation Review Guidelines for detail on the criteria for ratings.

Relevance can receive either a Satisfactory or Unsatisfactory rating. For Effectiveness and Cost efficiency, a six point rating scale is used (Highly Satisfactory to Highly Unsatisfactory), or Unable to Assess. Sustainability ratings are assessed on a four-point scale: Likely=no or negligible risk; Moderately Likely=low risk; Moderately Unlikely=substantial risks; Unlikely=high risk. In assessing a Sustainability rating please note if, and to what degree, sustainability of project outcomes is threatened by financial, sociopolitical, institutional/governance, or environmental factors.

Please justify ratings in the space below each box.

4.1 <b>Relevance</b>	Rating: <b>Satisfactory</b>
----------------------	-----------------------------

Project outcomes were consistent with the focal area of Biodiversity, including: improving the sustainability of protected area systems; and mainstream biodiversity conservation and sustainable use into production landscapes. Project outcomes included the development and implementation of a management plan, which included significant ecological restoration activities, and specific goals to increase the populations of target key species. The management plan was complemented with activities to increase public education and awareness, and to ensure the longevity of the project through administrative and financial stability. The project helped save and restore bird habitats of global significance.

The project is consistent with Bulgaria’s national priorities, as evidenced by Bulgaria’s national Biological Diversity Conservation Strategy (1998), National Plan for the Conservation of the Biological Diversity (1999), National Action Plan for the Conservation of the Most Important Wetlands in Bulgaria (1995), National Ecotourism Strategy and Action Plan (2004). As an EU pre-accession country, the Project will help Bulgaria meet the legislative requirements for the Conservation of the Habitats and Protection of Wildbirds reflected in the EU Directive 92/43 and EU Water Management Framework Directives 79/409. Bulgaria is signatory to the following international agreements that are directly related to the proposed project: the Convention on Biological Diversity (1992), Bonn Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species and Wild

Animals (1979); the Bern Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (1979); the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance, especially as Waterfowl Habitat (Ramsar Convention) (1971); the Helsinki Convention on Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (1992); and the Seville Strategy for Biosphere Reserves (UNESCO resolution 28 C/29-1995). The TE states that the project supported Bulgaria in fulfilling both its international obligations and national strategies with respect to biodiversity conservation.

<b>4.2 Effectiveness</b>	Rating: <b>Highly Satisfactory</b>
--------------------------	------------------------------------

Project outcomes are commensurate with expected outcomes. The TE states that the project “was successfully completed achieving the grant objective: contributing to long-term conservation of Lake Pomorie ecosystems, and reaching target values regarding threatened and rare bird species, and the development of the management plan”. The management plan was approved by the Ministry of Environment and Water and the partner agency Green Balkans. The restored sea-lake canal restored the hydrological conditions and thus ensured the return of fish and bird species. The TE reports a 200% increase in the populations of breeding rare bird species. The town of Pomorie acquired two new products: a Visitors Centre and Eco-festival that provide opportunities for development of environmentally friendly tourism. The project helped introduce the idea of sustainable tourism for the region providing a replication example, raising biodiversity awareness thanks to the new form of cooperation between the local authorities, the private sector and NGOs. The project contributed to protection of key wetlands along the second biggest migratory route.

Regarding the multi-stakeholder partnership, the TE states “The implementing agency, Green Balkans, gained substantial experience from project implementation. The municipality also benefitted from exposure to working with international institutions and to new ideas for sustainable development. This partnership, involving also the salt producers and spa centers, is innovative for Bulgaria.” The TE also comments on a partnership established between Green Balkans and the Po River Park management in Italy that led to an EU-funded project for knowledge exchange.

The ICM notes: Successful relations with other donors were established, resulting in additional financing and expansion of the project scope through 4 new projects. New project donors and partners included the European Commission, EU Operational Program “Environment”, Po Delta Park (Italy) as well as the Governments of the Netherlands and the USA.

<b>4.3 Efficiency</b>	Rating: <b>Satisfactory</b>
-----------------------	-----------------------------

In general, it seems this project was cost effective, with minor shortcomings. According to the TE and the ICM, the project was efficiently implemented and significant achievements were attained at a low cost and in a short time frame. The project also mobilized additional resources and support from public and private partners. The TE refers to this project as small in scale, but with significant environmental benefits and accomplishments.

However, the funding envisaged for implementation was insufficient due to the following reasons: the falling exchange rate of the USD led to the decrease of the project budget; and many of the costs proved higher than expected, mainly those for civil works. Funds were also reallocated from activities such as the construction of bird nesting habitat so that the visitors' center (for which envisaged funding was also insufficient) could be completed.

The TE does not provide in-depth information regarding grant usage, but reports the financial components of this project as satisfactory.

4.4 Sustainability	Rating: <b>Likely</b>
--------------------	-----------------------

The project successfully implemented a management plan with local government agencies and stakeholders, and successfully restored the hydro-biological and hydrological status of Lake Pomorie by building a permanent working canal and creating new habitat for key species.

The project plan included considerations of financial and administrative sustainability. The TE states that the Executing Agency, Green Balkans, has applied successfully for two EU-funded projects to ensure sustainability of the Pomorie lake project, and to provide for the infrastructure of the protected area and needed equipment and furniture for the visitors' center.

The TE states "Thanks to the partnership established between the NGO, municipality and private sector who worked for the same aim, project sustainability is ensured."

## 5. Processes and factors affecting attainment of project outcomes

5.1 Co-financing. To what extent was the reported co-financing essential to the 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 so, in what ways and through what causal linkages?

It seems co-financing was very important to the achievement of GEF objectives. Without additional funding, the visitor's center would not have been finished. The municipality allocated a land plot and financed the design of the visitors' center with US\$846,605 of co-financing. Green Balkans provided co-financing of US\$634,611, and expected more funding under a subsequent project financed by EU Structural Funds for providing equipment for the visitors' center and infrastructure for the protected area.

5.2 Project extensions and/or 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 so, in what ways and through what causal linkages?

Cooperation between Green Balkans and the municipality was initially difficult which led to delays in the first year of the project in the construction of the visitor's center. The Bank team intervened securing the support of the MOEW, the deputy prime minister and country management. All possible efforts to help improve cooperation between the project partners were made. Following intermediation by the Bank team, this cooperation improved and all activities were successfully concluded. The Bank team worked diligently to prevent the project from being cancelled, after the first year of implementation, and supported the stakeholders in achieving project outcomes and resolving difficulties in communication between the project partners.

The PIR mentions that the World Bank extended the project closing date by one year till February 1, 2010.

Additional information is found in the ICM: Project implementation was delayed, as no activities were carried out during the first year, and the designation of the land plot for the Visitors Centre met with difficulties. During the project's first year, changes were introduced to the original project management structure. The assigned project managers, however, did not cooperate, resulting in lack of progress and stoppage of project activities for one year. A new Bank team was asked to examine cancelling the project given the lack of activity during the first year. The Ministry of Environment and Water wished to prevent project cancellation and was very supportive. While project implementation subsequently began in earnest, the initial difficult relations between the NGO and the municipality did reflect on project activities from time to time and the Bank team would intervene to intermediate and ensure that cooperation improved. These tensions, as well as disagreement about the ownership of the Visitors Centre building, led to delays in the municipality's allocation of a land plot for the building.

5.3 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:

The TE does not include explicit information about country ownership. It seems the executing agency (Green Balkans) and the secondary executing government agency (Ministry of Ministry of Environment and Waters) were adequately engaged from the start in a project that was of clear national interest. Conflict between Green Balkans and the town mayor was reported, but there was no mention of the mayor's opposition to the project in general. There is insufficient information in the TE and the PIR to answer this question.

## 6. Assessment of project's Monitoring and Evaluation system

Ratings are assessed on a six point scale: Highly Satisfactory=no shortcomings in this M&E component; Satisfactory=minor shortcomings in this M&E component; Moderately Satisfactory=moderate shortcomings in this M&E component; Moderately Unsatisfactory=significant shortcomings in this M&E component; Unsatisfactory=major shortcomings in this M&E component; Highly Unsatisfactory=there were no project M&E systems.

Please justify ratings in the space below each box.

<b>6.1 M&amp;E Design at entry</b>	Rating: <b>Satisfactory</b>
------------------------------------	-----------------------------

The project's plan for the development of the Lake Pomorie Management Plan included environmental monitoring, training needs assessments, socio-economic surveys and financial sustainability aspects, thus the design of the project included both ecological restoration parameters and the necessary administrative and socio-economic planning necessary for the sustainability of a project. The design stage included expert reviews, local consultative processes, and critical assessment of the technical aspects of the project. The project's Management Plan also included a monitoring program which will provide continual updates on the status of not only the lake's biodiversity, but also other critical natural resources and social indicators related to the lake's management. The Project Document for CEO Approval's Annex 8 describes the Monitoring and Evaluation plan, with a rough time line, and various blank sample data collection matrices.

<b>6.2 M&amp;E Implementation</b>	Rating: <b>Satisfactory</b>
-----------------------------------	-----------------------------

The TE mentions the successful implementation of the "monitoring program which will provide continual updates on the status of not only the lake's biodiversity, but also other critical natural resources and social indicators related to the lake's management." However, the TE does not provide details of this process or its effects.

## 7. Assessment of project implementation and execution

Quality of Implementation includes the quality of project design, as well as the quality of supervision and assistance provided by implementing agency(s) to execution agencies throughout project implementation. Quality of Execution covers the effectiveness of the executing agency(s) in performing its roles and responsibilities. In both instances, the focus is upon factors that are largely within the control of the respective implementing and executing agency(s). A six point rating scale is used (Highly Satisfactory to Highly Unsatisfactory), or Unable to Assess.

Please justify ratings in the space below each box.

<b>7.1 Quality of Project Implementation</b>	Rating: <b>Highly Satisfactory</b>
--	------------------------------------

During the first year of this project, lack of cooperation between the executing agency and other partners created a difficult situation that might have led to the project’s cancellation. The World Bank team worked diligently to prevent the project from being cancelled and supported the stakeholders in achieving project outcomes and resolving difficulties in communication between the project partners. The ICM notes that “the Bank team made exceptional efforts to prevent the project from being cancelled, after the first unsuccessful year of implementation, and supported the stakeholders in achieving project outcomes and resolving difficulties in communication between the project partners. This took out-of-the box thinking, a lot of persistence and considerable intermediation skills.”

<b>7.2 Quality of Project Execution</b>	Rating: <b>Satisfactory</b>
---	-----------------------------

According to the TE, the World Bank rates Green Balkans Conservation NGO favorably in project management, financial management, securing cofinancing, procurement, and monitoring and evaluation. Green Balkans was proactive in developing international cooperation, and provided good reports on the status of the monitoring indicators, as well as project brochures, films and feature stories.

However, the TE notes “Cooperation between Green Balkans and the municipality was initially difficult which led to delays in the first year of the project. Following intermediation by the Bank team, this cooperation improved and all activities were successfully concluded.” The PIR mentions the conflict between Green Balkans and the Municipality and Mayor regarding the construction of the visitors center, describing it as “very difficult”. It also mentions that the “NGO still needs a lot of support and advice”, but rates the NGO performance as Satisfactory in all categories”.

The ICM notes that the World Bank rates Green Balkans Satisfactory: after a slow and difficult start, the NGO managed to overcome all obstacles in achieving the outcomes and established good cooperation with all project stakeholders, as well as developed international cooperation and attracted additional funding.



## 8. Lessons and recommendations

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

The project is a good example of how top-bottom approaches can complement top-down (national and European) efforts such as establishing the EU Natura 2000 network of protected areas and wetlands.

Small size projects are important as a pilot and replication model introducing new ideas for sustainable management of protected areas. This project showed how natural wetlands can be used to create unique tourism products and stimulate economic development. The project introduced a new model of cooperation between the local government, NGOs and the private sector.

Considerable implementation difficulties can be overcome with good cooperation and with strong support from the Bank team working closely with all stakeholders

8.2 Briefly describe the recommendations given in the terminal evaluation.

The TE clearly lists its main recommendation:

“stakeholders should continue [to] helping preserve and protect the unique natural riches of the area, the traditional salt production and salt museum, the curative mud extracted from the lake. By using these resources wisely, the area can develop a unique tourist product that will help the economic development of the area and raise living standards while preserving nature for the coming generations. “

## 9. Quality of the Terminal Evaluation Report

A six point rating scale is used for each sub-criteria and overall rating of the terminal evaluation report (Highly Satisfactory to Highly Unsatisfactory)

Criteria	GEF EO comments	Rating
To what extent does the report contain an assessment of relevant outcomes and impacts of the project and the achievement of the objectives?	The TE describes well the expected and actual outcomes of the project, their impacts, and the achievements of the project.	HS
To what extent is the report internally consistent, the evidence presented complete and convincing, and ratings well substantiated?	The TE is internally consistent, the evidence is convincing and complete, and the ratings are well substantiated. However, information on the M&E plan was lacking, as well as explicit information on finances and co-financing.	MS
To what extent does the report properly assess project sustainability and/or project exit strategy?	The TE addresses project sustainability, and clarifies the potential for sustainability based on project outcomes.	HS
To what extent are the lessons	The lessons learned could be a bit more comprehensive.	MS

learned supported by the evidence presented and are they comprehensive?	They are brief, they do not capture the conflicts of the project, and they are too general.	
Does the report include the actual project costs (total and per activity) and actual co-financing used?	The TE lists costs of each project component in parentheses before their descriptions, and mentions co-financing in passing. It does not contain a separate section where project costs are specifically and explicitly addressed.	<b>U</b>
Assess the quality of the report's evaluation of project M&E systems:	While the Project Document for CEO Approval describes a comprehensive M&E plan, the TE only mentions it in passing, and does not adequately report on it.	<b>HU</b>
<b>Overall TE Rating</b>		<b>S</b>

$$0.3 \times (a + b) + 0.1 \times (c + d + e + f) =$$

$$0.3 \times (6 + 5) + 0.1 \times (6 + 4 + 2 + 1) = 3.3 + 1.3 = 4.6$$

### **10. Note any additional sources of information used in the preparation of the terminal evaluation report (excluding PIRs, TEs, and PADs).**

This TER was completed using:

- Project Implementation Report of 2010
- Project Document for CEO Approval (2004)
- Implementation Completion Memorandum (ICM 2010)