



Service Procurement Notice:
Protected Areas and Ecological Network Expert

Location: Home based and Albania

Estimated number of total man/days: 124 man/days

Duration: until August 2013

Type of contract: Consultancy to IUCN Regional Office for Europe

Deadline for applications: 19 February 2012

Preferred starting date: 1 March 2012

1. BACKGROUND

IUCN, the International Union for Conservation of Nature, Regional Office for Europe, is seeking an experienced Consultant to act as **Protected Areas and Ecological Network Expert** for a protected areas and waste management project in Albania. The project is supported by the Government of Italy through DGCS, the DG for Development Cooperation of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The Project, "Institutional Support to the Albanian Ministry of Environment, Forest and Water Administration (MoEFWA) for Sustainable Biodiversity Conservation and Use in Protected Areas and the Management of Waste", will help enhance the Ministry's capacity in addressing these two important governmental national and sub-national priorities. More specifically, this Project will improve national capacity in conserving biodiversity by improving the capacities of MoEFWA in planning and managing protected areas and in implementing concrete actions on the ground.

The project's specific objectives are to:

1. Develop the technical capacities of MoEFWA to adopt systemic approach and methods to:
(i) increase biodiversity conservation effectiveness of protected areas, and (ii) their pivotal role in the development of communities living within the relevant ecosystems user and service areas;
2. Enhance the planning capacity of MoEFWA, i.e. in preparing participatory management plans consistently with technical capacities acquired as per Objective 1;
3. Enhance the capacity of MoEFWA in the implementation of participatory systemic plans and establish effective adaptive management practices for protected areas.

This Project will support the MoEFWA in the realization of the foregoing objectives by developing and implementing a systemic and replicable model to plan and manage protected area. As agreed with counterparts, the project will work at both central and local level, training and working with MoEFWA officials in Tirana and with the district staff responsible of the management of two pilot protected areas.

A set of criteria was considered for selecting two appropriate Project pilot sites. The criteria included: the potential sites' biodiversity values and threats; the ecosystem services that the site could generate; the existence of immediate risks for the local environment (e.g. the waste management in Velipoje); the representativeness of a site of its PA category in the country; the diversity of lessons that may be learned on a site; the site accessibility; the absence of duplication potential with other projects; the potential for synergy with other projects; the potential for transboundary collaboration.

Based on the foregoing criteria, two pilot sites were selected: 1) Buna River and the surrounding wetlands landscape protected area in the North part of the country referred to as Velipoje Protected Landscape and 2) Shebenik-Jablanica National Park in the Eastern part of the country.

The project will have a central coordination unit based in Tirana composed by the Project Manager, an administrative assistant and an accountant, and a scientific and technical supervision unit composed by a Chief Technical Advisor (CTA) and a Technical Coordinator (TC).

2. TASKS

The Protected Areas and Ecological Network Expert will be responsible for:

- Drafting of the organizational structure for the central and local level protected areas management network specific for the Albanian reality (e.g. central level: conservation objectives, policies and technical management/monitoring standards; regional level: planning for specific protected area sites; local level: implementation, monitoring & inspection in specific protected area sites). For the purposes of this work, drafting the structure of the protected areas network means the definition of links and flows between the central level and the two project pilot sites, Velipoje and Shebenik-Jablanica, in spatial, ecological and information terms;
- Drafting the management plans of Velipoje Protected Landscape and Shebenik-Jablanica National Park following the IUCN WCPA guidelines and standards and based on the quantitative analysis and comparative assessment of available management options and related planning measures (project activities 4.1.1, 4.2.1) developed following the systemic approach under the responsibility of the Project CTA (a description of the two sites is given in Annex I);
- Drafting the guidelines, compliant with IUCN PA planning standards, for the planning and management of Protected Areas in Albania. The expert will draft an operational document, based on and using the concrete examples of the work developed during the course of the project, with the objective of replicating in other Albanian protected areas the same approach implemented in Velipoje Protected Landscape and Shebenik-Jablanica National Park.

To accomplish the above tasks, the Protected Areas and Ecological Network Expert will have to take part in all phases of the participatory process that will be developed, under the responsibility of the Project CTA, for the systemic analysis and quantitative assessment of key social, economic and environmental dynamics as well as for the definition of related planning measures. This will be done by focusing on ecosystem structure, function and services, as well as on their interaction with the socio-economic system.

During the execution of the activities constituting this process the Protected Areas and Ecological Network Expert will collaborate with the Database and DSS experts providing inputs for the development of a computerized system for the integrated management of the network of protected areas in Albania.

For the implementation of his tasks the Protected Areas and Ecological Network Expert will respond directly to the IUCN SEE Project Coordinator and the IUCN SEE PM in Tirana and will work in close collaboration with the CTA and TC, supporting their work as required.

3. SELECTION CRITERIA

Education

Advanced University Degree (Master's degree or equivalent) in environmental studies, protected area management, natural resource management, or related field is required. An advanced university degree in a different subject matter with a relevant combination of academic qualifications and experience may be considered in lieu of the above mentioned subjects.

Work Experience

The Protected Areas and Ecological Network Expert will be an individual consultant, who may be contracted either directly or through a private or non-governmental organization providing equivalent services to the Project. He/she will have a minimum 10 years of relevant experience in the field of natural resources management, protected areas management and planning.

In the context of the above mentioned tasks and background, relevant experience is:

- having proven experience in the preparation of at least 4 participatory management plans of protected areas;
- having familiarity with the governance systems of protected areas at national level;
- a proven track record in planning monitoring systems of PAs;
- a proven experience in the use of informatics instruments (e.g. databases, GIS, computerized decision support systems etc.) for the systemic analysis and quantitative assessment of key social, economic and environmental dynamics involved in the management of the PAs.

Previous working experience on waste management in PAs as well as specific experience in Albania will be considered an advantage.

Languages

Complete fluency in English is essential. Knowledge of Albanian or Italian is considered to be an asset.

5. MAXIMUM BUDGET: 54.500 Euro

The daily fees of the single experts will be defined on the base of their actual competences and professional experience.

6. APPLICATIONS

Interested experts are invited to submit their application, comprising an introductory letter and CV to see@iucn.org by 19 February 2012.

ANNEX I - Project Site Descriptions

Buna River and surrounding wetlands Protected Water and Ground Landscape

Part of the original Velipoje Managed Reserve is now the core zone of the Velipoje Protected Landscape (IUCN Category V protected area) that is situated on the coast in the District of Shkodra at the Albania and Montenegro border. It is a picturesque and environmentally sensitive area that is surrounded by mountains on three sides. Its border follows the lower reaches of the Buna River and it possesses 8 km of coastline. Its present area is 694 ha, of which approximately 250 ha are disconnected small wetlands. The reserve includes the Buna River delta. Its vegetation is typically Mediterranean. The reserve provides habitat for the rare Pedunculate oak (*Quercus robur*), and its oak-ash forests are considered endangered. In VPL it is also possible to find species of European importance, such as the Pygmy cormorant (*Phalacrocorax pygmeus*), European otter (*Lutra lutra*), and Golden jackal (*Canis aureus*). The reserve possesses a nice sandy beach and has been experiencing growing numbers of summer users.

Velipoje village is the closest settlement with a year-round population of approximately 15,000 people. The visitation to the area grows in the summer to between 60,000 to 250 000 during the peak season due to the recreational use of the area. Since there is no waste collection, refuse accumulates throughout the reserve. Roadside heaps of household garbage are not only an environmental risk, but also a human health and safety risk. From an economic viewpoint, the polluted streets give a poor image to the city that depends on tourism for its revenues. When waste is collected, it is transferred and dumped into a local open dumping ground that has no specific management. Financial barriers prohibit the municipality from transporting its waste to the newly constructed regional landfill in Bushat.

Aside from waste, other stresses in the reserve have the potential to significantly reduce the value of the ecosystem services that VPL can provide to a large number of people. These include i) changes in the water regime, with alluvium often filling up the river mouth presenting an obstacle to fish migration, ii) the lasting effects of former marsh draining, iii) the upstream discharge of polluting materials (detergents, chemicals) from the town of Shkodra that flows from the Drin to the Buna River and then downstream to the delta, iv) damage to forest vegetation primarily along river banks resulting in increased erosion, v) damage to reed beds resulting in the loss of bird habitat, and vi) the poorly regulated construction of touristic and commercial (small hotels) infrastructure. The reserve has an Administration building and is supervised by one forestry technician and four guards. The staff has 2 motorcycles and radios. There is an office in the reserve that is equipped with a telephone.

The Viluni Lagoon, directly adjacent to the Velipoje Reserve, is another environmentally significant area that has been identified as one of the most Important Bird Areas (IBAs) in the country. The National Biodiversity Strategy proposed placing this area under protection as part of the Velipoje Reserve complex. Subsequent inclusion of this area in the Buna River Protected Landscape has added 950 ha to the original Velipoje Reserve.

The Viluni Lagoon area is important for migratory wintering waterfowl and water birds, a number of which are protected under the Bonn Convention. The Viluni Lagoon itself covers 390 ha and is connected to the sea via the Viluni canal which is 500 m long and 30-40 m wide. Sand beaches with scarce vegetation bordered by white dunes covered by marram grass (*Ammophila arenaria*) separate the lagoon from the sea. The lagoon is important for biodiversity for it hosts species sensitive to different gradients in salinity. The shallowness of the lagoon and the mudflats provide optimal habitat for numerous species of birds. Many passerines, including the lark (*Alauda arvensis*), pipit (*Anthus pratensis*), White wagtail (*Motacilla alba*), Goldcrest (*Regulus regulus*) and European blue tit (*Parus caeruleus*) use the lagoon when migrating or nesting. It is also a potential habitat for curlews (*Neminius tenuirostris*), which are presently a rare species. The area is also important for Dalmatian pelicans (*Pelecanus crispus*) as a feeding and migration site. It also provides suitable habitat for several species of amphibians and reptiles including the Large whip snake (*Coluber jugularis*), and the European pond turtle (*Emys orbicularis*).

The vegetation is mainly composed of sub-Mediterranean xeric broadleaf forest. The coastal vegetation consists of associations of Mediterranean grasses and reeds. The coast is partly covered by replanted pines and elms and partly by the Viluni Lagoon that is fringed by large reed fields. Here one also finds several poplar plantations. Inland, the plain has been reclaimed from extensive marsh and is presently only partly exploited, with most of the abandoned fields being grazed by cattle. The catchment basin of the Viluni Lagoon includes 500 ha of farmed lands, 389 ha of forests and 20 ha of grazing lands. The channels, often invaded by water plants, are experiencing eutrophication as a result of farming activities and the input of nutrients from nearby settlements.

Shebenik-Jablanica National Park

The National Park is located in Librazhdi District, in the region of Elbasan. It is one of the most beautiful and visited areas in the Eastern part of the country. It possesses high ecological, landscape, biodiversity and ecosystem service values, and eco-tourism, leisure, research and study are the most important uses of the area.

The area was designated as a National Park (IUCN Category II) by Decision of the Council of Ministers (DCM) no. 640, date 21.05.2008. Total area is 33927.66 ha and is situated between Bushtrica Valley, Shkumbini river, the national road Librazhd-Çermenike and the state border with FYROM in the District Elbasan, Under-prefecture: Librazhd, Communes: Stebleve, Lunik, Librazhd Qender, Hotolisht, Qukes and Rrajce.

Villages within and near the National Park include Stebleva, Borova, Zabzuni, Llanga, Letmi, Zagoshti, Kosarishti, Dorezi, Kutermani, Gizaveshi, Luniku, Qarishta, Librazhd-Katundi, Serecti, Kozhduk, Kokreva, Vulcani, Buzgara, Skroska, Nermolla, Dragoshtuni, Hotolishti, Skenderbeu, Sutani, Bardhaj, Rrajca, etc.. The human population is stable in number and is mostly engaged in traditional activities such as agriculture, forestry and livestock breeding.

The Administration responsible for the National Park is the Directorate of Forestry Service of Librazhd and communes according to the ownership and administrative division.

The area of Shebenik-Jablanica is part of the physical-geographical South-Eastern units of the country. Its elevation ranges from 300 to 2200 m above the sea level. Generally it lies on the direction North West-South East, length 30 km, and in the direction East-West, length 3-12 km. To the North this region lies up to Qarrishta Valley and Kryqi gorge, to the west to upper Shkumbini Valley, to the South it borders with Prrenjasi and Qafe Thana, whilst to the East it borders with Ohri Gropa and Black Drini.

From the phyto-climatological point of view, it is possible to distinguish 3 areas: Quercetum, Fagetum, pastures and livadhet (subalpine and alpine). Main natural areas are forests, even virgin forest areas, dominated by beech forests (*Fagus sylvatica* L.), fir (*Abies abies alba*), Bosnian pine (*Pinus leucodermi*), Turkey oak (*Quercus cerris* L.), Durmast oak (*Quercus petraea*), hophornbeam (*Ostrya carpinifolia* Scop.) and Sycamore maple (*Acer pseudoplatanus* L.).

The region of Shebenik-Jablanica is distinctive for its rich diversity of flora and fauna. It provides a number of habitats that are crucial for certain fauna species that feed and find shelter in these habitats. Among the numerous mammals species, 5 are listed in Annex II of the Bern Convention requiring strict protection; 9 other species are listed in the Red Book of Albanian fauna, of which special conservation interest have: brown bear (*Ursus arctos*), wolf (*Canis lupus*), lynx (*Lynx lynx*), chamois (*Rupicapra rupicapra*) and otter (*Lutra lutra*).

The Shebenik-Jablanica region is a refuge for a diverse bird community, characteristic of forest and high mountain areas. More than 70 % of the bird species are resident and more than half of them are of special conservation interest.

10 species of amphibians and 15 species of reptiles are found in the Shebenik-Jablanica region. Some of the rare species of herpetofauna are: *Testudo hermanni*, *Algyroides nigropunctatus*, *Coronella austriaca*, *Coluber jugularis*, *Coluber najadum* and *Natrix tessellat*. 4 species of amphibians and 11 species of reptiles belong to the Bern Convention's Annex II list of species.

Fresh waters of the rivers Shkumbin, Rrapun, Qarrishte and Bushtrice and those of mountain rivers are home to brown trout (*Salmo trutta fario*), a species listed in the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species.

Librazhd is the main city in the vicinity of the national park. Around 65 % of the population is categorized as working force. The population is dominated by youngsters. The road infrastructure is improving as well as other infrastructural facilities.

Agricultural activity and agricultural and livestock products are most important in the economy and social life of the communities. Agricultural land is under the ownership of the farmers' families.

Livestock and poultry numbers are increasing, by using modern technology and means interlinked with the traditional ones. Livestock breeding is dominated by goat and sheep, whilst gjedhi cattle play an important role in the flattest areas. The pasture capacity of the region does not fulfill the needs of livestock.

Forests and other biological resources contribute to community welfare. The Shebenik-Jablanica region, due to suitable ecological conditions, is very rich in medicinal, aromatic and

nutrition plants. These products are collected from both natural and cultivated plants. In some areas, employment in forestry sector and in relation to the collection and treatment of medicinal and aromatic plants is an essential economic activity. The forest area is also used for livestock grazing. Wood and timber from natural forests are the primary energy source and the source for rural construction.

The local economy is in harmony with the development of the free market and to this end efforts have been made to set up the agribusiness industry in accordance with the products and the needs of the population, aiming at both national and international markets.

Environmental protection and nature conservation are the main challenges related to the planning and proper administration of the rural and natural environment. Pollution increase caused by human activities has negatively affected the ecosystem and its biological productivity. This is a continuous serious threat to the natural environment of rivers as well as for mountainous, forest, and pasture ecosystems.

Possible negative impacts include:

- Throwing of solid and inorganic waste. The major part of waste consists of items used for picnics (bottles, bags, papers, glasses, cans, tins, plates).
- Risks from fire, grazing, illegal hunting and fauna disturbance.
- Construction of hotels and restaurants that are not in harmony with the natural landscape.
- Construction waste.
- One uncontrolled local dumping zone is an environmental menace.
- Collection of firewood as well as wood material.
- Lack of infrastructure and of touristic, leisure and sport activities' management.
- Water pollution due to the discharge of waste water from surrounding villages, waters with pesticides from agriculture and waters with high content of detergents as well as hydrocarbons.