

PROJECT INFORMATION SHEET

WETLANDS AND WATER POLLUTION

SUPPORT FOR DANUBE ENVIRONMENTAL FORUM NGOS

BACKGROUND

Support was provided by the UNDP/GEF Danube Regional Project (DRP) for the **Danube Environmental Forum's (DEF)** wetland-related activities. The DEF, created through earlier UNDP/GEF interventions, is today the umbrella organisation for the largest network of NGOs in the Danube Basin with 174 member organisations.

DRP support was geared to enhancing the DEF's '**International Wetlands Campaign**' which encourages national water managers in the Danube Basin to better incorporate wetland protection into their national river basin management plans. This should also assist them in their efforts in developing measures to meet the EU Water Framework Directive. Four DEF NGOs in the countries of Croatia, Serbia, Slovakia and Slovenia were supported. Significant media outreach was also implemented.

CROATIA

The area of concern here is the biodiversity-rich wetlands of the Drava River and confluences of the Bednja and Plitvice rivers. Past negative impacts include the construction of accumulation reservoirs that led to the cutting off and drying out of wetlands and their habitats with many fish deaths. On the Bednja and Plitvice rivers, recent upstream engineered regulations led to downstream spring floods for the first time ever in 2006 with farmlands flooded and local protests resulting. The project aims to raise awareness about natural solutions and create a long-term process for stakeholder dialogue and sustainable development planning. Project activities include stakeholder questionnaires, round table forums, radio and TV media outreach and educational initiatives with children. **(NGO: Franjo Koščec Association, Varaždin)**

SERBIA

The NGO here launched a local campaign to tackle problems in the 'Zasavica Special Nature Reserve', an area rich in wetlands. Surveys of villagers showed that they perceived the Reserve as important for the country's national heritage and that illegal waste dumping was the biggest problem. Local awareness was raised through educating children, disseminating information materials and successful media outreach. Local representatives, including a newly formed 'Children's Committee', met with local authorities to successfully push for improvements to waste management. **(NGO: Ecological Movement of Sremska Mitrovica)**

SLOVAKIA

This country-wide project found that most water managers saw their mandates as limited to ensuring good water quality and quantity with less attention for ecosystems and wetlands. NGO workshops held across the country for some 150 water managers helped raise awareness of the importance of wetlands and the responsibility of managers to protect them, especially to help fulfil the EU Water Framework Directive. Some model wetland restoration projects within the country were also identified. The project concluded that more wetlands-related training is needed for water managers as well as support from the national Ministry of Environment.

(NGO: Daphne, Bratislava)

SLOVENIA

The project goal here was to increase local public participation in protecting the Vrbje Pond near the Savinja River, a tributary of the Sava River and a proposed Natura 2000 site rich in biodiversity. Awareness raising activities included successful media outreach, the distribution of publications and promotional materials, workshops with local stakeholders and educational tours for school children and adults. Proposals were also made to increase revenues from local eco-tourism development, for which the NGO developed new information tables and a visitors center. **(NGO: Environmental Society Radoziv)**

MEDIA OUTREACH COOPERATION

Press releases jointly developed by the UNDP/GEF DRP and DEF were highly successful in launching three wetlands-related activities in 2006. The first was a new DRP project to encourage national water managers to better use wetland water plants to help reduce pollution. The second launched the DEF international campaign noted above. The third presented the first results of the DEF campaign in Serbia for the Zasavica Reserve.

The press releases were distributed through the UN Information Service in Vienna, DEF International and the DEF Serbian national focal point to international, national and local journalists on February 2, World Wetlands Day. The resulting widespread media coverage included top news on the international website of the Ramsar Convention (the organization that implements Wetlands Day) and local coverage around the Zasavica Reserve and neighbouring towns and villages.

More media outreach is planned for World Wetlands Days in 2007 and 2008, where the DEF will present their updated findings on whether water managers have increased their consideration of the importance of wetlands – all part of their International Wetlands Campaign.