UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

‘Conservation of Inland Wetland Biodiversity in Lithuania’

Atlas Project Number – 36079; PIMS - 1761

Report of the Final Evaluation Mission

30th December 2010

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The PIT provided a useful set of comments on an Interim Report produced by the Final Evaluation Team (FET) on 5th November (immediately following the field visits). A further set of comments were received from the PIT, UNDP CO and Regional Coordination Unit in Bratislava on the Draft Report on 13th December 2010. Comments have either been included in the text where these related to factual inaccuracies in the draft, or have been reproduced in full as a footnote to the appropriate text. We thank each of the reviewers for providing useful and constructive feedback, which helped to strengthen the final version of this report.

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30th December 2010

List of Acronyms

EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
EU	European Union
FE	Final Evaluation
FET	Final Evaluation Team
FSC	Forest Stewardship Council
FZS	Frankfurt Zoological Society
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GoL	Government of Lithuania
IA	Implementing Agency
MAB	Man and the Biosphere
MoA	Ministry of Agriculture
MoE	Ministry of Environment
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MTE	Mid-Term Evaluation
MWWG	Multisectoral Wetland Working Group
NHF	Nature Heritage Fund
PA	Protected Area
PIR	Project Implementation Report
PIT	Project Implementation Team
PM	Project Manager
PSC	Project Steering Committee
SNR	Strict Nature Reserve
SSPA	State Protected Areas Service
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive summary

Brief description of project

Although wetlands occupy only about 5% of Lithuania, they are among the country's most important ecosystems, with a wealth of rare, endemic and endangered species, particularly plant and bird species. However, despite their importance for biodiversity, an estimated 70% of Lithuania's wetlands have been lost in the last 30-50 years, with most damage occurring during the Soviet period, and continue to be subject to a range of threats, particularly drainage of bogs resulting from canals built pre-1990 for agricultural and forestry activities, overgrowth of meadows resulting from recently changed agricultural practices, unsustainable peat mining, water pollution (agricultural and urban domestic); and disturbance and habitat degradation from cranberry pickers and tourism.

The Project had two Objectives: 'To conserve inland wetland biodiversity in five sites through the application of alternatives approaches to wetland conservation in Lithuania' 'To institutionalize lessons learned from alternatives approaches for replication in other wetlands in Lithuania and elsewhere', which were later reduced to one 'Sustainable management of wetland biodiversity on five important sites'. The Project has six Outcomes, five delivering biodiversity conservation at the top five priority wetlands in Lithuania (Cepkeliai, Kamanos, Viesvile, Zuvintas and Girutiskis) e.g. 'Wetland biodiversity protected in Cepkeliai Strict Nature Reserve', with a sixth Outcome to create a formal intersectoral mechanism for institutionalization and replication of best lessons learned in conservation of inland wetland biodiversity.

The Project began in April 2004 and will officially finish on 31 December 2010, having had a 12-month no-cost extension (extended to 21 months). The total project budget was projected to be US$13,865,400, of which US$3,261,00 is the GEF contribution (this includes US$180,000 invested during the PDF B phase). Committed co-financing at the signing of the Project Document was US$10,424,000. Project execution is through the National Execution (NEX) modality, with the Project Implementation Team (PIT) office located in Vilnius and the designated national institution (Implementing Partner) being the Ministry of Environmental (MoE).

Project evaluation

The FE mission was conducted over a period of 19 days between 18th October – 5th November 2010 by a team of one International Consultant and one National Consultant. The FE occurred 2-3 months before the official end of the Project on 31st December 2010. The FE was based on the review of key Project and other related documents and interviews with 50 people from various stakeholder groups in Vilnius and at and around the Project's main wetland sites – the State Nature Reserves of Cepkeliai, Kamanos, Viesvile, Girustiskis and the Zuvintas Biosphere Reserve, and UNDP staff. The report was finalised on X December 2010 after receipt of comments.

In line with UNDP/GEF requirements, the FE team assessed the relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of the Project and its results, including implementation and management arrangements, and identify early signs of potential impact and sustainability of results, including the contribution to capacity development and the achievement of global environmental goals. This Report also includes recommendations to promote the impact, sustainability and promotion of Projects results and documents lessons learned of relevance to the design and implementation of other UNDP-GEF projects.

Key findings

Conceptualisation/design - Key elements of Project design imposed from outside (by UNDP-GEF and international consultant and so not of Lithuanian ownership) and most of these elements failed e.g. cranberry farm, tradable permits; poor logframe, added in late in the design process, with confused collection of largely non-SMART indicators and targets, many of which do not match each other; original risk analysis poor although stakeholder consultation in project design was adequate (although mostly key partners). Evaluated as ***Marginally Unsatisfactory***

Stakeholder participation/public involvement - Generally good partner participation but limited opportunities for local communities to influence project activities, e.g. only public involvement in management plans was only through 'public hearings'; SNR-specific 'Regional Groups' were not established; good, targeted use of experts from various Institutes, NGOs and universities in project activities; technical publications on SNRs were very good, but general communication about project activities and results has been *ad hoc* and could have been substantially improved (the lack of a formal Project Communication and results Dissemination Strategy and Plan led by specific PIT individual for project duration didn't help); website needs updating (2007 publications and some links don't work). Overall, evaluated as ***Satisfactory***.

Implementation approach - Some very limited revision to logframe (although documentation on this is absent) but not changed at MTE when opportunity arose, which has made evaluation of Project impact difficult as logframe lacks indicators which measure biodiversity impact and has very limited threat reduction indicators (which were not measured by the project anyway); very good partnerships in implementation arrangements (and Project team has helped improve relationships between partners); good adaptive management skills among project team (flexible team able to cope with major loss of co-financing early on, marked currency fluctuations and rising costs); very good Project Implementation Team (PIT) with a very good reputation among stakeholders Project team and outstanding at leveraging additional funding for project activities, particularly accessing EU funds; overall project management very good with capable, skilled and dedicated team and PSC has taken an active oversight role with good support from government, especially State Service for Protected Areas (SSPA) and the five SNRs, who clearly see the Project as very valuable and helping them achieve their aims; however, the was a lack of attention to Outcome 6 by Project (by both PIT and PSC) until issue pushed by MTE and this has been a major reason for the need for project extension. Evaluated as ***Satisfactory***

Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) - Adequate project monitoring and evaluation, but hampered by poor logframe with too many indicators many of which don't have appropriate targets and don't 'indicate' success or failure of the Objective or Outcome; detailed, well-presented 6-monthly PSC reports; adequate resources (human and financial) for effective M&E. However, weak lesson learning on the Project up to FE, with only brief mention in PIRs (and mostly not lessons learned). Evaluated as **Satisfactory**.

Sustainability - Management plans for SNR developed, approved and implemented (successful mainstreaming); recommendations from tourism services report but not clear how these will be integrated into national policy or planning for PAs (process, ownership); National Peatlands Strategy being developed but issues over stakeholder participation and ownership, associated action plan (need to identify indicators, responsibilities, funding sources), questions over whether, as an official strategy, it will need a Strategic Environmental Assessment, and the need to be adopted by GoL (which bodies is not clear nor is the process and procedure and not yet an agreement on this); NHF 'project driven' (like most young NGOs), has no Institutional Development Strategy and Plan or Business Plan and athough probably has funding for next 1-2 years which will help it follow through on the NPS, there are questions over its long-term vision and direction; capacity at SNR has been reduced due to government budget cuts and if there are more then likely to lose educational programmes, although GoL appears committed to maintaining infrastructure provided by Project and nature management activities are a priority for SSPA; Project has increased knowledge and capacity of other individuals to develop their own project proposals through training and informal mentoring; some integration of Project's school education programme into local schools (take up by teachers) but capacity of education staff at SNRs still needs to be built. Evaluated as **Satisfactory**.

Results

Achievement of objectives/outcomes – Many indicator targets met or exceeded, others not but often because and unrealistic targets set during the PDF-B stage. Project team did well to achieve so much given substantial loss of co-financing due to adverse currency exchange rates, hugely increased construction costs after implementation, and loss of some co-financiers which they overcame through very successful fund-raising. Overall, evaluated as ***Satisfactory***

Objective: 'Sustainable management of wetland biodiversity on five important sites'. Most indicator targets achieved, including: 1931ha under restoration activities, more than double the original target; management plans developed for all the sites; but replication of lessons learned to additional sites not yet achieved. ***Satisfactory***

Outcome 1: 'Wetland biodiversity protected in Cepkeliai Strict Nature Reserve'. Management plan under implementation, but only 96.3 ha 'restored' but initial target was not realistic and system of tradable permits not developed (idea didn't have local ownership). ***Satisfactory***

Outcome 2: 'Wetland biodiversity protected in Kamanos Strict Nature Reserve'. Management plan under implementation and significant increase in METT score; very good transformation of agriculture and farmland to nature protection (1218 ha – 1.5 times the maximum thought likely) and 65 ha of selected bogs and meadows restored with18.5km of ditches dammed (the target of 20km was an overestimate of what was required). ***Highly Satisfactory***

Outcome 3: 'Wetland biodiversity protected in Viesvile Strict Nature Reserve'. Management plan under implementation; biodiversity friendly Forest Management plan for Taurge forest prepared, approved by the MoE and under implementation; 67.5 ha of selected bogs, fens, and meadows restored (more than 6x the target); Capercaillie reintroduction program under implementation with state of the art facilities and very committed staff but too early to say whether a breeding population will be established in the wild; two fish ladders completed in 'model' exercise of how to address recreation-conservation conflicts. **Satisfactory**

Outcome 4: 'Wetland biodiversity protected in Zuvintas Biosphere Reserve'. Management plan under implementation and significant increase in METT score; only 314 ha of selected bogs, fens, and meadows restored but original target unrealistic; approval of reserve for UNESCO Biosphere not yet approved but in final stages; two farmers adopted beef cattle as wet meadow management tool (successful from a conservation point of view but questions over if it will be

financially viable); first priority measures of water management plan in Zuvintas being implemented (through joint EU LIFE+ project on Amalva wetlands). ***Satisfactory***

Outcome 5: 'Wetland biodiversity protected in Girutiskis Strict Nature Reserve'. Management plan under implementation; road-blocks and barriers built on the entrance roads to the reserve, reducing illegal access by car; user fee system for tourist not established but question over it was realistic in the first place; 301.6 ha of selected bogs, meadows and fens restored (more than 5 times the target). ***Satisfactory***

Outcome 6: 'Formal intersectoral mechanism for replication of best lessons learned in conservation of inland wetland biodiversity established and operational'. Lessons and best practice currently being captured and documented; Multi-sectoral Wetland Working Group not established, but National Ramsar Committee took over its role; National Peatlands Strategy under development but taking place very late in implementation, and, to date, weak involvement of stakeholders; 10 legal acts were supported by the Project. ***Marginally Satisfactory***

Key achievements/impacts: Management plans for the 5 target sites developed, adopted and under implementation allowing (legal) development of active nature management at the SNRs; pioneering of practical and innovative wetland restoration techniques, e.g. dams at Kamanos; innovative infrastructure developments, notably the fish ladder at Viesvile, which provides a very good example of a 'win-win' solution to a conservation-recreation conflict; educational opportunities provided by the Project, especially to schools at Zuvintas BR and Kamanos SNR; members of the community volunteering to work on nature management activities at the Reserve; very successful fund-raising to secure lost co-financing and support in leveraging of additional funds for other projects who's aims compliment the Project's; changes in awareness, attitudes and behaviours of target SNR staff, supporting them with the transition from the former 'exclusive' management model at their reserves to a new active management approach and helping to open up the SNRs to the public ("they have allowed physical and psychological access").

Main failings/weaknesses: failure to designate Girutiskis SNR as a Ramasar site after more than five years of project implementation; neither the proposed cranberry farm at Viesvile nor the cranberry permit trading system at Cepkeliai were established, each for a variety of different reasons but both ideas had little or no Lithuanian ownership; Regional Groups were not created and there was no real interest in them; significant delays over delivery of Outcome 6 'institutionalisation of lessons learned and best practice'; major design flaws in logframe, indicators and targets which hindered M&E and assessment of impact of project, and not corrected even after MTE; variable communication of and information dissemination; Weak formal lesson learning to date, with no formal mechanism for identifying lessons learned or specific lesson learning activities outside of reporting 'best practice' in PIRs; delays have led to the need to extend the Project, first by 12 months then 21 months.

Overall Project rating: Overall, the Project was well-managed with most activities achieved by the FE, and the Final Evaluation Team evaluates the project as '***Satisfactory'***. The weaknesses in the original design (particularly the formulation of the project strategy (objectives), poor logframe and confused set of indicators and targets), slow delivery of Outcome 6 related to 'institutionalisation of best practices and lessons learned' and failure to establish the tradable cranberry permitting system at Cepkeliai and cranberry farm at Viesvile (which can also be attributed to failures at the design stage), prevented the FET from awarding a ***Highly Satisfactory*** rating for this stage of the Project. However, it would perhaps be fairest to rate the overall delivery of the Project as '***Satisficatory*** +'.

Recommendations to strengthen delivery of Project results and impact

Capturing 'best practice' and 'lesson learning': (1) Extend internal project 'lessons learned' exercise and produce brief document on results for inclusion in Final Report and PIR; (2) convene a 1-2 day 'lessons learned' workshop to fully capture and document the Project's key experiences, successes, failures (and why activities have worked or not), focusing on the experience at each site of wetland conservation gained through the Project, with development of strategies for their replication; (3) produce a document on 'Best practices for management of wetland biodiversity in Lithuania' drawing on experiences from the Project, as a specific technical publication aimed at other wetland and protected area managers with case studies

Dissemination and promotion of project results: (1) Produce a Final Report (in addition to the PIR for 2011) that fully captures the main project activities, results, successes, impacts and lessons learned from the Project over the 5 years of implementation; (2) contract media consultant to advise on best ways to promote and disseminate Project results and produce a clear written strategy and plan on how to communicate project results to the different target groups (assuming that the Project is extended): (3) host a Final Project Meeting event for the Project stakeholders and media to present the Final Report with presentations on key Project achievements (timed to coincide with launch of draft National Peatlands Strategy); (4) present key results at the International Conference of Society of Wetlands Scientists in Prague in July 2011, if funding is available: (5) update website and renew links and include all major reports and studies produced by the Project: (6) employ a native or fluent English-speaker to review the English summaries of all the main Project publications to ensure accurate and readable translations; (7) publish results of economic valuation of peatlands in Lithuania in international (preferably English-language) journal; (8) undertake an analysis of Project results and combine with stakeholder analysis to identify where Project results, lessons learned and 'best practice' can be replicated

Education/interpretation programmes: (1) Develop a weekly 'Capercaillie blog' from Viesvile, and train SNR staff in its use; (2) integrate lessons plans/materials from Project into Municipal 'Education Centres' around Zuvintas and Kamanos, send to the relevant Centres around Cepkeliai and Viesvile and promote to national and municipal education authorities to ensure wider availability and 'ownership' of the GEF Project results; (3) upgrade to more informative 'interpretational' displays rather than simple species identification displays (as opportunity arises)

Development, adoption and implementation of National Peatlands Strategy: (1) Undertake separate stakeholder analysis as part of development of draft NPS, which should be included in the draft document; (2) produce a brief stakeholder participation plan for the development, promotion, adoption and implementation of the NPS; (3) ensure all key stakeholders are involved in developing NPS from an early stage: (4) determine whether the draft NPS will need an SEA (legal situation is unclear), and if so identify sources of funds to carry this out; (5) identify appropriate government body to take responsibility and ownership of the draft NPS to ensure it becomes legally adopted and implemented and develop 'protocol' that sets out who will be responsible for ensuring draft NPS is adopted; (6) ensure clear targets and milestones are set for proposed activities in the action plan, with responsibilities for their implementation clearly identified, programmes/activities costed and a budget developed and provisional sources of funding need to be identified through revised consultant ToRs; (7) raise awareness and profile of NPS among senior government level (not just within MoE) and other key decision-makers through targeted advocacy and promotion programme (branding and marketing of the NPS

Measuring Project impact: (1) Collect and analyse data on threats from pollution (Viesvile, Zuvintas) and illegal trespassing (Cepkeliai, Viesvile and Girutiskis) from 2003-2010 to examine extent of change of threats at these sites to determine if original targets set in logframe have been met

Improving prospects for sustainability: (1) Establish discussions with MoA, municipal authorities around Zuvintas and meat marketing industry to create better promotion of the Zuvintas beef, and discuss options for transfer of responsibility for beef venture from the Project

Project management: (1) Review TOR and role of Project Assistant and UNDP CO staff involved with the Project to ensure that boundaries are clear, there is no conflict of interest over responsibilities and GEF funds are not used to fund non-GEF Project activities or management time, clarifying the position of the Project Assistant in relation to the UNDP CO and the input by the UNDP CO with regards management for the remainder of the Project: (2) agree an additional 4-month no-cost extension to the Project, so official closure will be 30th April 2011, to allow time for production of Final Report, promotion of Project results through a Final Project Meeting, and draft NPS and negotiations on its adoption by government to be concluded

Recommendations to UNDP-GEF and GEF

Project design: (1) UNDP-GEF should upgrade its guidance to project designers on how to measure project impact and offer new advice on choice of suitable indicators (the old guidance is now dated and there has been considerable research done on biodiversity indicators in the last 10 years); (2) ensure a separate Project Communication and Results Dissemination Strategy and Plan is produced for all UNDP-GEF projects during the design phase or in the first 1-2 months of project implementation

Financial management: (1) Consider some form of protection or 'hedge' for such eventualities to better protect against exchange rate transactions (external risk), such as currency conversions or short-term deposits yielding high interest, that are compatible with UNDP and GEF administrative regulations

Monitoring and evaluation: (1) Ensure that a formal and independent review of a UNDP-GEF project's logframe, indicators and targets is undertaken at the start of full project implementation for all projects as part of standard project monitoring and evaluation framework (design flaws in the Project were not corrected at the inception stage and have persisted in the Project and reduced the ability to measure impact); (2) project Implementation Reviews should include a more detailed and robust analysis of how project is contributing to the conservation and sustainable use of globally important biodiversity, and an expanded section on lesson learning with guidance from UNDP on how to develop 'lessons learned'

Project management: (1) Review professional development schemes suitable for UNDP-GEF projects, with formal career development and professional training needs analysis system for the staff of UNDP-GEF Projects when implementation begins

METT forms: (1) Undertake analysis of the difficulties and biases in the completion of the METT over the UNDP-GEF project portfolio and recommend guidance or changes to facilitate filling in the forms and

Lessons learned are listed on page 55, but the FET feels the most important one is: when designing projects, don't impose ideas and artificial structures from outside or ensure that they have very good local ownership during the project design phase – most of the activities of the Project which were not delivered, namely the cranberry farm at Viesvile, the tradable cranberry permitting system at Cepkeliai, and the Multisectoral Wetland Working Group, were either entirely or largely promoted by non-Lithuanians and there was little true local ownership or interest.

1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose of the evaluation and key issues addressed

1. The UNDP-GEF Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) policy at the project level has four objectives: i) to monitor and evaluate results and impacts; ii) to provide a basis for decision-making on necessary amendments and improvements; iii) to promote accountability for resource use; and iv) to document, provide feedback on, and disseminate lessons learned.

2. In accordance with UNDP-GEF M&E policies and procedures[1], all Full-Sized Projects supported by the GEF should undergo a Final Evaluation. Final evaluations are intended to assess the **relevance**, **effectiveness** and **efficiency** of the project and its results, including implementation and management arrangements, and identify early signs of potential **impact** and **sustainability** of results[2], including the contribution to capacity development and the achievement of global environmental goals. They also identify/document lessons learned and make recommendations that might improve the design and implementation of other UNDP-GEF projects.

3. This Final Evaluation (FE) of the UNDP-GEF Project "**Conservation of Inland Wetland Biodiversity in Lithuania**" (hereafter referred to as the Project) was initiated by UNDP Lithuania as the GEF Implementing Agency. It aimed to provide managers (at the level of regulatory bodies of the Ministry of Environment, protected areas (project sites) administrations, and UNDP-GEF levels) with a comprehensive overall assessment of the project, and the basis for learning and accountability for managers and stakeholders.

4. In addition to general GEF and UNDP requirements, the FE Team (FET) was also requested to review and assess changes in development conditions by addressing the following questions, with a focus on the perception of change among stakeholders:

- Has the project achieved its objectives and outcomes as set in project document?
- Has the project established a management basis for long-term sustainability and development of project outcomes?
- Has the project helped the protection of endangered species in Project sites?
- Have there been changes in local stakeholder behavior (i.e. threats, land use management practices) that have contributed to improved conservation? If not, why not?
- Has the project elaborated innovative incentives to motivate the local population to apply biodiversity friendly land use and farming practices?
- Has awareness on biodiversity conservation and subsequent and nature values increased among various population groups (children, school students, protected areas staff, visitors, farmers, local population) as a result of the project?
- Is there adequate territorial planning in place, or in progress, ensuring long-term conservation of biodiversity and cultural values?
- What underlying factors beyond the project's immediate control have influenced outcomes and results, including recent changes in the governmental policy on the implementation of the agri-environmental scheme (assess the appropriateness and effectiveness of the project's management strategies for these factors)?

1.2 Approach and methodology of the evaluation

5. The evaluation approach was determined by the Terms of Reference (TOR, see Annex 1), which were closely followed. The FE mission was conducted over a period of 19 days between 18th October – 5th November 2010 by a team of one International Consultant and one National Consultant, following the itinerary detailed in Annex 2.

6. The Final Evaluation Team (FET) employed a variety of methods including:

1 See http://www.undp.org/gef/05/monitoring/policies.html for the UNDP Monitoring and Evaluation Policy and http://thegef.org/MonitoringandEvaluation/MEPoliciesProcedures/mepoliciesprocedures.html for the GEF Monitoring and Evaluation policy.

[2] **Relevance** – the extent to which the activity is suited to local and national development priorities and organizational policies, including changes over time; **Effectiveness** – the extent to which an objective has been achieved or how likely it is to be achieved; **Efficiency** – the extent to which results have been delivered with the least costly resources possible; **Results/Impact**s – the positive and negative, and foreseen and unforeseen, changes to, and effects produced by, a development intervention (includes direct project outputs, short- to medium-term outcomes, and longer-term impacts including global environmental benefits, replication effects and other, local effects); **Sustainability** – the likely ability of an intervention to continue to deliver benefits for an extended period of time after completion (includes environmental as well as financial and social sustainability).

- A review of relevant project documentation provided by the GEF Project's Project Implementation Team (PIT), UNDP CO, UNDP-GEF, as well as documents obtained from the internet (list given in Annex 3);
- A mission to Lithuania by the International Consultant, and, together with the National Consultant, field visits to the State Nature Reserves (SNRs) of Zuvintas, Kamanos, Viesvile, Cepkeliai and Girutiskis, which are the five principal Project sites
- Semi-structured interviews using questionnaires with key project individuals, partners, stakeholders and project beneficiaries;
- In-depth analysis and interpretation of data collected following the mission to Lithuania; and,
- The FET also drew on over 40 years combined experience in management and implementation of biodiversity and sustainable development projects, including several UNDP-GEF Final and Mid Term Evaluations.

7. Interviews were held with 50 people from the UNDP CO, Project staff (and some associated Nature Heritage Fund staff), UNDP-GEF staff (Bratislava), relevant government institutions (national and municipal authority levels), members of the Project Steering Committee (PSC), staff at all 5 Strict Nature Reserve Directorates, technical experts associated with the Project, other key partners including national NGOs, and individual beneficiaries of project activities (the list of people interviewed is given in Annex 4).

8. The FET adopted a participatory approach in which interviewees were encouraged to discuss (among other things) their own experiences of the Project, what impact it had made on their own lives and community or organization, what they felt had been its successes and failures to date[3], and what needed to be changed to strengthen delivery of the Project objective and outcomes. Project staff and stakeholders were reassured that the purpose of the FE was not to judge performance in order to apportion credit or blame but to determine ways to maintain or improve implementation to ensure the Project's successful conclusion and to gather lessons for the wider GEF context. Wherever possible, information collected was crosschecked between various sources to ascertain its veracity, particularly if there were conflicting claims.

9. The FET rated the project achievements, as detailed in the TOR, according to the GEF project review criteria, using the ratings of Highly Satisfactory (HS), Satisfactory (S), Marginally Satisfactory (MS), Marginally Unsatisfactory (MU), Unsatisfactory (U), Highly Unsatisfactory (HU) and Not Applicable (NA). The FET has evaluated the Project's performance against the revised logframe.

10. A brief presentation of the preliminary findings of the FE was given by the international and national consultants at the UNDP CO (meeting attended by the UNDP Programme (Communications) Officer, the Project Manager, Deputy Project Manager, Project Assistant, and Project Financial Manager) on 5 November 2010, immediately prior to the departure of the International Consultant from Lithuania. A printed copy of the presentation was left with the attendees as the FE Interim Report. A draft FE Report was produced by 12 December 2010 and the final report was completed after receipt of comments from project staff and stakeholders, coordinated by the UNDP Lithuania CO, on 30th December 2010.

2. The project and its development context

2.1 Problems that the project seek to address (threat to wetland biodiversity in Lithuania)

11. Although wetlands occupy only about 5% of Lithuania, they are among the country's most important ecosystems[4], with a wealth of rare, endemic and endangered species, particularly plant and bird species[5]. However, despite their importance for biodiversity, an estimated 70% of Lithuania's wetlands have been lost in the last 30-50 years, with most damage occurring during the Soviet period.

12. The project development phase (PDF-B) identified the following key threats/root causes to the ecological integrity of wetlands at five priority sites, identified as the most important for biodiversity but representative of other Lithuanian wetlands:

[3] Such questioning often reveals less tangible benefits and impacts that are not identified within a standard GEF project M&E system heavily reliant on logframe indicators, but which can nevertheless be important to stakeholders, useful for improving project partnerships, and essential for understanding how to deliver projects with real sustainable impacts. Different participants in a project often have very different ideas on what constitutes success and failure. Local people's views are no less important than those of a Minister, and it was considered important that all relevant beneficiaries or stakeholders had the opportunity to participate in the FE.

[4] Wetland vegetation in Lithuania consists of 4 broad classes: (i) fens alder (*Alnetea glutinosaea*); (ii) fens - small sedge thicket (*Scheuchzerio-Caricetea nigrae*); (iii) raised bogs - grassy peat-moss (*Oxycocco sphagnetea*); and (iv) raised bogs - whortle-berry (*Vaccinietea uliginosi*).

[5] For instance, Lithuania is situated along two major bird migration routes; the first of these connects Russia and the Baltic States with Western Europe and Africa, the second connects Scandinavia with the Middle East and Asia. During spring and autumn migrations, over 170 migrating bird species have been recorded, many of which use wetlands either as breeding or stopover sites.

- Drainage of bogs resulting from canals built pre-1990 for agricultural and forestry activities;
- Overgrowth of meadows resulting from recently changed agricultural practices (largely abandonment of land);
- Unsustainable peat mining (although no new licenses have been issued since 1990);
- Water pollution resulting from poorly regulated and managed non-point and point sources (agricultural and urban domestic);
- Habitat fragmentation promoted by intensive forestry in areas around the wetlands resulting from poor "cross-border" management;
- Disturbance and habitat degradation from cranberry pickers and tourism (unsustainable resource use) resulting from poor policy, education, and enforcement structures; and,
- Loss of habitat connectivity resulting from ill-advised and conceived dams.

13. As pointed out by the Mid Term Evaluation (MTE), the Project documents do not clearly identify threats and root causes on a national level, but rather specify them for each of the five Project sites (see annex 5). There was also a very weak analysis of the barriers to tackling these threats – what needs to be overcome and delivered to achieve effective conservation and sustainable use of wetland biodiversity in Lithuania.

2.2 Project development

14. The initial concept of the Project dates back to the late 1990s, and the Project entered the GEF Work Programme on 18 September 2000. The Project was submitted to GEF under Operational Programme 2 (Coastal, Marine and Freshwater Ecosystems) and Strategic Priorities BD1 (Catalyzing Sustainability of Protected Areas) and BD2 (Mainstreaming Biodiversity in Production Landscapes and Sectors) of the GEF Business Plan.

2.3 Immediate and development objectives of the project and expected results of project

15. The project approach was to: a) demonstrate improved wetland management *in-situ* at five globally significant sites; and b) with the lessons learned from these experiences, institutionalize best practices through a formal intersectoral mechanism for replication to other wetland sites throughout Lithuania.

16. According to the Project Document, the overall **Development Objective** (goal) of the Project to '*preserve inland wetland biodiversity in Lithuania'*.

17. Originally, there were two **Project (Immediate) Objectives** namely: (i) *To conserve inland wetland biodiversity in five sites through the application of alternatives approaches to wetland conservation in Lithuania*, and (ii) *To institutionalize lessons learned from alternatives approaches for replication in other wetlands in Lithuania and elsewhere*. Some time after the Project started (it was not clear to the FET when), UNDP-GEF stated that the Project could have only one Project Objective, in keeping with GEF guidance, and so a single Project Objective was formulated: '*Sustainable management of wetland biodiversity on five important sites'.*

18. The Project has six **Outcomes** (termed 'Outputs' in the Project Document). Five of these relate to delivering biodiversity conservation at five top priority wetlands in Lithuania:

Outcome 1: Wetland biodiversity protected in Cepkeliai Strict Nature Reserve;
Outcome 2: Wetland biodiversity protected at Kamanos Strict Nature Reserve;
Outcome 3: Wetland biodiversity protected at Viesvile Strict Nature Reserve;
Outcome 4: Wetland biodiversity protected at Zuvintas Reserve; and
Outcome 5: Wetland biodiversity protected in Girutiskis Strict Nature Reserve.

19. These five Strict Nature Reserves (SNR)[6] differ in the value of their main biodiversity elements (species, habitats and communities) but stand as internationally important locations for breeding, feeding, moulting, and resting of water birds. Based on their socio-economic characteristics, each project site tests a different approach to wetland conservation. The sixth Outcome was:

Outcome 6: Formal intersectoral mechanism for replication of best lessons learned in conservation of inland wetland biodiversity established and operational.

20. The intention of Outcome 6 was to capture lessons learned and best practices from Project successes at the five demonstration sites and use them to inform an inter-institutional policy dialogue regarding biodiversity conservation

[6] At the time of project initiation each of the project sites was a designated as a 'State Strict Nature Reserve' (SNR) where access was limited to scientific research only.

and economic and social benefits from wetlands, with the establishment of a Multisectoral Wetlands Working Group (MWWG) to act as a conduit to institutionalize the results and ensure their replication to other sites after project termination date.

21. The 'end-of-project situation' aimed to remove threats to wetlands biodiversity in targeted areas by direct action and mainstreaming biodiversity protection with socio-economic goals and sectoral integration in the management and conservation of project sites and in areas adjacent to those sites.

2.4 Project start, duration and implementation modality

22. The Project Document was signed on 30 March 2004 and first disbursement of funds occurred on 13 May 2004. The Project was originally envisaged to run for 84 months (5 years) and had an expected completion date of 30th March 2009, but a 12-month extension was recommended and agreed after the MTE, which would have put the finishing date at 30th March 2009. However, the Project has been further extended and now has a revised closing date of 31st December 2010.

23. The total project budget was projected to be US$13,865,400, of which US$3,261,00 is the GEF contribution (this includes US$180,000 invested during the PDF B phase). Committed co-financing at the signing of the Project Document was US$10,424,000.

24. The Project Manager (PM) was recruited during the PDF-B phase on 2nd August 2001, the Deputy Project Manager on 2nd August 2001, and the Project Financial Manager on 17th September 2001. Consequently, the core team has worked on the Project for the best part of 10 years, and there has been continuity of key staff between the PDF-B and full Project implementation. Other independent experts have been recruited as needed, although some Nature Heritage Fund staff have been employed part-time on the Project since 2004.

25. Project implementation is through the UNDP Lithuania Country Office (CO) and project execution is through the National Execution (NEX) modality, with the Project Implementation Team (PIT) office located in Vilnius. The designated national institution (Implementing Partner) is the Ministry of Environmental (MoE).

2.5 Main partners/stakeholders

26. A list of stakeholders is presented in the Project Document (see Table 1 below), compiled during the PDF-B stage. There does not appear to have been any significant changes since implementation began.

Table 1: Main stakeholders and partners associated with Project

Stakeholder group	Institution/group
1. National level (ministries, authorities and institutions, agencies, services)	• The Ministry of Environment (MoE, responsible for designing state policy on environmental protection, forestry, utilization of natural resources and territorial planning) • State Service of Protected Areas (SSPA, within MoE) • Environmental Protection Agency (EPA, within MoE, formerly the 'Joint Research Centre') • Forestry Department • Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) • National Paying Agency (within MoA, responsible for Rural Development funds (SAPARD) mostly during PDFB phase) • Fisheries Department (also within MoA) • Environmental Projects Management Agency (also within MoA) • The Lithuanian State Department of Tourism (within Ministry of Economy) • Directorate General of State Forests (State Forestry Company) • UNDP Lithuania Country Office (CO) • Ministry of Finance (fee issues in Girutiskis)
2. Project area level (SNRs, municipalities, others)	• Directorate of Cepkeliai SNR (now part of Directorate of Dzukija National Park) • Directorate of Kamanos SNR • Directorate of Viesvile SNR • Labanoras Regional Park as owner and manager of Girutiskis SNR • Directorate of Zuvintas Biosphere Reserve • Local municipalities in each of the demonstration areas • Various State Forest Enterprises around each SNR, particularly foresters at Viesvile
3. Scientific community (universities, institutes, individual scientists)	• Institute of Ecology • Institute of Botany • Institute of Geology and Geography • Geological Survey of Lithuania

	• Forest Research Institute • Forest Inventory and Management Institute
4. Civil society (NGOs, non/profit associations)	• Various NGOs including the Lithuania Fund for Nature • Schools around the 5 project sites, especially Zuvintas Biospshere Reserve and Kamanos SNR • Communities around the reserves • Groups involved in cranberry picking in Cepkeliai and Viesvile • Farming communities in Kamanos and Zuvintas • Local groups (for local public awareness campaigns)
5. Business community	• Association of Peat Extraction Industries
6. International level	• UNDP-GEF Bratislava, and UNDP-GEF Global • Frankfurt Zoological Society • SAPARD and ISPA staff for actions in Zuvintas

3. Findings and Conclusions

3.1 Overall Project strategy and design

27. The Project has had a two-pronged approach: (i) to demonstrate improved wetland management *in-situ* at five globally significant sites, and then (ii) with the lessons learned from these experiences, institutionalize 'best practices' through a formal, intersectoral, institutional mechanism (the Multisectoral Wetlands Working Group (MWWG)) for replication to wetland sites throughout Lithuania and to mainstream optimum wetland management requirements into sectoral policy so that economic activities - primarily agriculture, forestry and tourism - contribute to the conservation and sustainable use of wetlands and their biodiversity. It was expected that this process would provide an opportunity to leverage EU agriculture and environment funds for wetland conservation in the context of compatible productive activities. At the same time, the Project would then be in a position to inform EU agricultural policy for accession countries regarding the conservation of biodiversity and wetlands in the productive lands.

28. The Project's main strategic interventions were to include: (i) restoration of selected wetland habitats; (ii) re-conversion of farming lands to wetland-friendly agricultural activities; (iii) the adoption of biodiversity-friendly forestry protocols; (iv) strengthening enforcement of reserve regulations and boundaries, public awareness and public support activities; (v) gathering and codification of lessons and best practices; (vi) the elaboration of a strategy for replication to other priority wetland sites; and (vii) the establishment of a Biosphere Reserve at Zuvintas.

3.1.1 Changes to project strategy made during implementation

29. There was no official Project inception period or formal inception workshop, common for GEF Full Sized Projects[7], at which the logframe would normally have been reviewed and revised (although the Project was launched at a media event on 30th of March 2004, so the Project began implementation with the original set of objectives, outcomes, indicators and targets. However, there was some revision in the first two years (2004-2006), although documentation on this appears to be missing so it was difficult for the FET to establish dates, timeline and responsibilities. From what the PIT staff can remember, UNDP-GEF informed the team that only one Project Objective (the Immediate Objective) was allowed so the two initial Objectives were reformulated into one. In addition, some of the indicators – notably several threat reduction indicators, e.g. 'by year 4, a decrease of 80 % in reserve trespassing over the baseline' for Cepkeliai SNR, were removed from the logframe but another set related to assessing changes in local stakeholder perceptions and awareness about their local SNR were added (('Statistically significant positive changes in awareness and public support: 1) Relationship with PA, 2) Willingness to support PA'), and the term 'Output' was changed to 'Outcome' in the revised logframe. This modified logframe has been used by the PIT, the UNDP CO and UNDP-GEF to guide project implementation, monitoring and evaluation ever since. As a consequence, the FET also used this revised logframe for assessing project performance and achievements, rather than the original logframe given in the Project Document. An additional indicator – the GEF Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool (METT) scores – was also added to the indicator sets for the five States Nature Reserves (Outcomes 1-5), following recommendation by the UNDP-GEF RTA in the PIR for 2006. However, as this was 2-3 years after the Project had started, the baselines for 2003 had to be reconstructed.

[7] It is worth noting here that some other UNDP-GEF projects, e.g. Conservation of Globally Significant Biodiversity in the Landscape of Bulgaria's Rhodope Mountains Project (ATLAS ID 33627 PIMMS-1966) had an independent evaluation at the inception stage, which was able to recommend major changes to project strategy, logframe and indicators, particularly at the outcome level, which helped improve project delivery considerably.

3.1.2 Review of Project strategy

30. The FET found significant weaknesses in the project design with confusing and poorly worded project Objective and Outcomes, and confusion over the link between an objective/outcome and indicators and targets. In the case of the revised Objective, for instance, the phrase 'sustainable management' is not defined in the text, nor is it adequately measured through an indicator and target (nothing tells you how you will know when 'sustainable management' has been reached). Only one of the 7 Objective-level indicators - indicator number 5 '*State Forestry Company and private forestry companies have assessed options for certification and at least 3 pilot schemes for certifying forests near wetlands are underway*' - can be considered to relate to 'sustainability' (that wetland biodiversity is being used by humans in such a way that it is not reduced or degraded over the long-term), in this case because forest certification under the Forestry Stewardship Council (FSC, the model followed in Lithuania) has specific criteria for sustainable use of forests.

31. To be fair it should be noted that the Project was designed during GEF3 when many projects had more than one objective[8] and addressed several GEF Strategic Objectives and indeed projects from this period are often described as 'Christmas tree' projects because they have numerous different elements hanging on them. This is reflected in the original two Project Objectives and the clear BD1 (Outcomes 1-5) and BD2 (Outcome 6) elements in the Project. When the two Project Objectives were cut to one, Objective 2 was lost, but its related activities were retained in Outcome 6 ('*Formal intersectoral mechanism for replication of best lessons learned in conservation of inland wetland biodiversity established and operational'*). Consequently, the Project has retained the focus on two GEF Strategic Priorities, although the reworded Project Objective did not reflect this – the new Project Objective 'Sustainable management of wetland biodiversity on five important sites' clearly fits with Strategic Priority Biodiversity 1 (Catalyzing Sustainability of Protected Areas).

3.1.3 Indicators and targets

32. As noted above, indicators and targets in the Project logframe are poor, especially measuring the success of project activities on biodiversity at the target wetlands, which has made it difficult for both Project staff and the FET to determine overall project impact, performance and effectiveness. The main failings relating to the indicators and targets are:

- Many of the 'targets' are unrelated to their indicator, which itself is not related to the Project Objective or Outcome e.g. the targets for indicator number 1 ('*Management plans under implementation'* and '*980 ha of selected bogs, fens, and meadows restored'*) are not directly related to their indictor ('*Evaluation of threats reduction at each site, including disturbance by trespassing, continued overgrowth of woody vegetation, on-going drainage, nutrient loading, etc*.') and the indicator does not relate directly to the Project Objective either (reduction of threats is not necessarily tied to sustainable management, and a better indicator would have been changes in the combined METT scores for the 5 sites);
- Five of the indicators (indicators 3-7) were associated with the former Objective number 2 '*To institutionalize lessons learned from alternatives approaches for replication in other wetlands in Lithuania and elsewhere*', but were not removed when the logframe was revised and the second Objective cut;
- As the UNDP Regional Technical Advisor noted in the 2007 PIR, most indicators given in the logframe are process or performance indicators e.g. indicator number 8 '*Management plan developed and under implementation*' is a process indicator not an impact indicator, and there are no direct biodiversity impact indicators e.g. changes in % coverage of globally threatened plant species/communities at one of the 5 SNRs;
- Most threat-reduction indicators were removed from the logframe early in implementation and the only one that remains is indicator 1 whose targets do not measure achievement of the indicator;
- Many of the indicators are not SMART[9] which presented problems to both the PIT and FET in assessing the degree of their achievement;
- Some indictors are rather confused as to what is actually to be measured e.g. indicator 4 'Horizontal fund for wetlands management in agricultural areas has been secured (% of farms adopting environmentally friendly agricultural practices)' appears to be two different indicators, and, more importantly, the target for indicator 1 is '980 ha of selected bogs, fens, and meadows restored' but it is not clear what 'restored' means (not defined in any Project text);
- In many cases there has been either no or inadequate baseline data to decide whether conditions have improved as a result of Project activities, e.g. there is very little data on the original condition of the selected bogs, fens and meadows that are being 'restored' at any of the 5 Project sites since they have been targets for drainage since before Soviet times when research was not conducted;

[8] Current GEF (GEF5, and also previously GEF4) projects have a single objective and should deal with just one GEF Strategic Objective.
[9] SMART = Specific, Measureable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-bound. See section 3.2 of the GEF's "Monitoring and Evaluation Policies and Procedures", available at http://www.undp.org/gef/05/monitoring/policies.html.

- Interviews with SNR staff revealed that many of the 'targets' were not realistic when they were first set and based more on guesswork rather data, particularly relating to those indicators dealing with areas of bush/trees to be 'cleared' and wetland areas to be 'restored', e.g. 'restoration' of 600 ha of selected bogs, fens, and meadows at Zuvintas SNR was way beyond what was achievable and the Director of the Zuvintas Biosphere Reserve (ZBR) stated that he had not been party to setting this figure, and the amount of time, money and effort required for these activities had been considerably underestimated;
- There were no Mid-Term targets (milestones) in the logframe, which would have helped monitor project performance;
- There is some repetition of indicators between the Objective and Outcome levels, e.g. target 2 for indicator 2 under the Project Objective is repeated under Outcome 3 indicator 21; and,
- There are 38 listed indicators, and indicators 1, 8, 11, 12, 15, 16, 23, 24, 30, 35 have more than one separate target, which is far too many (good practice is to carefully select 2-3 good quality SMART indicators with a specific single target for each objective and outcome).

33. The FET has a particular concern about the Project's ability to measure its impact. As stated in the MTE Report, '*the Project currently has a very long list of indicators that do not accurately portray and/or measure project impact with regards to biodiversity conservation or even successful implementation of the project'*. This applies to both Objective- and Outcome-level indicators and limits the usefulness of indicators to guide implementation and evaluate project effectiveness. For instance, the Project lacks indicators reflecting measurable impacts at the 5 SNRs, such as: improved wetland-related land use practices (forestry, agricultural, tourism and natural resource use); water quality and quantity (this was included in the original logframe but subsequently removed); and (especially important) biodiversity values such as presence/absence and changes in the diversity and population of indicator species. Disappointingly, there is no Objective-level indicator that directly measures changes in the populations of globally important biodiversity[10], although changes in the overall area of three general wetland habitat types (raised bogs, fens, and meadows) that have been 'restored' (more accurately those which have received restoration activities) are included in the target for indicator 1.

34. In addition, there is no indicator that measures whether wetland conservation has been successfully institutionalized nationally; the logframe only lists the inadequate "national legislation adopted" as an objective level 'target' associated with the indicator number 5 (*State Forestry Company and private forestry companies have assessed options for certification and at least 3 pilot schemes for certifying forests near wetlands are underway*). As pointed out by the MTE, the logframe 'is silent regarding an operational "intersectoral" mechanism, let alone means to measure its effectiveness', although establishment of the 'Multisectoral Working Group' is listed as a target under Outcome-level indicator 36.

35. In the PIR 2006, the UNDP-GEF RTA made the recommendation that '*as the project was listed as BD 1 and BD 2 it needed to complete the METT (Monitoring of the Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool) and include them as an indicator at the objective level on improved management effectiveness'*. Although METT scores have been calculated for all 5 target sites, they are presented at the Outcome level rather than at the Objective level.

36. As noted, the MTE report identified many of the same weakness outlined above, but despite a clear need to revise and reconfigure the logframe indicators and targets to enable a more accurate assessment of project success, a decision was taken not to make changes. Because the MTE had been delayed by 15 months, the MTE Team (METT) argued that with less than 17 months of project activities remaining, it was not worth changing the logframe. The FET considers this an error, as even with 17 months left there would have been time to identity new or strengthen existing indicators and reconstruct the baselines. However, the FET feels that the logframe indicators and targets should have gone through an official and documented UNDP-GEF review during the first year of project implementation, which should be made mandatory for all UNDP-GEF projects (both Medium Sized and Full Sized Projects). It should be noted here that according to FE interviews, the logframe was developed very late in the project design stage (shortly before submission of the proposal to GEF) and largely by the international consultant contracted to help the PDF-B team to develop their proposal, and it was not developed in the more usual participatory way based on a 1-2 day stakeholder workshop held early on in the project development phase, where a threat/root cause analysis was undertaken, followed by definition of project objectives and outcomes, with development of the logframe with indicators and target done jointly by the workshop group.

37. In summary, the Project strategy, as set out in the logframe is a mixture of BD1 and BD2 activities, but there is an overly large set of indicators, many of which are not SMART, and have sets of unrelated targets, creating a confused logframe which does not aid the tracking and assessment of project performance, success and impact. Disappointingly, there are no adequate indicators to assess the Project's impact on wetland biodiversity. Unfortunately, although the

[10] Globally important biodiversity is defined here as species and habitats identified under the various international analyses, such as the IUCN Red Data Book, EU Birds Directive, EU Habitats Directive, Convention on Migratory Species, Bern Convention, etc, and includes threatened and endemic species (national and regional endemics).

MTE identified many of these problems the MTE team did not feel able to recommend changes to the logframe due to lack of time before project closure. It is always easy for evaluation teams with the benefit of hindsight to suggest what should have taken place, nevertheless it is clear that a more thorough and independent review of the Project's strategy, logframe and indictors should have taken place during the early stages of project implementation, led by the UNDP-GEF Bratislava office. Consequently, **project conceptulisation/design** is rated as ***Marginally Unsatisfactory.***

Recommendations/tasks	*Responsibility*	*Time frame*	*Deliverables/evidence*
1. Ensure that a formal and independent review of a UNDP-GEF project's logframe, indicators and targets is undertaken at the start of full project implementation to ensure that the impact of project activities on biodiversity and threats can be measured by the end of the project	UNDP-GEF, UNDP HQ	By mid-2011	A UNDP-GEF guidance note issued to all UNDP COs, RTAs, and consultants employed by UNDP involved with the design of GEF projects
2. UNDP-GEF should upgrade its guidance to project designers on how to measure project impact and offer new advice on choice of suitable indicators (the old guidance is now dated and there has been considerable research done on biodiversity indicators in the last 10 years)[11]	UNDP-GEF, GEF	By mid-2011	An updated UNDP-GEF Advisory Note on design of indicators for GEF biodiversity projects

The Project's overall Conceptualisation/design is rated as ***Marginally Satisfactory***.

3.2 Country ownership/driveness

38. The original idea for the Project dates back to the late 1990s, and was developed nationally through a PDF-A stage in 1999. A PDF-B funding application was made in 2000, funded by GEF (US$180,000) and the UNDP CO (US$25,000) with additional co-financing from the governments of Lithuania (US$10,000, in-kind), Finland (US$20,000) and Denmark (US$20,000) which included an initial stakeholder analysis, problem analysis, capacity assessment and general identification of response measures needed to address the key threats, root causes and barriers, among other things. The PDF-B phase lasted from 31st July 2001 to 31st July 2003.

39. Most of the ideas in the Project came from Lithuania However, some appear to have originated and been driven from the outside. The PDF-B application makes no mention of a formal intersectoral mechanism (Multisectoral Wetlands Working Group) or capturing lessons learned on wetland biodiversity management or development of a national strategy for the conservation and sustainable use of wetlands (covered under Outcome 6, and essentially the Project's BD2 component), which must have been added during the PDF-B phase itself. It is not clear where the ideas for Outcome 6 came from (the FET saw no documentation on this), but FE interviews revealed that there was mixed feeling about their ownership, with some interviewees claiming that Outcome 6 had essentially come from UNDP-GEF and the international consultant working with the national PDF-B team to develop the Project. Similarly, other Project components - the tradable permit system for cranberry pickers at Cepkeliai and establishment of the cranberry farm at Viesvile - appear to have been pushed by UNDP-GEF to promote a more 'green business' approach through the Project. Revealingly, these 'external' elements of the Project were the least successful. Consequently, there is a question over the degree of local/national ownership of some elements of the Project and the degree to which the project's direction was influenced by UNDP staff outside of Lithuania. However, the final project proposal submitted to GEF in 2003 was endorsed by the Government of Lithuania (GoL), and is included within the work programme of the MoE and the UNDP CO in Vilnius, so ultimately ownership of the Project was taken by the GoL.

40. However, the situation has improved since the project design stage and FET interviews revealed that current ownership of the Project and its results is very high, evidenced by full support, coordination and commitment by national government and staff of the SNRs, including good attendance and involvement of senior government members in Project Steering Committee (PSC) meetings. Ownership by municipal authorities appeared more mixed with confusion among some municipal authority staff interviewed by the FET over the identity of the GEF Project compared to other donor-funded projects (not surprising given the large number of, especially, EU-funded projects that have been developed in Lithuania in recent years), although staff at other municipal authorities interviewed were very enthusiastic about the Project and had had a long and mutually beneficial involvement with the Project, e.g. activities associated with Cepkeliai SNR. It should also be mentioned that many of the Project outputs are used by key stakeholders and considered important tools or assets e.g. the nature trails, SNR management plans, materials for schools, and some Lithuanian institutions have already adopted and replicated approaches developed by the Project, e.g. wetland

[11] Development of appropriate indicators for Biodiversity projects are discussed in UNDP-GEF (undated) Biodiversity Advisory Note – Indicators, and GEF (1998) Guidelines for Monitoring and Evaluation for Biodiversity Projects and http://gefweb.org/MonitoringandEvaluation/MEPolicies/MEPTools.html.

biodiversity friendly forest management planning by State Forest Enterprises and management plans for wetland Natura 2000 sites using the models developed by the Project, which suggests good ownership of Project products. The main disappointment here is that the Government of Lithuania has been slow to designate Girutiskis as a Ramsar site (and the FET could discover no clear reason for the long delay), which suggests wetland conservation is not a priority for the Government.

41. Overall, the opinion of stakeholders interviewed by the FET was of an exceptional project and Project Implementation Team, with comments such as "the best project we've had", "the first time we did this", "a model for how NGOs should operate" and "we probably couldn't have done it without them", which suggests high level of ownership and drivenness for the Project. Country ownership and driveness of the Project are considered ***Satisfactory***.

3.3 Relevance

42. The Project Document highlights the relevance of the Project to a number of national development plans and programmes, notably the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP, 1998) for Lithuania, especially as indicated in the general action plans "Protection of Wetland Ecosystems" and "Protection of species." The Project's five target sites are identified in the NBSAP as priority sites for biodiversity conservation. The action plan for the protection of wetland ecosystems aims to conserve wetland areas, ban new exploitation of wetlands, restore excavated peat lands, and restore damaged wetlands. Actions include the improvement of the legal framework, institutional strengthening, territorial planning/design, research and monitoring, information, and training and education. Wetlands and protection of their biodiversity also have high priority in the National Environmental Protection Strategy (1996).

43. The selected Project sites provide important habitats for a significant number of endemic, threatened and rare species, including a number of bird species that breed in or migrate through the region that are included in the Red Data Book of Lithuania. A number of these species are of international importance e.g. Corncrake *Crex crex* and are listed in the annexes of the IUCN, the Bern Conventions, the Convention on Migratory Species' African-Eurasian Water Bird Agreement and the Birds and Habitats Directives of the European Union. BirdLife International lists four of the five Project sites as Important Bird Areas (IBAs) - Cepkeliai, Kamanos, Viesvile, and Zuvintas[12], which are also Ramsar sites (Girutiskis is still awaiting formal designation). Consequently, the Project sites are considered of considerable national and international importance for biodiversity and the Project of high relevance for biodiversity conservation in Lithuania and the region.

44. FET interviews revealed that the biodiversity value of the target sites remains very high and indeed may have increased in recent years as other wetlands areas have been lost or degraded due to development, and the country's wetlands are still considered high priority for action by key stakeholders for biodiversity. Despite the lengthy history of development of the Project and the FET taking place almost 10 years after the Project was originally designed, the analysis of the threats to wetland biodiversity in Lithuania and barriers to achieving conservation and sustainable management of protected areas in Lithuania conducted during the PDF-B phase is still largely valid and these threats remain (the analysis was updated and extended by the MTE team – see MTE report). Consequently, the Project's approaches to tackling the key threats to wetlands, particularly drainage of wetlands, are as relevant now as in 2000 when the project was designed.

45. FET interviews revealed that Project outputs, tools and approaches, particularly the results of the Project's activities at the five SNRs, notably infrastructure and capacity building, are considered very important contributions to conservation of wetland biodiversity and sustainable use of protected areas in Lithuania by stakeholders (indeed, every national government institution interviewed by the FET commented that Project activities were important to their work), but the extent of their use and integration into stakeholder working practice (and therefore true ownership) is still unclear. The Project is considered of most relevance for capacity building and provision of infrastructure for institutions concerned with protected areas (e.g. nature trails, promotional and interpretation materials, support in project proposal development). Overall, relevance of the Project is considered ***Highly Satisfactory***.

3.4 Replication approach

46. Replicability was explicitly incorporated into project design through the original Objective 2 ('*To institutionalize lessons learned from alternatives approaches for replication in other wetlands in Lithuania and elsewhere'*), some of the indicators, e.g. indicator 3 ('*At least five additional sites identified for replication of lessons learned and schedule of replication of best practices formally agreed*'), and through Outcome 6 in which a '*formal intersectoral mechanism for replication of best lessons learned in conservation of inland wetland biodiversity*' would be established and made operational, a *'plan for replication of best lessons developed*' which would then be '*approved by the institutions*

[12] Heath, M. F. and Evans, M. I., eds. (2000) *Important Bird Areas in Europe: Priority Sites for Conservation.* 1: Northern Europe. Cambridge, UK: BirdLife International (BirdLife Conservation Series No. 8).

participating in the multisectoral working group'[13], followed by drafting and submission of relevant sectoral policies and legislation. However, at the FE stage, although the National Ramsar Committee had been established as an alternative (substitute) to the proposed MWWG (see section 4.1, 4.2 and annex 9), so an 'intersectoral mechanism' can be said to have been established, the 'plan for replication of best practices' (in the form of a 'National Peatlands Strategy' (see section 4.2.4) was still under development it is very unlikely that it will be completed and adopted before the formal end of project on 31 December 2010.

47. Up to the FE, there had been some replication and mainstreaming of individual Project results by stakeholders, including local resource users, municipal governments, and national level government agencies. Particularly good examples include the use of the management plans developed by the Project for the five SNRs as a model for other protected areas in Lithuania and in particular wetland Natura 2000 sites. There has also been much interest in the wetland restoration methods developed through the Project, particularly damming techniques employed at Kamanos SNR and Zuvintas BR, which are likely to have wide applicability in Lithuania given the number of wetland areas affected by drainage (indeed Viesvile SNR has already developed a project to block the stream based on an example from Kamanos). Some of the infrastructure projects are also being copied, e.g. there is a proposal to develop a nature trail south of the Viesville SNR based on the one developed through the GEF Project within the Reserve. However, the FET feels that the replication of Project results has been limited so far, although it is likely to increase considerably once 'best practice' approaches/experience from the Project have been fully captured and documented (as guidelines, manual, case studies, etc) and transferred. The Final Project Report should consider how best to replicate Project results and what resources will be needed (including an assessment of capacity of the institutions which would replicate project results) and identify a budget and sources of finance to achieve replication although this can probably only occur when the Lithuanian economy picks up again.

48. The Project has actively facilitated some valuable exchange of information and experience nationally through study visits, workshops and training activities, as well as organizing exchange visits between staff at the some the SNRs (notably between Cepkeliai and Viesvile SNRs relating to the Project's Capercaillie *Tetrao urogallus* breeding and reintroduction programme). Judging from FE interviews, foreign study tours appear to have had a particularly high impact among participants.

49. The Project has produced a significant number of booklets, pamphlets, and specific technical reports or guidelines (see Annex 6) and some impressive technical studies. However, not all documents are freely and easily available, many of those available through the Project's website were old and documents and information on Project results seemed scattered, which suggests that communication of Project results has not been a priority of the Project team to date. Again the lack of a Project Communication and Results Dissemination Strategy or a specific member of staff tasked with communication of project results (see section 3.9.1) has not helped.

50. Disappointingly, there was no serious promotion of a 'training of trainers' approach by the Project, in part because State staff (the target for much of the capacity building efforts) only have an obligation to pass on their knowledge within a year of the training course and they are often too busy to do so and there is no formal system for them to do so. This has meant that when experienced government staff leave e.g. education specialist at Kamanos SNR who received training on interpretation and awareness-raising through the Project, it can significantly reduced the capacity of unit.

51. Given the abundance of the wetland types (bogs, transition mires and fens) in Lithuania and especially in protected areas (the State Register of Peatlands contains data on 5,735 mires that are larger than 3 ha), and the variety of threats that the Projects has addressed at the five target sites, the potential for replication of lessons learned during this Project in the future is very considerable. Once the National Peatland Strategy is complete and Project's own findings on best practice and lessons learned are published there will be much greater potential for replication, and the Project could have a very significant impact in the future, particularly if the National Peatlands Strategy is widely adopted and implemented. Overall, at the FE stage, the Project's replication approach is considered as ***Marginally Satisfactory***.

3.5 Stakeholder participation in project design

52. Consultation with key local, national and international stakeholders during the design phase appears to have been good and regular, with opportunities for stakeholder participation offered through workshops, interviews and open forums, including meetings held at each of the SNRs with local stakeholders, although most consultation seems to have focused on key partners identified according to the threats facing the sites, and judging from interviews the SNR administrations had considerable influence at the design stage. Undoubtedly, stakeholder involvement was facilitated by a sensitive and participatory PDF-B project development team (led by the current Project Manager). Indeed the PDF-B team built strong and positive relationships with many stakeholders which helped overcome some of the challenges the

[13] In the Project Document it is stated that '*the inclusion of the second objective in the project thus represents a formal agreement with the Government of Lithuania to replicate lessons learned to other wetlands facing similar conditions and threats'*.

Project met during its first couple of years of implementation, e.g. connections made during the PDF-B helped identify and raise sources of co-financing that were lost at the start of implementation.

53. The Project Document states that '*the work undertaken during the PDF-B involved representatives from the Forestry Department, Joint Research Center, Department of Water Resources and State Service of Protected Areas (representatives from the central structure as well as the local staff in the selected Strict Nature Reserves) under the Ministry of Environment and representatives from the Ministry of Agriculture… the Institute of Botany, the Institute of Ecology, the Institute of Geology and Geography, Geological Survey of Lithuania and the Institute of Forest Management…advice and inputs from communities around the reserves…(including) inputs of those groups involved in cranberry picking…in Cepkeliai and Viesvile…foresters in Viesvile, (and the) farming communities in Kamanos and Zuvintas'*. The PFD-B phase also involved discussions with other international agencies and donors operating in Lithuania, and close collaboration was established with the offices of the SAPARD and ISPA programs, which directed some of their resources to sites selected by the Project[14]. Representatives from the Ministries of Environment of Finland, Denmark, Sweden and the Dutch Ministry of Agriculture, Nature Management and Fisheries were also consulted periodically during project preparation process, and NGOs participated in regular discussions about project objectives and alternatives for achieving these objectives. An outline of the stakeholder analysis undertaken at the PDF-B phase is presented in Annex 2G of the Project Document.

54. FE interviews of a selection of the stakeholders listed above confirmed that stakeholder consultation in the design phase of the Project had been good, and their participation and contributions significant (evidence of this is the level and diversity of co-financing and the large number of letters of commitment received by the end of the PDF-B). However, the FET believes that the stakeholder analysis in the Project Document should have been much more detailed with a specific Stakeholder Participation Plan (common to many UNDP-GEF projects)[15] that set out how to achieve effective stakeholder participation during implementation of the full Project, would have been useful. Overall, stakeholder participation during the design phase is rated as ***Satisfactory.***

3.6 Project implementation

3.6.1 Execution and implementation modalities

55. UNDP was the GEF Implementing Agency, and the Project has been executed under UNDP requirements for the National Execution (NEX) modality with the Ministry of Environment (MoE) as the Executing Agency. The Project Implementing Agency has been the Nature Heritage Fund (NHF), an NGO especially set up in 2000 to implement the GEF Project, but which has since developed a much wider portfolio of projects. A National Project Director (NPD) was appointed by the MoE to serve as the main focal point between the Project and the Government institutions and provide general oversight as well as guidance on project implementation. The execution and implementation arrangements are formalized in a three-party agreement between UNDP, MoE and the NHF. Consultation, coordination, and collaboration between IAs, and IA and EAs on operation issues appears to have been satisfactory.

3.6.2 Project management

i. Project team

56. Day-to-day implementation is the responsibility of a Project Implementation Team (PIT) located in Vilnius, comprising a full-time Project Manager (PM), a Deputy Project Manager and a Financial Manager, and, since April 2010, a Project Assistant (former Project Coordinator at UNDP, who previously provided oversight of the Project on behalf of the UNDP CO). The PIT is in charge of Project's central and local-level activities, including: preparation of yearly and 6-monthly PSC reports, financial reports and work plans; drafting of specifications for equipment and goods, and collection of offers; identification of consultants, preparation of contracts; coordination of consultants and sub-contractors; travel arrangements and organization of workshops.

57. The PM has overall responsibility for the successful implementation of the Project activities at the national and local level, and for achievement of the planned Project outputs, and reports to the National Project Director (NPD) and

[14] The SAPARD program chose Zuvintas as one of its three pilot sites for agro-environmental measures because of the clear synergies between its objectives and the GEF objectives. The ISPA program also directed resources to Zuvintas and Viesvile in view of the clear synergies among GEF, SAPARD and ISPA activities. The PDF-B project team was responsible for securing this collaboration among agencies.

[15] These typically set out information presented for each stakeholder (both those which would benefit from the Project and those for which the Project could have a negative impact) on their potential interest in the Project with a summary of discussions to date, what synergies/opportunities there were for their linkage to the Project, the potential role each stakeholder could play during project implementation, the level of individual stakeholder capacity needed for them to be involved, and what tools, methods and resources would be needed to ensure each stakeholder could fully participate, and an analysis of potential risks for stakeholder involvement.

UNDP. The position of PM has been held by Mr. Gediminas Rascius throughout, who is a specialist in protected area planning and management (he formerly worked in the protected areas department of the MoE and was the Ramsar Focal Point for the GoL) and considered to be one of the national experts in his field, which has given the Project an advantage in dealing with protected area staff. Composition of the full Project team, comprising the PIT and other staff employed at the National Heritage Fund (NHF) on a part-time basis, was revised at the start of project implementation and efforts were made to select staff who had experience and skills which complemented the PM's, which has resulted in a very good and well balanced project management team.

58. The Project has an excellent management team. All the employees of PIT interviewed by the FET were professional, clearly very competent, highly educated and trained, with good specialist knowledge and experience, and, importantly, good adaptive management skills able to cope with loss of co-financing, marked currency fluctuations, rising costs and other challenges. Decision-making appeared to be transparent and shared. In spite of the considerable difficulties faced by the team in implementing such a large and complex project, together with many changing circumstances, they have responded admirably in achieving many of their targets. The FET was particularly impressed by the way the team managed to raise substantial co-financing after the loss of major sources of co-financing soon after project implementation began e.g. loss of funds from the Frankfurt Zoological Society, and the way the team has grabbed opportunities to promote conservation of wetland biodiversity at and around the five target sites and at the national level through collaboration, cost-sharing and providing support for fund-raising of other projects whose aims complemented the GEF Project's. The FET was also impressed by the widespread trust and respect built with the stakeholders interviewed, all of which were very positive and complimentary about their interactions and experiences with the GEF Project and PIT members (very rare in the International Consultant's experience). "A good team", "dedicated", "very reliable", "can be trusted", "very professional", "skilled and capable", "respond quickly to requests", "very helpful", "pay attention to detail", and "couldn't have done it without them" were among the many compliments paid by interviewees, and it is clear that the team has built a very good reputation among both national government agencies and NGOs and also, particularly important, with municipal authorities, SNR staff and local resource users. Furthermore, the excellent delivery by the team and the strong partnerships and relationships they have built has helped generate much goodwill and interest in biodiversity conservation around the Project sites. The project team members have worked on the Project for many years and should be commended for their commitment, especially as all of them would be highly employable in other donor-funded projects or in the private sector.

59. It should also be noted that the PIT has received full cooperation and strong, thoughtful backstopping from the former UNDP Project Coordinator when she employed by UNDP, who essentially became the fourth member of the core team (and indeed is now employed as Project Assistant by the NHF till the end of the Project). The FET also found her to be a very capable, highly competent, professional and adaptive individual.

60. In terms of technical support capacity, the PIT is relatively small (although they do have significant capacity in some areas, particularly on protected area management) but rather than employing additional staff (a costly and risky strategy), the Project's approach has been to use a large number of short-term consultants (almost entirely national, and some other members of the NHF) to deliver many project activities, such as development and production of awareness-raising and educational materials, technical training workshops, and technical design of project proposals where they have needed an architect for instance, with the project staff supervising delivery of contracts (although also taking the opportunity to participate where possible). This has meant that the overall quality of the technical assistance provided by the Project has been consistently very high. The PIT has deliberately sought the best experts, groups, or institutions to carry out the contracts and contracted many of national institutes, NGOs and universities to undertake the work, which has helped to build good partnerships and a strong network to promote the Project results more widely. Overall, the quality of technical assistance used and provided by the project is rated as ***Satisfactory***.

61. The same core staff members (and former UNDP CO Project Coordinator) have been with the Project since the PDF-B period and there is a strong sense of 'family' about the team. These have greatly enhanced the Project's effectiveness and efficiency, allowed team members to follow their efforts and results over the long-term, given the Project a generally good institutional memory on project development and implementation, and helped build a good adaptive management approach and a shared project vision among the team. In the FET's opinion, this continuity and the strong working relationships that have developed between team members has undoubtedly been one of the strengths of the Project. The high achievements and strengths of the project are due in a large part to the quality and dedication of the whole project team. The core team – the PM, Deputy PM, Financial Manager, along with the former UNDP Project Coordinator – who have all been involved for the whole duration of the project - are to be particularly commended on delivering such as large and complex project, despite the difficulties that they have encountered.

ii. Project Workgroups

62. Due to the complexity of the Project and limited financial resources, and rather than employ additional members of staff for the PIT, it was decided that three 'Project Workgroups' (PW) comprising of technical experts would be contracted to provide the necessary support to the PIT in Vilnius on 'Nature Management', 'Socio-economic Issues' and 'Public Awareness and Education', and to ensure effective communication with governmental and other

counterpart institutions. According to the Project Document, PWs were '*to consist of delegated specialists from Ministries and other national authorities that are responsible for nature management and monitoring, tourism and recreation, rural development, legal issues, EU support co-ordination, spatial planning and land management, support to small and medium size enterprises, social schemes, agri-environment measures, eco-farming, public relations, etc., as well as hired experts from scientific institutions and NGOs of relevant fields'* and that they were to '*provide information to Multisectoral Wetland Working Group meetings and participate in the corresponding institutionalization process'*. They were to be led by long-term project advisors, and it was intended that co-financing would cover a big portion of the required expertise and consultancies. Terms of Reference for workgroup leaders of each workgroup were elaborated and approved by the PSC on 16th September 2004.

63. The workgroups do not appear to have been properly understood and were never convened and maintained formally (they appear to have met only met when there was a need). FE interviews revealed that the 'Public Awareness and Education PW' had met regularly and been heavily involved with developing materials for the Project's schools programme (notably for the programmes at Zuvintas BR and Kamanos SNR) but the Nature Management PW was led by the Deputy Project Manager (so was not independent of the PIT) and met more on a 'as needed' basis. The FET was not able to interview any members of the Socio-economic Issues PW. Unfortunately, there was no formal documentation available to the FET (e.g. minutes of meetings) on any of the PWs, so it is difficult to judge just how effective this model was in delivering project activities, but certainly the Public Awareness and Education PW was instrumental in delivering high quality schools programmes at Zuvintas and Kamanos.

64. The MTE report (dated February 2008) states that 'Working Groups are now evolving to shift focus from achievement of Outcomes 1-5 to Outcome 6. Workgroup leaders are in charge of finding relevant expertise and further codification of the lessons learned'. However, there were major delays over implementation of Outcome 6 (see section 4.2.4) and outside experts are only now becoming involved in capturing and codification of lessons learned and best practice from the Project.

iii. Professional development and staff training

65. Some capacity building efforts have been invested in the PIT staff in areas beyond the basic training usually provided to UNDP-GEF projects (GEF project monitoring and evaluation, Atlas financial management system, and UNDP procurement procedures). This has included attendance on training courses on: International Training of Trainers on Wetland Management in The Netherlands (Deputy Project Manager), a Workshop on Sustainable Wetland Management in Sweden (Deputy Project Manager and Financial Manager), exchange visit on nature guiding activities in Latvia (Programme Coordinator at NHF), and Biosphere reserve staff and experts meeting on biosphere reserve management in Latvia (Project Manager) among others. It should be noted that, unfortunately, UNDP-GEF projects do not generally offer project staff the chance for structured career development through planned training and other opportunities as part of their employment package. Rather training tends to be on an *ad hoc* basis, if and when courses come up, and is usually very limited due to the project's budget. Interestingly, all PIT staff involved with the GEF Project interviewed felt that their work would have benefited from additional training and learning opportunities, and several sets of specific needs were identified including: effective media presentations, negotiation and conflict resolution, and leadership skills.

66. The FET believes that UNDP (globally, not just UNDP Lithuania) needs to examine whether it should fund professional development as part of the employment package offered to GEF Project staff if it wants to attract and retain the best people, especially if salaries are not competitive, and the FET recommends that UNDP and GEF build this into project budgets at the design stage. Along with an attractive salary, professional development opportunities are the main reason why people stay with an organization and invest extra time in their work, so these opportunities can be crucial to attracting and retaining a good project team. It is therefore recommended that a formal career development and professional training needs analysis be undertaken for the staff of GEF Projects when implementation begins (preferably by an outside management consultant on a short contract).

Recommendations/tasks	*Responsibility*	*Time frame*	*Deliverables/evidence*
1. Review professional development schemes suitable for UNDP-GEF projects, with formal career development and professional training needs analysis system for the staff of UNDP-GEF Projects when implementation begins	UNDP-GEF, UNDP HQ, GEF	By mid-2011	Report on options for professional development and guidance note to UNDP-GEF RTAs and UNDP COs

iv. PIT office space

67. The PIT is housed at the NHF Office, which is much too small for the staff – three people are crammed into a tiny space, the PM (Director of the NHF) does not have his own room, private telephone conversations are impossible, the risk of constant interruption is very high, and any confidential conversations have to be held outside in the corridor

which has a more or less constant stream of people passing by. Having seen the PIT office, the FET does not understand how the PIT has managed to operate under these conditions for so long (a testament to their dedication).

68. The extremely limited space has also meant that the Project Assistant (the former UNDP Project Officer for the Project), taken on in April 2010, has had to keep using the UNDP CO as her base as there is no room for an additional desk at the NHF Office. This splitting of the PIT has not been ideal, and the FET is certain that overall the lack of space has negatively impacted the effectiveness and efficiency of the PIT. Whilst the few remaining Project activities can probably be completed successfully under the current arrangements, in the long-term the current office is not suitable for the NHF, especially if it intends to increase its project base, grow as an organization and become a major environmental NGO in Lithuania and the region. In the FET's opinion solving the space situation should be considered as a top priority for the NHF, and it should locate to new, larger offices as soon as possible.

69. In summary, Project management and oversight has been largely efficient and effective, with a particularly well-organised, motivated and highly capable Project team, and is evaluated as ***Highly Satisfactory***.

3.6.3 Project oversight

70. Project oversight is undertaken at the strategic level by an inter-institutional Project Steering Committee (PSC), established by the Ministry of Environment (MoE) to monitor project implementation, provide substantive guidance and advice, and facilitate communication, cooperation and coordination among major stakeholders and project partners. The PSC originally comprised 12 members from various national-level ministries and agencies (see Annex 7), including the two main ministries concerned with wetlands and their management in Lithuania – the MoE and the Ministry of Agriculture – as well as the State Protected Areas Service, GEF Operational Focal Point, Ramsar National Focal Point. The PSC is chaired by the Director of the Nature Conservation Department at the MoE, and UNDP is represented by the Country Office.

71. Disappointingly, there is no representation from the business sector (e.g. peat extraction industry), civil society (e.g. NGOs) or academia (e.g. universities or Institutes). The directors of the five SNRs where most of the Project's activities took place, were apparently invited as non-participatory observers, although usually only the Director of Zuvintas attended (in part because of the distance from Vilnius for some of the Directors). In addition, some members of the PSC, e.g. those representing the ISPA Implementing Agency and the Ministry of Education and Science no longer attend. A wider stakeholder representation would probably have helped in developing more strategic partnerships to improve mainstreaming of Project results and tools, and opportunities for raising co-financing, and the FET considers the lack of involvement by civil society and non-national level government bodies is considered a weakness of the original Project design which should have been rectified early on in implementation.

72. The PSC has met on 11 occasions since full Project implementation began on (16th September 2004, 25th February 2005, 29th September 2005, 27th January 2006, 5th October 2006, 14th February 2007, 20th December 2007, 8th May 2008, 21st October 2008, 26th May 2009, 11th November 2009). Judging from the minutes of meetings reviewed by the FET, most members attend the 6-monthly meetings. The general feeling among PSC members interviewed by the FET was that the PSC was effective at making decisions and most members have shown a keen interest in the Project (clearly they see it as valuable to their own interests, indicating good national ownership). From the PM's point of view, the PSC has offered the PIT a good opportunity to establish and maintain relationships with key ministry agencies involved with wetland issues in Lithuania and on several occasions these contacts had facilitated solution of problems on the Project, as well as providing input on Terms of Reference for Project contracts and other useful advice.

73. The PIT prepares a progress report on the Project for each PSC meeting and the members expressed the view they were well informed. Minutes of the PSC meetings were brief but informative.

3.6.4 Project coordination and operational issues

74. Coordination of Project activities is largely achieved through the very frequent communication between the PIT staff members and the Project's key partners, notably the SNR staff, largely through telephone and emails, but also through regular face-to-face meetings. None of the project sites is more than 250 kilometers on tarmaced roads from the Vilnius office, which has enabled frequent visits to all the Project sites by PIT members, and the FET was impressed by the depth of knowledge and understanding of the local situation by the PIT members (which comes from investing considerable time and effort at the sites). FE interviews with local partners confirmed good working relationships and the PIT were almost universally described as good communicators who were responsive to requests and tackled most issues quickly (apart from those related to Outcome 6, which was a generic problem affecting all those involved with the Project – see section 4.2.4).

75. Coordination of Project activities at the national level has also been very good, with regular, almost daily, communication (email, telephone) between the PIT staff and the UNDP CO, with until recently regular meetings to discuss project planning, coordination and implementation which has helped facilitate timely Project delivery (contracting, procurement, payments).

3.7 Adaptive management framework

76. The Project's adaptive management framework is set out in the Project Document with monitoring and evaluation largely based on the indicators and targets set out in the Project's logframe. The Project was implemented using a Results-Based-Management (RBM) approach. The Project Document included a results-based log-frame, the PIT implemented the Project on the basis of results to be achieved, and the progress reporting (PIRs, GEF Quarterly Reports, financial reports) included comparison of expected versus achieved results.

3.7.1 Monitoring, evaluating and reporting

77. Formalised monitoring and evaluation of Project activities has been undertaken through (i) progress monitoring, (ii) internal activity monitoring and (iii) impact monitoring.

i. Progress monitoring

78. Project progress monitoring has been undertaken through the annual Project Implementation Review (PIR) required by UNDP-GEF and quarterly financial statements produced by the PIT for the UNDP CO. These present quantitative (achievement versus targets set out in logframe and Annual Work Plan and associated budget sheets) as well as qualitative assessments of progress made. In addition, detailed 6-monthly progress reports, often with photographs (very useful), are prepared for the PSC with a presentation on the Project's activities over the previous 6 months given at an each PSC meeting by the PM. The PIT also helps prepare the 150-200 word fixed-format GEF Quarterly Reports sent by the UNDP CO to GEF.

79. Project Implementation Reviews (PIRs) are produced every year as a requirement of UNDP and GEF, developed by the PIT with input from the UNDP CO and Bratislava Regional Coordination Unit, and are also submitted to GEF. Those reviewed by the FET give a good summary of work-in-progress in terms of describing project implementation activities and in measuring performance against the corresponding set of progress indicators, and provide some information on problems and issues encountered by the Project during the previous year. Copies of all reports are submitted to the MoE, and the PIRs were also signed by the Government GEF Operational Focal Point.

80. The Mid Term Evaluation took place in October and November 2007, in the 43rd month of project implementation and its Final Report produced in February 2008. It should have taken place in the 30th month (September 2006). When questioned by the FET, the PM stated that this was because the Project had not delivered enough by the 30th month (due to external delays related to approving the management plans for the 5 SNR, without which no other Project activities could legally take place within the SNRs, and because of the need to raise additional co-financing) so a decision was taken to delay the MTE (it is not clear who took the decision – the PIT, UNDP CO and/or UNDP-GEF as this is not documented in any PIR). Whilst understandable, this delay lost the opportunity to change the logframe.

ii. Internal activity monitoring

81. Internal activity monitoring is undertaken at a number of levels by the PIT and UNDP CO staff. As mentioned above, there is very regular, almost daily, communication (email, telephone) between the PIT staff (mostly the PM) and the UNDP CO, which has meant that activity monitoring on the Project has been very good. The close Project team who have worked together over a long period has also helped maintain good informal progress monitoring.

82. UNDP CO undertakes a formal check of documents and procedures as part of its monitoring programme on a regular basis (e.g. checks major procurement documents before procurement takes place) and the Project also has an external audit as part of UNDP's annual external audit by a certified international accounting company.

iii. Impact monitoring

83. Impact monitoring is largely undertaken through the assessment of achievement of the indicator targets in the Project logframe. However, as pointed out earlier, the current indicator set has few good (SMART) impact indicators. Other impacts not captured by the logframe indicators, such as the quality of important stakeholder relationships are discussed briefly in the annual PIRs. Most of the Project's workshops have also included a request for feedback from participants in the form of questionnaires, although there is always an issue over how useful these really are, as invitees tend to appreciate their inclusion in such activities and hence often give very positive (biased) responses.

iv. Reporting

84. Overall, the FET feels that the Project's reporting could have been more detailed and regular as only a 6-monthly report for the PSC, annual PIR and 3-monthly financial statements to the UNDP CO were produced. Judging by documents provided to the FE, there needs to be increased documentation on the Project experiences and decision-making, in particular, has not been adequately documented (e.g. changes to the logframe). Unfortunately, due to the format of the GEF PIR, the PIRs do not accurately reflect the quality and extent of all project activities[16]. As a result, they provide a rather limited picture of project success, and the FET feels that the Project needs to produce a separate and detailed Final Project Report (in addition to the final PIR for 2011) that fully captures the Project's successes and failures as well as lessons learned and impacts over the whole of the implementation period, which should then be promoted at a media event timed with the release of the draft National Peatlands Strategy (see section 4.2.4).

85. With hindsight, it would have been useful if the project had produced formal quarterly reports comprising overview of activities, results, and main activities for the following quarter, with achievements against targets, analysis of problems encountered during the reporting period and how they were solved, monitoring of risks, or financial information (actual expenses against budget allocations).

Recommendations/tasks	***Responsibility***	***Time frame***	***Deliverables/evidence***
1. Produce a detailed Final Project Report that fully captures the Project's successes and failures as well as lessons learned and impacts over the whole of the implementation period	PIT	By April-2011	Report, released at public media event (could coincide with release of draft National Peatland Strategy for review)

86. Overall, the Project appears to have had adequate resources (human and financial) for effective monitoring and evaluation and has demonstrated good project monitoring and evaluation, in line with UNDP and GEF procedures, although it has been hampered by a poor original logframe with too many and ineffective indicators (see above), and is rated as ***Satisfactory***.

3.7.2 Use of logical framework as a management and M&E tool

87. The Project team has used the logframe as a management tool throughout implementation. However, this has not been straightforward. The difficulties presented by the Project's design (see above) were apparent to the PIT from early on in implementation. As noted earlier, the number of indicators was overly large, and according to the UNDP-GEF Regional Technical Advisor (RTA) in the PIR 2006 '*it is very difficult to assess if the project is on track in achieving global environmental benefits as most of the indicators are process and not impact indicators and they sound most like outputs'.* In other words, many of the indicators were not appropriate to measuring project impact. The UNDP-GEF RTA continued '*One of the recommendations of the 2005 PIR was for the team to review the logframe to allow for better measuring of the progress towards achieving a sustainable change and an impact on biodiversity. The same recommendation is made for this year.*' This recommendation does not seem to have been followed up in either 2005 or 2006.

88. The UNDP-GEF RTA made an evaluation visit to Lithuania on 12-14 April 2007 and in the PIR for 2007 commented that '*as for the last year's PIR, the fact that the logframe contains mainly process indicators output-like impedes an adequate assessment of the impact of the project on biodiversity…The project will be subject to mid-term evaluation in October 2007 and the agreement was to wait with the revision of the logframe until we receive the recommendations from the independent evaluator*.'

89. As expected, the Project's poor logframe was also highlighted as a major failure in the MTE report. However, the MTE Report states that '*If the evaluation had occurred during the actual "mid-term", one would normally recommend that the indicators be re-configured to provide a more accurate assessment of project success. However, with less than 17 months of project activity remaining this may not be useful.*' This failure to correct the original Project strategy, indicators, targets and logframe – to make it more coherent and indeed 'logical' is considered by the FET to be a serious mistake and a significant failing of the Project. However, despite this the Project has delivered most of what it set out to achieve and in many case substantially more (again testament to the abilities of the PIT and UNDP CO Project Coordinator).

90. It should be noted that it is likely that if substantial changes to the logframe had been proposed, they would have been deemed too much of a re-design and would almost certainly have required re-submission of the Project to the GEF Council leading to significant disruption and delay, and with the risk of rejection (a real possibility in 2006 due to

[16] Unfortunately, separate Annual Progress Reports (APR), which were formerly produced by many UNDP-GEF projects and would have provided a better opportunity than the more formal and limited PIR to fully document important problems and issues and how they have been addressed (or not), were not produced by the Project.

changes within the GEF). Use of the logframe as a as a management and M&E tool is rated as ***Marginally Satisfactory*** largely due to the poor design of the logframe and lack of revisions at the MTE stage.

3.7.3 Project work planning and strategic planning

91. The Project's Annual Work Plans (AWPs) are developed in consultation between the PIT, UNDP CO and MoE and approved at the annual PSC, and the example viewed by the FET (for 2010) was clear and comprehensive and 'Atlas friendly' with each activity having an accompanying Atlas code, which simplified procedures between the PIT and UNDP CO on Project activity and budget management and reporting.

92. Disappointingly, the Project has never had an annual Project Retreat for Project staff, UNDP CO staff and representatives of the key stakeholders, where assessment of the previous year's results, review of project progress and lesson learning were discussed and documented, followed by strategic planning to identify and agree priorities and activities for the next year (which would form the basis for developing the AWPs).

3.7.4 Risk identification and management

93. Initial Project 'risks' were identified during the project design phase, and the overall assessment of risks at that stage was considered 'low'. Risks were revised at the start of implementation and entered into the UNDP Atlas Risk Module (which forms the basis of the UNDP/GEF Risk Management System) and have been reported on each year in the PIR since 2005, including a rating of their critical status. The UNDP CO prepares a Project Quarterly Progress Report in Atlas and 8 risks are currently identified (report dated 12 October 2010 viewed by FET), none of which are classified as 'critical' risks (although judging from the dates given in the Atlas risk log, risks have not been updated recently).

94. However, those listed in the Project Document (section 2.C.1) are actually assumptions – situations that need to occur in order for project results to be achieved, e.g. '*habitat restoration activities in Kamanos are self-sustaining once drainage channels have been closed and original hydrological regime restored*' or '*the introduction of user fees combined with increased enforcement and public information campaigns is sufficient to control disturbance at Girutiskis'*. Common GEF project risks such as the risk that a new government would be elected during implementation that is much less supportive of environmental agenda and therefore the Project's aims, or exchange rate risks due to a decline in the Lita-US Dollar exchange during implementation[17] leading to reduced purchasing power of the GEF funds (a very common GEF Project risk) were not considered (although the latter risk was added to the Atlas system in 2007). Instead the Project Document really presents the risks that any of the assumptions will not hold and therefore that Project activities will not work. The PDF-B team did not seem to consider that there were any real (external or internal) risks at the design stage or any that could negatively impact the Project during implementation.

95. The MTE identified three risks to the achievement of full Project delivery: (i) a lack of time remaining to properly achieve Outcome 6 (at the MTE point there was just 17 more months to end-of-project, which was considered inadequate especially as essentially no work on Outcome 6 had begun); (ii) failure of government institutions to fully adopt the wetlands conservation program and policy changes required to provide comprehensive wetlands conservation on a national scale; and concern over the sustainability of the NHF. The MTE suggested that first two of these would be alleviated by adoption of a strategic plan for wetland conservation through a participatory process involving the key stakeholders including the PSC, and a no-cost project extension. It was suggested by the MTE that the third risk could be dealt with by promoting the NHF as a 'wetlands conservation support unit'.

96. Interviews revealed that Project team and the UNDP Project Coordinator had received no specific training or guidance in risk analysis and mitigation or scenario development ("What if...") as part of the training for managing the Project, although they undertook these in an informal, semi-structured way during senior management meetings. Training in risk and scenario analysis is something that UNDP-GEF should provide to all its GEF project teams.

97. The FET feels that less attention was paid to risk identification and management than should have been and it could have been better documented in the PIRs. Overall, the identification and management of risks and mitigation measures is rated as ***Marginally Satisfactory***.

[17] During the implementation period, the rate of exchange between the Lithuanian Lita and US Dollar diminished from 4:1 to 2.2:1. This had serious budget planning implications. On top of this, inflation rates in Lithuania, particularly for construction materials and labor, increased a rate well beyond anything anticipated at the time of project design.

3.7.5 Lesson learning

98. Many of the lessons learned from the Project, dealing with issues particularly addressing restoration of degraded, drained and converted peatlands, intensive forestry in adjacent lands, conservation issues in a post-*kolkhoz* agricultural environment, disturbance of wetlands due to harvesting activities (e.g. intensive cranberry and mushroom picking), and water pollution, were identified during the project design phase as applicable to other countries in a wider region – not only in the Baltic states, but also apply to Belarus, northern Ukraine and Poland. Lesson learning was built into the Project during the design phase under the (original) Objective 2 and Outcome 6 ('*Formal intersectoral mechanism for replication of best lessons learned in conservation of inland wetland biodiversity established and operational'*), and in included under indicator no. 3 ('At *least five additional sites identified for replication of lessons learned and schedule of replication of best practices formally agreed'*).

99. Regular lesson learning exercises support adaptive management and are seen as good practice in project management by UNDP. However, lesson learning has not been a very obvious part of the Project so far. The Project has not undertaken any regular, detailed formal lesson learning exercise since implementation started and there is no specific budget line for regular 'lesson learning' apart from those associated with Outcome 6. This is surprising since the STAP reviewer recommended that '"*An extra output for each of the interventions at the five sites should be the production of a "best practices / lessons learned" manual, that should be drafted at an early stage, and modified as a working document throughout the project*". This advice does not appear to have been followed by the Project. The STAP reviewer also states "*This can automatically feed into achieving Objective 2: institutionalization of best practices, and be used for drawing up guidelines, and for codification of lessons. If this does not happen, there is a danger that the wealth of lessons, information and experience regarding wetland management learnt at the five sites is dissipated*." The FET has a concern that this may already have happened.

100. Also, there appears to be no formal Project mechanisms for incorporation of feedback and lessons learned into project implementation and management and the only documented 'lessons learned' that the FET could discover are contained in the annual PIR reports[18].

101. There was some confusion among interviewees over what constitutes a 'lesson learned' and how to go about identifying and documenting them, who also stated that it is not part of the 'culture' in Lithuania (at least not within the NGO sector). In the International Consultant's experience, this is not uncommon among UNDP-GEF projects. Unfortunately, there is no model or guidance from UNDP-GEF on procedures to develop 'lessons learned' and essentially project teams are on their own when addressing this issue. Given their stated importance to GEF, it is surprising that GEFSEC itself has not provided written guidelines on this issue[19].

102. In the case of the current Project, interviewees revealed that 'lesson learning' should be left till towards the end of implementation (they didn't see it as something to do on a rolling basis). This is reflected in the entries for the 'Lessons' section of the PIRs, which for 2005 states '*As the activities are still in the first stage of implementation it is too early to speak about the lessons learned or good practices to be shared*' and for 2006, 2007 and 2010 the PIRs present 'results' rather than 'lessons learned' (the PIRs for 2008 and 2009 lack a specific 'lessons' section). Instead, the Project staff and UNDP CO understood that lessons learned were specifically connected with fulfillment of Outcome 6 and because activities related to this Outcome had been delayed, relatively little thought had been given to lesson learning until very recently.

103. The PIT finally began a formal internal lesson learning exercise in September 2010. This has covered a good range of topics (nature management, monitoring/techniques, citizen participation, cooperation with private sector, public information and education, management of the project, financial management, human resources, and project risk). The FET reviewed the initial results which looked very useful but were very preliminary (something the PIT was very aware of and freely admitted), and need a deeper analysis. The results of the exercise should be documented in a specific section of the Final Report for the Project. Contracting an external consultant with experience of such exercises for other organizations/groups, to help identify lessons learned related to project and financial management, stakeholder participation, cooperation with private sector and project risk (i.e. the nonn-technical aspects) would probably strengthen the analysis.

104. The FET also recommends that the Project conduct a more specific lesson-learning exercise, in the form of a workshop, to capture what the Project has learned about improving management of wetlands for biodiversity conservation from the five sites, with identification of cases studies showing models that could be replicated elsewhere,

[18] Specifically, the PIR 'lessons' section asks 'Are there any lessons from this project that could benefit the design and implementation of other GEF-funded projects?'

[19] Interestingly, the UNEP-DGEF Evaluation Office has spent some time compiling and analyzing 'lessons learned' from UNEP-GEF projects, and concluded that many lessons learned are trivial and not very useful, which again is a reflection of lack of guidance. See See - Spilsbury, M. J., C. Perch, S. Norgbey, G. Rauniyar and C. Battaglino (2007). Lessons Learned from Evaluation: A Platform for Sharing Knowledge. Special Study Paper Number 2, Evaluation and Oversight Unit United Nations Environment Programme, Nairobi Kenya.

and establish strategies for replication[20]. This should include all of the PIT staff, main consultants, UNDP CO staff, staff from the five SNRs (directors, inspectors, nature management and education specialists) and representatives of the key stakeholders, and be held over 1-2 days[21]. Again, such a workshop is likely to be most successful if the Project employs an external facilitator (non-PIT) to lead the meeting. The results this workshop should be published as a specific technical document (presenting qualitative as well as quantitative information) aimed at other wetland and protected area managers with a number of case studies (the FET suggests the Viesvile fish ladders, Capercaillie reintroduction project, construction of dams at the Kamanos SNR, experiences from the Kamanos voluntary programme (which will necessitate interviewing volunteers), and the Zuvintas school education programme)[22].

Recommendations/tasks	*Responsibility*	*Time frame*	*Deliverables/evidence*
1. Extend internal project 'lessons learned' exercise and produce brief document on results for inclusion in Final Report and PIR	PIT, UNDP CO	By end of Feb 2011	Document on results of lesson learning exercise and section on 'lessons learned' included in Final Project Report and PIR for 2011
2. Convene a 1-2 day 'lessons learned' workshop to fully capture and document the Project's key experiences, successes, failures (and why activities have worked or not), focusing on the experience at each site of wetland conservation gained through the Project, with development of strategies for their replication	PIT, UNDP CO, experts previously involved in Project, key Project stakeholders including key SNR members from Zuventis, Kamanos, Viesvile, Cepkeliai and Girutiskis/Labanoras	By end Dec 2010	Workshop report on 'lessons learned' on Project; Feedback report on workshop from participants
3. Produce a document on 'Best practices for management of wetland biodiversity in Lithuania' drawing on experiences from the Project, as a specific technical publication aimed at other wetland and protected area managers with case studies	PIT, UNDP CO	By end Feb 2011	Technical Report

105. The overall assessment of the Project's adaptive management framework and implementation approach are rated as ***Satisfactory***.

3.8 Support provided by UNDP

3.8.1 Project management by UNDP CO

106. The UNDP CO has provided substantial project management support to the PIT, including project evaluation, reporting and results-based project monitoring, input to selection and recruitment of experts, consultants and national counterpart staff members (including help preparing TORs and sitting as a member of the evaluation panel), efficient disbursement of project resources and overseeing of expenditures to ensure proper use of GEF resources followed UNDP rules and procedures. For all of the project design stage and most of project implementation, this support has been provided by the same UNDP CO staff member (the former Project Coordinator) who was concerned with most of the day-to-day management input, approved budget requests, signed off on reports and had overall responsibility within UNDP CO for the Project, including representing the UNDP CO on the PSC. She has excellent administration, organizational and interpersonal skills and the FET found her to be open-minded, and she has done an outstanding job. Although she is not a scientist by training and had no formal background in conservation or environment prior to the Project, FE interviews revealed that she has a very good understanding of the key issues affecting wetlands in Lithuania

[20] Appropriate questions could include: 'What worked, what didn't?', 'How could we do this better?', 'If we were to do this again, what would we do differently?', 'What have we learned about how to restore a wetland/ how to manage a GEF project/ how to successfully capture funds from major donors like the EU/ what do you need to do to write a successful project proposal?', 'Based on our experience over the last 5 years, how do you change attitudes of local communities and decision-makers towards the environment in Lithuania?', 'What advice would we give others intending to do what we have done?'

[21] The FET understands that such a workshop was held on 10 December 2010, following the recommendation in the Interim Report of the FE (dated 5 November 2010).

[22] The Project could also draw on the experiences of the UNDP-GEF project Renaturalization and Sustainable Management of Peatlands in Belarus Project (GEF PIMS: 1750) - see Kozulin, A.V., Tanovitskaya, N. I. and Vershitskaya, I. N. (2010). Methodical Recommendations for ecological rehabilitation of damaged mires and prevention of disturbances to the hydrological regime of mire ecosystems in the process of drainage. Scientific and Practical Center for Bio Resources Institute for Nature Management of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus. 41pp.

and the rationale for the Project (and has made a number of field visits to each of the project sites over the course of project design and implementation stages), and in cases where she has had to make a judgment on an environmental issue but not felt qualified enough to make a decision, she has wisely left it to the PIT or sought advice from outside experts. As mentioned earlier, there was almost daily communication between the UNDP CO Project Coordinator and the PIT, through email or by telephone, and she met with the PIT on a regular basis.

107. The UNDP CO has had no core funding since 2005 and there have been discussions on its closure in the past couple of years[23]. Due to the very limited resources available many projects and programmes have since closed down. As a result, the Project Coordinator's position, along with a number of other UNDP CO staff, was terminated in early 2010. However, an agreement was made between the UNDP CO and the NHF that she would be employed as a Project Assistant by the NHF (using GEF funds) to help with the delivery of Project activities during the critical last 9-12 months of the Project when many of the Project results need to be captured, documented and promoted. She has been employed in this new position since April 2010. Her role is to act, among other things, as the link between the Project and the UNDP CO for the remainder of the Project, with the UNDP CO staff supervision role being provided by the UNDP CO Communications Officer instead.

108. The Communications Officer spends very little time on the GEF Project (she estimated less than 5% of her time), which is partly because of support provided by the Project Assistant, and partly because she has many other projects to manage. This arrangement appears to work fairly well but it is important that the UNDP CO does not ask the Project Assistant, who is now employed by the NHF (using GEF money) to undertake work or provide project support that is the responsibility of the UNDP CO as Implementing Agency for the GEF Project (she should not be undertaking work for the UNDP CO that should be done by existing UNDP CO staff). In addition, there is the potential for a conflict of interest over the Project Assistant's duties, as she is managed by, and reports to, the Project Manager, so she cannot also carry out oversight tasks on behalf of the UNDP CO. The FET reviewed the Project Assistant's TOR and believes that these should be clarified by the UNDP CO and UNDP-GEF in Bratislava to ensure her role and that of the Communications Officer do not become blurred.

109. There is a general point here that there does not appear to have been any consideration given to the potential risks associated with the closure of the UNDP CO (such as disruption or delays to Project delivery) and this new arrangement regarding the Project Assistant does not appear to have been documented (at least not in official Project reports seen by the FET).

110. In terms of other technical assistance, the Communications Team of the UNDP CO has also provided some limited support to the GEF Project on how to deal with media events[24]. The Project will also need input from the Communications Team early in 2011 in order to effectively promote the Project's results (e.g. a media event to present the Final Report and National Peatlands Strategy).

Recommendations/tasks	*Responsibility*	*Time frame*	*Deliverables/evidence*
1. Review TOR and role of Project Assistant and UNDP CO staff involved with the Project to ensure that boundaries are clear, there is no conflict of interest over responsibilities and GEF funds are not used to fund non-GEF Project activities or management time, clarifying the position of the Project Assistant in elation to the UNDP CO and the input by the UNDP CO with regards management for the remainder of the Project	UNDP CO, UNDP-GEF Bratislava, PM	By end Dec 2010	- Email correspondence clarifying position of Project Assistant and UNDP CO - Issue documented in the PIR for 2011 and Management Response to the FE Report

3.8.2 Soft assistance provided by UNDP CO

111. UNDP 'soft assistance'[25] in support of the Project, while difficult to quantify, appears to have been adequate[26], although social inclusion, governance and corporate social responsibility have higher profiles and staff time investment

[23] The UNDP CO commented that the CO was never given a definite date for closure. Rather this depended on ability to mobilize funding for survival and running of programmes and that the Office has therefore kept functioning up till now.
[24] It should be noted that some UNDP CO analyse media coverage of UNDP projects to derive an 'Advertising Value Equivalent' (AVE) value. According to the UNDP CO staff, this was not done for the Project, in part due to lack of budget and staff resources.
[25] Defined in the UNDP's *Handbook on Monitoring and Evaluation for Results* as 'Advocacy, policy advice/dialogue, and facilitation/brokerage of information, partnerships or political compromise.'
[26] This is based on conversations with less senior staff at the UNDP CO and some of the key national partners. Unfortunately, the FET did not have the opportunity to interview the Head of Office as she was on maternity leave during the FE.

than environment within the UNDP CO county portfolio[27], and the UNDP CO provides support to the Government of Lithuania to help them better absorb EU Structural Funds.. The UNDP CO has very good working relationships with the main national partners, has discussed the Project with key parties, and facilitated high-level cross-ministerial communication on project issues, although there has been less promotion of the Project since the former Resident Representative (RR) left in 2006 The RR visited the Zuvintas Biosphere Reserve in 2002 in connection with the Project. The FET feels that the Project will need an increased 'soft assistance' from senior UNDP managers in relation to Outcome 6 to help to promote the National Peatlands Strategy at senior government levels to ensure it will be adopted by both the MoE and MoA (see section 4.2.4).

3.8.3 Management by UNDP-GEF

112. Management input by the UNDP-GEF office in Bratislava has been generally good and timely (although see point above about input on review of logframe and indicators during early stages of Project). The UNDP-GEF Regional Technical Advisor (s) (there have been two since project implementation began) have each made a visit to Lithuania, one in April 2007 and the other in June 2009. In addition, the former RTA who was responsible for the Project during the project design phase made a brief visit to Lithuania with UNDP-GEF's Lead Natural Resource Economist at the beginning of project implementation in mid April 2004 and made a number of key recommendations on how the Project should be implemented.

3.8.4 Reporting by UNDP

113. Project supervisory missions by UNDP CO staff are not reported in any detail as there is no requirement to write Back-to-the-Office reports (BTOR) after field visits. From GEF's point of view it would be useful if UNDP COs required staff to write short (up to a page) BTORs which could be attached to the Quarterly Reports to GEF, as supervisory missions often result in important decisions being made and changes in implementation activities and it is important that these are properly documented. It is recommended that these are introduced.

114. The UNDP-GEF Regional Technical Advisor (RTA) produces 1-page BTOR following a standard format that includes a brief summary of mission findings and recommendations/actions to be taken and by whom. Those reviewed by the FET were succinct but very informative, although it is unclear what the Project's management response and follow-up to these BTORs has been as they are not directly reported on in Project documents.

3.8.5 Comparative advantage of UNDP

115. UNDP was well positioned to provide support for this project. During the design phase, the UNDP CO had a significant portfolio of environmental projects including managing the national GEF Small Grants Porgramme, and had a strong relationship with the Ministry of Environment. Many other donors including The World Bank, the only other potential GEF Implementing Agency in Lithuania's case, were reducing their operations in the country at the time or had left following EU accession, which gave UNDP a clear comparative advantage to implement the GEF Project. In addition, the UNDP-GEF regional office in Bratislava has a long and well-respected history with the implementation of biodiversity and wetlands programming in the region, and is experienced with at positioning GEF projects to maximize benefits available to relatively new EU members such as Lithuania.

116. Overall, UNDP input and support to the design and implementation of the Project is rated as ***Satisfactory***.

3.9 Project communication

3.9.1 Project communication strategy

117. Judging from FE interviews, communication and understanding of the Project's central messages and results has been variable, with some interviewees at municipal level either unable to differentiate the GEF Project from other donor-funded projects or unable to explain what they understood the Project involved and what it was trying to do. Also, when asked what they thought had been the successes of the Project, few people outside of the PIT, national-level partners and SNR staff, said that the Project had improved biodiversity and wetland conservation in Lithuania, which suggests that the Project's main message – the need to improve the status of wetland biodiversity – was not getting through to some key audiences at the local/municipal level.

118. The FET believes these can be largely attributed to the lack of a specific and detailed Project Communications and

[27] The UNDP CO commented that '*This is due to limited funding opportunities available to UNDP in Lithuania for environment programmes*'

Results Dissemination Strategy and Plan[28]. A very basic 'communications strategy' was developed early on in implementation, but it was little more than a list of target stakeholders, and, strangely for a communications plan, there is very little detail on how best to engage the media, e.g. no suggestion to develop a Project 'press pack'. In addition, there was no Communications Officer position tasked with implementing such a document within the PIT for the whole of project implementation. Initially a part-time consultant was employed but she left the Project after 32 months (she left the project at the end of 2006) and her position wasn't replaced, suggesting that project communication and promotion of results was not seen as a high priority at the time. As a result, communications and information dissemination on the Project has been shared between various members of the PIT with advice on national media events provided through the UNDP CO, and overall has been conducted in a rather *ad hoc* fashion.

119. The failure to establish Regional Groups at each of the five Project sites (see below) or include NGOs or municipal administrations on the Project Steering Committee also contributed to weak communication of Project activities to stakeholders as they would have brought local stakeholder groups into much more contact with the Project (and improved opportunities for collaboration on, and coordination of, activities). In addition, the fact that several Project activities which would have heavily involved local communities and municipalities, namely establishment of the alternative permit system at Cepkeliai and design and management of the cranberry farm at Viesvile were not achievable, therefore further reduced opportunities for communication of Project aims, results and activities to stakeholders.

Recommendations/tasks	*Responsibility*	*Time frame*	*Deliverables/evidence*
1. Ensure a separate Project Communication and Results Dissemination Strategy and Plan is produced for all UNDP-GEF projects during the design phase or in the first 1-2 months of project implementation	UNDP-GEF, GEF	By mid-2011	Guidance note given to all project designers

3.9.2 Use/establishment of electronic information technologies and website

120. No major electronic databases e.g. GIS data systems, were established as these were not a major requirement or focus of the Project. The PIT backs up the Project data and correspondence at least once a week and reports archived on to separate media (DVDs and external hard drive). However, it is not clear whether two backup copies are kept, with at least one set located in a fire-proof safe in a second location to avoid risk of loss of Project data from a possible catastrophic fire in the PIT office or building, or whether the Project server is backed-up externally by the service provider.

121. The Project's website (http://www.wetlands.lt) was reviewed by the FET. It is simple and has some of the Project's documents available for download but the latest reports available for download are dated 2007 suggesting little or no management of the content of the website in the last three years. In addition, the English version of the website is less developed (compared to the Lithuanian version) with some of the links absent or leading to a page in Lithuanian, e.g. http://www.wetlands.lt/galery_list.php. Also, the 'news section' of the main website http://www.wetlands.lt/naujienos.php was empty when checked on 4 November 2010 (still on 6 December 2010).

122. Much of the downloadable site-specific material produced by the Project is also supposed to be available for download from the individual SNR websites, e.g. educational materials and lessons plans designed for schools around Zuvintas Biosphere Reserve and Kamanos SNR. Unfortunately, some of links to these websites, are broken or wrongly addressed e.g. http://www.wetlands.lt/eng/www.kamanos.lt, and some links lead to pages under construction e.g. http://www.zuvintas.lt/en/m6_.php. In addition, some of the SNR websites themselves have font inconsistencies, e.g. http://www.kamanos.lt/m8_.php, poor layout and usability with picture galleries opening images in separate windows e.g. http://www.zuvintas.lt/fotogalerija.php, with, in some instances, grammatical mistakes or even typos (http://www.kamanos.lt/m5_.php). Although the SNR websites are not directly managed by the Project, they are meant to present information on Project activities or Project information for download, and the problems with these websites do not lend a good image of the Project.

123. Interestingly, few interviewees expressed an opinion on the website but those that did stated that it is functional but 'nothing special' (it doesn't stand out). The Project website and the links to pages giving detail on activities at the sites clearly need updating and to be made more attractive and interactive if the website is to be effective as a tool to promote the Project (and perhaps supplement the Project's capacity building activities by providing wetland restoration and other

[28] Often developed for GEF projects and usually linked with a Stakeholder Participation Plan. Typically, it sets out what the Project needs to communicate (concepts, ideas, key messages, priorities and results) and why, who the target audiences are for communication and dissemination activities, and how the specific Project ideas, results and information will be presented to the target audiences, stakeholders and sectors, and includes an implementation plan with specific activities, deliverables, targets and milestones set within a clear timetable that relates communication and dissemination activities to other Project activities and identifies responsibilities and the resources needed (financial, technical, human).

manuals/guidelines and relevant training materials and tools online). In the FET's opinion, it needs an external professional web design company to revise the design. As well as redesign, the website probably needs to be better promoted (perhaps by sending out a card with its address on to all community groups in the Project area, an approach which has been successful for international NGOs seeking to promote project results at a local level).

124. The FET was very impressed with the Capercaillie breeding facility which is an integral part of a reintroduction programme for this bird at Viesvile SNR. Given the likely interest in the Capercaillie breeding programme, it is suggested that the Reserve sets up a blog on its website that could detail the progress of the programme, including presenting updates on the success of individual birds during the breeding season and on the status of birds once they have been released. This could be done at the same time as the Project website is being redesigned/updated, and by the same company.

125. The use/establishment of information technologies is rated as ***Satisfactory*** but could be considerably improved.

Recommendations/tasks	*Responsibility*	*Time frame*	*Deliverables/evidence*
1. Update website and renew links and include all major reports and studies produced by the Project	PIT, web design company	By March 2011	New Project webpage with clean links and Project reports available for download
2. Develop a weekly 'Capercaillie blog' from Viesvile, and train SNR staff in its use	Viesvile SNR, PIT and website company	By March 2011	Blog facility on Viesvile SNR website with link to Project website

3.10 Stakeholder participation and public involvement during project implementation

126. In judging Stakeholder Participation/Public Involvement during implementation four related and often overlapping issues need to be assessed: (i) stakeholder identification; (ii) information dissemination; (iii) consultation; and (iv) "stakeholder" participation.

3.10.1 Identification of stakeholders

127. As mentioned above, the initial stakeholder analysis undertaken during the PDF-B phase should have been more detailed and a much more detailed Stakeholder Participation Plan developed. During implementation, the stakeholders appear to have been chosen largely based on the knowledge and experience of the PIT staff or those considered most relevant to implementation of proposed Project activities. Unfortunately, some important stakeholder groups have been largely missing from the Project, namely high-level decision-makers (politicians), Local Action Groups, and local-level NGOs/CBOs, which would have helped ensure better ownership and sustainability of the Project outputs. Apart from those at Viesvile and Jurbarkas, municipal administrations have also played a relatively minor role in the Project. Other important actors in biodiversity field such as Parliament's Environmental Protection Committee have not been involved at all.

128. The FET has a particular concern about stakeholder involvement for the delivery of Outcome 6, specifically the development and adoption of the suggested National Peatlands Strategy' which needs wide stakeholder participation and endorsement if it is to be successful. The FET notes that the MTE recommended that the Project develop '*a brief stakeholder strategy to be included within Component 6 outputs to identify key stakeholders and make certain mechanisms are in place to provide for meaningful involvement in policy/program deliberations. These mechanisms should be suitable for adoption by national and local agencies to institutionalize integrated stakeholder participation'*. As the MTE pointed out '*this plan does not necessarily need to make stakeholder participation "formalized*", but should clearly identify stakeholders and describe methods to include them in policy discussions relating to peatland conservation and management. Such a stakeholder analysis has still not been done by the Project, and the FET recommends that a new analysis is undertaken and a brief stakeholder participation plan produced to help ensure proper participation in the development of the National Peatlands Strategy, and its promotion, adoption and implementation.

Recommendations/tasks	*Responsibility*	*Time frame*	*Deliverables/evidence*
1. Undertake a new stakeholder analysis and produce a brief stakeholder participation plan for the development, promotion, adoption and implementation of the National Peatlands Strategy (main deliverable of Outcome 6)	PIT, PSC, National Ramsar Committee	By January 2011	Document detailing stakeholder analysis, and brief stakeholder participation plan

3.10.2 Information dissemination

129. Dissemination of information on the Project and its results is achieved through a number of means, but largely through the Project's website, presentations by PIT staff, and printed documents including newspaper articles and project leaflets. The Project has produced a large number of reports, publications, educational, training and awareness-raising materials (many listed in the annual PIRs) and other documents. Dissemination of these has been generally good although, as noted above, there has been an issue of their availability through the website and a number of interviewees did not feel they had been kept sufficiently informed of Project progress.

130. Given the need to promote the Project results and ensure good partnerships are maintained (which will become increasingly important to achieve Outcome 6), it is disappointing that the Project did not produce a regular newsletter, e.g. an illustrated, 3-4 page, 3-monthly or 6-monthly newsletter[29], available both electronically (for download from Project website) and in hard copy, with distribution to all major stakeholders (both to individuals and their institutions). In part this reflects the lack of a detailed, coherent Project Communication and Information Dissemination Plan (see above).

131. The Project needs to promote the Project aims and its considerable results more. It is therefore recommended that in addition to the final PIR due in summer 2011, the Project team produce a specific Final Report, that captures the main project activities, results, successes, impacts and lessons learned from the Project itself (so distinct from what 'lesson learning' is taking place to develop the National Peatlands Strategy), and to hold a Final Project Meeting to present the report and give presentations on the key achievements of the Project to all stakeholders and the media. It is recommended that a short consultancy is offered to a media expert to advise on how the most appropriate medium /format to promote, publicise and disseminate Project results to each of the Project's target stakeholder groups and produce a produce a short strategy and plan for how to communicate project results to the different target groups. It is suggested that the draft National Peatlands Strategy is also presented at the Final Project Meeting, which will help increase stakeholder interest and input to development of the NPS.

132. Greater promotion of the Project's results will help raise the general profile of the Project among the public and increased awareness of its key achievements among government figures early in 2011 will facilitate the adoption of the National Peatland Strategy later in 2011. Since it will take some time to collate all the relevant information and organize events to promote the Project results, such an event cannot take place before the official end of the Project on 31st December 2010, but should be possible by late spring 2011.

133. All of the publicly accessible information on the Project is available in Lithuania, but not all of the key documents have an English summary, e.g. the 'Public Awareness Study'[30]. Unfortunately, for those that do, the quality and length of these translations varies with vague, unclear, ambiguous or misleading English in some summaries reviewed by the FET, the worst example being the 'summary' of the 'Study on services provided to protected area visitors by protected area directorates'[31]. It is therefore recommended that a native English speaker checks all translations, as the English translations are important for dissemination of the Project results to the international stakeholders and global audience.

134. It is clear that the Project has produced an enormous amount of new information and publications, and this needs to be available in the public domain. The books on the SNRs financed through the GEF Project are particularly attractive. Some studies commissioned by the Project are of national and regional or international importance and should be published in academic journals. The study of the economic value of the peatlands of Lithuania, which is currently being undertaken as part of Outcome 6, will be of especial interest to the wider economic and scientific communities and should be submitted to an international journal, as this is a relatively new field and there have been very few valuation studies of peatlands anywhere. In addition, some of the results and activities at the target sites relating to management to improve wetland biodiversity would be of interest to international audiences. It is therefore recommended that if funding allows, the Project should consider presenting key results at the International Conference of Society of Wetlands Scientists in Prague, Czech Republic in July 2011.

Recommendations/tasks	*Responsibility*	*Time frame*	*Deliverables/evidence*
1. Produce a Final Report (in addition to the PIR for 2011) that fully captures the main project activities, results, successes, impacts and lessons learned from the Project over the 5 years of implementation	PIT	By April 2011	Report
2. Contract media consultant to advise on best ways	PIT, consultant to	By March	Written strategy and

[29] This could have been based on the 6-monthly reports produced for the PSC meetings.
[30] Spinter tyrimai (Spinter research) (2004, 2006, 2009) Gamtinių rezervatų apylinkių gyventojų sociologinis tyrimas / Spinter research (2004, 2006, 2009) Public opinion survey of people living nearby strict nature reserves
[31] Turizmo pletros institutas (2009). Lietuvos saugomų teritorijų direkcijų teikiamų paslaugų saugomų teritorijų lankytojams studija. Vilnius, Lithuania. 132pp.

to promote and disseminate Project results and produce a clear written strategy and plan on how to communicate project results to the different target groups (assuming that Project is extended)	advise on promotion of project results	2011	plan on how to communicate project results to the different target groups
3. Host a Final Project Meeting event for the Project stakeholders and media to present the Final Report with presentations on key Project achievements (timed to coincide with launch of draft National Peatlands Strategy)	PIT	In April-May 2011	1-day media event with all stakeholders (national and local) invited Written feedback from stakeholders
4. Publish results of economic valuation of peatlands in Lithuania in international (preferably English-language) journal	Consultants carrying out the study, PIT	By March 2011	Publication ready for submission to journal
5. Present key results at the International Conference of Society of Wetlands Scientists in Prague in July 2011, if funding is available	PIT	July 2011	Presentations (lecture and posters)
6. Employ a native or fluent English-speaker to review the English summaries of all the main Project publications to ensure accurate and readable translations	PIT Project Assistant, English-speaking translator	By March 2011	Revised English summaries (as needed)

135. Production and dissemination of information by the COAST Project is rated as ***Marginally Satisfactory.***

3.10.3 Stakeholder consultation

136. In terms of consultation, the PIT has actively sought opinions and feedback from local stakeholders on planned project activities, to increase the likelihood of more successful implementation, ownership and sustainability, and worked hard to ensure transparency in decision-making and developed a reputation for this. In addition, the PM is widely regarded as someone who is a good listener and negotiator who discusses project ideas or activities and asks for opinions from others. This has helped generate an image of the PIT as being 'consultative'.

137. The PIT have developed particularly strong relationships with the five SNR authorities, who see the Project as both open and responsive to their concerns[32] and helping to deliver their objectives, and the PIT consults them on implementation of Project activities. Relationships and consultations with the municipal authorities and their local wards around the five SNRs appear to be more mixed; FE interviews suggested that some of these relationships are strong and active and consultation frequent e.g. with the municipality of Varena on Project activities at and around Cepkeliai SNR, while other municipal authorities have been less involved in the Project, e.g. Akmene (although one interviewee suggested that was because the municipality wasn't that interested in the Project).

138. In addition, the Project has an active and engaged Project Steering Committee at whose meetings progress and information on the Project is presented and consultation sought on the subsequent 6-monthly activities with discussion and approval of Project Work Plans and budgets as well as contracts and their TORs.

139. However, there have been some weakness in the approach to stakeholder consultation taken by the Project, and the major disappointment is that there was very limited opportunity for local stakeholders to make meaningful input to development of the management plans for the SNRs, which were a key focus and deliverable of the Project. Local communities around the reserves were only included at a very late stage when 'public hearings' were held shortly before they were endorsed by the ministry (so not during the design phase), and it is not clear just how much their views influenced the final plans (this is not documented by the Project) but the FET suspects that the plans were already agreed by that stage. International best practice on developing management plans is to involve local communities from the start. The proposed Regional Groups at each of the SNRs could have provided a valuable forum for channeling the views of local communities on the management plans, but sadly they were not established (see below).

140. Overall, stakeholder consultation during the Project implementation is rated as ***Satisfactory***.

[32] An example would be the relocation of the nature trail and visitors centre from Girutiskis to much closer to the Labanoras Regional Park Headquarters as the RP administration considered Girutiskis too far away from the headquarters to manage effectively or easily. In this case, it is debatable whether the SNRs had too much influence over project implementation and the PIT and PSC should have argued more strongly to keep the infrastructure at Girutiskis.

3.10.4 Stakeholder participation

i. General Points

141. Interviews by the FET revealed generally good stakeholder participation during the Project's implementation. The Project has worked closely with, and through, a large number of local stakeholders, notably the SNR administrations, State Forest Enterprises, local government including some municipalities and their local wards, and some national and local NGOs, as well as individuals. There were opportunities for locals to be directly involved in some of the Project's activities, such as participation in education and awareness-raising activities organized by the Project at Kamanos and Zuvintas (although some activities aimed at local communities, notably the cranberry farm at Viesvile did not happen), and some municipalities were also included in infrastructure development activities e.g. construction of fish ladders at Viesvile. Many of the Project activities were delivered through partnerships with relevant institutions, based on short-term contracts, which appear to have been arranged and managed very effectively, with few problems with delivery.

142. There has also been good, targeted use of experts from universities and institutes in Lithuania in Project activities (largely as consultants), including the Institute for Botany in Vilnius. However, the FET feels that meaningful NGO involvement in the Project has been rather limited (only the Lithuanian Fund for Nature, Community Atgaja, Biota, (Biodiversity Information Center), Eiciai village community "Karsuva" and the Alytus and Simnas branches of the Society for Beautification of Lithuania – have been significantly involved), although this is probably a reflection of the underdeveloped nature of the environmental NGO community in Lithuania rather than any discrimination against NGO participation by the Project.

ii. Regional Groups

143. Another important approach listed in the Project Document for promoting greater stakeholder participation and decision-making in the Project was to be the use of 'Regional Groups' (RGs), one at each of the five SNRs. According to the Project Document these were to be established at each Project site early in project implementation '*to ensure local stakeholder involvement and that local co-funding obligations are met*'. RGs were to be comprised of representatives from the local authorities and municipal enterprises (municipalities33, forest enterprises, regional environmental protection agencies, etc.), private enterprises, and local NGOs/Community Based Organisations. They would be led by the Directors of the five SNRs and would facilitate communication as well as collaboration between local actors, coordinating their inputs, and feeding the PIT with information on substantive matters. According to the Project Document, RGs were also to '*serve as advisory boards to Strict Nature Reserves*' (see section 2.b.7 of Project Document) and, by having representatives of local authorities, ensure that necessary decisions were taken at municipal levels.

144. Sadly, Regional Groups were not set up at any of the five Project sites. When questioned by the FET, most of the SNR staff and local municipal authorities claimed that they were never discussed after project implementation began, and they do not seem to have had a high local ownership at the design stage and it is not clear whether the idea was originally suggested by Lithuanians or UNDP-GEF. Some PIT and other SNR staff suggested that they were not established because they were seen as unnecessary and that dealing one-on-one with individual stakeholders was more effective. This rather misses the point, which is that stakeholders have a right to be included within decision-making systems which affect their lives. Such groups may also have helped avoid some potential conflicts that have arisen between stakeholder groups at some of the sites, e.g. hunters, foresters and SNRs staff over hunting of wild boar in and around the SNR at Viesvile, as they could have offered a forum to airing concerns, and could have provided valuable independent feedback on Project progress, help build more effective partnerships and networks at the local levels (especially important for lobbying and mainstreaming wetland conservation activities), create better local 'ownership' of the Project, aid dissemination, communication and replication of Project results, and help to ensure project sustainability at the end of the Project, and could also perhaps have provided 'champions' within stakeholder groups who could promote (champion) the Project's initiatives in their respective organizations.

145. The FET suspects that the reason for the failure to establish such groups was probably due to unfamiliarity with how to establish and operate this model for overseeing project activities given the former Soviet control system where SNRs were exclusive areas which were not accessible to the general public who had no say in their maintenance or development. Consequently, on the local level, stakeholder involvement in the Project has been less "formal" than originally intended. Also as RGs were not established they did not become advisory boards for the SNRs either. However, it seems that there was no legal basis for this role – under the legislation, management of the SNRs is the responsibility of the SSPA and the individual SNR directorates – indicating that this was not check during the project design phase.

146. Overall, stakeholder participation and public involvement during Project implementation is rated as **Satisfactory**, although it could have been further improved, particularly with greater involvement of the NGO community and local

[33] The local municipalities around the five SNRs are Akmene (Kamanos), Taurage (Viesvile), Jurbarkas (Viesvile), Marijampole (Zuvintas), Alytus region (Zuvintas), Lazdijai (Zuvintas), Svencionys (Giruriskis), and Varena (Cepkeliai).

stakeholders at Project sites and it is disappointing that the Regional Groups were not created. The good stakeholder participation has led to good local and national ownership of the Project.

3.11 Project partnerships and linkage with other interventions in the sector

3.11.1 Partnerships

147. The Project has invested significant time and effort in developing partnerships operating in Lithuania and around the five SNRs, and has been very successful with this and should be congratulated.

148. Strong partnerships were built during the PDF-B phase, which have continued, and many new ones (both practical and strategic) have been formed during implementation. FE interviews revealed that this is in part because the Project has needed to raise additional co-financing following early loss of some co-financing sources, adverse changes in the exchange rate between the US Dollar and Lithuania Lita and increased costs (especially for construction of infrastructure), and it has chosen to do this through joint applications to donors for shared activities, many initiated by the GEF Project. As pointed out by the MTE '*this project has catalyzed the initiation of many related projects and provides leadership for many of these initiatives'*. Particularly significant joint initiatives have included 'Integrating Dzukija National Park and Cepkeliai Nature Reserve into a common tourism area in the border regions of Lithuania and Poland' (PHARE funding); Restoration of Amalvas wetlands (EU LIFE+); Bird rich wetlands of international importance, nature reserves and cultural landscapes as resources for sustainable developments in rural areas (INTERREG); and Management and Restoration of Natura 2000 sites through the Integrated River Basin Plan for Dovine River, Lithuania (IAC – International Agricultural Center, Netherlands). A complete list of associated projects is included in Annex 8.

3.11.2 Linkage with the SGP

149. The Project had good linkage with GEF's national Small Grants Programme (SGP). The PIT encouraged and supported local communities and SNRs to prepare applications for SGP funding and helped with proposal writing. As a result, SGP approved several applications that focused on, or supported conservation, of wetland biodiversity e.g. Innovative Use of Wetlands for the Heating of Simnas along with Improvement of the State of Zuvintas Strict Nature Reserve's and Lakes' Ecosystems (SGP - LIT/OP3/01/06/20) or development of alternative or traditional livelihoods in or close to wetland reserves, e.g. Cultivation of traditional apiculture and protection of natural meadows in Musteika village (SGP - LIT/05/03) which funded a traditional beekeeping 'farm' (museum) near Cepkeliai SNR.

3.11.3 Lessons learned from other projects in sector

150. The Project Document sets out an extensive analysis of how the project design incorporated lessons learned from many other similar projects in the past, particularly with regard to: institutional strengthening and policy development; nature management; sustainable forest use; agriculture and rural development; and environmental education and awareness. Specific projects mentioned in the Project Document (and there are many) include: "Harmonization of Lithuanian capacity, policies and procedures on nature protection with EU requirements, with particular focus on implementation of the EEC Habitats Directive (92/43) and the EEC Birds Directive (79/409)" (1999 – 2003); Conservation and Management of Lithuanian Wetlands (1995–1997); Restoration of the Puscia Bog (2000 – 2003); Inventory of Forest Key-habitats in Lithuania (2001–2003); and Nature Watch (1995-ongoing).

151. Overall, establishment of partnerships by the Project is rated as ***Satisfactory***

3.12 Financial Planning and management

3.12.1 GEF funding, project co-financing and leveraged funds

152. GEF financing for Project implementation was US$3,261,000, with an additional US$180,000 for PDF-B funding, so total GEF financing was US$3,441,000. Co-financing is complex with many types and sources (see Table 2). The total committed originally committed at the start of Project implementation was US$10,424,000 giving a combined Project budget of US$13,865,000, and a GEF:initial co-financing ratio of 1:3.03. However, an additional US$7,680,000 in co-financing was leveraged as of 30th September 2010, giving an overall co-financing total of US$18,104,000, which is a very significant amount, and represents a GEF: co-financing ratio of 1:5.26, which is very good for a GEF project under GEF3. A breakdown of figures given in the 2010 PIR show US$360,000 as in-kind, versus US$17.75 million for

cash co-financing, giving a co-financing total at 30 June 2010 of US$18.11 million, and GEF: cash co-financing ratio of 1:5.6, which therefore continues to be very good.

Table 2: Co-financing and additional leveraged funds

Co-financier	Classification	Type	Original amount (US $) in Pro Doc	Total spent to 31st December 2009 (US$)	% of original spent
Ministry of Environment Of Lithuania	Government	Cash	2,189,400	5,222,537	238.5
Ministry of Environment Of Lithuania	Government	In-kind	50,000	50,000	100.0
State Service for Protected Areas	Government	Cash	300,000	2,157,195	719.1
Land cadaster	Government	In-kind	28,600	30,000	104.9
Public Agency Soil Remediation Technologies	Government	Cash	270,000	0	0.0
PHARE	Government	Cash	108,000	476,875	441.6
Local Municipalities	Government	Cash	829,400	834,051	100.6
ECAT	Non-gov	In-kind	15,600	1,966	12.6
Eco-clubs	Non-gov	Cash	10,300	0	0.0
OMPO	Non-gov	Cash	19,700	0	0.0
State Road Fund	Government		199,700	417,204	208.9
Biota (NGO)	Non-gov	Cash/ In-kind	137,100	67,900	49.5
Dzukija National Park	Government	In-kind	46,700	50,000	107.1
The National Paying Agency under the MoAgric (former SAPARD)	EU funds	Cash	815,000	1,831,978	224.8
State Forestry Enterprise	Government	Cash	85,000	100,198	117.9
State Fishery Centre	Government	Cash	62,900	5,724	9.1
Private individual (JSC Labanoro turas, JSC Alga in Zuvintas)	Private	Cash	382,400	377,400	98.7
Atgaja (NGO)	Non-gov	Cash / In-kind	10,400	13,795	132.6
Frankfurt Zoological Society	Non-gov	Cash / In-kind	150,000	6,000	4.0
State Forest Fund	Government	Cash	121,400	122,118	100.6
Wild Nature Support Fund	Non-gov	In-kind	5,700	0	0.0
Key Habitat Project	Bilateral	In kind	5,700	5,700	100.0
ISPA	EU funds	Cash	4,443,300	4,102,932	92.3
Lithuanian Cranberry Growers Association with Canadian partners	Non-gov	In kind	12,000	0	0.0
Environmental Protection Agency	Government	Cash	31,100	104,024	334.5
MATRA project	Bilateral	Cash / In-kind	95,000	708,507	745.8
LIFE+	EU funds	Cash	0	504,747	
Unesco Lithuania	Bilateral	Cash	0	15,971	
BSR Interreg III B	EU funds	Cash	0	517,312	
Swedish Environmental Protection Agency	Bilateral	Cash	0	86,689	
Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency	Bilateral	Cash	0	36,166	
EEA Financial Mechanism and Norwegian Financial Mechanism	Bilateral	Cash	0	45,845	
Total			**10,424,400**	**17,892,834**	**171.6**

153. During the implementation period, the rate of exchange between the Lithuanian Lita and US Dollar diminished

from 4:1 to 2.2:1[34]. This had serious budget planning implications. On top of this, inflation rates in Lithuania, particularly for construction materials and labor (which increased significantly in 2003-2005 due to growth in the economy), increased a rate well beyond anything anticipated at the time of project design and the original budget for nature trails, visitor centres, etc was not enough. There was also a loss of co-financing from some sources, e.g. during the PDF-B phase the Frankfurt Zoological Society (FZS) agreed to be a major co-financier for land purchase around the Kamanos SNR with a contribution of US$ 450,000, but after the Project started the FZS decided not to provide funding. The Project identified gaps and created a strategy that was able to generate the additional funds to offset budget shortfalls and the PIT invested significant amount of time identifying and applying for funds and forming partnerships with other projects to do so. They have been extremely successful at raising replacement funds and additional funding beyond that originally envisaged (one of the best examples seen by the International Consultant) and should be commended for their performance. As Table 2 shows, in some cases the amount of additional funds raised above that originally identified in the Project Document was considerable, e.g. the co-financing offered by the MATRA project at the project design stage was US$95,000 but in the end a co-financing contribution of US$708,507 was achieved, nearly 7.5 times the original amount.

154. One point that should be made here is that several of the sources of co-financing identified in the Project Document were from projects in which the GEF Project has had no role and very little input (consultation mostly), e.g. construction of sewage facilities around Zuvintas reserve (funded through EU programmes), and which seem to have been included to boost the amount of co-financing. Also, the GEF Project's contribution to some of the new leveraged funds has been relatively small with the GEF project limited to providing technical support for project proposal preparation in many cases, but claiming a significant amount as co-financing. This is not a criticism of the Project, whose PIT have used GEF resources for raising much larger amounts of money for other projects which further the GEF Project's general aim (to promote conservation and sustainable use of wetland biodiversity), and have thereby effectively 'mainstreamed' the GEF project's message and goals into other projects and so enhanced and expanded the Project's impact.

155. There do not appear to have been any significant problems with inputs from the Government of Lithuania (GoL), or major delays over delivery of co-financing. Indeed the GoL's contribution, although much of it as in-kind, deserves special mention as, like most other countries, the GoL has had to contend with a financial and economic crisis which has resulted in a reduced budget to the MoE and the SSPA over the last two years, yet they have continued to support the Project and indeed extended their commitment beyond the original finishing date of the Project when a 12-month (which became 15-month) extension to the Project was agreed in early 2008, which coincided with the worst period of the crisis. The FET feels the GoL should be commended for their continued commitment and support and it is clear that a successful GEF Project is a priority for the MoE and its SSPA.

3.12.2 Disbursements and breakdown by activity

156. The original Project budget was revised after implementation began and again after the MTE and funds reallocated between different Outcomes to reflect changed circumstances and recommendations of the MTE Report. This reallocation meant that the level of funding for Outcomes 1, 2, 3 and 5 were reduced and Outcomes 4 and 6 were increased (Table 3). Some of these reallocations were significant with a 45% increase in funding for Outcome 6, for instance, over the original amount budgeted. However, the FET agrees that these changes were necessary and significantly improved delivery of key Project results.

157. Total disbursement of GEF funds to the Project up until 30th September 2010 (latest figures available) amounted to US$2,894,233, which represents 88.75% of the projected spending (revised budget) by this date (see Table 3). If Project spending is taken as a crude measure of the progress of implementation, then the Project has progressed very well and in fact the above disbursement figure does not include the costs of a number of ongoing contracts and the FE costs that will be paid by the end of 2010, so overall disbursement is even higher. However, this overall figure hides considerable variation in the spending between Outcomes. Outcome 4 *('Wetland biodiversity protected at Zuvintas Reserve'*) is overspent judged according to the original Project Document budget and Outcome 5 ('*Wetland biodiversity protected in Girutiskis Strict Nature reserve'*) considerably underspent, but under the revised budget there was no overspending on any Outcome up to 30th September 2010. Outcome 6 ('*Formal intersectoral mechanism for replication of best lessons learned in conservation of inland wetland biodiversity established and operational'*) had been considerably underspent, but this Outcome is to be a focus for activities during the final few months of the Project when the National Peatland Strategy will to be developed, promoted and adopted, so the underspend is not surprising and was expected.

158. Spending between years also varied (Table 4), with Outcome 5 showing an enormous overspend in 2005, 2007 and 2008 (shaded cells), Outcomes 2 and 3 in 2008 and 2009 and Outcome 2 in 2009. Outcome 6 has had little spending until 2009 (for reasons given above). Spending in 2010 to 30th September had accounted for less than 50% of the

[34] The PIT commented that '*At the project PDFB phase the rate was 4:1. For preparation of project implementation phase budget we used rate 3.5:1. During implementation phase rate fluctuated from 2.9: 1 to 2.2:1'*

allocated budget but there were many activities associated with Outcome 6 expected in the remaining part of 2010.

159. Breakdown of disbursements by activity show that spending on activities related to capacity building (including equipment and infrastructure) to 30th September 2010 totaled US$1,685,326, comprising US$62,883 for capacity building (all activities related to staff training, workshops, conferences, etc), US$1,079,919 for infrastructure costs (repairs of visitor centers, building of nature trails, dam construction, reconstruction of dikes and sluices, construction of fish ladders, installment of interpretation displays, etc.) and US$542,524 for equipment (includes jeeps, tractors, reed cutter machine, boats, amphibious machine to extracting trees from peatlands, saws, hydro-meteorological stations, computer hardware and software, etc.). Total Project funds spent on public awareness and educational programmes amounts to US$643,198, most of which comes under the budget lines for each of the five Project sites e.g. 'Public support and awareness for conservation of Zuvintas reserve increased'.

160. Overall, US$ 17.9 million or 57% of the total co-financing had been disbursed up to 31st December 2009, and total Project funding – GEF and all forms of co-financing – amounted to US$ 21.55 million.

3.12.3 Cost-effectiveness

161. The Project has completed most of the planned activities and met most of expected outcomes within budget, although it has required a 15-month no-cost extension[35] due to the need to refocus towards a more mainstreaming approach. The Project has made very good use of (cheaper) national consultants (minimal use of international consultants, and those that were engaged with the Project were funded from co-financing and not GEF funds) which helped keep costs low, and all bids were put out to competitive tender (minimum three bids except in exceptional circumstances), following UNDP rules and procedures, and the PIT' has made a point of trying to find value for money across all project activities (and the FET was very impressed that the PM is still driving the same car bought with GEF Project funds 10 years ago!).

162. As mentioned above, the PIT adapted well to initial financial constraints caused by the falling value of the US$ by becoming expert at capturing available EU funds, and focused upon relatively few, strategic, 'large' projects and used these to leverage, seed fund or co-fund EU investments. They learned quickly how to access these funds and worked assiduously to secure funds specifically for Project needs and have been very successful.

163. In addition, according to interviewees at UNDP Lithuania, the Project has required less management time from UNDP CO than many other UNDP-managed projects, due to a very capable and professional core project team which already had several years of experience with the Project when implementation started. Similarly, from UNDP-GEF Bratislava's point of view, the Project is viewed as a 'cost-effective' project in that it has required less management time from staff than many other similar UNDP-GEF projects.

3.12.4 Financial management, audit and independent assessment of internal controls

164. The management procedures to procure Project assets and equipment and to recruit consultants have followed the existing UNDP rules and procedures under the NEX modality. FE interviews suggest that project transactions have been promptly recorded and properly classified, and show good internal controls mechanisms to manage and control project financial resources. According to the PIT, there has been no major problem with disbursements (minor but they have not seriously impacted delivery of Project results), which are usually received on time from the UNDP CO and there is good communication between the Project's Financial Manager and the finance department at the UNDP CO. A reorganization of the budget was suggested at the MTE because it was very difficult to track allocations according to priorities and impeded transparency. Overall financial management of the Project appears to have been good and the Financial Manager deserves credit for this.

165. The Project has followed the standard UNDP procurement procedure of a competitive bid process with a minimum of three proposals, although as Lithuania is a small country and limited number of businesses dealing with environmental issues there was often limited choice, and usually the PIT approached potential bidders to encourage an application and bid submission.

166. Financial audits of the Project have been undertaken each year by independent auditors contracted by the UNDP

[35] Project extensions are common on GEF projects, as during the project design phase it is often difficult to predict exactly how long will be required to complete project activities, and the political, economic and financial contexts of most projects change during implementation, sometimes with negative impacts of project delivery. Consequently, the 15-month no-cost project extension agreed for the Project following the MTE in February 2008 in order to fully implement the recommendations of the MTE should not be seem as a sign of poor performance or failure by the Project team, but rather as a realistic, practical solution to a changed situation (in other words a sensible adaptive management response). One positive consequence of the extension was that it allowed the Project to overlap with applications to be made to the EU (e.g. EU LIFE+) where GEF funds were used as co-financing.

CO, as part of normal UNDP CO accounting procedures. These have not reported any financial irregularities (audit report for 2008 viewed by FET), although the scope of the audit has been limited to the expenditures of the NHF, which are defined as including all disbursements listed in monthly financial reports submitted by the NHF and the direct payments processed by the UNDP CO at the request of the NHF. Also, as mentioned above the UNDP CO undertakes regular financial checks of Project finances.

167. As noted above co-financing was secured, and there were significant additional leveraged funds. In the FET experience, when compared with other similar GEF projects and especially with EU-funded and World Bank funded biodiversity projects, the Project has delivered its results cheaply and been very cost-effective. Overall, cost-effectiveness is judged as ***Highly Satisfactory*** and the PIT and UNDP CO have done a good job in seeking value for money when spending Project funds, particularly given that they had to deal with falling Litas-Dollar rates, increased construction costs and loss of co-financing early on in implementation.

Table 3: Total disbursement of funds by output to 30 September 2010 (US$) (figures rounded)

Outcome	Original budget (from Project Document - A)	% total original budget	Reallocated budget (B)	% total reallocated budget	% change due to reallocation (B-A/A x 100)	Total disbursement (until 30/9/2010 – C)	% reallocated budget spent (C/B x 100)	% original budget spent by end of September 2010 (C/A x 100)
Outcome 1	463,398	14.21	369,838	11.34	-20.19	354,997	95.99	76.61
Outcome 2	394,225	12.09	381,680	11.70	-3.18	349,326	91.52	88.61
Outcome 3	470,094	14.42	434,216	13.32	-7.63	415,772	95.75	88.44
Outcome 4	1,186,033	36.37	1,392,917	42.71	17.44	1,230,525	88.34	103.75
Outcome 5	496,450	15.22	318,413	9.76	-35.86	302,691	95.06	60.97
Outcome 6	250,800	7.69	363,936	11.16	45.11	240,923	66.20	96.06
Total	**3,261,000**	**100.00**	**3,261,000**	**100.00**	**0.00**	**2,894,233**	**88.75**	**88.75**

Source: PIT

Table 4: Project spending according to year

Outcome	2004			2005			2006			2007		
	Planned	Spent	%	Planned	Spent	%	Planned	Spent	%	Planned	Spent	%
Outcome 1	109,452	103,284	94.36	58,408	54,136	92.69	144,683	128,095	88.54	26,383	33,800	128.11
Outcome 2	109,155	31,698	29.04	53,433	55,395	103.67	46,891	51,754	110.37	104,397	127,434	122.07
Outcome 3	109,858	36,422	33.15	61,840	66,855	108.11	78,225	78,391	100.21	105,594	116,840	110.65
Outcome 4	290,967	120,481	41.41	118,577	157,489	132.82	181,995	184,606	101.43	98,818	146,435	148.19
Outcome 5	199,363	37,098	18.61	24,264	78,605	323.95	35,331	30,920	87.52	27,629	71,493	258.76
Outcome 6	0	0	0.00	0	0	0.00	0	0	0.00	0	0	0.00
Total	**818,794**	**328,983**	**40.18**	**316,523**	**412,480**	**130.32**	**487,124**	**473,766**	**97.26**	**362,822**	**496,001**	**136.71**

Outcome	2008			2009			2010		
	Planned	Spent	%	Planned	Spent	%	Planned	Spent	%
Outcome 1	23,929	33,036	138.06	6,984	2,647	37.90	0	0	0.00
Outcome 2	44,397	53,498	120.50	8,106	28,669	353.66	15,300	877	5.73
Outcome 3	59,061	92,754	157.05	8,038	15,192	189.01	11,600	9,318	80.32

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Outcome 4	106,131	149,001	140.39	220,606	251,825	114.15	375,823	220,688	58.72
Outcome 5	25,021	84,575	338.01	6,804	0	0.00	0	0	0.00
Outcome 6	0	0	0.00	59,936	132,010	220.25	304,000	108,913	35.83
Total	**258,539**	**412,865**	**159.69**	**310,474**	**430,343**	**138.61**	**706,723**	**339,795**	**48.08**

Source: PIT

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4. Results and impacts

168. The Project's main aim is to develop and implement an integrated, long-term approach to the protection of inland wetlands biodiversity of Lithuania. GEF measures project success largely on the degree to which a project's logical framework targets are met. As noted above, the Project's poor logframe, which is "output" oriented, lacks biological success indicators and has many indicators and targets which do not match, makes assessment of overall Project success and impact difficult. Nevertheless, some concrete conclusions on project achievement can be draw.

4.1 Achievement of Objectives

169. Assessment of indicators and targets relating to the Project's revised Development Objective – '*Sustainable management of wetland biodiversity on five important sites'* - are generally positive.

4.1.1 Objective Indicator 1 - ***'Evaluation of threats reduction at each site, including disturbance by trespassing, continued overgrowth of woody vegetation, on-going drainage, nutrient loading, etc'.***

170. Unfortunately, threats to biodiversity were not measured directly at the sites by the Project, although threat reduction indicators and targets are given for four of the five sites under their relevant Outcome in the original logframe (removed when the Project started), namely:

- *'By year 4, 50% decrease over baseline in solid and other water pollutants'* (Viesvile);
- *'By year 4, 50% decrease over baseline in pollutants loads in Zuvintas Lake and Dovine River'* (Zuvintas);
- *'By year 4, a decrease of 80 % in reserve trespassing over the baseline'* (Cepkeliai);
- *'A decrease of 80% in reserve trespassing over the baseline*' (Viesvile);
- *'A decrease of 80% in reserve trespassing over the baseline'* (Girutiskis).

171. It is unclear why these indicators were removed, and it would contribute to the debate over which, and to what extent, threats have changed at the five SNRs since the Project began if data on these indicators could be collected and analysed, and the FET recommends that that this is done and is reported on in the Project's Final Report and PIR for 2011. Data for these threats should be readily available (information on illegal trespassing from the SNR Annual reports, and water pollution data from the EPA monitoring records).

Recommendations/tasks	*Responsibility*	*Time frame*	*Deliverables/evidence*
1. Collect and analyse data on threats from pollution (Viesvile, Zuvintas) and illegal trespassing (Cepkeliai, Viesvile and Girutiskis) from 2003-2010 to examine extent of change of threats at these sites to determine if original targets set in logframe have been met	PIT/ SSPA/ individual SNRs/ EPA	By February-2011	Section on changes to threats to biodiversity in Final Project Report and PIR for 2011

172. In the absence of quantitative data the FET has had to rely on information from the interviewees. According to interviews with staff of the five SNRs threats to wetland biodiversity have been reduced at all five sites, and no individual threat is greater in 2010 than in 2003 when project designed. Although interviewees claimed that there were a number of reasons for this, most claimed that the GEF Project activities had made a significant contribution to reducing some types of threats, notably through activities to control overgrowth of wetland areas by trees and shrubs and blocking of drainage canals to reduce on-going drainage of wetland area. Staff also claimed that there was now believed to be less illegal entry to the five sites due to blocking of entrances through construction of barriers and erection of signs at reserve boundaries. Other threats, such as pollution, have also been addressed at most of the sites, but this has been through other either non-GEF funded programmes or projects in which the GEF project was a minor partner.

173. Targets for this indicator (which do not directly related to measuring threat reduction at the sites) were not given in the Project Document, but the revised logframe presented the following: (i) Management plans under implementation and (ii) 980 ha of selected bogs, fens, and meadows restored. Management plans for all of the five SNRs have been developed through the Project and were approved in 2005-2006 by separate Ministerial Order and all are under implementation (although the management plan for Girutiskis is being revised as a plan is currently being developed for Labonaras Regional Park, which was absent during implementation of the Project[36]).

[36] Girutiskis SNR is part of the Labanoras Regional Park (enclosed within it). In the case of Girutiskis SNR another document, termed a 'Nature management plan' is also needed according to the national legislation.

174. In terms of the area of 'selected bogs, fens, and meadows restored', there is a question over what is meant by the word 'restored' and how to measure this. Unfortunately, there are no baseline data for the state of the areas chosen for 'restoration activities' (e.g. coverage by the different original plant communities), as most areas began to be drained many decades ago, some well before the Soviet period, so there is no clear idea what an area should be 'restored' to. After discussions with the PIT and other stakeholders, it was decided that a more appropriate target was '980 ha of selected bogs, fens and meadows under activities to return them to wetland habitat'. This then includes Project activities to clear woody plants from areas that are drying out due to drainage (an activity carried out at all five Project sites) and activities to change the hydrological balance in selected areas, such as raising the water table by damming drainage canals. Under this definition, the Project has achieved its target since the combined total for 'restoration activities' at the five SNRs funded under the GEF project at the FE stage was 1931ha, more than double the original target. Consequently, both targets for this indicator have been achieved.

175. The mentioned above, the Project has successfully addressed many of the threats to wetlands at the SNRs which will hopefully inform actions at other wetland protected areas in Lithuania through the National Peatlands Strategy (see below). However, the MTE identified a number of 'new' threats to Lithuania's wetlands not covered in the Project Document that come from activities outside of the protected areas, such as leased peat mines, recreational development (use of off-road vehicles, tourism, vacation homes, etc.), urban development, and agriculture. These were discussed during the MTE (see the draft threat/root causes matrix in MTE Report annex) and should be addressed through the elaboration of the national wetlands conservation policy and program.

4.1.2 Objective Indicator 2 – ***'Evaluation of (i) rate of utilization of restored habitats and wetlands by targeted species and (ii) restoration of wetland-friendly hydraulic regimes'***

176. The first part of this indicator – 'rate of utilization of restored habitats and wetlands by targeted species' – was not measured, and indeed would be very difficult and expensive to measure depending on how the 'target species' and the area to be monitored (neither defined in the logframe or Project Document). Also no baseline data appears to have been collected by the Project. Instead the logframe presents a 'target' for this indicator of '*Fish bypasses installed and Capercaillie reintroduction program under implementation in Viesvile'*.

177. In terms of the fish bypasses, both have been installed along the Viesvile River and have been a great success. The one on the edge of the town is a wonderful example of a how to create a 'win-win' situation for a conflict between what were originally perceived as opposing recreation and conservation needs. Construction of the fish ladder at the town required demolishing a sluice gate to enable migration of sea trout and river lamprey to spawning areas further up the river in upstream in Viesvile Strict Nature Reserve, but the old structure formed a swimming area for the town's inhabitants who argued against the loss of their important communal facility. The Project worked to replace the old structure with a landscaped fish ladder with stone covered banks and a small waterfall that provided the town with a considerably improved recreational experience. However, it is not yet clear whether the fish are using the fish ladders as the monitoring programme at the two ladders will only begin in October 2010 and will run for two years, so it is too early to tell whether this is a success for conservation (although it certainly helped build a very strong relationship between the people of Viesvile and the SNR and GEF Project).

178. As far as the Capercaillie breeding and reintroduction programme is concerned, an impressive captive breeding facility has been established at the Viesville SNR, and is managed by a very enthusiastic and dedicated team. After initial disappointment and delays in sourcing breeding stock from Belarus, five birds were bought from Poland (same subspecies as occurs in Lithuania) in 2009. It is not clear why Lithuanian birds from other areas could not be translocated to Viesvile – it would have been cheaper and probably reduced the chance of spread of disease and genetic contamination. The phase 'reintroduction program' used in the Project Document has two parts – an initial captive breeding phase followed by release and establishment of captive breed birds in the wild as the second phase. The first part of the programme to breed up a captive population of about 50 birds for release appears to be on track, although there has only been one breeding season (the first release is planned for autumn 2011, depending on how successful breeding is in spring 2011). However, the second part of the programme to release of the birds and the establishment of a viable population in the wild is some years away, and is fraught with uncertainties. Reintroduction, especially of animals not directly originating from an area is notoriously difficult and the conservation literature is scattered with examples of both successes and failures, although mostly the latter. Two experts interviewed by the FET stated that, realistically, it would take 10 years before it will be known whether the programme's goal of establishing a wild breeding population at Viesvile SNR that need does not need supply of additional captive bred birds has been achieved. Consequently, although the first part of the Capercaillie reintroduction programme is underway and has been successful, the second has not started yet and the FET feels that final success cannot be assessed at this stage. However, the FET would like to note that the work done so far, and the level of dedication and enthusiasm shown by the Capercaillie team (witnessed directly by the FET) is outstanding and if the programme does not succeed it is unlikely to be because of a lack of SNR staff commitment or effort. It should be noted that this is the first time captive breeding of

Capercaillie has been tried on this scale in Lithuania (there was one previous failed attempt by private sector) so the programme is highly innovative.

179. The second part of this indicator '*restoration of wetland-friendly hydraulic regimes*' had a target to close 20 km of ditches at Kamanos SNR, and to begin implementation of the first priority measures for restoration of the Dovine River basin that includes the Zuvintas Reserve. By the FE, 18.5km of ditches had been closed at the Kamanos but a study of the hydrology of the site after implementation started (i.e. after the original target was set) showed this was all that was needed, so although the target in the logframe was not reached, the target needed for restoration was. In relation to the other part of this indicator, initial priority measures (set out under the Dovine River Basin Management Plan, part funded by the GEF Project) were under implementation by the FE, largely focused on restoration of the Amalva wetland, financed by EU LIFE+ funds with the GEF Project providing some co-financing.

4.1.3 Indicator 3 – ***'At least five additional sites identified for replication of lessons learned and schedule of replication of best practices formally agreed'***

180. Indicators 3 to 7 were initially associated with Project Objective 2 '*To institutionalize lessons learned from alternatives approaches for replication in other wetlands in Lithuania and elsewhere'*. However, when this Objective was removed the indicators were not and have remained to be reported on, and hence are covered here.

181. The target for this indicator is '*at least five additional sites identified for replication of lessons learned'*. As noted above, 'lesson learning' has only recently become a focus for the Project and largely in connection with development of the proposed National Peatlands Strategy, so there has not yet been any formal replication of lessons learned. However, the Project has already achieved some considerable replication of results at the five SNRs, notably input to the preparation of 40 nature management plans for Natura 2000 sites in Lithuania, of which 11 are important wetland sites (Smalvas, and Birzulis wetlands, Lukstas, and Plateliai lakes, Musos Tyrelis, Plynoji, Svencele, and Uzpelkiai mires). The model for these management plans was based on that developed through the GEF project for the five target SNRs. Also, the model developed for the Forest Management Plan of Taurage SFE in which the Project participated has been copied by other SFEs (see below).

182. When the lessons learned exercise has been completed, the National Peatland Strategy has been developed, and the Project has analysed and produced a Final Report there are likely to be many opportunities for replication of Project results. In order to maximize the opportunities for replication it is recommended that a brief replication plan is produced.

Recommendations/tasks	***Responsibility***	***Time frame***	***Deliverables/evidence***
1. Undertake an analysis of Project results and combine with stakeholder analysis to identify where Project results, lessons learned and 'best practice' can be replicated	PIT	By February-2011	Section included in the Final Project Report

4.1.4 Indicator 4 – ***'Horizontal fund for wetlands management in agricultural areas has been secured (% of farms adopting environmentally friendly agricultural practices)'***

183. This indicator comprises two parts, an output and an indicator, and in the original logframe had additional text ('SAPARD horizontal fund for wetlands management…'), which was removed in the revision. The target given for this indicator is '*10% farms near by Zuvintas have adopted environmentally friendly agricultural practices and have contracts with National Paying Agency'*. The PIR for 2010 gives the achievement of this target as '*3 % of farmlands are managed according to eco-farming requirements in the project target - Simnas ward. 19 crop and livestock farms on 500 ha adopted eco-farming in surroundings of Zuvintas so far'*. Unfortunately, it is not clear whether the '% of farmlands' (the wording suggests the measure is an area) is the same as the '% of farms' (the wording of the indicator suggests a number of properties). If it is the same, then the target has not been met; if it is different, then it is impossible to assess achievement of this target. No information is presented in the PIRs on the extent 'horizontal funding' for wetlands management (from SAPARD or other sources).

4.1.5 Indicator 5 – ***'State Forestry Company and private forestry companies have assessed options for certification and at least 3 pilot schemes for certifying forests near wetlands are underway'***

184. The targets for this indicator are '*national legislation adopted, and 3 schemes for certifying forests near wetlands is underway'*. It is not clear what 'national legislation' this refers to but it is presumed it relates to certification of

forestry. All State Forest Enterprises (SFE) in Lithuania were certified according FSC standards in 2004, just before the Project started, and so achievement of the target cannot be said to have been due to the GEF Project.

185. However, it should be noted that the Project also initiated a biodiversity friendly forest management plan for Taurage SFE – the Forest Management Plan of Taurage SFE - which was approved by the MoE in 2006 (order No D1-202 of 24/04/2006). The Plan aims for a balance between timber production, nature conservation and recreation, and includes special measures for the protection of biodiversity. Experience of this new approach to forest management planning has been replicated in the development of forest management plans for Kretinga, Rietavas, Telsiai, Mazeikiai, Kursenai, Joniskis, Siauliai, and Tytuvenai SFE's.

*4.1.6 Indicator 6 – **'Models for land purchase or decommissioning are being replicated in Lithuania'***

186. The target for this indicator is '*land acquisition for nature conservation mechanism introduced into national legislation*'. According to the PIR 2010 this has occurred, although it is not clear which legislation this refers to as no details are given of the titles or dates for the relevant legislation passed (although a study titled 'Privacios zemes, esancios saugomoje teritorijoje, ispirkimo galimybiu arba konpensavimo uz sios zemes naudojimo apribojimus studija / Possibilities of repurchase of private land in protected areas or compensation of land use restrictions of such areas (2005) pp 72' appears to be relevant here)[37]. However, the PIR 2010 points out that 26ha (16 plots) has been purchased through a EU LIFE+ project (GEF providing some co-financing and support) that is seeking to restore the former hydrological regime of the Amalva wetland at Zuvintas. If this model is successful it may be replicated to other sites in the future.

*4.1.7 Indicator 7 – **'Tourism action plans and user fees are being developed in at least three other wetland protected areas in Lithuania'***

187. Tourism action plans and user fees have not been developed at any of the five Project sites, let alone replicated to three additional wetlands. User fees were considered for Girutiskis SNR in the Project Document but were not developed because the legislation covering management of SNRs at the time did not allow the protected area administration to collect visitor fees (a mistake at the project design stage). However, the Project commissioned an independent study of the potential tourism services that could be provided by Lithuania's protected areas, covering (among other things) collection of fees, role of the state and private sector, prevention of negative impacts. This has been presented to the SSPA and staff of the state's protected areas. Recommendations for improvements of current regulations and practice related to tourism services in protected areas of Lithuania were discussed at a round table meeting in January 2010, in part based on this study, but as yet, the recommendations of the study have not been adopted and a model for tourism services in protected areas in Lithuania is still under discussion by the government.

188. The target for this indicator – '*Plan for replication of lessons to other PA in Lithuania developed and agreed*' – presumably refers to the study mentioned above, although it is not clear in the Project Document.

189. Overall achievement of the Project Objective(s) is rated as **Satisfactory**.

4.2 Achievements of Outcomes

190. Below is a summary table and ratings of the achievement of the Project's Outcomes (Table 5). More detail on each is given in annex 9. However, there are also a number of issues that are relevant to several Outcomes or require separate discussion, and these are discussed below.

[37] The PIT commented that '*The land acquisition mechanism for nature conservation was introduced through Government Order of 25th June 2003 No 841 'Purchasing or leasing of land, constructions ant other property' (Žemės, esamų pastatų ar kitų nekilnojamųjų daiktų pirkimų arba nuomos ar teisių į šiuos daiktus įsigijimų tvarkos aprašą), which was amended on 23th June 2006 (OJ 2006, No 72-2710). The first plot of land (22 ha) was bought from private owners by SSPA in Alioniai State Nature Reserve (Eastern part of Lithuania) 20/12/2006. The Project uses the same legislation when buying land in Zuvintas'.*

Table 5: Summary of achievement of Project Objectives and Outcomes

Objective	Indicator	Target Level	Status of Delivery*	Rating **	Comments
1. Sustainable management of wetland biodiversity on five important sites	1. Evaluation of threats reduction at each site, including disturbance by trespassing, continued overgrowth of woody vegetation, on-going drainage, nutrient loading, etc.	Management plans under implementation		**HS**	All five management plans under implementation, although that for Girutiskis is being revised
		980 ha of selected bogs, fens, and meadows restored		**HS**	1931ha under restoration activities, more than double the original target
	2. Evaluation of (i) rate of utilization of restored habitats and wetlands by targeted species and (ii) restoration of wetland-friendly hydraulic regimes	Fish bypasses installed		**HS**	Two fish ladders completed at Viesvile in 'model' exercise of how to address recreation-conservation conflicts. Considered good practice model
		Capercaillie reintroduction program under implementation in Viesvile		**S**	Strictly speaking the target has been achieved as the programme is under implementation, but it will take at least 10 years before the full 'reintroduction program' can be judged as successful, i.e. when a stable breeding population of Capercaillies has been established at Viesvile, although the captive breeding element of programme has begun and had a successful first year (2010).
		Closing 20 km of ditches in Kamanos		**HS**	18.5km of ditches dammed; 20km was an overestimate of what was required so target achieved
		First priority measures implemented in the Dovine River basin		**HS**	Under implementation, funded through joint EU LIFE+ project
	3. At least five additional sites identified for replication of lessons learned and schedule of replication of best practices formally agreed	At least five additional sites identified for replication of lessons learned		**S**	Replication of 'lessons learned' will take place after 'lesson learning' has been conducted by the Project, which should happen by the end of 2010.
	4. Horizontal fund for wetlands management in agricultural areas has been secured (% of farms adopting environmentally friendly agricultural practices)	10% farms near by Zuvintas have adopted environmentally friendly agricultural practices and have contracts with National Paying Agency		**MS**	Confusion over data presented. The PIR for 2010 states '*3 % of farmlands are managed according to eco-farming requirements in the project target - Simnas ward. 19 crop and livestock farms on 500 ha adopted eco-farming in surroundings of Zuvintas so far*' but not clear if % farmlands is the same as % farms. If the same then target has not been met.
	5. State Forestry Company and private forestry companies have assessed options for certification and at least 3 pilot schemes for certifying forests near wetlands are underway.	National legislation adopted, 3 schemes for certifying forests near wetlands is underway		**Not relevant**	All State Forest Enterprises (SFE) in Lithuania were certified according FSC standards in 2004 so target no longer relevant when Project started.
	6. Models for land purchase or decommissioning are being replicated in Lithuania	Land acquisition for Nature conservation mechanism introduced into national legislation		**MS**	A study 'Kompensavimas už žemę saugomose teritorijose' has been produced and apparently national legislation has been passed and but it is not clear what this is (name, title, date?)
	7. Tourism action plans and user fees are being developed in at least three	Plan for replication of lessons to other PA in Lithuania developed and agreed		**MS**	A report of potential visitor services and how they could be organized for the all protected areas in Lithuania was developed and has been provided by the

	other wetland protected areas in Lithuania				protected areas directorates has been carried but 'tourism action plans' have not been developed for any of the Project sites and user fee systems have not been developed by the Project, although if the report is adopted by government then likely to have replication.
Outcome	**Indicator**	**Target Level**	**Status of Delivery***	**Rating ** ***	**Comments**
1. Wetland biodiversity protected in Cepkeliai Strict Nature Reserve	8. Management plan developed and under implementation. Management effectiveness scoring (METT scores)	Management plan under implementation		**HS**	Management Plan under implementation
		METT - 60.7		**HS**	Final METT score – 70.2 so overall increase in score and above target
	9. System of tradable permits for cranberry picking in place	System of tradable permits in place		**U**	System not developed. Idea didn't have local ownership.
	10. Cutting of vegetation in bogs, meadows and open sands	230 ha of selected bogs, meadows and open sand areas restored		**S**	Only 96.3 ha 'restored' but initial target was not realistic
	11. Statistically significant positive changes in awareness and public support: 1) Relationship with PA, 2) Willingness to support PA	1) Positive - 45%, negative - 20%, no relationship - 30%.		**MU**	Positive - 33.3 %; negative - 7.5 %; no relationship - 56.2 %, so lower than target. Also figures are confusing as they do not add up to 100%
		2) Yes/rather yes - 70%, no/rather no 30%		**MU**	Yes/rather yes - 61.7 % No/rather - 37.8 %, so lower than target
2. Wetland biodiversity protected in Kamanos Strict Nature Reserve	12. Management plan developed and under implementation. Management effectiveness scoring (METT scores)	Management plan under implementation		**HS**	Management Plan under implementation
		METT - 65.9		**HS**	Final METT score – 74.3 so overall increase in score and above target
	13. Area taken out of agriculture /forestry or reconverted to enable restoration of hydrological regime of the raised bog, closing selected ditches inside and outside the reserve	300-800 ha transformed from agriculture and forestry activity into nature protection		**HS**	1218 ha of land transformed
		Closing 20 km of ditches		**HS**	18.5km of ditches dammed; 20km was an overestimate of what was required so target achieved
	14. Cutting of vegetation in bogs, meadows	80 ha of selected bogs and meadows restored		**S**	65ha achieved but the initial target was not realistic and was not based on scientific evidence. However the key areas of raised bog and meadows are being targeted for restoration and area likely to increase substantially in next 2-3 years.
	15. Statistically significant positive changes in awareness and public support: 1) Relationship with PA, 2) Willingness to support PA	1) Positive - 54%, negative - 7%, no relationship - 39%.		**MS**	Positive - 29 %; negative - 11 %; no relationship - 59.5 %, so lower than target
		2) Yes/rather yes - 55%, no/rather no 45%		**MS**	Yes/rather yes - 33 %; no/rather no 66.5 %, so lower than target
3. Wetland biodiversity protected in Viesvile	16. Management plan developed and under implementation. Management effectiveness scoring (METT scores)	Management plan under implementation		**HS**	Management plan under implementation
		METT - 67.9		**HS**	Final METT score – 68.2 so overall increase in score and above target

Strict Nature Reserve	17. Program for biodiversity friendly forestry use around the reserve	Biodiversity friendly Forest Management plan under implementation		**HS**	Biodiversity friendly Forest Management plan prepared, approved by the MoE and under implementation. Activity completed.
	18. Restoration activities carried out in bogs, fens, and meadows	10 ha of selected bogs, fens, and meadows restored		**HS**	Total of 67.5 ha restored.
	19. Establishing a pilot cranberry farm in Laukesa peat-land	Pilot cranberry farm producing yield		**HU**	Not established.
	20. Investments in anti-pollution infrastructure undertaken	Sewage treatment plant		**MU**	Not funded directly by the Project. Reconstruction of sewage treatment plant ito be funded through 2007-2013 European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument Cross-Border Cooperation Programme
	21. Fish bypasses installed in two dams in the Viesvile river	Fish bypasses installed		**HS**	Two fish ladders completed in 'model' exercise of how to address recreation-conservation conflicts
	22. Evaluation of pilot program for reintroduction of Capercaillies	Reintroduction program under implementation		**S**	Strictly speaking the target has been achieved as the programme is under implementation, but it will take at least 10 years before the full 'reintroduction program' can be judged as successful, i.e. when a stable breeding population of Capercaillies has been established at Viesvile, although the captive breeding element of programme has begun and had a successful first year (2010).
	23. Statistically significant positive changes in awareness and public support: 1) Relationship with PA, 2) Willingness to support PA	1) Positive - 45%, negative - 12%, no relationship - 43%.		**MS**	Positive - 19 %; negative - 16.5 %; no relationship - 63.5 %, so lower than target
		2) Yes/rather yes - 58%, no/rather no 42%		**MS**	Yes/rather yes - 44 %; no/rather no 58.6 %, so lower than target
4. Wetland biodiversity protected in Zuvintas Biosphere Reserve	24. Management plan developed and under implementation Management effectiveness scoring (METT scores)	Management plan under implementation		**HS**	Management plan under implementation
		METT - 51.4		**HS**	Final METT score – 69.2 so overall increase in score and above target
	25. Documentation establishing the Biosphere Reserve approved	Site inscribed into UNESCO MAB network		**S**	Documentation with UNESCO (advisory committee meeting by the MAB ICC Bureau) and awaiting final decision, which is expected to be positive
	26. Farms have adopted environmentally friendly agricultural practices	10% of farms		**MS**	Confusion over data presented. The PIR for 2010 states '*3 % of farmlands are managed according to eco-farming requirements in the project target - Simnas ward. 19 crop and livestock farms on 500 ha adopted eco-farming in surroundings of Zuvintas so far*' but not clear if % farmlands is the same as % farms. If the same then target has not been met.
	27. Implementation of first priority measures of water management plan in Zuvintas	First priority measures implemented		**HS**	Being executed through joint project under EU LIFE+ funding for dam construction and restoration of water level of southern part of Amalva peatland
	28. Investments in water and air pollution undertaken	Reconstruction of Simnas town sewage treatment plant and expansion of sewerage, establishment of sedimentation pond in Simnas fish ponds		**S**	Reconstruction of sewage treatment plant and expanding of sewerage in Simnas are under construction but GEF Project not the main funder
	29. Overgrowth of critical meadow, fen, and bog habitats halted	600 ha of selected bogs, fens, and meadows restored		**S**	Only 314 ha restored but initial target was not realistic and was not based on scientific evidence. However the key areas of raised bog, fen and meadows

					are being targeted for restoration.
	30. Statistically significant positive changes in awareness and public support: 1) Relationship with PA, 2) Willingness to support PA	1) Positive - 47%, negative - 10%, no relationship - 43%.		**MS**	Positive - 21.9 %; negative - 9.5 %; no relationship - 65.2 %, so lower than target
		2) Yes/rather yes - 45%, no/rather no 55%		**MS**	Yes/rather yes - 38.4 %; no/rather no 57.7 %, so lower than target
5. Wetland biodiversity protected in Girutiskis Strict Nature Reserve	31. Management plan developed and under implementation. Management effectiveness scoring (METT scores)	Management plan under implementation		**HS**	Management plan under implementation
		METT - 59.6		**HS**	Final METT score – 62.0 so overall increase in score and above target
	32. Decrease of trespassing	Building of road-blocks, barriers on the entrance roads to the reserve, elimination illegal trespassing by car		**S**	Access blocked but signage not maintained
	33. Users fee approved and in operation	User fee system for tourist in place and operating		**U**	Not established, but not considered realistic in first place
	34. Overgrow of critical meadow, fen, and bog habitats halted	60 ha of selected bogs, meadows and fens restored		**HS**	301.6 ha of habitats restored
	35. Statistically significant positive changes in awareness and public support: 1) Relationship with PA, 2) Willingness to support PA	1) Positive - 45%, negative - 15%, no relationship - 40%.		**MS**	Positive - 17.2 %; negative - 16.2 %; no relationship - 63.1 %, so lower than target
		2) Yes/rather yes - 65%, no/rather no 35%		**MS**	Yes/rather yes - 40.9 %, no/rather no 58.6 %, so lower than target
6. Formal intersectoral mechanism for replication of best lessons learned in conservation of inland wetland biodiversity established and operational	36. A plan for replication of best lessons developed and an executing unit formally established	Lessons codified - instruments and guidelines from experiences in the five pilot sites		**MU**	Lessons learned were not documented during
		Multisectoral Working Group established		**S**	National Ramsar Convention Committee established to act as the Multisectoral Working Group, although long delays over solution to MWWG.
	37. Plan for replication of best lessons approved by the institutions participating in the multisectoral working group	Ministerial orders by participating institutions		**MS**	National Peatlands Strategy under development but taking place very late in implementation, and, to date, weak involvement of stakeholders
	38. Draft sectoral policies and legislation prepared and submitted	Produce draft legislation on policy reforms in nature conservation, agriculture, forestry, tourism		**HS**	10 legal acts were supported by the Project

* Status of delivery: Green = indicators show successful achievement; Yellow = indicators show expected completion by end of Project; Red = unsatisfactory. ** HS = Highly satisfactory; S = Satisfactory; MS = Marginally satisfactory; MU= Marginally unsatisfactory; U = Unsatisfactory; HU = Highly unsatisfactory.

4.2.1 Management plans and METT scores

i. Management Plans

191. Under the current Lithuanian legislation, only activities identified in an officially approved management plan can be carried out at protected area (without such a plan there can be no activities). At the start of the PDF-B stage no management plans existed for any of the five target SNRs, so these were proposed as a key activity to be developed by the Project. The first to be developed was the Cepkeliai SNR management plan and indeed work began on this plan began after the PDF-B but before full project implementation. It was developed largely in 2004 by a consortium of several groups (DanWater&Environment, BirdLife International, NHF and the Cepkeliai SNR Directorate), and largely financed through with PHARE funds, with the GEF Project providing a contribution (mostly in terms of technical support). It was approved by the Minister of Environment in October 2005.

192. The plan has brief (5-6 page) narrative section describing the current status of biodiversity at the site, socio-economic situation, analysis of threats and trends and impacting factors. It also has a detailed action plan with priority actions, deadlines and indicators, and gives a list of who is responsible for implementation activities. It also has a zoning plan showing where different activities should take place and a brief list of management measures and regulations covering activities that can take place in the buffer zone.

193. The plan for Cepkeliai served as a model for developing the management plans for the other SNRs targeted by the Project (Kamanos, Viesvile, Zuvintas and Girutiskis). However, the plans for the other four sites viewed by the FET are much less detailed and lack a concrete action plan to implement priority activities with targets, indicators, time frame or a budget allocation. The Ministerial Order (the document which approves a management plan and makes it a legally binding document) for the other fours sites indicates that priority activities are to be selected by the individual SNR directorates taking into consideration their financial position. This is considered poor practice because it undermines the purpose of the management plan (which is an agreed set of activities to be carried out which will further biodiversity conservation (and other) aims), and without an agreed set of activities to be carried out within a specified timeframe with indicators, milestones, and a ring-fenced budget to implement these activities, it is difficult to monitor the impact of management activities. In addition, there is a danger that the state institutions will not allocate a sufficient amount of funding for implementation of nature management measures as they are not legally bound to fund individual activities as they are not identified in these other management plans, allowing the possibility that critical activities in the plan will not be carried out (under the justification there are insufficient funds).

194. The MTE report stressed that the Project should demonstrate more strategic, objective-oriented action planning and select one or possibly two protected area systems to demonstrate wetlands conservation planning that is integrated to include wider landscapes with a variety of management regimes, i.e., state forest lands, strictly protected areas, and national/regional parks. This appears to be in place at some sites. At Zuvintas, for instance, as a 'biosphere reserve' under Lithuanian legislation (and awaiting Biosphere Reserve status under UNESCO), landscape planning/integrated ecosystem management approach to development at the site include investments in water pollution control and solid waste management, the introduction of environmentally friendly agricultural practices overall and in specific strategically important areas, the development of a water management plan at the basin level, the restoration of the original water circulation pattern inside the biosphere reserve, changes in forest practices, selected habitat restoration actions and public awareness activities in the buffer zone. In addition, the Zuvintas BR is included with the watershed management plan for the Dovine River Basin developed through the Project. There are also possibilities for landscape-orientated planning through the development of the new management plan for the Labanoras Regional Park/ Aukstaitija National Park complex, which includes the Girutiskis SNR. In addition, the Dzukija National Park and Cepkeliai SNR administration have begun an application for PAN Parks status which requires the development of a sustainable tourism strategy for the region that aims to provide real economic benefits to rural communities in and around the protected area, at the same time reducing pressure caused by tourism on the protected area itself.

ii. METT scores

195. In order to get an indication of the effectiveness of management at the site, a GEF Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool (METT)[38] form was completed three times for each of the five Project sites - once during the visit of the RTA in spring 2007 (but using data from the start of project implementation, so baseline was reconstructed for 2004), again just before the MTE in late 2007, and finally just before the FE in October 2010. The overall scores have increased for all sites, although, like most other GEF protected area projects, much less between the mid-term and final evaluation than between the start of project implementation and the mid-term. A breakdown of individual scores is given in Annex 10.

196. Despite the UNDP-GEF RTA spending significant time during her visit in 2007 explaining how to fill in the METT forms, some of the SNR staff who had responsibility for completing the forms apparently continued to have difficulty and needed further clarification from the PM. The FET spent some time with the PM after the field visit to each SNR reviewing and discussing the last (2010) set of METT scores, checking whether they had been filled in accurately. In the case of one SNR, it appeared that the Director had given artificially higher scores to some questions, possibly to ensure his site came out with a much higher score compared with other sites or over the 2004 baseline, and that he had overseen a significant improvement in management at the site.

197. UNDP-GEF needs to be aware that since the usual GEF target for the METT score indicator is 'increase in METT scores over baseline' (usually without any indication of how much of an increase should be achieved) and since directors of protected areas are unlikely to mark their site down (it would reflect badly on them and their promotion prospects) the completion of the METT score sheets should be done by independent observers rather than protected area staff. It is recommended that UNDP-GEF review the experiences of UNDP-GEF project staff on completing the METT forms to determine whether additional written guidance is needed to help those charged with filing them in (in the International Consultant's experience many project teams have difficulties filling in the forms). Although guidance is given at the beginning of the METT forms, it is clearly not enough.

Recommendations/tasks	*Responsibility*	*Time frame*	*Deliverables/evidence*
1. Undertake analysis of the difficulties and biases in the completion of the METT over the UNDP-GEF project portfolio and recommend guidance or changes to facilitate filling in the forms and	UNDP-GEF, GEF	By mid 2011	Updated guidance note on how to complete the METT forms

4.2.2 Contribution to conservation of globally important biodiversity

198. The only indicators in the (revised) project logframe that measure the impact of Project activities on biodiversity at the five sites are those that relate to the area of general wetland habitats (raised bogs, fens, meadows and open sandy areas) 'restored' through the Project, which is achieved through either removal of bushy vegetation from boggy areas or raising the water table through damming, e.g. indicators 13 ('*Area taken out of agriculture /forestry or reconverted to enable restoration of hydrological regime of the raised bog*') and 14 ('*Cutting of vegetation in bogs, meadows'*). No information is presented on the impact of Project measures on individual species, or more specific wetland habitat types, including those of international importance. Indeed, none of the globally threatened species listed in the Project Document have been monitored directly by the Project. Also, the quality of the key wetland habitats following 'restoration' is not presented in Project reports, e.g. whether the area of *Sphagnum* moss habitat, an indicator for saturated soils and high water table, has increased. Consequently it is difficult to assess the Project's contribution to the conservation of globally important biodiversity (the reason for GEF funding). However, data on some species are available from other sources e.g. SNR or EPA monitoring programmes. For instance, the MTE report notes that '*Kamanos (SNR) has relatively good golden plover (Pluvialis apricaria) data starting from 1979 and historical data to 1960. Since the bogs are being cleared to provide nesting habitat for plovers, increased nesting pairs would likely make for a good "indicator" of the effectiveness of project*

[38] Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool (METT) is a rapid assessment, based on the World Commission of Protected Areas assessment framework. It is based on a scorecard questionnaire and has been adopted by GEF since as a simple impact-monitoring indicator. The scorecard includes all six elements of management identified in the IUCN-WCPA Framework (context, planning, inputs, process, outputs and outcomes), but has an emphasis on context, planning, inputs and processes. It is basic and simple to use, and provides a mechanism for monitoring progress towards more effective management over time. It is used to enable park managers and donors to identify needs, constraints and priority actions to improve the effectiveness of protected area management.

activity. Kamanos also monitors dozens of trees and water quantity and quality at over one hundred locations every ten days to assess the impacts of the restoration dams'. It is therefore recommended that the Project collates data from existing sources and present a detailed analysis of changes in the globally important biodiversity in the areas where Project activities have been undertaken and this presented in the Project's Final Report and PIR for 2011.

Recommendations/tasks	*Responsibility*	*Time frame*	*Deliverables/evidence*
1. Undertake analysis of the Project's contribution to the conservation of globally important biodiversity	PIT, SNRs, EPA, SSPA	By April 2011 (Final Report) and June 2011 (PIR)	Specific section on impact of Project on internationally important biodiversity at the five sites in Final Report and 2011 PIR

4.2.3 Project's contribution to capacity building

199. Capacity development has been an integrated and significant component of this Project, with activities targeted not only at the PIT staff but also stakeholders at both the national and local level[39]. As well as organizing or participating in 25 national training workshops, the Project has either funded directly, provided some co-financing, or leveraged additional resources, for a very large number of people to attend international courses and study tours, including courses in The Netherlands, Estonia, Sweden, the UK, Germany, Poland, Finland, Norway, Italy and Latvia, (see Annex 11). Participants in these courses included members of the Project and NHF staff, staff from the SSPA and other national government agencies, and especially staff from the five SNRs. Staff from municipalities around the SNRs received less targeted capacity building, e.g. only a few staff from Alytus and Marijampole municipalities attended international courses apart from a Teacher's workshop in Tervete Nature Park in Latvia, and at Åkersetra in Norway, where a number of local teachers attended, but the focus of the Project's capacity building was intended to be mostly at the SNR level.

200. Although changes in capacity was not measured directly by the Project, feedback from workshops was usually very positive and many interviewees commented that these international trips were particularly valuable and increased their interest in their work (and there was a high demand for more from interviewees). However, there was no obligation for those who received training to train colleagues[40] - no 'train the trainer' approach, and there have been cases where someone who the Project had invested a considerable amount of money in training left her position without passing on the knowledge and experience gained from the course and as a result valuable capacity has been lost and not replaced, e.g. education specialist at the Kamanos SNR who attended a week long course on 'Rethinking Education for Sustainable Development in a Changing World' in the UK.

201. Some interviewees also commented that they valued not only training courses provided through the Project but also gained experience of project management by being involved with the Project and had learnt from the PIT staff (through informal mentoring) when developing projects of their own (often on developing and writing proposals) and felt their fund-raising capacity had been increased and were now much more likely to be successful with funding applications (in this sense, the PIT has provided a very valuable service to other organizations and for future funding of wetland conservation projects in Lithuania). Interviewees also mentioned that the Project had generated important new knowledge and approaches to peatlands and biodiversity management from which they would benefit.

202. The Project's capacity building efforts were also complimented by another project running between 2004-2007 – the 'Skills Development of the Protected Areas' Staff' (Project No 2004/016-925-03 02) – in which the Nature Heritage Fund was also involved, and a capacity needs assessment was carried out for this project the results of which fed into selection of capacity building activities by the GEF Project.

203. In addition to capacity development activities for national stakeholders, a study visit to Lithuania was organsied

[39] However, although the STAP reviewer recommended that 'a training needs assessment should be considered, to provide the basis for a strategic approach to capacity building, rather than providing this on an *ad hoc* basis' this does not seem to have been done by the Project.

[40] According to interviewees, government staff can only be called on to pass on their training in the first year after training (and it is not compulsory), and when a member of staff leaves a SNR they need give only 2 weeks notice, so there is little opportunity to transfer knowledge and experience.

for Belarusian peatland experts to learn what the GEF Project was doing, focused on Cepkeliai.

4.2.4 Development of National Peatlands Strategy (Outcome 6)

204. It is not clear what from the Project Document how to achieve 'replication of best lessons learned in conservation of inland wetland biodiversity' most effectively. Following discussions between the PIT and members of the PSC after the MTE, it was decided that the best approach would be through the development of a 'National Strategy for the Sustainable Use of Mires and Peatlands' (referred to as the National Peatland Strategy or NPS). It was proposed that the PIT would oversee the development of a draft strategy, which would include an economic cost-benefit analysis of the use of Lithuania's peatlands, and development of a national model for sustainable use of leased bogs, for peat exploitation, conservation and development benefits for local communities[41]. The NRC (and the GEF Project's PSC) approved Terms of Reference for contracts to develop these documents, which were awarded to two consultancy firms in early 2010.

205. The ToRs for both the economic study of peatlands and development of the draft Strategy (ToRs for consultants reviewed by FET) do not require a specific stakeholder analysis to identify who the key organizations, groups, companies or individuals are at national or local level in relation to the use of peatlands[42]. This is considered an omission that needs to be corrected. In addition, to date, stakeholder involvement has only involved the NRC and PSC in initial discussions on the contents of the NPS (they are not involved in gathering data, discussing the analysis or developing the draft text), and the PIT and the two consultancy firms, and the FET has general concerns over the level of stakeholder involvement in development of the NPS. Key stakeholders interviewed by the FET, e.g. the Lithuanian Peat Producers Association and the NGO community knew very little about the exercise (they knew the NPS was being developed but nothing more). At present, then it seems the Project is essentially driving development of the NPS. Whilst it is proposed that the draft NPS will be shared with key stakeholders whose feedback will be incorporated into the final draft prior to submission to the MoE for adoption, the FET feels that it is important that key stakeholder groups are identified as soon as possible, invited to a group meeting to discuss development of the NPS, including its content and recommendations as soon as possible. If this is not done the FET feels that 'ownership' of the NPS will be very limited, its adoption more difficult and implementation less effective.

206. According to the ToRs seen by the FET, the draft Strategy will include action plan with sets of activities. However, it is also important to include clear targets and milestones for these activities with responsibilities for their implementation clearly identified (which need to be fully agreed by the stakeholders/partners), programmes/activities need to be costed and a budget developed and provisional sources of funding need to be identified (e.g. EU Structural Funds from MoE budget, State Lands Degradation Programme). Consequently, the ToRs may need to be extended.

207. It was also clear from interviews with various ministry officials that a government agency needs to 'adopt' the draft plan once complete (as stated above, at present 'ownership' rests with the Project and not the ministries), promote it widely in government and guide it through the process of legal adoption. However, there does not seem to be a clear, agreed, documented pathway for the transfer of the draft NPS from the Project to the government. The National Ramsar Committee, which was established to take the role of the Multisector Wetlands Working Group, proposed in the Project Document[43], cannot do this as it is only an advisory body - it can make recommendations to the relevant Minister(s) on the content of the NPS but it cannot adopt the NPS on behalf of the GoL. In addition, there was a consensus among interviewees that the NPS needs to be adopted by both the MoE and MoA if it stands any chance of being implemented, as these two ministries are the main players in relation to management of wetlands in Lithuania. Interviews with ministry staff suggested that the adoption process is likely to take 12-15 months after the draft has been developed, and it was clear that the development of the NPS will not be complete

[41] The NPS will also include relevant Project experiences gained at the five SNR over the last five years, although, as mentioned above, at the FE stage a specific project 'lesson learning' exercise to 'codify' the experiences of the Project was only just beginning.

[42] The only mention is 'Overview of responsible institutions (an overview of the institutions related to wetlands and peatlands protection, recovery and restoration, group them according to their role in policy formulation and implementation of control', but 'responsible institutions' but this relates to government bodies, and does not include the business sector, NGOs and civil society organisations or the general public as stakeholders (which they are, since they also either use wetlands e.g. cranberry picking or have conservation or business interests).

[43] According to the Project Document, it was originally intended that the PSC would delegate their relevant members to the 'Multisectoral Wetland Working Group', when the Project's "lessons institutionalization" process started. The NRC membership comprises many of the members of the PSC and it will provide 'expert opinion' to the MoE on the draft NPS.

before the end of 2010, when the Project is due to officially close (revised date following the MTE). It is suggested that both the Project's PSC and National Ramsar Committee are convened to discuss options for which government body would take responsibility and ownership of the draft NPS and that its members are co-opted to promote and advocate for the NPS at senior government level. The UNDP CO could also facilitate adoption of the NPS through advocacy at senior government level.

208. There is also a question on whether as a 'strategy' it will require a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) under current regulations, and if so who would pay for this (it would need to be undertaken by an independent consultant and is likely to be expensive). There are also issues relating to how to fund implementation of the NPS and it is important that potential funding sources are identified in the draft NPS (there may be possibilities of funds from EU Structural Funds available through MoE and MoA), as without clearly identified funding there is no chance of it being implemented. Consequently, the delivery of the NPS and its implementation and so mainstreaming of wetland conservation at a wide national level are still not assured, and the FET feels that unless the above issues are addressed the draft NPS is likely to be ignored.

209. As the MTE pointed out '*As a result of project success and changes related to Lithuania's rapid "development" the need to secure strictly protected areas is not as important to long-term wetlands conservation as creating a change in the ways productive lands outside of protected areas are managed. This applies to compatible management of state and private forests, agricultural lands, municipal areas, and tourism areas*.' In the FET's view then, probably the most important long-term impact of the Project will come through the NPS, which is why special attention needs to be paid to ensure it has wide ownership, is adopted by both the MoE and MoA and funding for its implementation is identified and secured during the 'adoption' process, and the NPS will need to be 'branded and marketed' successfully.

Recommendations/tasks	***Responsibility***	***Time frame***	***Deliverables/evidence***
1. Undertake separate stakeholder analysis as part of development of draft NPS, which should be included in the draft document	PIT, consultancy company	Start immediately	Section on stakeholders included in draft NPS
2. Ensure all key stakeholders are involved in developing NPS from an early stage	PIT	Start immediately	Regular written briefings to stakeholders on development of draft NPS
3. Determine whether the draft NPS will need an SEA (legal situation is unclear), and if so identify sources of funds to carry this out	MoE, PIT	Immediately	Written statement from MoE explaining position on need for an SEA
4. Identify appropriate government body to take responsibility and ownership of the draft NPS to ensure it becomes legally adopted and implemented and develop 'protocol' that sets out who will be responsible for ensuring draft NPS is adopted	PSC, NRC, MoE	By end Jan 2011	Minutes of meetings, written 'protocol' documenting procedure for adoption of the draft NPS
5. Ensure clear targets and milestones are set for proposed activities in the action plan, with responsibilities for their implementation clearly identified, programmes/activities costed and a budget developed and provisional sources of funding need to be identified through revised consultant ToRs	Consultants, NRC, PSC, PIT, MoE	By end 2011	Revised consultant ToRs and proposed additional issues covered in consultant's report and draft NPS
6. Raise awareness and profile of NPS among senior government level (not just within MoE) and other key decision-makers through targeted advocacy and promotion programme (branding and marketing of the NPS)	PIT, NRC, PSC	By end 2011	Minutes of meetings, document setting out strategy to promote the NPS to key stakeholders and decision-makers

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4.2.5 Education issues and interpretation at the sites

210. The Project has funded (wholly or in part) information displays and other interpretative materials at the five SNRs. During the FET's visits to these sites it was noticed that many of the displays were rather simple, usually presenting little more than a picture of the animal or plant to aid identification but little about it's life habits or information to help 'interpret' what visitors would see directly in front of the display. At Zuvintas, for instance, there are displays along the boardwalk to the observation tower, which show just a picture of birds species occurring in the Reserve, but no information about them, or any information about the plants and trees occurring right next to the walkway. It is therefore recommended that displays at the SNRs should be upgraded to more informative 'interpretational' displays when they next need replacing.

211. It should be noted that there are some much better interpretative and more educational displays at the Viesvile SNR, especially at the end of the broadwalk that stretches into the bog, which describe the history of the bog formation and present cut sections of two pines, one of which had grown on the bog and had very small growth rings (suggesting very slow growth) and the other from another part of the reserve which had much thicker growth rings (suggesting much healthier growth) and demonstrating in a simple way how wet bogs are not an ideal environment for pine trees.

212. On a related issue, the Project funded a significant number of signs to demarcate Reserve boundaries, interpretative materials at the reserves, and nature trails. FET visits found that in some places these were damaged and in need of repair or replacement such as interpretation signs at Zuvintas facing the summer sun which were almost bleached white, and in some cases nature trails were constructed badly (using long smooth planks that presented a hazard in wet or icy conditions) such as the nature trail at the Kamanos SNR. The costs of replacement or repair should be met form the SSPA budget.

Recommendations/tasks	*Responsibility*	*Time frame*	*Deliverables/evidence*
1. Upgrade information displays to more informative 'interpretational' displays rather than simple species identification displays	SSPA, SNRs, PIT, education consultants	At next replacement of displays	More informative interpretation displays

4.2.6 Change in attitudes and behaviours towards wetlands

213. To gain a more general picture of changes in awareness and attitudes towards wetlands and protected areas during the lifetime of the Project, the PIT commissioned an independent market research company (JSC 'Sprinter tyrimai') to carry out a study on the awareness of the public around the five reserves in 2005, 2007 and 2009. Around 1,000 people living around the reserves were interviewed (200 at each site) using a questionnaire jointly designed by the PIT and themselves, and a high proportion of the same people completed the questionnaires each time as the communities surrounding the SNRs are quite small and generally sedentary. Changes in the scores from the awareness surveys were incorporated as an indicator at each of the Project's sites in the revised logframe early in implementation. The indicator is '*Statistically significant positive changes in awareness and public support: 1) Relationship with PA, 2) Willingness to support PA*', and for each site there is a specific different set of targets that must be reached e.g. for Cepkeliai it is 1) - positive - 45%, negative - 20%, no relationship - 30%; and for 2) Yes/rather yes - 70%, no/rather no 30%.

214. Results show an increase in scores between 2005 and 2007 but then a fall in the 2009 scores. However, it is not clear whether these are 'statistically' different (statistical testing is clearly required by the indicator) and so whether the changes are meaningful. When interviewed by the FE, JSC revealed that reduced scores were seen in many of its surveys in 2009 across Lithuania, which they believed was due to general negative public views on the economy and personal wealth (interviewees were asked about their willingness to pay toward the reserves), and stated that the lower scores for Project in 2009 should not be interpreted as a sign that attitudes towards the environment had turned negative and wetlands could be threatened as a result (although the results do suggest that the survey methodology employed is highly sensitive to outside influences and change in attitudes towards local wetlands may be small compared to the impact of other factors that affect public opinion). There was no English summary of the study report, which is disappointing as there is likely to be interest in the methodology and results among UNDP-GEF projects in the region, and this should be rectified. Also, only two questions from the questionnaire were chosen for incorporation into the logframe, 'Statistical noise' would have been lower if an overall score complied from all the

questions had been used instead and it is suggested that such figures are calculated and the relevant analysis presented in the Project's Final Report.

215. The FET found some indirect evidence that there have been some significant changes in the views, attitudes and behaviours among some local communities living around the five reserves, the most striking example being the growth in the number of local people interested in volunteering to help with nature management activities at the Kamanos SNR (something which should be encouraged[44]). Other simple examples mentioned by interviewees included one official who said that the "boundary signs are removed less often now", a local community leader who claimed that less people were illegally picking cranberries inside Viesvile SNR after being made aware of their impact, and another that people were phoning the reserve administration if they saw someone entering illegally. The Project has also helped generate local pride in the reserves. For instance, staff at the Varena municipal administration commented that when they have important visitors that they want to impress they take them to their local SNR. It is interesting to note that the initial media reaction at the start of the Project was "why is three million Dollars being put into a bog?"

216. Also, it should be noted that as SNRs now have visitor facilities this has opened up the sites to the public and ('they have allowed physical and psychological access' commented one interviewee) and present new opportunities for people to engage with nature, who are therefore more likely to place greater value on biodiversity in the future.

217. Interviewees also claimed that the Project had helped change the awareness, attitudes and behaviours of SSPA and SNR staff, supporting them with the transition from the former 'exclusive' Soviet management model for Strict Nature Reserves to a new active management approach, through providing them with infrastructure, tools, approaches ad models that demonstrated what could be done.

218. Delivery of Outcomes 1-5 has been very good; Outcome 6 is yet to be delivered, and the overall rating for achievement of Outcomes is ***Satisfactory***.

4.3 Prospects for sustainability

4.3.1 Sustainability in project design

219. The original project design placed high importance on achieving sustainability of Project results, evidenced through the inclusion of a specific Outcome 6 (and originally a specific Objective 2), and the Project Document gives a brief analysis of the likely sustainability of results at each of the five Project sites. However, the focus is on environmental and financial sustainability, and institutional, human, and socio-political sustainability are largely missing, as is a detailed presentation of options and risks for sustainability. Also, many assumptions are made that need to be met for sustainability to be reached. For instance, it was assumed that public information campaigns at each of the five SNRs would change local attitudes and behaviours, increase support and participation of local stakeholders in activities aimed at protecting the reserve (e.g. monitoring) and that these would be self-sustaining.

220. Disappointingly, the Project has not developed a Project Sustainability and Exit Strategy, produced by many UNDP-GEF projects in their last 18 months of implementation (usually includes sections on institutional sustainability, sustainability of specific project outputs and activities, transfer of project assets, project finalisation and public events, with an action plan for implementation of the strategy). The situation over the transfer of the Project's assets (vehicle, computers and GIS, office furniture and equipment, and intellectual property rights) after closure of the Project is also not detailed.

4.3.2 Financial sustainability

[44] Conservation volunteers are very important in some countries in Europe. In the UK, for instance, the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers (BTCV) works with over 600,000 volunteers a year and can provide significant organised labour for nature conservation activities at important wildlife sites. It also offers offers training courses and holidays for volunteers (see http://www2.btcv.org.uk/).

i. Financing for activities at the SNRs

221. FE interviews revealed that wetland management activities initiated by the GEF Project, namely clearance of woody vegetation from wetland areas, will continue to be funded by the GoL and carried out by SNR staff who see such activities as crucial to their work and the integrity of the reserves. Although, unsurprisingly in the wake of the economic and financial crisis, there have been cuts in the budgets to all five of the SNRs (the FE was informed that there has been a roughly 30% cut in state budget for PAs since 2008) and some staff have been lost or reallocated to other tasks, maintenance of infrastructure built through the Project and nature management activities are seen as a core activities by the SSPA and the SNR administrations and the FET was assured that the GoL is committed to continue to fund these[45]. However, if further budget cuts do occur however, which may happen in 2011, then interviewees stated that the most likely areas to be lost will be education and public awareness raising programmes, in part because these are easier to replace through funding from donors and outside sources. There could also possibly be further reductions in levels of enforcement which have already been reduced at most of the Project sites).

222. Specific Project actions were aimed to promote financial sustainability at some of the target SNRs through establishment of a system of user fees scheme at Girutiskis and tradable permits at Cepkeliai, and that these schemes would remain in place after Project termination and contribute to the costs of increased enforcement and regular public awareness campaigns by SNR staff. Unfortunately, as noted above, it was not possible to establish either scheme so these sources of sustainable financing were not created. There is also some question over whether these would have been sustainable anyway. For instance, although the Project Document stated that '*although revenues can vary from expected levels, the system of users fees, once established, is self-sustaining, as it does not require external financial inputs to keep it running*', collection of these fees probably costs more money than it makes in terms of staff time, as fees charged need to be small to attract visitors. As result, the protected areas (and ultimately tax payers) are probably subsidizing visitors.

ii. Building capacity to improve financial sustainability of Project results

223. The Project (NHF) has been able to leverage considerable additional funding from EU sources and other donors and has helped build capacity within project partners, particularly the reserve administrations and municipalities around the reserves on the formulation of project proposals to increase the potential for financial sustainability of Project results. There are considerable opportunities for EU funding for biodiversity conservation, wetland management, education and awareness raising and infrastructure projects and these sources are likely to continue for some more years. In addition, FE interviews strongly suggested that the GoL is keen to continue investment in wetlands conservation and willing to allocate EU funds for this. However, support to build capacity for fund-riasing for follow-up to the Project appears to have been provided on a rather *ad hoc* basis. Instead, it could be offered through a more structured approach, such as workshops with identification of specific sources of funding, or mentoring of key individuals.

224. In terms of financing for pure biodiversity conservation activities as a follow up from the Project, the PIT has helped others raise significant amounts of funding through a wide variety of sources, especially EU sources such as a €801,998 EU LIFE+ project 'Restoring Hydrology in Amalvas and Žuvintas Wetlands' (Wetlands back to Life) and from national governments such as a LTL130 571 grant from Norway for 'Capacity Building through the Preparation of the Nature Guide Training Programme Supporting Nature Tourism Development Within Protected Areas', which is being developed as a partnership between the NHF and the Varena district municipality and Dzukija National Park.

iii. Opportunities related to agri-environment schemes and promotion of alternative agricultural products and nature-based tourism

225. The Project has aimed to take advantage of the EU-funded agri-environment schemes that help to protect the environment and maintain traditional landscapes. However, the current economic conditions in Lithuania, and Europe generally, make the successful development of alternative agricultural products or local varieties difficult and uncertain. Internal markets for any of these ('niche') products and services are still very small, not well promoted, premiums are low or non- existent, and external markets are still depressed. Whilst there are funds

[45] The EU Birds Directive and Habitats Directive very strongly support wetlands conservation and interviews revealed the GoL is keen to meet its responsibilities under these directives, as indicated by their active Natura 2000 programme.

available with Lithuania's 2007-2013 Rural Development Plan for agri-environmental schemes[46], uptake of these schemes has been low, and many people stated to the FET that such payments were simply too low to act as an incentive for farmers to change practice and take on risk.

226. The Project has promoted beef cattle as a conservation management tool for maintaining wetland vegetation around the Zuvintas BR with the appeal that these cattle are a niche market and so would sell for a premium, and also qualify for agri-environmental payments. Unfortunately, the Project did not pay enough attention to analysing markets, identifying barriers to market access, or supporting product development (despite a recommendation by the MTE to '*Investigate improved marketing of beef cattle through high-end restaurants in Vilnius*'). For instance, the Project does to appear to have conducted a consumer awareness campaign to educate consumers in Lithuania why they should buy biodiversity friendly meat products (and it could perhaps have linked the Zuvintas beef with other projects attempting to persuade the big supermarkets chains to establish a 'green corner' as occurs in many other European countries).

227. However, it should be noted that influencing meat markets and consumers was always likely to be a big challenge for the Project and was not seen as a major activity at the project design stage, and in the current financial situation few consumers would probably pay extra for meat whose main perceived added value was that it help protect wetlands (especially as, nationally, few Lithuanians know and understand the values of wetlands even after the Project). In the International Consultant's experience, product and market development would have required an entire set of activities on its own which would probably have been best managed through a consultancy with a food marketing company. Development of some sort of 'certification' or labeling scheme might help to build greater interest in these markets in Lithuania and the Baltic region. Given the lack of time before the Project finishes, the PIT probably does not have time (or the financial resources) to explore further opportunities to market the "Friends of Zuvintas" beef. However, it is recommended that the Project sets up a discussion with the MoA, the Zuvintas BR, municipal authorities round Zuvintas and meat and meat marketing industry to examine options to transfer responsibility for the venture (to the MoA?) and identify ways to better promote the Zuvintas meat and build a market.

228. Another barrier mentioned by interviewees was high start-up costs, mostly purchase of the cattle, which are beyond the poorer farmers, and, as mentioned above, agri-environmental payments are currently not an incentive. Certainly, an interview with one farmer who has some of the beef cattle at Zuvintas, indicated that he is not confident whether the venture will be economically viable (sustainable) and unfortunately won't know for some years. It is therefore not clear yet whether promoting beef cattle farming around key wetland sites will be adopted more widely by farmers and is a 'sustainable' wetland conservation management tool.

Recommendations/tasks	***Responsibility***	***Time frame***	***Deliverables/evidence***
1. Establish discussions with MoA, municipal authorities around Zuvintas and meat and meat marketing industry to create better promotion of the Zuvintas beef, and discuss options for transfer of responsibility for beef venture from the Project	PIT, MoA, Zuvintas BR, local authorities, meat industry	By Jan-2011	Minutes of meetings showing decisions taken

229. In terms of the tourism sector, the Project has helped to promote tourism to the five SNRs through construction of visitor infrastructure, nature trails, and provision of interpretation and educational materials (e.g. documentaries on the sites and 360 degree videos which will soon be available on the SNR websites), which will hopefully help bring in more not just national but international visitors. The 'Study on services provided to protected area visitors by protected areas directorates' which focused on the Labanoras Regional Park/ Aukstaitija National Park complex, is also likely to increase government and private sector investment for nature tourism into the protected area system in Lithuania which will help maintain and build on the education activities and tourism facilities provided by the GEF Project.

[46] The specific objectives of the measure are: 'preserving the landscape, biodiversity and semi-natural habitats' and 'reducing the negative impact of agricultural activities on the environment'. The relevant sub-measure is 'to preserve and to duly maintain natural and semi-natural meadows and wetlands, when necessary, restoring extensive farming systems in them, to reduce the intensity of farming on intensively-used meadows' and activities 2 (management of wetlands), 3 (management of shore protective belts of water bodies in meadows) and 4 (protection of water bodies against pollution and soil erosion on the arable land) are relevant.

4.3.3 Institutional sustainability

i. Mainstreaming of Project results

230. There have been several examples of successful mainstreaming or institutionalization of Project goals and results so far. For instance, the Project provided technical assistance at the MoA's request to include wetlands restoration as part of their Rural Development Programme and biodiversity conservation is now considered in forestry management plans by the SFEs (pioneered by work done by the GEF Project at Viesvile with the local SFE), both of which have strong, long-term institutional identities, which should help ensure sustainability. Other examples include the development, approval and implementation of management plans for five SNR which focus on wetland conservation and set the legal basis for the sustainable use of the reserves, offering opportunities for public access and education and (limited) economic development (mostly nature tourism). The study on opportunities for fee-paying tourism ('Study on services provided to protected area visitors by protected areas directorates')[47], commissioned by the Project, is also relevant. It makes recommendations on (among other things) how nature-based tourism services could be developed in Lithuania's protected area system, including the five SNRs targeted by the Project (although at the time of the FE it was not clear how this would be integrated into national policy or planning for protected areas and there was some difference of opinion among interviewees over the degree to which the private sector should be involved in offering and managing tourism services in protected areas).

231. However, the main area of institutional sustainability the FE feels the Project still needs to address is how to integrate wetlands conservation into national level policy and programmes, especially into non-environment sectors. The Project is attempting to achieve this through the development, adoption and initial implementation of a National Peatlands Strategy (NPS). As pointed out above, there have been delays over starting this activity and the Project will not complete the task before the official end of the Project on 31st December 2010. In addition, as mentioned above, there are difficulties over the ownership and the manner of its development (drafted by an outside consultancy with direction by the PIT) and it is not clear to what extent other stakeholders will participate in the development and approval of the final draft but without wide 'ownership' of the NPS is unlikely to be implemented effectively. Also, importantly, there is still no formal agreement on which institution(s) will take on the role of promoting and adopting the NPS, once the Projects ends as the National Ramsar Commission is only an advisory body and cannot legally 'adopt' the NPS on behalf of the government. Consequently, in the FET's opinion transfer and sustainability of the NPS is still not assured.

ii. Human and stakeholder capacity

232. It should also be noted that while the human capacity within key partner and stakeholder organizations has been significantly increased by the Project, there is still insufficient capacity within at least some of the SNRs to be able to fully use the tools, knowledge and training provided by the Project due to lack of staff (which has been made worse due to recent budget cuts). Furthermore, this capacity will decline in the coming years unless further training and learning opportunities can be offered due to staff moving to other jobs and retirements. Unfortunately, there was no 'train the trainers' approach adopted by the Project, and unless training opportunities continue to be offered to staff over the coming years through being built into key institutional development programmes, loss of human capacity from the SNRs and local authorities built by the Project is likely to occur.

233. The NHF, which was created to be the operational body for the GEF project for the PDF-B and full implementation stages, has become perhaps the leading non-government expert group on wetland conservation in Lithuania over the last 10 years. However, it is still young as an institution and like most young NGOs it is essentially 'project driven' with very little core funding. FE interviews confirmed that the NHF has built a very good reputation among government agencies and the NGO community and can probably be assured of offers of work (or invited to bid) in the near future. However, its core full-time staff currently work from a single tiny office which creates problems. Unfortunately, the NHF does not have enough income to rent larger offices. Although, according to FE interviews, it expects to have income from a variety of projects for the next 18 months, it is not clear what will happen then. At present it successfully competes for both donor funds for its own projects (usually in partnership with other groups, both government agencies and other NGOs) and private sector contracts, but the NHF is

[47] Turizmo pletros institutes (2009). Lietuvos saugomų teritorijų direkcijų teikiamų paslaugų saugomų teritorijų lankytojams studija. Vilnius, Lithuania. 132pp.

something of a chimera – a mixture of NGO and environmental consultancy business. The NHF feels that this 'mixed status' is needed to survive but longer term NHF will need to decide what it wants to be and have their own clear organizational vision and their own agenda to drive them forwards. Although the NHF has an overall vision, it does not have an Institutional Development Strategy and Plan or Business Plan.

234. Project results are being transferred to the SNR and SSPA websites, and the Project website will be incorporated into the NHF website so sustainability should be assured.

4.3.4 Socio-economic sustainability

235. The prospects for social sustainability of the Project's achievements appear relatively good, given the wide range of stakeholders involved and the Project's focus on building and maintaining partnerships. Respect for the PIT staff was also noted to be very high during FET interviews (unusually with no exceptions), which bodes well for delivery of the reminder of the Project and achieving the long-term project aims.

i. Awareness-raising

236. A significant number of interviewees (admittedly a biased sample) claimed that the Project's public awareness and education activities have helped to generate greater interest in the environment and specifically in wetlands and an appreciation of their importance and value, which is helping to generate an informed local constituency for wetlands conservation. This is illustrated by the numbers of members of local communities around the Kamanos SNR volunteering to help with habitat management activities at the Reserve, by increasing annual participation of local people in World Wetlands Day (held at each site on 2 February every year), and by the very positive response of schools targeted by the Project around Zuvintas BR and Kamanos SNR (teachers requesting more information and children keen to do field trips). However, it should be noted that it is of course virtually impossible to say exactly how much of this was due to the Project and how much due to other factors, such as increased attention on environmental issues in the media generally and the influence of the arrival of EU funding for nature conservation (there are now many EU-funded projects in the Lithuania), but many interviewees were clear that the Project has made a difference.

237. The Project's Public Awareness Surveys suggested that awareness initially increased in the early part of the Project but then decreased, but as explained above this is probably a reflection of general attitudes towards life in general and willingness to pay to protect the environment during periods of economic recession is likely to fall as people have less money, and falls in scores are not believed to be due to a negative reaction against Project and its activities.

ii. Integration of educational programmes

238. As mentioned above, the Project has implemented a significant set of education set activities directed at schools, which have been very important (one interviewee mentioned to the FET, that for many children, the Project probably provided their first experience of a wetland). Some of the tools and materials developed by the Project have been integrated into local schools, and there has been a good take-up of lesson plans designed around wetland biodiversity and conservation at Zuvintas and Kamanos SNR by teachers. However, the capacity of staff at the SNRs to carry out educational and public awaressness raising work still needs to be built or sustainability will not be reached.

239. Ownership and operation of the school materials is shared between the SNRs and the local schools (although not yet the education authorities). Lesson plans, developed through the Project, can be tailored to suit specific classes and are available to teachers on the internet through the Zuvintas BR website, but all the technical equipment, instruments, and literature necessary for delivery of the lessons is kept at the Zuvintas visitor centre (nature classroom), along with 20 copies of annexes (main plant and animal guides, water quality evaluation guides, etc) to education programme[48]. The FET has a concern that if government budgets are cut again and education programmes at the reserves reduced then these programmes could be lost or reduced (as technical facilities to provide these classes may not be available and the SNR education staff have less time for such activities as they are reassigned to other activities, such as inspection work). The FET feels that it is disappointing that these school

[48] The PIT commented that the 'PIT will also organize development and distribution of advertising leaflet to teachers of Alytus and Marijampolė counties about availability of materials and Zuvintas BR facilities'.

education programmes were not replicated at Viesvile or Cepkeliai (Girustiskis has no nature trail so is less suitable) as there were sufficient time and project resources[49].

240. The FE recommends that lessons plans/materials from project are also integrated into Municipal 'Education Centres' around Juventus and Kamanos, sent to the relevant Centres around Cepkeliai and Viesvile, and are promoted to national and municipal education authorities. This will help to ensure wider availability and 'ownership' of the GEF results.

Recommendations/tasks	*Responsibility*	*Time frame*	*Deliverables/evidence*
1. Integrate lessons plans/materials from Project into Municipal 'Education Centres' around Juventus and Kamanos, send to the relevant Centres around Cepkeliai and Viesvile and promote to national and municipal education authorities to ensure wider availability and 'ownership' of the GEF Project results.	PIT, Municipal 'Education Centres', Ministry of Education	By Feb-2011	Correspondence showing that lessons and materials have been transferred to other education authorities and Education Centres

4.3.5 Environmental sustainability

i. Ecological integrity of SNRs

241. It can be clearly stated that the Project has significantly strengthened the ecological integrity at each of the five Project wetland sites. The Project's activities directed at habitat restoration activities have led to significant changes in conditions at the sites. Habitat restored through damming of former canals to reduce/ eliminate drainage and raise the water table are likely to be largely self-sustained once the restoration of the original hydraulic regime at the five sites has been accomplished, as the target areas will be much less suitable for woody species and wetland-adapted species will begin to thrive again, and as long as the hydrological regime is maintained so will the wetland communities.

ii. Ecological carrying capacity

242. The Project has sought to promote sustainable use of the target SNRs, principally through management of the collection of wild products (cranberries, mushrooms) and educational, recreational and tourism activities. However, the FET has a concern about the potential negative impact of visitors to these reserves. Whilst the numbers of cranberry pickers and visitors to the nature trails and visitors centres are better controlled, there have still not been any detailed studies of the ecological carrying capacity of these wetland sites (or even Limits of Acceptable Change, and the limits to 'sustainability' defined).

243. There is particular concern over tourism development, which many of the municipalities around the SNRs are seeking to develop. The assumption seems to be that 'nature-tourism' will not damage the local environment, but experience from other parts of the world has shown that it can have a negative impact if too many tourists are concentrated in the same area or forced along the same trails. It is therefore recommended that the tourism section of the National Peatlands Strategy contain a recommendation that assessments of ecological carrying capacity should be undertaken at any sites where such developments are proposed.

244. Overall, the FET evaluates the likely sustainability of the Project as **Satisfactory**, although in part this will depend on the likelihood of the National Peatlands Strategy being developed, adopted and implemented.

4.3.6 Delays over project implementation and the need for short extension to Project

245. There have been some significant delays over the delivery of this Project, due to a variety of reasons, most of which were beyond the control of the Project, including: delays over adoption of the management plans for the SNRs by the MoE that prevented early implementation of Project's nature management, restoration and

[49] The PIT notes that the programme 'was already replicated by another protected area – Kaunas marios (sea) regional park, which is not a project site, what shows interest in and potential of idea'.

infrastructure activities at these sites, and loss of purchasing power of Project funds due to adverse changes in the Dollar-Lita exchange rate combined with significantly increased costs for construction of infrastructure which together forced the PIT to focus on raising additional co-financing. However, the PIT and PSC and project partners were largely responsible for the delay over implementation of Outcome 6 (establishment of the MWWG (role taken on by the National Ramsar Committee), capturing of lessons learned by the Project, and development of the draft NPS) and significant activities only began to take place after the MTE helped clarify approaches (the MTE was also critical of the slow delivery of this Outcome). As a result of these delays the Project has needed a no-cost extension – the first for 12 months to 30th March 2010, then by another 9 months to 31st December 2010.

246. In order to ensure that the final tasks of the Project – a formal lesson learning exercise involving the project stakeholders, development of the NPS with full stakeholder participation and negotiations with the MoE, MoA, NRC and other stakeholders over adoption of the NPS by government, production of a Final Project Report that fully captures the Project's results, and promotion of key Project achievements to key audiences - the FET believes that the Project needs (and merits) an additional 4-month no-cost extension. This would take the end of the Project to 30th April 2011.

247. The FE recommends that the NHS extend the contract of key project personnel using the bulk of the remaining GEF funds and identify a staff member (the FET recommends the Project Assistant) to take responsibility for and lead the production of the Final Report and promotion of Project achievements. It is also recommended that the current Deputy Project Manager continues to oversee the development of the NPS and advocate for its adoption by government.

Recommendations/tasks	*Responsibility*	*Time frame*	*Deliverables/evidence*
1. Agree an additional 4-month no-cost extension to the Project, so official closure will be 30th April 2011, to allow time for production of Final Report, promotion of Project results through a Final Project Meeting, and draft NPS and negotiations on its adoption by government to be concluded	PIT, UNDP, MoE, UNDP-GEF	By end Dec-2010	Correspondence detailing agreement on the extension

5. Summary of Evaluation Findings and project ratings

5.1 Summary of key achievements, impacts and failings

5.1.1. Key achievements and positive impacts of the Project to date

248. The FE considers the key achievements and positive impacts of the Project to date are (in no particular order):

- Management plans for the 5 target sites developed, adopted and under implementation allowing (legal) development of active nature management at the SNRs, e.g. nature trail;
- The Project pioneered practical wetland restoration techniques, e.g. dams at Kamanos to change water table that staff can construct, which demonstrated what can be done, cheaply and quickly and by SNR staff;
- Some particularly impressive and innovative infrastructure developments, notably the fish ladder at Viesvile, which provides a very good example of a 'win-win' solution to a conservation-recreation conflict, and nature trails (although interpretation needs to be improved and there potential public safety concerns);
- SNRs now have visitor facilities which has opened up the sites to the public ("they have allowed physical and psychological access") and new opportunities for people to engage with nature (and are therefore more likely to place greater value on biodiversity);
- Educational opportunities provided by the Project, especially to schools at Zuvintas BR and Kamanos SNR, and growth in interest among local communities around Kamanos SNR that has led to members of the

community volunteering to work on nature management activities at the Reserve (conservation volunteering is rare in Lithuania);
- Changes in awareness, attitudes and behaviours of target SNR staff, supporting them with the transition from the former 'exclusive' management model at their reserves to a new active management approach;
- Related to the last point, increased pride and enthusiasm among SNR staff for their jobs (this was particularly apparent with the staff involved with the Capercaillie reintroduction programme) and a sense of increased opportunities among staff;
- Very good relationships developed by the PIT with key partners (national, municipal, SNR staff) and maintained throughout Project, and Project team has helped improve relationships between partners who were not on the best of relations beforehand (good on conflict resolution and negotiation);
- Good support from government, especially SSPA, who clearly see the Project as very valuable and helping them achieve their aims;
- Project helped foster improved relationships between some SNRs and local stakeholders, e.g. between protected area administration and Varena municipal authority over cleaning of Lake Kastinis near Cepkeliai, and local community, municipal authorities and SNR staff at Viesvile over construction of the fish ladder;
- Creation of the National Ramsar Committee (NRC) as a *de facto* Multisectoral Wetlands Working Group (there had been calls for the establishment of the NRC for many years, the Project helped facilitate this, although it wasn't the original intention);
- Co-financing secured (and re-secured), with high GEF:co-financing ratio (very good for UNDP-GEF project) with outstanding leveraging of additional funds by the PIT, with good linkage to EU funds as well as support (development of 'technical proposals') to other organizations/groups to help them raise funds for projects which would complement GEF project aims; and,
- Very cost-effective project compared to many other GEF projects, it delivered a lot for USD 3.2 million.

249. It should be noted that many of these achievements and impacts are not directly related to the Project's logframe indicators.

5.1.2 Innovative results

250. Particularly innovative results and aspects of the Project are (again in no particular order):

- The first large wetland biodiversity conservation project for Lithuania and hence it had to 'pioneer' new approaches and relationships, such as use of plastic sheets for making dams;
- Nature trails and visitor centres at the SNRs;
- Management plans for SNRs that allowed (controlled) public access and educational and awareness-raising opportunities;
- The capercaillie 'reintroduction' programme, although it is too early to say this will be successful as reintroduction yet to begin and is likely to have high levels of mortality;
- Use of beef cattle as a conservation management tool for wet meadows (system being copied by the Lithuanian Fund for Nature for pond turtles project as cattle keep *Salix* down and the edges of the ponds more open and suitable for the turtles and also for amphibians), although it is not clear whether this will be financially viable and therefore attractive to other farmers);
- Use of amphibious machine at Zuvintas for cutting and controlling aquatic vegetation (a first for Lithuania);
- Lesson plans for schools used at Zuvintas and Kamanos based on national curriculum needs; and,
- National Peatland Strategy (when completed).

5.1.3 Failure and weaknesses of the Project

251. The main failures, weaknesses and reservations in the opinion of the FET are that (in no particular order):

- Girutiskis SNR has still not been designated as a Ramasar site after more than five years of project implementation;

- Neither the proposed cranberry farm at Viesvile nor the cranberry permit trading system at Cepkeliai were established, each for a variety of different reasons but both ideas had little or no Lithuanian ownership;
- There have been significant delays over delivery of Outcome 6 'institutionalisation of lessons learned and best practice', which was due to a variety of reasons including lack of clarity on what was expected (the Project Document left a lot of the detail on how to deliver Outcome 6 to be determined during implementation), lack of guidance on capturing and formulating lessons learnt or 'best practice' (relative term) and an understandable reluctance on the part of the GoL to create a new intersectoral body (Multi-sectoral Wetlands Working Group) with independent decision-making powers specifically for wetlands, and as a result of these delays the Project has needed a no-cost extension (first 12 months to 30 March 2010, then by another 9 months and the FE is recommending a further 4 months to end April 2011);
- Regional Groups were not created, as there was no real interest, although they could offer a forum to help resolve potential conflicts over activities in and around the SNRs;
- Very limited involvement of farmers with 'beef cattle scheme' at Zuvintas (scheme hasn't been copied by any other farmers as yet - they are waiting to see whether the Project's experiment is successful as the startup costs are considerable and there is no developed market for such beef in Lithuania);
- There are some issues over the development of management plans, specifically most appear to have no targets, clear identification of responsibilities or budgets and it is not clear how were priorities for conservation were set;
- Major design flaws in logframe, with two objectives originally (BD1 and BD2), poor indicators and targets (not SMART, some don't connect with each other or the Objective or Outcome (don't 'indicate' success or failure) and some unrealistic), making it difficult to measure achievement of Objective and Outcomes through logframe, which was not corrected before or after the MTE;
- Variable communication of and information dissemination on the Project and its messages and activities at some levels (the image/profile of the Project was particularly weak at municipal level) and there was no specific targeting of senior political decision-makers outside of the MoE and MoA;
- The fish farm project at Cepkeliai, which was to be developed as a bird watching initiative, failed, although this was not the fault of the Project but obstruction by land speculators; and
- Weak formal lesson learning to date, with no formal mechanism for identifying lessons learned or specific lesson learning activities outside of reporting 'best practice' in PIRs, and or mechanisms for incorporation of lessons learned back into project planning, implementation, management such as annual project retreat.

5.2 Individual views of Project stakeholders on success and failure

252. During interviews, all interviewees were asked what for them personally had been the 'successes' and 'failures' of the Project, as well as its strengths and weakness. Answers were collated and are given in Annex 12. Many of the perceived successes and failures are similar or overlap and repeat but the full list of replies is given to show the range of opinions provided by interviewees. The list illustrates that many Project's achievements and impacts are not captured by the standard GEF monitoring and evaluation process (attainment against logframe targets), but are nevertheless important. It should be noted that the list of successes is considerably longer than that of the failures.

5.3 Project ratings

5.3.1 Summary ratings of main project elements

253. Summary ratings for the design and implementation of the Project are given in Table 6 below.

Table 6: Summary ratings for main project elements

PROJECT COMPONENT OR OBJECTIVE	EVALUATION					
	HS	S	MS	MU	U	HU
PROJECT FORMULATION						
Conceptualization/Design				■		
Stakeholder participation		■				
PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION						
Implementation Approach		■				
The use of the logical framework			■			
Adaptive management		■				
Use/establishment of information technologies		■				
Operational relationships between the institutions involved		■				
Technical capacities		■				
Monitoring and evaluation		■				
Stakeholder participation		■				
Production and dissemination of information			■			
Local resource users and NGOs participation			■			
Establishment of partnerships		■				
Involvement and support of governmental institutions	■					
PROJECT RESULTS						
Attainment of Outcomes/ Achievement of objectives		■				
Achievement of objective		■				
Outcome 1		■				
Outcome 2	■					
Outcome 3		■				
Outcome 4		■				
Outcome 5		■				
Outcome 6			■			
OVERALL PROJECT ACHIEVEMENT & IMPACT		■				

5.3.2 Overall Project rating

254. Overall, the Final Evaluation Team evaluates the project 'Conservation of Inland Wetland Biodiversity in Lithuania' as '***Satisfactory'***. The weaknesses in the original design of the Project (particularly the formulation of the project strategy (objectives), poor logframe and confused set of indicators and targets), slow delivery of Outcome 6 related to 'institutionalisation of best practices and lessons learned' and failure to establish the tradable cranberry permitting system at Cepkeliai and cranberry farm at Viesvile (which can be attributed to failures at the design stage), prevented the FET from awarding a ***Highly Satisfactory*** rating for this stage of the Project. However, it would perhaps be fairest to rate the overall delivery of the Project as '*Satisficatory* +'.

6. Summary recommendations

255. Below is a summary of recommendations given in the main text. These include recommendations for increasing impact, sustainability and dissemination of Project results that should be undertaken before the end of the Project, as well as some relevant to UNDP-GEF and GEF globally.

6.1 Summary of recommendations to strengthen delivery of Project results and impact

i. Capturing 'best practice' and 'lesson learning'

- Extend internal project 'lessons learned' exercise and produce brief document on results for inclusion in Final Report and PIR
- Convene a 1-2 day 'lessons learned' workshop to fully capture and document the Project's key experiences, successes, failures (and why activities have worked or not), focusing on the experience at each site of wetland conservation gained through the Project, with development of strategies for their replication
- Produce a document on 'Best practices for management of wetland biodiversity in Lithuania' drawing on experiences from the Project, as a specific technical publication aimed at other wetland and protected area managers with case studies

ii. Dissemination and promotion of project results

- Produce a Final Report (in addition to the PIR for 2011) that fully captures the main project activities, results, successes, impacts and lessons learned from the Project over the 5 years of implementation
- Contract media consultant to advise on best ways to promote and disseminate Project results and produce a clear written strategy and plan on how to communicate project results to the different target groups (assuming that the Project is extended)
- Host a Final Project Meeting event for the Project stakeholders and media to present the Final Report with presentations on key Project achievements (timed to coincide with launch of draft National Peatlands Strategy)
- Present key results at the International Conference of Society of Wetlands Scientists in Prague in July 2011, if funding is available
- Update website and renew links and include all major reports and studies produced by the Project
- Employ a native or fluent English-speaker to review the English summaries of all the main Project publications to ensure accurate and readable translations
- Publish results of economic valuation of peatlands in Lithuania in international (preferably English-language) journal
- Undertake an analysis of Project results and combine with stakeholder analysis to identify where Project results, lessons learned and 'best practice' can be replicated

iii. Education/interpretation programmes

- Develop a weekly 'Capercaillie blog' from Viesvile, and train SNR staff in its use
- Integrate lessons plans/materials from Project into Municipal 'Education Centres' around Juventus and Kamanos, send to the relevant Centres around Cepkeliai and Viesvile and promote to national and municipal education authorities to ensure wider availability and 'ownership' of the GEF Project results
- Upgrade to more informative 'interpretational' displays rather than simple species identification displays (as opportunity arises)

iv. Development, adoption and implementation of National Peatlands Strategy

- Undertake separate stakeholder analysis as part of development of draft NPS, which should be included in the draft document
- Produce a brief stakeholder participation plan for the development, promotion, adoption and implementation of the NPS
- Ensure all key stakeholders are involved in developing NPS from an early stage
- Determine whether the draft NPS will need an SEA (legal situation is unclear), and if so identify sources of funds to carry this out

- Identify appropriate government body to take responsibility and ownership of the draft NPS to ensure it becomes legally adopted and implemented and develop 'protocol' that sets out who will be responsible for ensuring draft NPS is adopted
- Ensure clear targets and milestones are set for proposed activities in the action plan, with responsibilities for their implementation clearly identified, programmes/activities costed and a budget developed and provisional sources of funding need to be identified through revised consultant ToRs
- Raise awareness and profile of NPS among senior government level (not just within MoE) and other key decision-makers through targeted advocacy and promotion programme (branding and marketing of the NPS

v. Measuring Project impact

- Collect and analyse data on threats from pollution (Viesvile, Zuvintas) and illegal trespassing (Cepkeliai, Viesvile and Girutiskis) from 2003-2010 to examine extent of change of threats at these sites to determine if original targets set in logframe have been met

vi. Improving prospects for sustainability

- Establish discussions with MoA, municipal authorities around Zuvintas and meat and meat marketing industry to create better promotion of the Zuvintas beef, and discuss options for transfer of responsibility for beef venture from the Project

vi. Project management

- Review TOR and role of Project Assistant and UNDP CO staff involved with the Project to ensure that boundaries are clear, there is no conflict of interest over responsibilities and GEF funds are not used to fund non-GEF Project activities or management time, clarifying the position of the Project Assistant in elation to the UNDP CO and the input by the UNDP CO with regards management for the remainder of the Project
- Agree an additional 4-month no-cost extension to the Project, so official closure will be 30th April 2011, to allow time for production of Final Report, promotion of Project results through a Final Project Meeting, and draft NPS and negotiations on its adoption by government to be concluded

6.2 Recommendations to UNDP-GEF and GEF

i. Project design

- UNDP-GEF should upgrade its guidance to project designers on how to measure project impact and offer new advice on choice of suitable indicators (the old guidance is now dated and there has been considerable research done on biodiversity indicators in the last 10 years)
- Ensure a separate Project Communication and Results Dissemination Strategy and Plan is produced for all UNDP-GEF projects during the design phase or in the first 1-2 months of project implementation

ii. Financial management

- Consider some form of protection or 'hedge' for such eventualities to better protect against exchange rate transactions (external risk), such as currency conversions or short-term deposits yielding high interest, that are compatible with UNDP and GEF administrative regulations

iii. Monitoring and evaluation

- Ensure that a formal and independent review of a UNDP-GEF project's logframe, indicators and targets is undertaken at the start of full project implementation for all projects as part of standard project monitoring and evaluation framework (design flaws in the Project were not corrected at the inception stage and have persisted in the Project and reduced the ability to measure impact)
- Project Implementation Reviews should include a more detailed and robust analysis of how project is contributing to the conservation and sustainable use of globally important biodiversity, and an expanded section on lesson learning with guidance from UNDP on how to develop 'lessons learned'

iv. Project management

- Review professional development schemes suitable for UNDP-GEF projects, with formal career development and professional training needs analysis system for the staff of UNDP-GEF Projects when implementation begins

v. METT forms

- Undertake analysis of the difficulties and biases in the completion of the METT over the UNDP-GEF project portfolio and recommend guidance or changes to facilitate filling in the forms and

7. Lessons learned

256. There have been no specific lesson learning exercises during Project implementation up to the FE, but the FET has identified a number of lessons learned relevant to the design and implementation of GEF and UNDP projects (in no particular order).

- When designing projects, don't impose ideas and artificial structures from outside or ensure that they have very good local ownership during the project design phase – most of the activities of the Project which were not delivered (failed), namely the cranberry farm at Viesvile, the tradable cranberry permitting system at Cepkeliai, and the Multisectoral Wetland Working Group, were either entirely or largely promoted by non-Lithuanians and there was little true local ownership.
- Although no two consultants will probably ever agree 100% over the design of a logframe, it is essential that sufficient attention is paid to the choice of indicators and associated targets, and in particular the choice (for biodiversity projects) of impact and threat-reduction indicators, if the Project expects to be able to show that real achievement of results by its end - a simple coherent measurable logframe is critical for complex GEF projects and helps keep a project focused, whereas a bad one creates confusion and wastes valuable time and resources.
- Measuring success and failure using a logframe is limited, especially when if the logframe is poor – GEF projects need to assess other dimensions of success and in particular the views of stakeholders on project success and failure, which can be very important especially for sustainability of the project results. The Project had a flawed set of indicators and targets, but nevertheless it delivered and real meaningful achievements.
- All GEF projects should mandate that mid-term evaluations occur at a specific date in the project cycle (delays should not be allowed except under exceptional circumstances), as, in the absence of a formal inception review, the MTE is the major opportunity to make corrections to the project design and delivery if it has lost focus or facing problems, and if the MTE is delayed it may be too late to correct weaknesses and failings (which was the opinion of the MTE in this case).
- Project teams which are looking to develop national policy, legislation or strategies, which usually require lengthy and often complex negotiations, need to start thinking (and take decisions) about these and their development during the very early stages of implementation if there is to be any chance of them being adopted by the end of the project (delays and avoidance over dealing with the development of the NPS have led to two extensions to the Project and a third is needed).
- Related to the above, a time frame of 6-7 years for a GEF project that includes mainstreaming activities at national level is more realistic than a shorter 4-year project.
- Communication of project aims and results to stakeholders is crucial for project success and to ensure proper stakeholder participation and buy-in, especially if the project is trying to mainstream results. In the international consultant's experience, communication on UNDP-GEF projects is frequently given less attention than it should (as is the case here).
- Continuity of project staff between the PDF-B stage and implementation can significantly improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the delivery of project results. The Project benefited from having the same strong team working from the PDF-B phase through to implementation, and had been together for the best part of 10 years which meant they knew every aspect of the project very well and the rationale behind decisions most cases). Capacity, team building, partnerships, and knowledge of the Project's 'historical perspective' were all enhanced with this consistency, and UNDP and GEF should look to employ PDF-B staff in full project implementation, particularly the PM, even if only during the first 2-3 months inception period.

Annexes

Annex 1: Terms of Reference for Project Final Evaluation

UNDP/GEF Project
"Conservation of Inland Wetland Biodiversity in Lithuania"

I. Background information

The implementation of the UNDP/GEF Project "Conservation of Inland Wetland Biodiversity in Lithuania" began in April 2004 with an objective to optimize sustainable management of wetland biodiversity at five important sites in Lithuania. Its immediate objective is to secure the long term conservation of globally significant biodiversity of five wetland protected areas in Lithuania, which are considered globally important grounds for feeding, molting and resting of water birds and contain rare and endangered species of flora and fauna. The project's strategic interventions include: (i) restoration of selected wetland habitats; (ii) re-conversion of farming lands to wetland-friendly agricultural activities; (iii) the adoption of biodiversity-friendly forestry protocols; (iv) strengthening enforcement of reserve regulations and boundaries, public awareness and public support activities; (v) gathering and codification of lessons and best practices; and (vi) the elaboration of a strategy for replication to other priority wetland sites.

The project document was signed in 30/03/2004 and implementation started in April 2004. The total project budget is US$ 13,865,400. The GEF contribution is US$ 3,261,000. The Executing Agency for the project is Ministry of Environment of Lithuania, Project Implementing Agency – Nature Heritage Fund (NHF).

II. Objectives of the Final evaluation

The evaluation is to be undertaken in accordance with the "GEF Monitoring and Evaluation Policy" (see http://thegef.org/MonitoringandEvaluation/MEPoliciesProcedures/mepoliciesprocedures.html), which indicates that all regular and medium size projects supported by GEF should undergo a final evaluation upon completion of implementation.

Final evaluations are intended to assess the relevance, performance and success of the project. It looks at early signs of potential impact and sustainability of results, including the contribution to capacity development and the achievement of global environmental goals. It will also identify/document lessons learned and make recommendations that might improve design and implementation of other UNDP/GEF projects.

As per Monitoring and Evaluation Policy final evaluation at the project level in UNDP/GEF has two overarching objectives:

a) promote accountability for the achievement of GEF objectives through the assessment of results, effectiveness, processes and performance of the partners involved in GEF activities. GEF results will be monitored and evaluated for their contribution to global environmental benefits; and
b) promote learning, feedback and knowledge sharing on results and lessons learned among the GEF and its partners, as basis for decision-making on policies, strategies, program management, and projects and to improve knowledge and performance.

Evaluation Audience

This Final Evaluation of the UNDP/GEF Project "Conservation of Inland Wetland Biodiversity in Lithuania" is initiated by UNDP as the GEF Implementing Agency. It aims to provide managers (at the level of regulatory bodies of the Ministry of Environment, protected areas (project sites) administrations, and UNDP-GEF levels) with a comprehensive overall assessment of the project and with a strategy for replicating the results. It also provides the basis for learning and accountability for managers and stakeholders.

Objectives of the Evaluation

The overall goal of the evaluation is to measure the effectiveness and efficiency of project activities in relation to the stated objective so far, and to produce possible recommendations on its completion strategy.

The purpose of the Evaluation is:

- To assess overall performance against the Project objectives as set out in Project Document and other related documents;
- To assess the effectiveness and efficiency of the Project;
- To critically analyze the implementation and management arrangements of the Project;
- To assess the sustainability of the Project's interventions;
- To list and document initial lessons concerning Project design, implementation and management;
- To assess Project relevance to national priorities.

Project performance will be measured based on Project Logical Framework (see Annex 1), which provides clear performance and impact indicators for project implementation along with their corresponding means of verification.

The evaluation should assess:

Project concept and design

The evaluators will assess the project concept and design. He/she should review the problem addressed by the project and the project strategy, encompassing an assessment of the appropriateness of the objectives, planned outputs, activities and inputs as compared to cost-effective alternatives. The executing modality and managerial arrangements should also be judged. The evaluator will assess the achievement of indicators and review the work plan, planned duration and budget of the project.

Implementation

The evaluation will assess the implementation of the project in terms of quality and

timeliness of inputs and efficiency and effectiveness of activities carried out. Also, the effectiveness of management as well as the quality and timeliness of monitoring and backstopping by all parties to the project should be evaluated. In particular, the evaluation is to assess the Project team's use of adaptive management in project implementation.

Project outputs, outcomes and impact

The evaluation will assess the outputs, outcomes and impact achieved by the project as well as the likely sustainability of project results. This should encompass an assessment of the achievement of the immediate objectives and the contribution to attaining the overall objective of the project. The evaluation should also assess the extent to which the implementation of the project has been inclusive of relevant stakeholders and to which it has been able to create collaboration between different partners. The evaluation will also examine if the project has had significant unexpected effects, whether of beneficial or detrimental character.

The evaluation will assess the aspects as listed in evaluation report outline attached in Annex 2.

In addition to a descriptive assessment, the evaluation will also provide **ratings** of Project achievements according to GEF Project Review Criteria, using the following divisions: Highly Satisfactory, Satisfactory, Marginally Satisfactory, Unsatisfactory.

Aspects of the Project to be rated are:

- Implementation approach;
- Management of globally significant species
- Outcome/Achievement of objectives (meaning the extent to which the project's environmental and development objectives were achieved).
- Stakeholder participation/public involvement
- Sustainability;
- Replication approach;
- Cost-effectiveness;
- Monitoring and evaluation

Issues of special consideration:

The Evaluation will review and assess changes in development conditions, by addressing the following questions, with a focus on the perception of change among stakeholders:

- Has the project achieved its objectives and outcomes as set in project document?
- Has the project established a management basis for long term sustainability and development of project outcomes?
- Has the project helped the protection of endangered species in Project sites? (With a special attention to indicator species mentioned in the Tracking Tool and the Logframe Matrix, see Annex 1.)
- Have there been changes in local stakeholder behavior (i.e. threats, land use management practices, ….) that have contributed to improved conservation? If not, why not?

- Has the project elaborated innovative incentives to motivate the local population to apply biodiversity friendly land use and farming practices?
- Has awareness on biodiversity conservation and subsequent and nature values increased among various population groups (children, school students, protected areas staff, visitors, farmers, local population) as a result of the project?
- Is there adequate territorial planning in place, or in progress, ensuring long-term conservation of biodiversity and cultural values?
- Assess the underlying factors beyond the project's immediate control that influence outcomes and results, especially the recent changes in the governmental policy on the implementation of the agri-environmental scheme. Consider the appropriateness and effectiveness of the project's management strategies for these factors.

For future development support in the region, UNDP is especially interested in the assessment of the support model applied in the project, its implications for the long-term impact and sustainability of the project results.

The Evaluation Report will present recommendations and lessons of broader applicability for follow-up and future support of UNDP and/or the Government, highlighting the good and bad practices in addressing issues relating to the evaluation scope.

III. Products expected from the evaluation

The key product expected from this final evaluation is a comprehensive analytical report in English that should, at least, include the contents as indicated in Annex 2 of this TOR.

The Report of the Final Evaluation will be stand-alone document that substantiates its recommendations and conclusions. The report will have to provide to the GEF Secretariat complete and convincing evidence to support its findings/ratings.

The Report will include a table of planned vs. actual project financial disbursements, and planned co-financing vs. actual co-financing in this project, according the table attached in Annex 3 of this TOR.

The Report will be supplemented by Rate Tables, attached in Annex 4 of this TOR.

The length of the evaluation report shall not exceed 30 pages in total (not including annexes).

IV. Evaluation team – qualities and requirements

A team of independent experts will conduct the evaluation. The evaluators selected should not have participated in the project preparation and/or implementation and should not have conflict of interest with project related activities.

The evaluation team will be composed of **one International Consultant or Team Leader and**

one National Consultant. The consultants shall have prior experience in evaluating similar projects. Former cooperation with GEF is an advantage.

Team Qualities:

- Recent experience with result-based management evaluation methodologies;
- Experience applying participatory monitoring approaches;
- Experience applying SMART indicators and reconstructing or validating baseline scenarios;
- Recent knowledge of the GEF Monitoring and Evaluation Policy;
- Recent knowledge of UNDP's results-based evaluation policies and procedures
- Competence in Adaptive Management, as applied to conservation or natural resource management projects;
- Recognized expertise in the management and sustainable use of wetlands in temperate ecosystems;
- Familiarity with protected area policies and management structures in Lithuania;
- Demonstrable analytical skills;
- Work experience in relevant areas for at least 10 years;
- Experience with multilateral or bilateral supported conservation projects;
- Project evaluation experiences within United Nations system will be considered an asset;
- Excellent English communication skills, (the National Consultant also good Lithuanian communication skills)

Specifically, the international expert (team leader) will perform the following tasks:

- Lead and manage the evaluation mission;
- Design the detailed evaluation scope and methodology (including the methods for data collection and analysis);
- Decide the division of labor within the evaluation team;
- Conduct an analysis of the outcome, outputs and partnership strategy (as per the scope of the evaluation described above);
- Draft related parts of the evaluation report; and
- Finalize the whole evaluation report.

The National Consultant will provide input in reviewing all project documentation, especially if available only in Lithuanian, and will provide the International Consultant with a compilation of information prior to the evaluation mission.

Specifically, the national expert will perform tasks with a focus on:

- Review documents;
- Prepare a list of the outputs achieved under project;
- Organize the mission programme and provide translation/interpretation when necessary;
- Participate in the design of the evaluation methodology;
- Conduct an analysis of the outcome, outputs and partnership strategy (as per the scope of the evaluation described above);
- Draft related parts of the evaluation report;
- Assist Team leader in finalizing document through incorporating suggestions received on draft related to his/her assigned sections.

The evaluation will be undertaken in-line with GEF principles[50]:

- Independence
- Impartiality
- Transparency
- Disclosure
- Ethical
- Partnership
- Competencies and Capacities
- Credibility
- Utility

Individual consultants are invited to submit applications together with their CV for these positions. Joint proposals from two independent evaluators are welcome. Or alternatively, proposals will be accepted from recognized consulting firms to field a complete team with the required expertise within the evaluation budget.

If individual evaluators are selected, UNDP will appoint one Team Leader. The Team Leader will have overall responsibility for the delivery and quality of the evaluation products. Team roles and responsibilities will be reflected in the individual contracts. If a proposal is accepted from a consulting firm, the firm will be held responsible for the delivery and quality of the evaluation products and therefore has responsibility for team management arrangements.

V. Methodology or evaluation approach

An outline of an evaluation approach is provided below; however it should be made clear that the evaluation team is responsible for revising the approach as necessary. Any changes should be in-line with international criteria and professional norms and standards (as adopted by the UN Evaluation Group[51]). They must be also cleared by UNDP before being applied by the evaluation team.

The evaluation must provide evidence-based information that is credible, reliable and useful. It must be easily understood by project partners and applicable to the remaining period of project duration.

The evaluation will take place mainly in the field. The evaluator is expected to follow a participatory and consultative approach ensuring close engagement with the government counterparts, the National Project Manager, Steering Committee, project team, and key stakeholders. The evaluator is expected to conduct a mission to Lithuania, to Vilnius and to the 5 project sites (Viesvile, Zuvintas, Cepkeliai, Kamanos, Girutiskis) to interview the project team, project partners and key stakeholders, and to held field visits to the sites.

The evaluation team is expected to consult all relevant sources of information, such as the project

[50] See p.16 of the GEF's Monitoring and Evaluation Policy
[51] See http://www.uneval.org/

document, project reports, project budget revisions, progress reports, project files, national strategic and legal documents, and any other material that it may consider useful for evidence based assessment. The list of documentation to be reviewed is included in Annex 5 of this Terms of Reference;

The evaluation team is expected to use interviews as a means of collecting data on the relevance, performance and success of the project. Team is also expected to visit the project sites.

The methodology to be used by the evaluation team should be presented in the report in detail. It shall include information on:

- Documentation reviewed;
- Interviews;
- Field visits;
- Questionnaires;
- Participatory techniques and other approaches for the gathering and analysis of data.

Although the evaluation team should feel free to discuss with the authorities concerned, all matters relevant to its assignment, it is not authorized to make any commitment or statement on behalf of UNDP or GEF or the project management.

The evaluation team should reflect sound accounting procedures and be prudent in using the resources of the evaluation.

VI. Implementation Arrangements

The principal responsibility for managing this evaluation lies with UNDP Country Office Lithuania. UNDP Lithuania will contract the evaluators and ensure the timely provision of per diems and travel arrangements within the country for the evaluation team. Nature Heritage Fund and UNDP will be responsible for liaising with the Evaluators team to set up stakeholder interviews, arrange field visits, coordinate with the Government etc.

The activity and timeframe are broken down as follows:

Activity	**Timeframe**	
	international expert	the national consultant
Desk review	2 days	4 days
Briefings for evaluators by PM and UNDP	1 day	1 day
Field visits, interviews, questionnaires, de-briefings	6 days	6 days
Drafting of the evaluation report	3 days	2 days
Validation of preliminary findings with stakeholders through circulation of draft reports for comments, meetings and other types of feedback mechanisms	2 days	4 days
Finalization of the evaluation report (incorporating comments received on first	2 days	1 day

draft)		

Working Days:
Team Leader (international expert) – 16 working days
Technical expert(s) (national expert(s)) – 18 working days

The proposed date for the in-country mission to Lithuania is June - September 2010.

The draft and final report shall be submitted to the UNDP Lithuania (Ms. Ieva Labanauskiene, address: A. Goštauto g. 40A, LT-01002 Vilnius, tel. 3705 2107405, fax 3705 2107401, e-mail: ieva.labanauskiene@undp.org)

Prior to approval of the final report, a draft version shall be circulated for comments to government counterparts and project management. UNDP and the stakeholders will submit comments and suggestions within 5 working days after receiving the draft.

Timeframe for submission of first draft of the report: within 10 working days after the mission**.**

The evaluation should be completed by 31 October 2010.

If any discrepancies have emerged between impressions and findings of the evaluation team and the aforementioned parties, these should be explained in an annex attached to the final report.

VII. Application process

APPLICATION: Please send your applications to a project manager, Mr. Gediminas Rascius; e-mail: g.rascius@gpf.lt and cc to andrius.sugintas@undp.org by 26 July 2010, 17:00 CET

The application should contain:

1. current and complete C.V. in English with indication of the e-mail and phone contact
2. price offer indicating the total cost of the assignment (including the daily fee, per diem and travel costs, preferably according the template attached in Annex 6)
3. indication of earliest possible timing for evaluation mission and completion of report.

UNDP applies fair and transparent selection process that would take into account the competencies/skills of the applicants as well as their financial proposals.

Qualified women and members of social minorities are encouraged to apply.

Due to large number of applicants, UNDP regrets that it is unable to inform the unsuccessful candidates about the outcome or status of the recruitment process.

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Annex 1

Project Logical Framework

Objective	Indicator	Baseline Level	Target Level	Sources of verification	Risks and Assumptions
Sustainable management of wetland biodiversity on five important sites	1. Evaluation of threats reduction at each site, including disturbance by trespassing, continued overgrowth of woody vegetation, on-going drainage, nutrient loading, etc.	(i) No management plan (ii) 16 ha bogs restored	(i) Management plans under implementation (ii) 980 ha of selected bogs, fens, and meadows restored	Order of the MoE on MP approval, Reports by experts, Minutes of Steering Committee meetings, PA annual reports	The combination of (i) a pool of lessons in inland wetland conservation, (ii) a functioning mechanism for replication, (iii) continued commitment from the MoE and the GoL towards wetland conservation, and (iv) appropriate budget eliminates or significantly reduces threats in other wetlands of Lithuania
	2. Evaluation of (i) rate of utilization of restored habitats and wetlands by targeted species and (ii) restoration of wetland-friendly hydraulic regimes	(i) No fish bypasses and no program for reintroduction of capercaillies in Viesvile (ii) Closing 0.2 km of ditches in Kamanos	(i) Fish bypasses installed and capercaillie reintroduction program under implementation in Viesvile (ii) Closing 20 km of ditches in Kamanos, first priority measures implemented in the Dovine River basin	Technical projects, constuction permits, works completion statement, pictures	
	3. At least five additional sites identified for replication of lessons learned and schedule of replication of best practices formally agreed	State Register of Peatlands produced by MoE	At least five additional sites identified for replication of lessons learned	Project reports, Minutes of Steering Committee meetings	
	4. Horizontal fund for wetlands management in agricultural areas has been secured (% of farms adopting environmentally friendly agricultural practices)	No farms use environmentally friendly agricultural practices	10% farms near by Zuvintas have adopted environmentally friendly agricultural practices and have contracts with National Paying Agency	Reports by experts	
	5. State Forestry Company and private forestry companies have assessed options for certification and at least 3 pilot schemes for certifying forests near wetlands are underway.	State Forest Enterprises certified according FSC standards	National legislation adopted, 3 schemes for certifying forests near wetlands is underway	Reports by experts	
	6. Models for land purchase or decommissionin g are being replicated in Lithuania	No current models for land purchase	Land acquisition for Nature conservation mechanism introduced into national legislation	Reports by experts	
	7. Tourism action plans and user fees are being developed in at least three other wetland protected areas in Lithuania	No user fee systems	Plan for replication of lessons to other PA in Lithuania developed and agreed	Reports by experts	

Outcome	Indicator	Baseline Level	Target Level	Sources of verification	Risks and Assumptions
Wetland biodiversity protected in Cepkeliai Strict Nature Reserve	8. Management plan developed and under implementation. Management effectiveness scoring (METT scores)	No management plan METT - 50.7	Management plan under implementation METT - 60.7	Order of the MoE on MP approval, METT sheets	The combination of harvest permits combined with better enforcement and increased public awareness is sufficient to control disturbance in Cepkeliai, which constitutes the main threat in the reserve.
	9. System of tradable permits for cranberry picking in place	No alternative system of permits	System of tradable permits in place	Order of the SPAS	
	10. Cutting of vegetation in bogs, meadows and open sands	0 ha	230 ha of selected bogs, meadows and open sand areas restored	PA annual reports	
	11. Statistically significant positive changes in awareness and public support: 1) Relationship with PA, 2) Willingness to support PA	1) Positive - 34.8%, negative - 21.9%, no relationship - 40.8%. 2) Yes/rather yes - 62.2%, no/rather no 37.8%	1) Positive - 45%, negative - 20%, no relationship - 30%. 2) Yes/rather yes - 70%, no/rather no 30%	Public survey reports	
Wetland biodiversity protected in Kamanos Strict Nature Reserve	12. Management plan developed and under implementation. Management effectiveness scoring (METT scores)	No management plan METT - 55.9	Management plan under implementation METT - 65.9	Order of the MoE on MP approval, METT sheets	The reconversion of up to 800 ha (at least 300 ha) of current farming and forest land combined with the closing of drainage channels eliminates the main threat to the Kamanos reserve. Habitat restoration activities in Kamanos are self-sustaining once drainage channels have been closed and original hydrological regime restored.
	13. Area taken out of agriculture /forestry or reconverted to enable restoration of hydrological regime of the raised bog, closing selected ditches inside and outside the reserve	No land acquisition mechanism for nature conservation. Closing 0.2 km of ditches	300-800 ha transformed from agriculture and forestry activity into nature protection. Closing 20 km of ditches	Technical projects, constuction permits, works completion statement, pictures	
	14. Cutting of vegetation in bogs, meadows	16 ha	80 ha of selected bogs and meadows restored	PA annual reports	
	15. Statistically significant positive changes in awareness and public support: 1) Relationship with PA, 2) Willingness to support PA	1) Positive - 44.5%, negative - 10%, no relationship - 45%. 2) Yes/rather yes - 42.5%, no/rather no 51.5%	1) Positive - 54%, negative - 7%, no relationship - 39%. 2) Yes/rather yes - 55%, no/rather no 45%	Public survey reports	
Wetland biodiversity protected in Viesvile Strict Nature Reserve	16. Management plan developed and under implementation. Management effectiveness scoring (METT scores)	No management plan METT - 57.9	Management plan under implementation METT - 67.9	Order of the MoE on MP approval, METT sheets	Forest protocols that attain output needs and are compatible with biodiversity conservation in Viesvile are technically feasible. A cranberry farm combined with better enforcement and increased public local awareness is sufficient to eliminate disturbance in Viesvile.
	17. Program for biodiversity friendly forestry use around the reserve	No program for biodiversity-friendly forestry use around the reserve	Biodiversity friendly Forest Management plan under implementation	Order of the MoE on MP approval, PA annual reports	
	18. Restoration activities carried out in bogs, fens, and meadows	0 ha restored	10 ha of selected bogs, fens, and meadows restored	PA annual reports	
	19. Establishing a pilot cranberry farm in Laukesa peat-land	No cranberry farm	Pilot cranberry farm producing yield	Project reports	

	20. Investments in anti-pollution infrastructure undertaken	No investments in anti-pollution infrastructure	Sewage treatment plant	Co-financier statements	
	21. Fish bypasses installed in two dams in the Viesvile river	No fish bypasses	Fish bypasses installed	Technical projects, constuction permits, works completion statement, pictures	
	22. Evaluation of pilot program for reintroduction of capercaillies	No program for reintroduction	Reintroduction program under implementation	Project reports, reports by experts	
	23. Statistically significant positive changes in awareness and public support: 1) Relationship with PA, 2) Willingness to support PA	1) Positive - 34.8%, negative - 14.9%, no relationship - 49.3%. 2) Yes/rather yes - 48.2%, no/rather no 50.7%	1) Positive - 45%, negative - 12%, no relationship - 43%. 2) Yes/rather yes - 58%, no/rather no 42%	Public survey reports	
Wetland biodiversity protected in Zuvintas Biosphere Reserve	24. Management plan developed and under implementation Management effectiveness scoring (METT scores)	No management plan METT - 41.4	Management plan under implementation METT - 51.4	Order of the MoE on MP approval, METT sheets	A restored hydrological regime and reduced pollution loads is sufficient to ensure conservation of wetland habitat in Zuvintas. A restored hydrological regime makes habitat restoration outputs self-sustainable in Zuvintas.
	25. Documentation establishing the Biosphere Reserve approved	Not inscribed into UNESCO MAB network	Site inscribed into UNESCO MAB network	Filled in the nomination form signed and submited	
	26. Farms have adopted environmentally friendly agricultural practices	0 % of farms	10% of farms	Reports by experts	
	27. Implementation of first priority measures of water management plan in Zuvintas	No priority measures	First priority measures implemented	Technical projects, constuction permits, works completion statement, pictures	
	28. Investments in water and air pollution undertaken	No investment in water and air pollution	Reconstruction of Simnas town sewage treatment plant and expansion of sewerage, establishment of sedimentation pond in Simnas fish ponds	Co-financier statements	
	29. Overgrowth of critical meadow, fen, and bog habitats halted	0 ha	600 ha of selected bogs, fens, and meadows restored	PA annual reports	
	30. Statistically significant positive changes in awareness and public support: 1) Relationship with PA, 2) Willingness to support PA	1) Positive - 35.5%, negative - 14.5%, no relationship - 49.0%. 2) Yes/rather yes - 30.5%, no/rather no 69.5%	1) Positive - 47%, negative - 10%, no relationship - 43%. 2) Yes/rather yes - 45%, no/rather no 55%	Public survey reports	
Wetland biodiversity protected in Girutiskis Strict	31. Management plan developed and under implementation. Management effectiveness scoring (METT scores)	No management plan METT - 49.6	Management plan under implementation METT - 59.6	Order of the MoE on MP approval, METT sheets	The introduction of user fees combined with increased enforcement and public information campaigns is

Nature Reserve	32. Decrease of trespassing	No border markings	Building of road-blocks, barriers on the entrance roads to the reserve, elimination illegal trespassing by car	PA annual reports	sufficient to control disturbance at Girutiskis. A restored hydrological regime makes habitat restoration outputs self-sustainable in Girutiskis.
	33. Users fee approved and in operation	No user fees	User fee system for tourist in place and operating	Reports by experts	
	34. Overgrow of critical meadow, fen, and bog habitats halted	0 ha	60 ha of selected bogs, meadows and fens restored	PA annual reports	
	35. Statistically significant positive changes in awareness and public support: 1) Relationship with PA, 2) Willingness to support PA	1) Positive - 24.4%, negative - 22.9%, no relationship - 50.2%. 2) Yes/rather yes - 57.7%, no/rather no 41.3%	1) Positive - 45%, negative - 15%, no relationship - 40%. 2) Yes/rather yes - 65%, no/rather no 35%	Public survey reports	
Formal intersectoral mechanism for replication of best lessons learned in conservation of inland wetland biodiversity established and operational	36. A plan for replication of best lessons developed and an executing unit formally established	N/A	Lessons codified - instruments and guidelines from experiences in the five pilot sites, Multisectoral working group established	Order of the MoE on establishing executing unit	Agencies and institutions whose actions can potentially affect wetland biodiversity are willing to assimilate lessons from project
	37. Plan for replication of best lessons approved by the institutions participating in the multisectoral working group	N/A	Ministerial orders by participating institutions	Approved action plan	
	38. Draft sectoral policies and legislation prepared and submitted	N/A	Produce draft legislation on policy reforms in nature conservation, agriculture, forestry, tourism	Legal acts	

Annex 2

EVALUATION REPORT: SAMPLE OUTLINE

Minimum GEF requirements[52]

Executive summary

- Brief description of project
- Context and purpose of the evaluation
- Main conclusions, recommendations and lessons learned

Introduction

- Purpose of the evaluation
- Key issues addressed
- Methodology of the evaluation
- Structure of the evaluation

The project(s) and its development context

- Project start and its duration
- Problems that the project seek to address
- Immediate and development objectives of the project
- Main stakeholders
- Results expected

Findings and Conclusions

(In addition to a descriptive assessment, all criteria marked with (*) should be rated[53])

- Project formulation
  - Implementation approach (*)
  - Analysis of LFA (Project logic /strategy; Indicators)
  - Lessons from other relevant projects (e.g., same focal area) incorporated into project implementation
  - Country ownership/Driveness
  - Stakeholder participation (*)
  - Replication approach
  - Cost-effectiveness
  - UNDP comparative advantage
  - Linkages between project and other interventions within the sector
  - Management arrangements

- Implementation
  - Implementation approach (*)
  - The logical framework used during implementation as a management and M&E tool
  - Effective partnerships arrangements established for implementation of the project with relevant stakeholders involved in the country/region
  - Feedback from M&E activities used for adaptive management
  -

[52] Please refer to GEF guidelines for explanation of Terminology (provided below)

[53] The ratings will be: Highly Satisfactory, Satisfactory, Marginally Satisfactory, Unsatisfactory

- Financial Planning
  - Monitoring and evaluation (*)
  - Execution and implementation modalities
  - Management by the UNDP country office
  - Coordination and operational issues

- Results
  - Attainment of objectives (*)
  - Sustainability (*)
  - Contribution to upgrading skills of the national staff

Recommendations

- Corrective actions for the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the project
- Actions to follow up or reinforce initial benefits from the project
- Proposals for future directions underlining main objectives

Lessons learned

- Best and worst practices in addressing issues relating to relevance, performance and success

Annexes

- TOR
- Itinerary
- List of persons interviewed
- Summary of field visits
- List of documents reviewed
- Questionnaire used and summary of results

Explanation on Terminology Provided in the GEF Guidelines to Terminal Evaluations

Implementation Approach includes an analysis of the project's logical framework, adaptation to changing conditions (adaptive management), partnerships in implementation arrangements, changes in project design, and overall project management.

Some elements of an effective implementation approach may include:

- The logical framework used during implementation as a management and M&E tool
- Effective partnerships arrangements established for implementation of the project with relevant stakeholders involved in the country/region
- Lessons from other relevant projects (e.g., same focal area) incorporated into project implementation
- Feedback from M&E activities used for adaptive management.

Country Ownership/Driveness is the relevance of the project to national development and environmental agendas, recipient country commitment, and regional and international agreements where applicable. Project Concept has its origin within the national sectoral and development plans

Some elements of effective country ownership/driveness may include:

- Project Concept has its origin within the national sectoral and development plans
- Outcomes (or potential outcomes) from the project have been incorporated into the national sectoral and development plans
- Relevant country representatives (e.g., governmental official, civil society, etc.) are actively involved in project identification, planning and/or implementation
- The recipient government has maintained financial commitment to the project
- The government has approved policies and/or modified regulatory frameworks in line with the project's objectives
- Project's collaboration with industry associations

Stakeholder Participation/Public Involvement consists of three related and often overlapping processes: information dissemination, consultation, and "stakeholder" participation. Stakeholders are the individuals, groups, institutions, or other bodies that have an interest or stake in the outcome of the GEF-financed project. The term also applies to those potentially adversely affected by a project.

Examples of effective public involvement include:

Information dissemination

- Implementation of appropriate outreach/public awareness campaigns

Consultation and stakeholder participation

- Consulting and making use of the skills, experiences and knowledge of NGOs, community and local groups, the private and public sectors, and academic institutions in the design, implementation, and evaluation of project activities

Stakeholder participation

- Project institutional networks well placed within the overall national or community organizational structures, for example, by building on the local decision making structures, incorporating local knowledge, and devolving project management responsibilities to the local organizations or communities as the project approaches closure
- Building partnerships among different project stakeholders
- Fulfilment of commitments to local stakeholders and stakeholders considered to be adequately involved.

Sustainability measures the extent to which benefits continue, within or outside the project domain, from a particular project or program after GEF assistance/external assistance has come to an end. Relevant factors to improve the sustainability of project outcomes include:

- Development and implementation of a sustainability strategy**.**
- Establishment of the financial and economic instruments and mechanisms to ensure the ongoing flow of benefits once the GEF assistance ends (from the public and private sectors, income generating activities, and market transformations to promote the project's objectives).
- Development of suitable organizational arrangements by public and/or private sector**.**
- Development of policy and regulatory frameworks that further the project objectives**.**
- Incorporation of environmental and ecological factors affecting future flow of benefits.
- Development of appropriate institutional capacity (systems, structures, staff, expertise, etc.) **.**
- Identification and involvement of champions (i.e. individuals in government and civil society who can promote sustainability of project outcomes)**.**
- Achieving social sustainability, for example, by mainstreaming project activities into the economy or community production activities**.**
- Achieving stakeholders consensus regarding courses of action on project activities.

Replication approach, in the context of GEF projects, is defined as lessons and experiences coming out of the project that are replicated or scaled up in the design and implementation of other projects. Replication can have two aspects, replication proper (lessons and experiences are replicated in different geographic area) or scaling up (lessons and experiences are replicated within the same geographic area but funded by other sources). Examples of replication approaches include:

- Knowledge transfer (i.e., dissemination of lessons through project result documents, training workshops, information exchange, a national and regional forum, etc).

- Expansion of demonstration projects.
- Capacity building and training of individuals, and institutions to expand the project's achievements in the country or other regions.
- Use of project-trained individuals, institutions or companies to replicate the project's outcomes in other regions.

Financial Planning includes actual project cost by activity, financial management (including disbursement issues), and co-financing. If a financial audit has been conducted the major findings should be presented in the TE.

Effective financial plans include:
- Identification of potential sources of co-financing as well as leveraged and associated financing[54].
- Strong financial controls, including reporting, and planning that allow the project management to make informed decisions regarding the budget at any time, allows for a proper and timely flow of funds, and for the payment of satisfactory project deliverables
- Due diligence due diligence in the management of funds and financial audits.

Co financing includes: Grants, Loans/Concessional (compared to market rate), Credits, Equity investments, In-kind support, other contributions mobilized for the project from other multilateral agencies, bilateral development cooperation agencies, NGOs, the private sector and beneficiaries. Please refer to Council documents on co-financing for definitions, such as GEF/C.20/6.

Leveraged resources are additional resources—beyond those committed to the project itself at the time of approval—that are mobilized later as a direct result of the project. Leveraged resources can be financial or in-kind and they may be from other donors, NGO's, foundations, governments, communities or the private sector. Please briefly describe the resources the project has leveraged since inception and indicate how these resources are contributing to the project's ultimate objective.

Cost-effectiveness assesses the achievement of the environmental and developmental objectives as well as the project's outputs in relation to the inputs, costs, and implementing time. It also examines the project's compliance with the application of the incremental cost concept. Cost-effective factors include:
- Compliance with the incremental cost criteria (e.g. GEF funds are used to finance a component of a project that would not have taken place without GEF funding.) and securing co-funding and associated funding.
- The project completed the planned activities and met or exceeded the expected outcomes in terms of achievement of Global Environmental and Development Objectives according to schedule, and as cost-effective as initially planned.
- The project used either a benchmark approach or a comparison approach (did not

[54] Please refer to Council documents on co-financing for definitions, such as GEF/C.20/6. The following page presents a table to be used for reporting co-financing.

exceed the costs levels of similar projects in similar contexts)

Monitoring & Evaluation. Monitoring is the periodic oversight of a process, or the implementation of an activity, which seeks to establish the extent to which inputs, work schedules, other required actions and outputs are proceeding according to plan, so that timely action can be taken to correct the deficiencies detected. Evaluation is a process by which program inputs, activities and results are analyzed and judged explicitly against benchmarks or baseline conditions using performance indicators. This will allow project managers and planners to make decisions based on the evidence of information on the project implementation stage, performance indicators, level of funding still available, etc, building on the project's logical framework.

Monitoring and Evaluation includes activities to measure the project's achievements such as identification of performance indicators, measurement procedures, and determination of baseline conditions. Projects are required to implement plans for monitoring and evaluation with adequate funding and appropriate staff and include activities such as description of data sources and methods for data collection, collection of baseline data, and stakeholder participation. Given the long-term nature of many GEF projects, projects are also encouraged to include long-term monitoring plans that are sustainable after project completion.

Annex 3

Co-financing Table

Co financing (Type/ Source)	IA own Financing (mill US$)		Government (mill US$)		Other Sources* (mill US$)		Total Financing (mill US$)		Total Disbursement (mill US$)	
	Proposed	**Actual**	**Proposed**	**Actual**	**Proposed**	**Actual**	**Proposed**	**Actual**	**Proposed**	**Actual**
Grant										
Credits										
Loans										
Equity										
In-kind										
Non-grant Instruments *										
Other Types										
TOTAL										

- Other Sources refer to contributions mobilized for the project from other multilateral agencies, bilateral development cooperation agencies, NGOs, the private sector etc.

- "Proposed" co-financing refers to co-financing proposed at CEO endorsement.

- Describe "Non-grant Instruments" (such as guarantees, contingent grants, etc):
    - *Source/amount/in-kind or cash/purpose.*

- Explain "Other Sources of Co-financing":
    - *Source/amount/in-kind or cash*
    - …

Annex 4

RATE TABLES

Table 1: Status of objective / outcome delivery as per measurable indicators

OBJECTIVE	MEASURABLE INDICATORS FROM PROJECT LOGFRAME	END-OF-PROJECT TARGET	STATUS OF DELIVERY*	RATING**
Objective :				
OUTCOMES		**END-OF-PROJECT TARGET**	**STATUS OF DELIVERY**	**RATING**
Outcome 1:				
Outcome 2:				
Outcome 3:	-			
Outcome 4:				
Outcome 5:				

* **Status of delivery colouring codes:**
Green / completed – indicator shows successful achievement
Yellow – indicator shows expected completion by the end of the project
Red – Indicator show poor achievement - unlikely to be complete by end of Project

** **Rating:**
Highly Satisfactory = HS
Satisfactory = S
Marginally Satisfactory = MS
Unsatisfactory = U

Table 2: Project ratings

PROJECT COMPONENT OR OBJECTIVE	RATING SCALE						RATING
	HU	U	MU	MS	S	HS	
PROJECT FORMULATION							
Conceptualization/Design							
Stakeholder participation							
PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION							
Implementation Approach							
The use of the logical framework							
Adaptive management							
Use/establishment of information technologies							
Operational relationships between the institutions involved							
Technical capacities							
Monitoring and evaluation							
Stakeholder participation							
Production and dissemination of information							
Local resource users and NGOs participation							
Establishment of partnerships							
Involvement and support of governmental institutions							
PROJECT RESULTS							
Attainment of Outcomes/ Achievement of objectives							
Achievement of objective							
Outcome 1							
Outcome 2							
Outcome 3							
Outcome 4							
Outcome 5							
Outcome 6							
Outcome 7							
OVERALL PROJECT ACHIEVEMENT & IMPACT							

Annex 5

List of documents to be reviewed by the Evaluators

The following documents can be used as a basis for evaluation of the project:

Document	Description
Project document	Project Document
Project reports	Inception Report Progress Reports Mid Term Evaluation Report SC meeting minutes
Annual Project Report to GEF	Project Implementation Reviews - PIRs

Other relevant materials:	METT Financial Audit Reports Articles in magazines and newspapaers Expert studies, reports and research resultsProject Homepage Publications, albums, , methodical guides, management plans, other relevant papers produced by the project Newsletters of project sites and the local initiatives

Annex 6

Cost breakdown template

	Units*	**Rate**	**Total**
Home office			
Desk review			
Briefings by UNDP and PM			
Drafting of the evaluation report			
Validation of preliminary findings with stakeholders through circulation of draft reports for comments, meetings and other types of feedback mechanisms			
Finalization of the evaluation report (incorporating comments received on first draft)			
Mission			
Field visits, interviews, questionnaires, de-briefings			
International travel to and from Vilnius			
Local travel (to be arranged and covered by the project)	n/a	n/a	n/a
DSA (overnights)			
TOTAL			

Estimates are indicated in the TOR, the applicant is requested to review and revise, if applicable.

Annex 2: Agenda of Final Evaluation

October 17, Sunday	
19.15	Arrival of International Consultant at the Vilnius Airport from UK
20.00	Accommodation at the Hotel "Ratonda" Gedimino ave 52/1, Vilnius
October 18, Monday	
9.00–12.00	Overview of the agenda with *Mr Kęstutis Navickas* – National Consultant (at the hotel)
12.00–13.00	Lunch (Holiday Inn)
13.00–17.00	Overview of the agenda. Discussion on the project implementation. *Mr Gediminas Raščius, Ms Milda Dijokienė, Mr Argaudas Stoškus, Ms Lina Jankauskienė* (at Nature Heritage Fund, A. Juozapaviciaus str. 9-919)
October 19, Tuesday	
9.00–10.00	Meeting with a Director of the State Protected Areas Service *Ms Rūta Baškytė* (A. Juozapavičiaus str. 9-502)
10.00–11.00	Meeting with a Deputy Director of the Environmental Protection Agency *Ms Aldona Margerienė* (A. Juozapavičiaus str. 9-912)
11.00–12.00	Meeting with the representative of of the Ministry of Environment *Mr Donatas Dudutis* – Head of division, Forest Department (A. Juozapavičiaus str. 9-505)
12.00–13.00	Lunch
14.00–15.00	Meeting with a Director of Nature Protection Department *Mr Laimutis Budrys* (A. Jakšto str. 4/9)
15.00–16.00	Meeting with the representatives of the Ministry of Environment: *Mr Vidmantas Bezaras* – director of the Protected Areas and Landscape Department, *Mr Algis Klimavičius* – Head of Protected Areas Strategy Division (A. Jakšto str. 4/9)
17.15	Communication with Maxim Vergeichik at the UNDP Bratislava office
October 20, Wednesday	
9.00–10.00	Meeting with a Head of Reclamation and Biofuel Division of the Ministry of Agriculture *Mr Vytautas Byla* (Gedimino av. 19)
10.00–11.00	Meeting with the representatives of the Ministry of Agriculture *Ms Vilma Daugalienė* – Director of Rural Development Department (Gedimino av. 19)
11.30–12.30	Meeting with Lithuanian Fund for Nature (*Mr Nerijus Zableckis*)
13.00–14.00	Lunch
15.00–17.00	Meeting with leaders of working groups (*Mr Argaudas Stoškus, Mr Šarūnas Gerulaitis, Ms Aušra Birgelytė*)
October 21, Thursday	
7.30	Departure to Žuvintas (140 km)
9.00–10.00	Arrival at Alytus (110). Meeting with *Ms Vilija Vervečkienė* – Head of subdivision (Ministry of the Interior, Alytus county subdivision for

	Regional Development).
11.00–12.00	Departure to Simnas (20 km). Meeting at Simnas ward on organic farming and water pollution prevention issues (*Mr Vytautas Viršilas* – Head of Ward).
13.00–14.00	Lunch (Seirijai). Overview of Žuvintas Lake water regulation system (Simnas and Dusia dams on the way). Meeting with *Mr Arūnas Pranaitis* – Director of the Žuvintas BR
15.00–16.00	Arrival at Žuvintas Biosphere Reserve office. Meeting with local farmers (*Mr Juozas Paulauskas*). Meeting with *Mr Arūnas Pranaitis* – Director of the Žuvintas BR. Discussion on Nature management issues and inspection of visitor infrastructure
19.00	Accommodation in EUROPA ROYALE Marijampole
October 22, Friday	
9.00–10.00	Meeting with *Mr Jonas Kazakevičius*, Marijampolė municipality Discussion on the reconstruction of Amalva polder and other Life+ project issues.
10.30–11.30	Meeting at Marijampolė State Forestry Enterprise office with *Mr Kęstutis Bielskus* – Director, and *Mr Ramūnas Mažėtis* – Forest Engineer. Discussion on nature management in Bukta forest, Amalva mire rehabilitation, INTERREG III B and Life+ project issues.
12.00–13.00	Lunch (Marijampolė)
14.00–15.00	Visit to Amalva mire rehabilitation area and Žuvintas Lake water regulation system (Dovine dam, Amalvas dam)
15.30–16.30	Visit to Bukta forest nature path.
16.30	Departure to Vilnius (140 km)
18.00	Arrival at Vilnius
October 23, Saturday	Day Off
October 24, Sunday	
14.00	Departure to Mažeikiai (290 km)
18.00	Dinner and accommodation in Mažeikiai (Hotel “Palma”)
October 25, Monday	
10.00–11.00	Arrival at Kamanos Strict Nature Reserve office (30 km). Meeting with *Mr Darius Triaušys* – Director and representatives from Akmenė municipality. Discussion on the project outcomes in Kamanos
11.00–12.00	Assessment of Kamanos visitor center
12.30–13.30	Lunch (Akmenė)
14.00–17.00	Visit and assessment of Kamanos nature path, hydrological regime restoration works
17.30	Departure to Tauragė (130 km)
19.30	Dinner and accommodation at Hotel Deizė, in Tauragė

October 26, Tuesday	
9.30–10.30	Meeting at Tauragė State Forestry Enterprise office with *Mr Antanas Gaudiešius* – Deputy Director. Discussion on sustainable forest management in Karšuva forest, Carpercaile reintroduction programme.
11.00	Departure to Eičiai (20 km)
11.30–12.30	Arrival to Viešvilė Strict Nature Reserve office. Meeting with *Mr Algis Butleris* – director, Head of Eičiai village community. Discussion on the project outcomes in Viesvile (Carpercaille reintroduction programme, nature management, cranberry farming). Inspection of Capercaillie breeding facility
13.00–14.00	Lunch (Smalininkai)
14.30–17.00	Site visit to Viesvile Nature Trail and Karšuva forest, with discussion on protected area management
18.00	Dinner and accommodation in Jurbarkas
October 27, Wednesday	
9.30–11.00	Meeting with representatives of Jurbarkas municipality (*Ms Rita Danielienė* – Chief Specialist, *Mr. Jonas Bučinskas* – Director, and *Mr. Arūnas Stasiūnas* – former Deputy Director). Discussion on construction of fish ladders
11.30–14.00	Meeting at Viešvilė (*Mr Valentinas Kucinas* – Head of Ward). Visit to inspect Viesvilė River dams and fish ladders
14.00–15.00	Lunch (Jurbarkas)
15.00	Departure to Marcinkonys (220 km)
18.00	Accommodation at Marcinkonys (Guest house "Ėglis")
October 28, Thursday	
9.00–10.30	Meeting with *Mr Eugenijus Drobelis* – Deputy Director of Dzūkija NP, *Mr. Mindaugas Lapelė* – Head of Division, *Ms Jurga Labanauskienė* – Information Specialist. Discussion on the project outcomes in Čepkeliai
10.30–12.00	Čepkeliai nature path, nature management, visitor infrastructure near by the Kastinis Lake,
12.00–13.00	Lunch (Marcinkonys)
13.00–16.00	Visit to Gribaulia fish ponds and Bee Keeping Museum in Musteika
16.00–17.00	Meeting with representatives of Varėna municipality (*Mr. Alvydas Valeiša* – Vice Mayor, *Ms Svetlana Griškevičienė* – Head of Division, *Mr Antanas Labanauskas* – Ecologist). Discussion on cranberry picking, tourism infrastructure
17.00	Departure to Vilnius (140 km)
17.30	Dinner (Pirčiupiai)
19.00	Arrival at Vilnius and accommodation at the Shakespeare Hotel, Vilnius
October 29, Friday	
11.00–12.00	Meeting with *Mr Ignas Zokas* – director of Spinter Research Ltd.

	Tilto str. 35/4-5, Vilnius
12.00–13.00	Further discussions on project implementation with PIT. *Mr Gediminas Raščius, Ms Milda Dijokienė, Mr Argaudas Stoškus* (at Nature Heritage Fund, A. Juozapaviciaus str. 9-919)
13.00–14.00	Lunch (Cafė "Pilaitė")
14.00–17.00	Continuation of the discussion on the project implementation. *Mr Gediminas Raščius, Ms Milda Dijokienė, Mr Argaudas Stoškus* (at Nature Heritage Fund, A. Juozapaviciaus str. 9-919)
October 30, Saturday	Day Off
October 31, Sunday	Review of notes by international consultant at hotel
November 1, Monday	Public holiday. Review of notes by international consultant at hotel
November 2, Tuesday	
9.00–10.30	Depature to Labanoras Regional Park (90 km)
10.30–11.30	Meeting with staff (*Mr Žydrius Mukulys – Chief Specialist for Landscape Management, Mr Audrius Aliukonis –Chief Ecologist*) of Labanoras Regional Park.
11.30–12.30	Inspection of Labanoras Lake nature trail
12.30–13.00	Lunch (Labanoras)
13.00–17.00	Visit to Girutiškis bog
17.00–18.30	Departure to Vilnius
16.00–18.00	Discussion on the project matters at UNDP office *Ms Ieva Labanauskienė, Ms Lina Jankauskienė*
November 3, Wednesday	
9.00–10.30	Review of material. The Final Evaluation Team work at Baltic Environmental Forum (BEF) office (Užupio str. 9/2-17).
10.30-11.30	Meeting with *Mr Juozas Daukantas* – Managing Director of Petland Industry Association "Lithuanian peat", at BEF office
11.30-13.00	Review of material. The Final Evaluation Team work at BEF office
13.00–14.30	Lunch (cafė "Irmanto Sriubos", A. Jakšto str. 7)
14.30-17.30	Meeting with *Mr Dalius Sungaila* – national Ramsar focal point Discussion on the project matters at UNDP office *Ms Ieva Labanauskienė, Ms Lina Jankauskienė.* Analysis of mission results
November 4, Thursday	
9.00–13.00	Analysis of mission results. The Project Evaluation Team work at BEF office.
13.00–14.00	Lunch
15.00–17.00	Analysis of mission results and preparation of Interim Report to UNDP. The Final Evaluation Team work at BEF office.
November 5, Friday	
10.00–12.30	Presentation of Interim Report to UNDP CO and Project Manager.

	Discussion on the key findings at UNDP office.
12.30	Departure of International Consultant to the Vilnius airport
14.40	Departure of International Consultant to Frankfurt and UK.

Annex 3: List of documents reviewed by the FET

i. Key documents reviewed

- Project Document for the UNDP-GEF project "Conservation of inland wetland biodiversity in Lithuania"
- PDF-B project proposal "Conservation of inland wetland biodiversity in Lithuania"
- Mid-Term Evaluation Report (2008) on the Conservation of inland wetland biodiversity in Lithuania
- Minutes of the Project Steering Committee
- Project Implementation Reviews (2005-2010)
- Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool scoresheets for Cepkelia SNR, Viesvile SNR, Kamanos SNR, Zuvintas BR and Girutiskis SNR
- Cepkeliai SNR Management Plan (2005)
- Forest Management Plan of Taurage State Forest Enterprise (2006).
- Viesvile SNR Management Plan (2006)
- Kamanos SNR Management Plan (2006)
- Zuvintas BR Management Plan (2006)
- Girutiskis Wetland Nature Management Plan (2007)
- Plan for the Management and Restoration of Natura 2000 sites in the Dovine River Basin (2006)
- Akmene Municipality Council decision No T-141 of 20/06/2007 (enabling 79.2 ha of land in buffer zone of the Kamanos reserve took out from privatization).
- Amalva Wetland Nature Management Plan (2007)
- The amendments (regulating cranberry picking by locals) to the Rules on visiting of strict nature reserves issued by the State Protected Areas Service (2009)
- Rules on preparation and approval of management plans for strict nature reserves (approved by the Ministry of Environment (2002))
- UNDP (2009). Handbook on planning, monitoring and evaluating for development results, UNDP 2009
- Financial Audit Report 2009
- Other PIT documents including Project Work Plans, and financial statements for Project

ii. Other documents reviewed

- National Long-Term Development Strategy (2002)
- National Sustainable Development Strategy (2009)
- Action Plan of the National Environmental Protection Strategy (1996)
- Agriculture and Rural Development Strategy (2000)
- National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (1998)
- Lithuanian Forestry Policy and Strategy for Its Implementation (2002)
- Law on Environmental Protection (1992, latest edition 2010)
- Law on Environmental Monitoring (1997, latest edition 2006)
- Law on Forests (1994, latest edition 2009)
- Rules on visiting of Strict Nature Reserves (2004)

Annex 4: List of interviewed people

No.	Name	Position	Institution
1.	Ruta Baskyte	Director	State protected areas service
2.	Nerijus Zitkevicius	Head of environmental protection and management division	State protected areas service
3.	Dalia Cebatariunaite	Chief specialist of environmental protection and management division	State protected areas service
4.	Aldona Margeriene	Deputy director	Environmental protection agency
5.	Donatas Dudutis	Head of forest development division	Forestry department
6.	Laimutis Budrys	Director of nature protection department	Ministry of Environment
7.	Vidmantas Bezaras	Director of protected areas and landscape department	Ministry of Environment
8.	Algirdas Klimavicius	Head of protected areas strategy division	Ministry of Environment
9.	Vytautas Byla	Head of land reclamation and biofuel division	Ministry of Agriculture
10.	Vilma Daugaliene	Director of rural development department	Ministry of Agriculture
11.	Jolanta Zutautiene	Head of compensations and investments division	Ministry of Agriculture
12.	Nerijus Zableckis	Executive director	Lithuanian Fund for Nature
13.	Lina Jankauskienė	Project assistant	Nature Heritage Fund
14.	Gediminas Rascius	Director	Nature Heritage Fund
15.	Argaudas Stoskus	Projects manager	Nature Heritage Fund
16.	Milda Dijokiene	Financial manager	Nature Heritage Fund
17.	Ausra Birgelyte	Education and information officer	Nature Heritage Fund
18.	Sarunas Gerulaitis	Head of primary, ethics and social education	Education development centre
19.	Vilija Verveckiene	Liquidator	Alytus county administrator
20.	Vytautas Virsilas	Head of ward	Simnas ward
21.	Arunas Pranaitis	Director	Zuvintas biosphere reserve
22.	Juozas Paulauskas	Farmer	Juozas Paulauskas farm
23.	Eugenijus Alesius	Head of rural economy	Marijampole municipality
24.	Jonas Kazakevicius	Specialist for land reclamation	Marijampole municipality
25.	Kestutis Bielskus	Director	Marijampole Forest enterprise
26.	Ramunas Mazeikis	Forest planting and protection engineer	Marijampole Forest enterprise
27.	Darius Trausys	Director	Kamanos strict nature reserve
28.	Kristina Grigaliuniene	Chief specialist for information	Kamanos strict nature reserve
29.	Ausra Urboniene	Chief ecologist	Kamanos
30.	Svajunas Vilkas	Ecologist	Akmene municipality
31.	Antanas Gaudiesius	Chief forester	Taurage Forest enterprise
32.	Algis Butleris	Director	Viesvile strict nature reserve
33.	Danute Dapkiene	Chairperson	Eiciunai local community
34.	Jonas Bucinskas	Administration director	Jurbarkas municipality
35.	Rita Daneliene	Chief specialist of investment and strategic planning division	Jurbarkas municipality
36.	Arunas Stasiunas	Director	Jurbarkas Local Action Group
37.	Valentinas Kucinas	Head of Ward	Viesvile Ward
38.	Asta Useliene	Ecologist	Viesvile strict nature reserve
39.	Eugenijus Drobelis	Deputy director	Dzukija national park and Cepkeliai strict nature reserve directorate
40.	Mindaugas Lapele	Head of nature division	Dzukija national park and Cepkeliai strict nature reserve directorate
41.	Alvydas Valeisa	Vice-mayor	Varena municipality
42.	Svetlana Griskeviciene	Head of investment division	Varena municipality
43.	Antanas Labanauskas	Ecologist	Varena municipality
44.	Ignas Zokas	Director	“Spinter tyrimai” JSC
45.	Dalius Sungaila	Chief specialist (RAMSAR focal point)	Ministry of Environment
46.	Zydrius Mukulys	Specialist for landscape management	Aukstaitija national park and Labanoras regional park directorate
47.	Audrius Aliukonis	Ecologist	Aukstaitija national park and Labanoras regional park directorate
48.	Ieva Labanauskiene	Communication officer	UNDP CO Lithuania
49.	Juozas Daukantas	Executive Director	Association of Peat extraction enterprises "Lietuviskos durpes
50.	Maxim Vergeichik	Regional Technical Advisor	UNDP-GEF, Bratislava

Annex 5: Key threats and root causes/barriers to the five Project sites (from Project Document)

Site	Threats	Roots causes/barriers
Cepkeliai (Area: 11,212 ha)	1) Increasing numbers of visitors during the cranberry-picking season disturb wildlife and damage significant areas of raised bog vegetation cover. 2) Overgrowth of meadows in Katra River valley due to cessation of mowing, and haying, and land abandonment	1.1) The current system of permits to collect cranberries and mushrooms has proven unable to address the problem of disturbance. Only local people can apply for these permits, which are not tradable or transferable - they cannot be sold to non-locals. However, the origin of disturbance is mainly from non-locals who can come from as far as Vilnius; 1.2) Low public awareness regarding reserve regulations and importance of biodiversity; 1.3) Low enforcement levels of reserve regulations; 2) Gradual abandonment of agricultural activities;
Kamanos (Area: 3,935 ha)	1) Extensive drainage of the bog; 2) Overgrowth of bog areas with vegetation given change in hydraulic regime;	1) The strict nature reserve is bordered on the north and south by a farming belt. Drainage canals extend inside the reserve, which results in extensive drainage of the bog area. While the authorities can legally block the canals within the strict nature reserve, this action alone would be insufficient. Because of the particular location of farms relative to the bog, it is also necessary to block several canals outside the reserve, something that will require the cooperation of affected farmers; 2) The root cause is the change in the hydraulic regime (see 1 above), which favors colonization by trees.
Viesvile (Area: 3,216 ha)	1) Intensive forestry activities around the reserve cause a negative impact on the reserve because of disturbance to species/habitat and change in the landscape mosaic; 2) Two small dams in the Lower Viesvile creek negatively impact habitat for a species of global significance, by impeding migration and spawning along the river. 3) Disturbance from cranberry picking and tourism; 3) Water, solid waste and pesticide pollution;	1) Logging by the State Forestry Company around Viesvile complies with existing laws and regulations. The reserve has little leverage to force a biodiversity favorable solution on the State Forestry Company. This situation is also observed in other nature reserves around the country; 2) Dams were built without EIAs; 3) Viesvile is a relatively new strict nature reserve, and conflicts with local inhabitants occur regarding restrictions on land use. In addition, the reserve is not able to enforce its own regulations; 4) Inappropriate infrastructure for waste handling and treatment;
Zuvintas (Area: 18,490 ha)	1) An altered hydraulic regime in the catchment has a negative impact on the preservation of wetland biodiversity 2) Water pollution; 3) Overgrowth by woody vegetation in bogs, meadows and fens;	1) There is insufficient coordination and information exchange between the authorities in charge of managing the hydraulic regime in the Dovine River basin and the reserve authorities. In addition, part of the water regulatory infrastructure is out of use and impedes circulation of water; 2.1) Farmers have an insufficient technical and financial capacity to adopt techniques that minimize impact on wetlands; 2.2) Deficient infrastructure for treatment of waste water from villages; 3.1) A disturbed hydraulic regime and agricultural runoff favor eutrophication; 3.2.) A changed hydraulic regime favors colonization of bogs and fens by trees and bushes; 3.3.) Abandonment of traditional agricultural practices results in growth of woody vegetation in meadows
Girutiskis (Area: 1,483 ha)	1) Disturbance from tourism; 2) Drainage of the bog; 3) Overgrowth of open bog habitats with trees;	1.) The area is a popular destination for tourists and the reserve is ill prepared to deal with existing tourist flows; 1.2) The reserve shows insufficient capacity to enforce its own regulations; 2) There are two drainage canals in Balinės and Aisputiškio raised bogs that have changed the hydraulic regime of the reserve; 3) A changed hydraulic regime allows trees to colonize open bog habitats;

Annex 6: List of key Project publications

- Leaflet “Conservation of Inland Wetland Biodiversity in Lithuania”, in Lithuanian, 2004.
- Drobelis, E. “Cepkeliai”, in Lithuanian and English, 2005.
- Kunskas, R. “Ezeru ir pelkiu ekosistemu raida” (Development of Lake and Bog Ecosystems), 2005.
- Daubaras R. “Stambiauogių spanguolių plantacinis auginimas” (Cranberry cultivation), 2005
- Didelyte, G. and Grigaite, O. “Raiste” (In the Marsh), 2005.
- “Turisto vadovas po Meteliu–Zuvinto krasta” (Tourist guide for Meteliai-Zuvintas region), 2006.
- Booklet “Zuvintas Biosphere Reserve”, in Lithuanian, 2006.
- Zingstra, H. (final edit), Gulbinas, Z., Kitnaes, K, Querner, E., Povilaitis, A., Rašomavičius, V. (2006) Management and Restoration of Natura 2000 sites in the Doviner River Basin. Wageningen International, The Netherlands.
- Newsleter “Management Plan for the Dovine River Basin”, in Lithuanian, 2006.
- Leaflet “Zuvintas Biosphere Reserve Management Plan”, in Lithuanian, 2006.
- Leaflet “Zuvintas Biosphere Reserve” in Lithuanian, 2006.
- Mats Rosengren and Kenneth Franzén “BEST PRACTICE advice and help when building in nature for visitors“, translation into Lithuanian, 2007.
- Photo album “Zuvintas”, 2007.
- Newsleter “Management of Cepkeliai Strict Nature Reserve”, in Lithuanian, 2007.
- Leaflet “Cepkeliai Strict Nature Reserve” in Lithuanian and English, 2007.
- Leaflet “Kamanos Strict Nature Reserve” in Lithuanian, 2007.
- Leaflet “Zuvintas Biosphere Reserve” in Lithuanian, 2007.
- Photo album “Kamanos”, 2008.
- Newsletter “Viesvile Srict Nature Reserve” in Lithuanian, 2008.
- Leaflet “PAN park - what is it?” in Lithuanian, 2009.
- Photo album “Viesvile”, 2009.

Annex 7: List of Project Steering Committee Members

Name, surname	Position	Institution	Duration
Mr Albertas Vasiliauskas	Vice minister, Committee Chairman	Ministry of Environment	From 15th June 2004 to 17th December 2007
Mr Laimutis Budrys	Director of Department, Committee Chairman	Ministry of Environment, Nature Conservation Department	From 15th June 2004 until now
Ms Rūta Baškytė	Director, Committee Deputy Chairman	State Protected Areas Service	From 15th June 2004 until now
Mr Vytautas Byla	Head of Division	Ministry of Agriculture	From 15th June 2004 until now
Mr Donatas Dudutis	Head of Forestry Development Division	Ministry of Environment Forest Department	From 15th June 2004 until now
Mr Gintautas Indriūnas	Head of Division	State Tourism Department under the Ministry of Economy	From 15th June 2004 until now
Ms Lina Jankauskienė	Programme Officer	United Nations Development Programme Lithuanian Office	From 15th June 2004 to 6th April 2010
Ms Ieva Labanauskienė	Communication Officer	United Nations Development Programme Lithuanian Office	From 6th April 2010 until now
Mr Algirdas Klimavičius	Head of Protected Areas Strategy Division	Ministry of Environment, Nature Conservation Department	From 15th June 2004 until now
Ms Aldona Margerienė	Deputy Director	Environmental Protection Agency	From 15th June 2004 until now
Ms Indre Venckunaite	GEF Operational Focal Point	Ministry of Environment	From 15th June 2004 to 17th December 2007
Ms Jolita Meilūnė	GEF Operational Focal Point	Ministry of Environment	From 17th December 2007 until now
Ms Irena Pilypienė	Head of Environment Division	Government of the Republic of Lithuania	From 15th June 2004 until now
Mr Jonas Karpavicius	National Focal Point for Ramsar Convention	Ministry of Environment	From 15th June 2004 to 5th May 2008
Mr Dalius Sungaila	National Focal Point for Ramsar Convention	Ministry of Environment	From 5th May 2008 until now

Annex 8: Linkage with other Projects and associated co-financing

Project name	Time frame	Budget	Funding source	Main Implementing Agencies	Project Manager	Goals	Relation with UNDP/GEF Project
LIT/01/G41 Conservation of Inland Wetland Biodiversity in Lithuania	05 2001 – 05 2003	250,000 $	UNDP-GEF	NHF	Gediminas Rascius	Preparation of project proposal for the GEF financing for the implementation of the second project stage; development of a strategy for conservation of biological diversity in 5 wetlands and nature management plans of particular measures in the project sites in Lithuania	GEF Council endorsed the financing strategy for project implementation. Memorandum of Contract for the implementation of the Project No LIT/03/G31 "Conservation of Inland Wetland Biodiversity in Lithuania" signed among the UNDP, the MoE and the GEF on 30 of March, 2004.
Waste Management in recreational zones of Labanoras RP	01 02 2003 – 31 12 2003	10,400 €	DANCEE	NGO society „Atgaja"	Andrejus Gaidamaviciu s	Development effective waste handling system in recreational zones of Labanoras RP	Main attention during the UNDP/GEF project implementation will focus to manage the uncontrolled recreational problems at the vicinities of Girutiškis reserve
LIT/02/14 Adaptation of Grybaulia fishery ponds for protection of birds and promotion of ornithological tourism	13 02 2003– 30 07 2004	509,600 LTL	GEF SGP	NGO Biodiversity Information Center „Biota"	Eugenijus Drobelis	Adaptation of Grybaulia fishery ponds for protection of birds and promotion of ornithological tourism; implementation of the planned measures for biodiversity protection and restoration	UNDP/GEF project allocated financial resources to adapt Grybaulia fishery ponds for birds' protection and promotion of ornithological tourism. Financial resources used to execute biotechnical works, establish educational paths, installation of visual information and procurement of equipment for public visitor center
Establishment of the recreational zone at the lakeshore Kastinis	03 2003 – 12 2003	12,000 LTL	Varėna district municipality	Lithuanian University of Agriculture	Antanas Ciunys	Investigations of Lake Kastinis drafting a project proposal for its reclamation and management of the lakeshore	Upon implementation of the project, UNDP/GEF will allocate finances to procure recreational equipment for Lake Kastinis
PPA02/LT/9/2 Capacities building for promotion and implementation of agro-environmental program in Lithuania	04 2003 – 09 2004	378,000 €	Senter	DLV Agriconsult, Avalon, DLV Plant, DLG, Lithuanian Fund for Nature	Mark Redman	Institutional capacities building (both at national and local levels), which are necessary for the effective & complete implementation of the EU agrarian environmental measures in Lithuania	Žuvintas BR was a pilot project site. Based on examples of Žuvintas BR and Dovine River basin, the possibilities of agro-environmental measures were explored in order to meet obligations maintaining favorable conservation status of Natura 2000 territories in Lithuania
Wetland Management and Public Information *	01 05 2003 – 01 09 2004	590,000 SEK	SEPA	County administration of Västra Götaland, Sweden	Peder Hedberg Fält	Organize educational business trip for national PAs specialists to South of Sweden getting acquainted with protection and management of lakes and wetlands in Sweden. Foreign experts shared their experiences during the seminar in Žuvintas	Knowledge obtained was applied for the implementation of restoration and conservation activities in wetlands and shallow lakes. The guidelines for the management of Žuvintas Lake plus adjacent wetlands and public education and information were prepared. Directorate of Žuvintas BR obtained equipment for observations of nature

Project name	Time frame	Budget	Funding source	Main Implementing Agencies	Project Manager	Goals	Relation with UNDP/GEF Project
Management and Restoration of Natura 2000 sites through the Integrated River Basin Plan for Dovine River, Lithuania *	01 09 2003 – 31 05 2006	485,900 €	Dutch PIN-Matra programme	IAC – International Agricultural Center, Netherlands	Henk Zingstra	Restoration of natural water level in Dovinė river basin, pollution prevention, conservation of environmental values at Žuvintas Lake and adjacent wetlands, rehabilitation of the drained Amalvas wetland	GEF financial resources will be concentrated for the implementation of the targeted measures at Žuvintas BR and the surrounding territories.
LI0116.01.01.0010 Preparation of the Management Plan for Cepkeliai Reserve as an integral part of the Management Plan for Cepkeliai-Kotra trans-boundary Wetland of International importance *	15 11 2003 – 15 11 2004	48,208 €, from which 27,378 € EU Phare funds	EU Phare SPF	NHF	Argaudas Stoskus	To ensure long-term biodiversity conservation in Cepkeliai–Kotra trans-boundary wetland, strengthening bilateral co-operation between Lithuania and Belarus, to prepare nature management plan for Čepkeliai SNR	Preparation of the management plan for Čepkeliai SNR. The drafted nature management plan will be implemented employing UNDP/GEF project financial resources
Development of the Management Plans for the Protected Areas of Lithuania	05 2004– 10 2005	1,275,000 € from which 64,600 LTL for final preparation of management plans for project sites and 139,000 LTL for equipment	EU Phare	Rambøll	Jan Durinck	Development of nature management plans for Natura 2000 territories	There were developed final drafts of management plans for UNDP/GEF project sites (Kamanos and Viešvilė SNRs, Girutiškis reserve, Žuvintas BR) upon implementation of the indicated project. The developed management plans will be implemented employing financial resources of UNDP/GEF project
29520 A LI Sustainable usage of the forest resources – finding consensus among economical, ecological and social forest functions *	01 2004– 08 2004	?	NMCP	NMCP	Albertus Schotveld	Based on sustainable usage of forest resources, evaluate the actual status, delivering the recommendations for improving preparation of forest management projects	Development of sustainable forest management project for Karšuva forest, thus enabling to improve practical skills for preparation of other similar forest management projects
SISF 011 Sustainable usage of the forest resources – finding consensus among economical, ecological and social forest functions *	04 2004– 06 2005	246,140 SEK	SIDA	Regional Forest administration of Östra County Götaland, Sweden	Bo Thor	Based on sustainable usage of forest resources, evaluate the actual status, delivering the recommendations for improving preparation of forest management projects	Development of sustainable forest management project for Karšuva forest, thus enabling to improve practical skills for preparation of other similar forest management projects
LIT/04/05 Promotion of ecological farming in the protected wetlands of Žuvintas BR	30 06 2004– 30 09 2005	4,100 LTL	GEF SGP	NGO Society "Lietuvai pa-gražinti d-ja", Simnas division Alytus county	Lina Virsilienė	Protection of biological diversity, involving the local community into the nature management activities	Conservation of open biotopes in Žuvintas BR

Project name	Time frame	Budget	Funding source	Main Implementing Agencies	Project Manager	Goals	Relation with UNDP/GEF Project
Bird rich wetlands of international importance, nature reserves and cultural landscapes as resources for sustainable developments in rural areas *	08 2004 – 08 2007	3,991,452 €, from which 408,748 € Lithuanian part	INTERREG III B	County administration of Västra Götaland, Sweden	Jan Lundegrén	Strengthen the natural and cultural roles in the rural development: conservation, management and territorial planning of these areas and development of eco-tourism Dovinė River basin was proposed as a pilot area from Lithuanian side	Strengthened participation of local communities in the promotion of ecological tourism, promoted the nature management measures in Dovine River basin, modernized infrastructure for educational tourism and strengthened ecological education
Development of public infrastructure for tourism in Southern part of Labanoras RP	11 2004–09 2005	93,745 €, from which 52,581 € EU Phare funds	Phare	Labanoras RP	JSC „Eldra“	Prepare the project documentation for development of public infrastructure for tourism in Southern part of Labanoras RP	Technical project for public visitor center in Januliškis was prepared, which implementation will be co-funded by Wetlands Project
LIFE05NAT/LT/000094 Protection of Emys orbiculiaris and Amphibians in North European Lowlands	01 2005–12 2009	2,346,185 €, from which 350 000 € Lithuanian part (~ ⅓ for Zuvintas BR)	Life Nature	Lithuanian Fund for Nature	Pranas Mierauskas	Nature management activities to protect rare reptiles and amphibians	Nature management activities improving living conditions for local populations. Local inhabitants will have opportunities to promote cattle breeding, thus enabling long-lasting supervision of meadows.
Inscription of Žuvintas Biosphere Reserve into the global network of UNESCO program „Man and Biosphere” *	25 04 2005–01 12 2005	46,604 LTL	UNESCO	NHF	Gediminas Raščius	Preparation of Žuvintas BR nomination for inscription into the global network of UNESCO program „Man and Biosphere”	Upon inscription of Žuvintas BR into the international UNESCO network of Protected Areas, the national PA will have full rights enabling to participate in its activities. That will stimulate promotion of ecological tourism in a region. International acknowledgment will enable to receive additional financial donors in Žuvintas BR.
LIT/05/04 Promotion of traditional beekeeping and conservation of natural meadows in Musteikos village	07 2005–07 2006	175,970 LTL, from which 60,840 LTL GEF funds	GEF SGP	NGO Biodiversity Information Center „Biota“		Promotion of traditional beekeeping and conservation of natural meadows in Musteikos village	Musteikos village was chosen as a pilot area for promotion of traditional entrepreneurships nearby Čepkeliai SNR. UNDP/GEF project will finance drafting of a technical project for establishment of beekeeping museum homestead, construction of beehives, and preparation of visual information.
LIT/05/11 Protection and Reproduction of Black Grouse and Wood Grouse (Capercallie) in Dzukija Ntional Park	07 2005–08 2007	281,500 LTL, from which 139,000 LTL GEF funds	GEF SGP	Society for conservation of biological diversity „Gamtos namai“	Eugenijus Drobelis	Protection of blackcock and capercaillie population in Dzūkija NP	Construction of the breeding–grounds for capercaillie, i.e. the main building, aviaries for the birds and their younglings, fences in Viesvile
2003/005.877.01.010029 Integrating Dzukija National Park and Cepkeliai Nature Reserve into a common tourism area in the border regions of Lithuania and Poland *	30 11 2005–31 10 2006	299,976 €, from which 204,379 € Phare funds	EU Phare	Administration of Varėna municipality	Algis Miškinis	Development of recreational infrastructure in Dzukijos NP and Cepkeliai SNR	Reclamation and cleaning of Kastinis lake installing recreational zone there. Rehabilitation and equipment of public visitor center in Čepkeliai SNR, reconstruction of educational nature path in the bog

Project name	Time frame	Budget	Funding source	Main Implementing Agencies	Project Manager	Goals	Relation with UNDP/GEF Project
LIT/OP3/01/06/20 Innovative usage of bio-fuel resources for heating of Simnas, and improving ecological status of Žuvintas BR and other adjacent lakes	03 2006–03 2008	456,696 LTL, from which 145,700 LTL GEF funds	GEF SGP	NGO Society "Lietuvai pagražinti d-ja", Simnas division Alytus county	Lina Virsilienė	Utilization of bio-fuel at Simnas boiler-house. Cutting of flourished reeds along the lakeshores of Žuvintas and other adjacent lakes will be used as bio-fuel for heating of Simnas houses during the heating period	Status of Žuvintas BR ecosystem will improve diminishing air pollution
BPD2004-ERPF-1.3.0-04-05/0003 Management and Protection of National Protected Areas 2	30 06 2006–30 062008	Reconstruction of Žuvintas BR visitor center: 2,490,000 LTL, Visitor center of Kamanos SNR: 1,362,500 LTL; Nature management in Zuvintas BR 140,000 LTL	EU structural funds (75%), State budget (25%)	SPAS	Eduardas Vaitkevicius	Implementation of nature management measures and development of educational recreation infrastructure in Lithuanian Protected Areas (PAs)	Reconstruction of visitor centers in Žuvintas BR and Kamanos SNR. Nature management activities in Epušė and Liepakojai wetlands
LIT/OP3/02/06/10 Conservation of the Rare Birds in Kamanos SNR through the Development of the Public Environmental Awareness *	11 12 2006–10 2008	157,400 LTL, from which 89,430 LTL GEF funds and 67,970 LTL MoE allocation	GEF SGP, MoE	NHF	Ausra Birgelyte	Conservation of rare bird species in Kamanos SNR, promoting activities of visitor center	Implementation of nature management activities in Kamanos SNR, public awareness and information. There will be established public visitor center in the lodgings of reserve's directorate (exposition for natural values – 45 m², hall for seminars – 29 m² and classroom of natural sciences – 24 m²). It was elaborated educational curricula for the school of natural sciences.
LIT/OP3/02/06/12 Development of Ecological Tourism in the Zuvintas Biosphere Reserve	12 2006–05 2008	423 786 LTL, including 97 874 LTL GEF SGP contribution and 65 751 LTL MoE funds	GEF SGP, MoE	Žuvinto bičiulių klubas (Zuvintas friends club)	Gytis Salys	Promote eco-tourism in Zuvintas BR and control visitors flows in the areas important to nesting and migration of birds, involve local communities into development of eco-tourism activities, encourage provision of information and services to tourists	A bird watching tower and two platforms were constructed. Favorable conditions for nesting and breading of Great Bittern and Western Marsh maintained in a 1.5 ha territory nearby nature path. Local exhibition - fair as well as seminar on production of souvenirs to tourists organized for local craftsman.
BPD2004-ZOFP-04.9.0-10-06/0001 Restoration of Passing Route for Sea Trout and other Migratory Fish in the Viesvile River *	01 09 2007–30 08 2008	390 698 LTL, including 293 023 LTL of EU funds and 97 674 LTL as budget contribution	EU structural funds (75%), LTU budget (25%)	Jurbarkas municipality	Martynas Kursevičius	Construction of fish ladder on the Viesvile River dam.	Fish bypass constructed on Viesvile river dam, equipment purchased for scientific monitoring of migratory fish. Fish bypass construction project was prepared using GEF funds.

Project name	Time frame	Budget	Funding source	Main Implementing Agencies	Project Manager	Goals	Relation with UNDP/GEF Project
LIT/OP3/02/07/25 Implementation of the Integrated Measures for the Reintroduction of Capercaillie Population in Karsuva Forest *	18 10 2007–10 2008	171 530 LTL, including 95 000 LTL GEF SGP funds	GEF SGP, MoE	Eiciai village community „Karšuva“	Saulius Bartminas	Implementation of nature management activities for reintroduction of Capercaillie in Karsuva Forest, protection of European importance „Natura 2000“ habitats.	Nature trail established, natural meadows maintained, equipment, such as haymaker and hay raking machine purchased for this purpose. Spruce underbrush removed in Capercaillie breeding areas (30 ha).
4F 08-58 Feasibility Study and Recommendations for Rehabilitation of Wetlands with an Aim to Reduce Flows of Organic and Biogenic Substances into Water Reservoirs	05 06 2008–15 06 2009	225 000 LTL	Environmental Protection Agency	Nature Heritage Fund	Zenonas Gulbinas	Feasibility study and recommendations for rehabilitation of wetlands in order to reduce flows of organic and biogenic substances into water reservoirs	Elaboration of methodic recommendations for reductions of flows of organic and biogenic substances into water reservoirs
Sewerage System Development in Simnas, Alytus district	14 08 2008	8 694 168 LTL	EU Cohesion Fund, Alytus district municipality	Private business company „Pireka“	Linas Piliponis	To lay on new sewerage network in northern part of Simnas, to construct local sewage pump-house.	Improved water quality in Dovine basin and Zuvintas lake
LIFE07 NAT/LT 000530 Restoring Hydrology in Amalvas and Žuvintas Wetlands (Wetlands back to Life)*	01 01 2009–31 03 2012	1 603 996 €, including 801 998 € EU funds and 400 999 € MoE co-funding	LIFE+	Nature Heritage Fund in partnership with Zuvintas BR, Marijampole municipality and Marijampole State Forest Enterprise	Argaudas Stoškus	To preserve wetland habitats in Natura 2000 territories (7110, 7120, 9080, 91D0). Develop educational tourism infrastructure, strengthen ecological education in Zuvintas BR, promote sustainable development of the region.	Implementation of measures aimed at restoration of natural water regime in Zuvintas lake and rehabilitation of drained Amalvas bog.
2004-LT0008-NVO-1EEE/NOR-02-056 Capacity Building through the Preparation of the Nature Guide Training Programme Supporting Nature Tourism Development Within Protected Areas *	11-06-2009–00-06-2010	145 111,11 LTL, including 130 570,98 LTL Norwegian grant other funds – partner contributions	Norway grants project	Nature Heritage Fund in partnership with Varena district municipality and Dzukija National Park	Aušra Birgelytė	Development of Nature guides training program aiming at promotion of educational tourism. Development and promotion of partnerships among local communities, NGOs as well as science and education institutions. Elaboration of public information measures concerning Nature guides training program and educational tourism services and opportunities.	Nature guides training program aiming at promotion of educational tourism and contributing to advancement of socio-economic conditions in Dzukija region.

Project name	Time frame	Budget	Funding source	Main Implementing Agencies	Project Manager	Goals	Relation with UNDP/GEF Project
LLII-062 Environmental Education Network for Sustainable Communities *	01-01-2010–30-06-2011	201 006 €, including ERDF funding of 170 855,10 €	Latvia–Lithuania cross border cooperation programme	Nature Heritage Fund in partnership with Kamanos SNR and Tetervete forest education center	Aušra Birgelytė	Promotion and development of environmental education as well as cooperation among partners for delivery of education.	Additional financial resources for establishment of exposition of Kamanos SNR visitors center, promotion of collaboration between Kamanos SNR and district schools , cooperation with partners in Latvia.

Source: PIT. * = projects initiated by the UNDP/GEF PIT

Annex 9: Detailed analysis of Achievement of the Project's Outcomes

Outcome 1: Wetland biodiversity protected in Cepkeliai Strict Nature Reserve
The main threats identified during the PDF-B phase at this site were: (1) increasing number of visitors (particularly non-locals) during the cranberry picking season causing disturbance to wildlife and damage to significant areas of the raised bog areas; (2) Overgrowth of meadows in the Katra River Valley due to cessation of mowing and hay-making and abandonment of the land (people leaving rural areas). The main activities undertaken by the Project to address these threats are discussed below.

i. Management Plan (indicator 8 - Management plan developed and under implementation)
A draft management plan was produced during the PDF-B phase for Cepkeliai, which was completed with GEF Project funding and approved by the Minister of Environment in October 2005 (although this is not listed as a specific activity in the section on Cepkeliai in the Project Document but is mentioned in other parts of the Project Document). The Plan sets out the legal basis for activities at the SNR - without a management plan there can be no management activities – so it was crucial to implementation of the other GEF Project activities at the site (although only 2% of the SNR area requires active management under the plan). It was the first of its kind for Lithuania and has served as a model for the other four Project sites.

The plan has also helped the reserve staff with development of an application to include Cepkeliai (and Dzukija National Park) within the PAN Parks initiative[55]. Interviewees claimed that not only did the management plan set out what they need to do in a coherent way which helps with their work planning but the existence of a management plan enables them to access funds, e.g. the government's Environmental Protection Support Programme now provides money for management activities at the site.

In order to get an indication of the effectiveness of management at the site, a GEF Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool (METT) form has completed three times for the site[56]. The score has increased from the baseline of 60.7 in 2004 to 70.2 by end of October 2010 suggesting that there had been a significant improvement in management at the site.

ii. Tradable Cranberry Collection Permits (indicator 9 - System of tradable permits for cranberry picking in place)
Cranberry picking by local people has a long tradition at Cepkeliai bog going back probably hundreds of years, and the general attitude has been that anyone should be able to go and pick cranberries mushrooms, or other wild food. However, after establishment of the Cepkeliai SNR access to the bog was strictly forbidden, so a cranberry picking permit system was established. During the Soviet period this system was abused e.g. licences were issued to political officials from outside the region and often buses of pickers would come from Vilnius under one of these permits, which undermined the control rationale behind the permit system.

As a result, illegal over-harvesting of cranberries became a problem and was identified as a key threat to the Cepkeliai SNR during the PDF B phase. The proposed action to address the problem was to introduce a system of cranberry collection licences that would be issued only to local people but which could be traded so holders could increase their income (considered particularly important as many locals are elderly or underemployed), thereby offering an incentive to protect the cranberry resource and manage it sustainably.

The social and economic situation affecting Cepkeliai has changed significantly in the last 10 years, with the local population decreasing due to many young people leaving the region for jobs elsewhere (e.g. 50% decrease in population near Cepkeliai SNR in last 10 years) and the economic situation of many people improving during the economic boom of the mid-2000s. This has apparently impacted the level of cranberry picking as there are less young, able people interested in collecting cranberries (hard physically demanding work) and many people no longer needed to collect cranberries to supplement their diet. These factors are reflected in the reduced number of licences issued in recent years, down from 1,425 in 1999 to just 563 in 2009 (see Figure 1)[57]. According to FE interviews, the SNR is no longer

[55] PAN Parks is a European-wide organisation focusing on the protection of wilderness areas, through an integrated approach combining wilderness protection and sustainable tourism development. PAN Parks provides effective third-party certification system under WCPA (World Commission on Protected Areas) Framework for Management Effectiveness. PAN Parks sets an important benchmark for high standards in protected area management. The certification is based on verification carried out by independent experts, in accord with PAN Parks quality standards. There are five PAN Parks principles; covering relevant wilderness protection, social, economic and cultural aspects. These ensure high standards of management for both conservation and sustainable development and the existence of a wilderness area without human intervention. Principles allow for objective verification and transparency. The verification procedure includes three elements: verification of the protected area, its Sustainable Tourism Strategy and the local business partners. See http://www.panparks.org/.

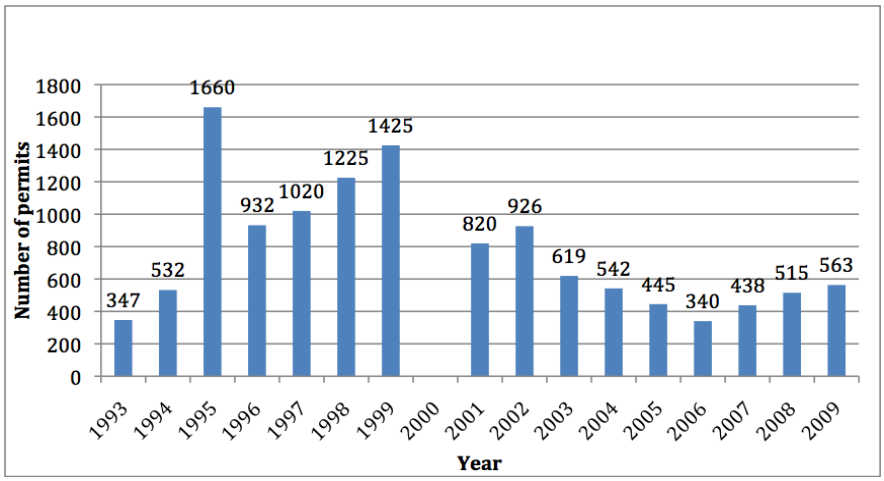
[56] These were completed for all five Project sites - once during the visit of the RTA in 2007 (but using data from the start of project implementation, so baseline was reconstructed), again just before the MTE in late 2007, and finally just before the FE (reviewed and revised by the PM and FET during the FE) in October 2010.

[57] Cranberry picking was down again in 2010 but in part because of heavy prolonged summer rains made access to the best areas of the bog much more difficult.

considered threatened by illegal cranberry picking and protected area managers consider the current level of collection to be 'sustainable' (it is not clear how the ecological 'carrying capacity' was calculated but it seems to have been based on just the number of paths created in the bog). Indeed, interviewees stated that in 10-20 years time there is likely to be virtually no interest in the activity (although the FET notes that the local social and economic situation could change). However, mushroom collecting is popular and indeed much easier and more valuable than collecting cranberries.

Due to this declining interest there was no real enthusiasm for developing the tradable permitting system and it was not developed as a Project activity. FE interviews revealed that the original idea did not originate locally, but was suggested by UNDP-GEF staff and there was little local ownership, and importantly, no detailed feasibility study involving locals at the PDFB stage. Also, there was no other example in Lithuania so stakeholders were not sure how it would operate.

Figure 1: Number of cranberry collection licences issued for Cepkeliai bog since 1993



Source: Cepkeliai SNR report

There has been some criticism of the way permits have been issued in the past – some villages distant from the SNR have been awarded licences, whilst others much closer to the Reserve have not and decision-making has not been transparent or fair (under old arrangement, villages which had been taking hay form the reserve were permited to pick cranberries, those that didn't weren't). The MTE made the recommendation that the Project should '*provide the MoE and local municipalities with technical assistance to identify and implement international CBNRM models to demonstrate a regulatory framework for equitable and sustainable cranberry harvest within Cepkeliai reserve'.* In response, the PIT initiated discussions with representatives from the Varena municipality, the SSPA, Dzukija National Park and Cepkeliai SNR to develop transparent criteria for awarding permits[58]. As a result, the SPAS updated the relevant regulations (order issued on 29/12/2004, amendment under SPAS order No V142 issued on 01/09/1009) with revised criteria (e.g. villages located in Dzukija National Park can apply for permits) and an additional 10 villages are now included eligible. So the Project has contributed to development of fairer regulations governing which villages could apply for permits.

iii. Habitat Enhancement Program (indicator 10 - Cutting of vegetation in bogs, meadows and open sands)
Various activities were funded through the Project to enhance wetland habitats within Cepkeliai SNR. These included purchase of a tractor to help with mowing of wet meadows along the Katra Valley (which had been abandoned by farmers and need to be managed for the birds *Crex crex* and *Gallingo media*), and clearance of woody vegetation in some areas of the Reserve. The initial goal was to 'restore' 230 ha of habitat, but only a total 96.3 ha was achieved, comprising 51.5 ha of open raised bog, 24.8 ha of meadows and 20 ha of open sandy areas with scarce vegetation. However, the initial target set at the PDF-B phase was not realistic or based on any sound scientific data, and the area targeted by the Project includes the most important areas so the FET considers the habitat restoration activities at the Reserve to be satisfactory and essentially achieved.

[58] A final meeting on improvement of Cranberry picking regulations in Cepkeliai was arranged on 22/07/2009 with participation of representatives from Varena Municipality, Ministry of Environment, State Protected Areas Service (SPAS), Cepkeliai Strict Nature Reserve, Dzukija National Park, and the PIT.

iv. Public Awareness and Tourism (indicator 11 - Statistically significant positive changes in awareness and public support)

The Project has carried a considerable amount of work to facilitate the improvement of public awareness of the Cepkeliai SNR and its value, primarily through activities designed to stimulate destination marketing, improve visitor experience and offer opportunities for education and learning. Cepkeliai and Dzukija receive thousands of visitors each year and visitor management related activities represent approximately 10% of Dzukija National Park's annual operating budget, so these were important Project activities. Significant investment of GEF funds was made to develop nature/interpretative trails with viewing towers for bird watching and the development of a new visitor centers at Cepkeliai with interpretative materials and stands. Interviews revealed that these facilities have been very popular, as they have allowed access to the Reserve, which has been (legally) off limits in recent years. The trail viewed by the FET was well constructed and designed to allow disabled access. Basic field work/nature study equipment was also purchased for the education/interpretation centre at Cepkeliai SNR (it was originally intended for the Marcinkonys village school). Staff from the SNR have visited schools in the area and discussed opportunities with the school principals to create school classes for different age groups under a 'nature in the community' programme, and the Project's financing for the nature trail has helped deliver this.

The Project also helped attract funds from the GEF Small Grants Programme to develop a traditional beekeeping farmstead/interpretative center in Musteika village. This and another project part-funded through the GEF Project – Reconstruction of recreation facilities by the Kastinis lake (Marcinkonys village)[59] – took place outside of the Cepkeliai SNR, but aimed to help regulate the impact of tourism on the SNR and other surrounding sensitive sites.

The Project also commissioned a study on the awareness of the public around Cepkeliai and whether this changed during the lifetime of the Project (see main text). The scores in 2009 were lower than in 2005 when the first survey was undertaken (see main text for likely reasons for the decline and its significance).

Although there was an intention to generate funds from charging entrance fees to Cepkeliai SNR, protected area administrations are not authorized to charge for entry (it is not covered in the legislation, although this is being reviewed). Instead, the administration, like many other protected areas in Lithuania, makes a charge for arranging excursions and guiding groups around the nature trail, and every group requires a guide.

v. Enforcement of Reserve Regulations Strengthened

The Project provided support for road closures and signage, as well as the purchase of a new 4-wheel drive vehicle for the administration. Unfortunately, recent cuts to the state budget (there has been a 20% cut in staff in last two years, with the loss of an accountant and one inspector) have meant that enforcement activities (number of staff days/hours spent in Reserve) have been reduced, although the recent merging of the Directorates of Dzukija National Park and Cepkeliai SNR and more targeting enforcement activities (at areas where illegal entry/cranberry picking are likely to take place) have offset this loss to some extent. The EPA also has inspectors operating in the area but inspection duties are not shared.

vi. Grybaulia Fish Ponds Project

The Project also attempted to promote the development of the Grybaulia fishponds (situated at the boundary of the Dzukija National Park and covering 780 ha), for bird-watching and recreational fishing. The site was included on the Natura 2000 list as habitat for migrating White-tailed Eagles *Haliaeetus albicilla* in 2004, and closed in 2006 due economical reasons. The fishponds are now in private hands and despite lengthy negotiations are not likely to be developed (the current owners are speculating on a rise in price of land and appear to have little interest in the original tourism venture). The site is now largely dry (the fishponds were built on sandy ground and so required expensive pumps to keep them filled with water) and overgrown and its biodiversity value is being lost (which is likely to create problems due to it Natura 2000 listing), and most of the infrastructure at the site has fallen apart. Curiously, Project activities related to the ponds are only mentioned in the workplan of the Project Document but no detail is given. The Project was to invest, together with funds from the GEF SGP programme, in visitor and birdwatching infrastructure, and develop interpretation and information materials, but it appears that no GEF funds were spent.

vii. Other activities

Some activities listed in the Project Document for Cepkeliai were not carried out, e.g. 'Reconstruction of four local homesteads for eco-farming' and 'Establishment of traditional farmstead-tourism centre in Zervynos village'. This is because they relied on large co-financing that was not delivered (and indeed appear only to have been listed in order to produce co-financing for the GEF application), but they were not major activities required to deliver the Project goals for this site.

[59] The Varena municipal council campaigned to have regeneration of Kastinis Lake included as an activity within the GEF Project even though it was outside of SNR. In response, the GEF Project set the activities being funded through GEF for the Nature Trail at Cepkeliai SNR as co-financing for an application for PHARE funds to finance activities at the Lake. The application was successful and the work at the Lake has led to very good relations between the Project and municipality.

Outcome 2: Wetland biodiversity protected in Kamanos Strict Nature Reserve
Key threats to the site identified in Pro Doc were: (1) extensive drainage of the bog for forestry and agricultural purposes; (2) overgrowth of bog areas with vegetation and (3) on-going disturbance from cranberry picking. The firs two threats are still valid but much less than previously and the third has never been a major problem according to interviewees. The main activities undertaken by the Project to address these threats are discussed below.

i. Management plan developed and under implementation (indicator 12 - Management plan developed and under implementation)
The management plan for the Kamanos SNR was developed through the GEF Project and approved by the MoE in May 2006 (OJ, 2006, No 60-2147), and GEF funds have been used for initial implementation. It is different from that for Cepkeliai – it is briefer (one page map with 3-4 pages of narrative text) with a zoning plan showing where different activities should take place and a brief list of management measures and actions and regulations covering activities in the buffer zone[60]. It is considered to be a very useful tool by Reserve staff but it could give more emphasis to the buffer zone, which is difficult to manage, as many of the owners are not local.

A GEF Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool (METT) form was completed three times for the site. The score has increased from the baseline of 65.9 in 2004 to 74.3 by end of October 2010, again suggesting that there had been a significant improvement in management at the site.

ii. Natural hydrological regime re-established and selected open bog and meadow habitats restored (indicator 13 – 'Area taken out of agriculture /forestry or reconverted to enable restoration of hydrological regime of the raised bog' and 14 'Cutting of vegetation in bogs, meadows')
The primary threat to Kamanos SNR identified during project development was the drainage of the raised bog by canals built prior to the establishment of the Reserve. There are more than 162 old canals stretching approximately 73 kilometers within the reserve. Being a raised bog, to restore the wetland it is only necessary to slow drainage as water drains from the Reserve to neighbouring areas. However, since Kamanos is a SNR, it was illegal for the MoE to actually address this problem. The Project worked with the MoE and lobbied for amendments to the Land Reclamation Law to make it legally possible to block the canals on environmental grounds. The Project also provided financial and technical assistance to determine the hydrological regime of the protected area and designed ecologically appropriate mechanisms for blocking the canals. Due to the complex hydrology of the bog, this was not an easy task but the Project has constructed 64 dams made of long-lasting plastic sheets (low-impact material) and 8.4 km of ditches were dammed which have already significantly reduced drainage from the raised bog and effectively raised the water table within the Reserve, affecting 1204 ha of the bog by 2010. Although many channels have been blocked (around 50%), the sphagnum community is beginning to recover in places where it had been negatively impacted before and water table is rising, it is still too early to say that the site has been 'restored' (measured by the Reserve staff as the point when the original hydrology has been recreated). According to Reserve staff this may require an additional 10 years to complete as many of the remaining 50% of dams that need to be built are more difficult and will require use of EU Structural Funds (the Reserve is submitting a proposal to do this, but it means that impact is not certain and will depend on follow-up funding.).

The plastic piling has proved to be a good solution as it is quick and easy to install, and, importantly, dams can be erected by Reserve staff eliminating the need to employ expensive construction companies. So successful has the dam-construction and canal blocking work been at Kamanos SNR that other wetland protected areas in Lithuania have asked for information on the technique e.g. Zemaitijos NP and Zagare RP and it is clear that the work pioneered at Kamanos has considerable potential for replication.

The dam construction activity has been combined with active monitoring of water quality/quantity as well as biodiversity impacts (flora and fauna) by the SNR staff. Even though the Reserve has faced budget cuts and may do in the next couple of years, staff interviewed stated that monitoring are a priority and will continue to be funded from state funds.

At the PDF-B stage, the Project expected to have to purchase lands outside of the SNR that would be flooded due to restoration of the bog inside the Reserve. Purchase of adjoining private farm property was to be funded by the Frankfurt Zoological Society (FZS) but in the end the FZS decided not to fund the purchase. However, a detailed study of the hydrology of the Reserve[61] and its surroundings showed that the purchase was unnecessary anyway since the extent of flooding seems to be limited to almost entirely within the Reserve's boundaries. Following discussions with PIT and SNR staff, the local municipality of Akmene withdrew 79.2 ha of agricultural land in the buffer zone that would have

[60] The SNR has had a buffer zone since legislation was passed in 1979, and there are restrictions on various activities in these zones, e.g. there are restrictions on the cutting of different aged trees in forested areas, and there can be no clear cuts within 300m of the boundary of the Reserve. There are also some restriction on agricultural areas.
[61] The Kamanos Bog Hydrological Regime Restoration Plan.

been flooded from privatization schemes, effectively completely eliminating the need for any land purchase, and enabling other nature management activities to be undertaken on this land (this land has been designated as a Natura 2000 site which places some restrictions on land use). As a result, a total of 1218 ha of land has been transformed from agriculture and forestry activity into nature protection in and around the Reserve, considerably above the 300-800ha originally envisaged. A further 65ha of bogs and meadows has been restored through clearance of woody plants at the Reserve. Although the original 80ha target was not achieved it should be mentioned that the initial target was not realistic and not based on scientific evidence.

iii. Increased public awareness and support of local communities for wetland conservation (indicator 15 – 'Statistically significant positive changes in awareness and public support')
The Project has financed construction of a 3.6 kilometer raised walk-way nature trail with interpretive signs, and has assisted with the construction of a small log cabin on the reserve boundary that is used by Reserve staff to maintain a more full-time presence at the site, as well as education programmes targeted at local school children. However, the nature trail is in need of repair (verified during the FET visit) but a proposal to undertake the work has already been included in the local LEADER+ programme.

The Project staff together with three Kamanos SNR staff and education experts from Vilnius (mostly the Educational Development Centre in Vilnius and the PIT) have developed comprehensive lessons plans for use by local schools at the Reserve built around national curricula requirements, with some designed to be used in conjunction with the nature trail. The lessons plans cover several subjects such as geography, physics, biology and use concrete examples from Kamanos SNR and its surrounding. Although tailored for the SNR, teachers can use them during the regular classes. According to educational experts interviewed by the FET, this approach has worked well because having regular classes outside of the classroom increases schoolchildren's enthusiasm and motivation for the subject. The educational programme targeted communities/schools with 10km of the Reserve to raise the profile of reserve and promote opportunities for visitors. Many teachers targeted by the educational programme reportedly revisit and some have written articles on their visits for local newspapers which has further helped promote the site. There are also more schools visiting and from a bigger catchment area than formerly with local schools now being proactive directly requesting information from the education team.

The Project also contributed to the development a nature classroom at the Reserve's headquarters, which is equipped with field-work/study equipment and materials and the Kamanos SNR staff provide lectures and information on biodiversity values of Kamanos SNR. It has also part-financed and raised additional funding for a new interactive visitors centre with many displays (still under construction when visited by the FET but from what could be seen it is likely to be one of the best in the Lithuania's protected area network).

As is the case at some of the other SNRs, the Directorate charges for guiding services to enter the Reserve but it is not clear whether this is cost-effective and whether it could develop into a sustainable source of finance to cover Reserve management costs in the future.

Although one interviewee claimed that the local municipal authority (Akmene) was not sure what the GEF Project actually did (suggesting it had a low and unclear public profile), he stated that the Project had greatly improved opinions about the Reserve locally and that the municipal authority had continued to provide it with a small grant (Lt 16,000) for promotion and education activities despite the financial crisis. The interviewee claimed that the most positive local impact had come from the nature trail as this has allowed entry to the Reserve, and helped people understand the value of the site.

One very interesting result of the GEF Project activities at Kamanos SNR has been the number of local people who have volunteered, both adults and children, to help with nature management work at the Reserve suggesting a change in the views, attitudes and behaviours of local communities around the Reserve as conservation volunteering is not very common in Lithuania. Participation mostly centers around activities arranged for World Wetland Day (2nd February each year) and the numbers volunteering has been increasing over the last five years (50-100 people depending on the weather).

Currently, education/awareness activities at the site are the responsibility of two members of staff, neither of which has an education background (one is an ecologist, the other an agronomist). Nevertheless they have done a very good job. Surprisingly, the GEF Project funded one member of staff to undertake a week-long course in the UK on interpretation, education, and awareness-raising methods but unfortunately, she left the Reserve and did not pass on her training and experience (no 'train the trainer' approach or requirement) and the remaining two staff members have had to learn largely by doing (so it questionable just how much capacity the Project has built on education at the site). The Project has employed Vilnius-based experts to design the interactive education and interpretation displays rather than building capacity within the SNR itself. Specific needs mentioned during the FET visit for the education staff at the Reserve included training in educational tools for each target age group and information on types of materials that could be used.

The Project also commissioned a study on the awareness of the public around Kamanos and whether this changed during the lifetime of the Project (see main text). The scores in 2009 were lower than in 2005 when the first survey was undertaken (see main text for likely reasons for the decline and its significance).

iv. Other activities
Two activities listed in the Project Document for Kamanos - 'Closure of Juciai village dumping site and clearing out of the area' and 'Demounting of the former collective farm buildings and clearing out of the area Reconstruction of four local homesteads for eco-farming' were essentially funded from other sources (EU Structural Funds and municipal sources) and appear to have been listed in order to generate co-financing for the GEF application. Again, they were not major activities required to deliver the Project goals for this site.

Outcome 3: Wetland biodiversity protected in Viesvile Strict Nature Reserve
The Project Document identifies the following threats at Viesvile: intensive forestry activities around the SNR; small dams in the Lower Viesvile river that impede migration and spawning for globally important species; disturbance from cranberry pickers (predominately local people in contrast to non-locals at Cepkeliai SNR); disturbance from tourism; and pollution from solid waste and pesticides.

i. Management plan developed and under implementation (indicator 16 – 'Management plan developed and under implementation').
The management plan for the Viesvile SNR was developed through the GEF Project and approved by the MoE in May 2006 (OJ, 2006, No 60-2146), and GEF funds have been used for initial implementation. It is brief (one page map with 3-4 pages of narrative text) with a zoning plan showing where different activities should take place and a brief list of management measures and actions and legal regulations covering activities in the buffer zone.

A GEF Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool (METT) form was completed three times for the site. The score has increased from the baseline of 67.9 in 2004 to 68.2 by end of October 2010 suggesting only a minimal improvement in management at the site.

Importantly, the local municipal plan produced in 2008 includes the management plan for the Reserve and has zoning for biodiversity sensitive areas. According to interviewees at the municipal authority, the GEF Project has specifically influenced their thinking on environmental issues. Together these indicate successful mainstreaming by the Project.

ii. Forestry protocols around Viesvile reserve are compatible with conservation of wetland biodiversity (indicator 17 - Program for biodiversity friendly forestry use around the reserve)
One of the primary threats identified at Viesvile SNR was the negative impact of forestry activities outside the protected area. Consequently, one aim of the Project was to assist the SFE to either negotiate a change in forestry practices resulting in biodiversity benign practices or establish a forest certification regime. By chance, all state forests in Lithuania became certified under Forestry Stewardship Council (FSC) standards following a decision made by the Lithuanian Government, around the time that full project implementation started. As a result, the Project did not need to expend special effort of this activity and as the MTE pointed out '*got an easy win on this activity'*.

However, the Project did actively facilitate the development of a forest biodiversity-friendly management plan – the Forest Management Plan of Taurage State Forest Enterprise - for the forest plots managed by the Taurage Forest Enterprise, which was approved by order number D1-202 of the MoE on 24th April 2006 (OJ, 2006, No 51-1899). This innovative plan aimed to balance economic activities (timber production) with nature conservation obligations and recreation in the Taurage forest. The Project provided technical assistance and training to planners and Taurage SFE staff to ensure that the plan incorporated information to improve recreational management, conservation of important bird species such as woodpeckers, and planning for the re-introduction of Capercaille *Tetrao urogallus*, which is focus for a set of specific activities initiated by the Project at the Viesville SNR (see below). The development of the management plan and FSC certification has helped changed the practices of foresters in the region who now have to monitor biodiversity e.g. nesting habitat for birds, as part of their regular activities. However, the Taurage SFE does not have a trained ecologist on staff (biodiversity monitoring is an area where the SNR could perhaps provide support to the SFE) and the plan only covers the northern half of the forest (approximately 30,000 ha); the southern forest is managed by a separate State Forest Enterprise and encompasses another 30,000 hectares.

Under the current scheme, the SNR Director can comment on the 10-year forest management plan, regulates the use of all Natura 2000 sites within the area affected, and must approve all forest activities within the small buffer zone. As a result of the plan threats to biodiversity have been significantly reduced and the SNR and SFE undertake joint planning and establishment of Natura 2000 sites and this has helped improve the relationship between Forestry and SNR. However, there is no formal institutionalized structure for cooperative management between the two entities and there has been previous conflict between the SFE and SNR over some issues, notably hunting of wild boar *Sus scrofa* within

and outside the buffer zone (interestingly, species such as red and roe deer are managed in the forest lands outside Viesvile specifically to limit grazing and browsing damage). This is a situation where establishment of a SNR management committee with wide stakeholder membership, built of the initial Project idea of a Regional Group for the SNR, would have been useful.

iii. Selected open fen and meadow habitats restored (indicator 18 – 'Restoration activities carried out in bogs, fens, and meadows)

The Project has provided equipment to keep open up habitats that had become overgrow with trees and shrubs, which had been important for birds and some plants. During the Project 67.5 ha of habitat has been cleared to restore open fen and meadow areas and open glades in the forest for Capercaille, which is more than 6 times the original target. These areas are identified for action in the Reserve's management plan and includes 7.5 ha of meadows and fen managed and 18.2 ha of forest area cleared of scrubs creating open space areas for rare plants.

iv. Cranberry pilot farm established and managed by local community (indicator 19 – 'establishing a pilot cranberry farm in Laukesa peat-land')

Viesvile SNR is latest SNR in Lithuania to be established (in 1991). Cranberry picking is a traditional activity for local communities but cranberry picking was banned within the Reserve after its establishment, which created conflict with the local population. A potential solution suggested was to set up a private, community managed commercial cranberry farm on land close to the SNR under licence to a peat-mining company (Laueska), as an alternative to wild cranberry picking and to provide economic benefits to the local community many of whom are unemployed. It was hoped the farm would, combined with increased public awareness and better enforcement of reserve regulations, reduce pressure from disturbance at the SNR.

Although the Project organised a training workshop on cranberry farming to locals interested in the venture, with a visit to the Botanical Gardens in Kaunas, and offered to provide initial investment by purchasing cranberry seedlings, the farm could not be established. A proper business feasibility study that assessed the local economic and financial circumstances of the target local community does not appear to have been undertaken at the PDF-B stage and there does not seem to have been any real understanding of whether the cranberry farm would work. FE interviewees indicated that this activity failed because of a number of reasons:

- There was a lack of strong leadership of the venture among the local community (no specific individual who could champion or lead the project);
- Potential local shareholders in the farm were not willing to provide a financial contribution, even it was only Lt100 payment to help establish and plant out the farm;
- There was reluctance to invest 2-3 years worth of work on the farm before the first commercial harvest would be produced;
- Related to the above there was no financial incentive to work as many people get paid state unemployment benefit;
- Shareholders were not interested in taking out a bank loan, in part because access to micro-credit had become more difficult and expensive since the financial crisis as banks and other financial institutions have become much more risk adverse and not willing to give loans at favorable rates without deposit or guarantees;
- There was easy to access other areas with cranberries within the SNR, and the fines for being caught are low and not a disincentive (in fact they had been reduced 3 years ago from Lt 300 to Lt 100 due to political pressure it is claimed and the police generally turn a blind eye to illegal sales, although another interviewee stated that the threat of being caught trespassing deters some locals who now collect cranberries at a site outside the Reserve);
- The peat extraction company which was working the land where the farm was to be established was owned by a parent German company who, apparently, had not interest in the idea;
- The idea of the farm was 'imported' from outside of Lithuania, originally proposed by the UNDP-GEF staff and international consultant working on the Project during the PDF-B stage and did not therefore have high local ownership; and
- One interviewee also mentioned that the local authorities were reluctant to provide co-financing due to the economic situation, and that the local community didn't own the land so there was not much enthusiasm for the venture.

Worryingly, the SNR staff believe that the number of cranberry pickers has increased, and is linked mostly with unemployed people for whom the sale of cranberries can represent an important seasonal income.

v. Water and solid waste pollution reduced in Viesvile (indicator 20 – 'Investments in anti-pollution infrastructure undertaken')

EU accession and national legislation now requires that authorities building centralized wastewater and pollution management facilities for all settlements with more than 500 residents. The municipality is now in the process of considering a wastewater treatment plant at Viesvile (funded through the next programming period of the EU Structural

Funds and 2007-2013 European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument Cross Border Cooperation Programme Lithuania-Poland-Russia Federation). In addition, the solid waste dumping site the village of Eiciai and pesticide storage facility near Viesvile have both been eliminated in the last five years. Together these should effectively mitigate primary Viesvile pollution concerns. Activities related to pollution control essentially took place outside of the Project control and no GEF funding was provided (it appears to have been included to capture co-financing[62]).

vi. Fish ladders (indicator 21 – 'Fish bypasses installed in two dams in the Viesvile river')
Construction of two fish ladders to replace existing dams on the Viesvile River and improve species habitat has been completed which should enable sea trout and river lamprey migration to spawning areas upstream in the Viesvile SNR. The Project helped secure the necessary government permits and GEF funds were used to cover all technical aspects of the design of the fish ladders and paid for construction of the smaller upper ladder. The Project was able, in cooperation with the Jurbarkas municipality, to leverage additional funds from the EU Structural Funds budget to construct the larger 'primary' lower fish ladder in Viesvile village[63].

This Project activity has also included development of a species management plan (monitoring of fish, tagging, etc.), training of staff of SNR, provision of a boat for monitoring purposes, and the release of 3,000-7,000 sea trout fry each year for the last two years into the Viesvile river to try and restock the river above the two fish ladders. However, it will be a couple more years before it is known whether spawning migration has been reestablished as monitoring of sea trout and river lamprey movements across the fish ladders was only scheduled to begin in autumn 2010 (there was not point beforehand as the introduced fish were too young).

This activity has resulted in increased cooperation with the municipality as well as very good community support for conservation and is a very good example (truly a 'model') of how to resolve a conservation-recreation conflict. The Viesvile inhabitants were initially deeply skeptical and resistant to the loss of their former dam on the outskirts of the village because it provided a very popular bathing and picnic area during the summer for the villagers. However, the PIT staff (mostly the PM) spent a great deal of time patiently explaining why the dam needed to be changed and the PIT came up with a design for the new fish ladder that not only kept many of the features of the old dam (most importantly a small waterfall that locals liked to bath under) but extended and improved the area for recreation with careful landscaping of the river banks (good for picnics) and pools in the steps of the fish ladders for bathing[64]. The construction of the fish ladder also offered the opportunity to clean the area which was appreciated by the locals who now have an attractive town park with a fish ladder that it is hoped (see above on issue of monitoring) will enable spawning in the upper Viesvile River. An additional benefit is that the local people are now much more aware of the creatures they share their river with and the experience appears to have changed attitudes towards the environment locally. It is another example of the Project's excellent ability to identify and access funds to magnify the impact of its strategic investments, and is certainly one of the key successes of the Project. The FET considers it important that the experience and 'lessons learned' from this project activity be properly documented, and it is suggested that it is written up as a case study for the Project's Final Report. The municipal authorities commented that the success of the fish ladder had made it much easier for them to discuss other needed public projects needed in area, e.g. improving water quality.

It should be noted that the Viesvile river has been dammed for several hundred years so the Project is trying to restore fish migration after a very long period and is therefore an interesting and unusual experiment. Given the number of other rivers dammed in Lithuania and the wider Baltic region, the model developed by the Project has high replication potential assuming that sea trout and river lamprey migration is reestablished along the Viesvile river.

vii. Re-introduction of Capercaille (indicator 22 – 'Evaluation of pilot program for reintroduction of capercaillies')
On 30th March 2006, the MoE approved a programme for the re-introduction of Capercaille *Tetrao urogallus major* into Karsuva forest (order number (11-1)-D8-2793). The Project bought equipment for habitat management, a vehicle and paid for building of cages and the purchase of birds, and helped leverage a significant amount of co-financing. Activities completed up to the FE include the development of a Capercaille management plan for the site that encompasses both the SNR and the surrounding state forest, the construction of a 'state of the art' holding and breeding facility at the SNR headquarters in 2007, which was upgraded in 2010 to ensure the birds can be kept safely during the winter months, and the training of SNR staff at a Capercaillie breeding facility in Poland in 2008. After initially being

[62] Other 'projects' listed in the Project Document as providing co-financing but into which the GEF Project appears to have little, if any, direct input, at Viesvile include: Clearing-up of Viesvile dumping site (Municipality and EU structural funds); Establishment of the Panemuniai bicycle trail nearby Viesvile village (EU Structural Funds); Establishment of the pier for tourists in Viesvile village (EU Structural Funds), among others.
[63] Construction prices rose significantly while the municipality waited for final central government approval for the fish ladders and as a result GEF funds were inadequate. The municipality secured funds to pay for Project over-runs directly from their budget.
[64] Initially, construction began without the local community having had an opportunity to participate in public hearings on the technical design of the fish ladders. The PIT in close cooperation with the municipality arranged an open discussion with representatives of the Viesvile community, at which they gave a presentation with technical data and good graphics of what the final construction would look like, which helped reduce resistance to the works.

unable to source breeding birds from Belarus, two male birds and four females were bought from Poland in 2009, which in their first breeding season (2010) produced five juveniles.

The FET interviewed the staff responsible for the captive breeding facility and was highly impressed (overwhelmed might be a better term!) by the knowledge, enthusiasm and commitment of the staff, especially the woman who leads the team, which bodes well for the future success of the programme. However, as mentioned above, it will be some years before it is known whether reintroduction of the captive bred birds is successful, i.e. when a viable breeding population has been reestablished in Karsuva forest.

There have been problems over this activity, notably difficulties in sourcing birds from Belarus and insufficient funds for the centre (there were problems with the original incubators which were replaced with additional state funds) that have both introduced considerable delays, but the team has done an excellent job so far. The SSPA and Viesvile SNR are committed to making this programme a success and confirmed to the FET that state funds (likely to be Environmental Support Programme funds) will be used to maintain this activity (even in the face of budget cuts) for the foreseeable future, and EU Structural Funds will be used in future to build more cages to accelerate the captive breeding programme.

The MTE recommended accessing further international technical experience regarding re-introduction programming, including looking at issues related to the re-introduction of other species in places such as the US. The FET considers that this was addressed as the SNR have drawn heavily on experiences from Poland (and had training there) where there is considerable success in reintroducing these birds. Interviews revealed that the Polish birds had been thoroughly assessed by veterinarians for disease and the SNR staff have no concern that they might introduce disease or parasites from Poland into the Lithuanian population following release (they are likely to be held in captivity for at least another couple of years anyway so will have undergone a long quarantine period).

Another important result of the Capercaille re-introduction programme is that it has served as a catalyst to promote better cooperative management between the Viesvile SNR and the Karsuva State Forest.

viii. Increased awareness and support for conservation of Viesvile Reserve among forester staff, local communities engaged in mushroom and cranberry picking and occasional tourists (indicator 23 – 'Statistically significant positive changes in awareness and public support')
The Project has sponsored several targeted training programmes (domestic and international) aimed at improving cranberry production knowledge (although as pointed out above cranberry farm was not established) and training and workshops related to the Capercaillie reintroduction programme.

In terms of raising general public awareness and education, the Project helped fund the construction of a nature trail with interpretation signage and supportive education materials, and published a book on Viesvile with many beautiful, good quality photographs, as well as printed and distributed a 'Vesvile Strict Nature Reserve' newsletter to local inhabitants and a film on the Reserve. The SNR also promotes World Wetland Day, which has been supported by the GEF Project. Feedback from locals collected during the FE interviews on nature trail at the SNR was that they were 'very happy' with it, although there has been no attempt to capture formal feedback on use of reserve by visitors (such as a visitor book or questionnaire once a year or requesting comments on the Reserve's webpage) and in the FET's opinion a nature trail guide booklet would also be useful. The presence of the nature trail has also helped control activities of visitors and limited the potential for damage. The Capercaille reintroduction center is also likely to attract visitors and will provide an excellent focus for information/education activities to the general public and schools (although care will need to be taken not to disturb the birds (perhaps install a one-way viewing screen?).

The surrounding municipal authorities also see the SNR as an attraction for developing tourism to the region and in interviews with the FET discussed the possibilities of linking cycling routes along the Nemunas River with the Reserve. The Local Action Group with financial support of the LEADER programme also plans to develop an interpretation trail from Viesvile village to the boundary of the Reserve and a visitor centre will be constructed financed through other programmes managed by the SSPA (GEF only financed rechnical design.

The Project also commissioned a study on the awareness of the public around Viesvile and whether this changed during the lifetime of the Project (see above). The scores in 2009 were lower than in 2005 when the first survey was undertaken (see above for reasons of why this occurred).

Budget cuts in the last two years have meant the loss of a member of staff who was tasked with education and public awareness-raising, although the current woman with responsibility for this area is a capable educational specialist with a degree in biology. Given that Viesvile (and Labanoras/Girutiskis and Cekeliai) has not been the focus of special education activities through the Project to the same extent as Zuvintas BR and Kamanos SNR, it might be helpful to

bring all the educational staff at the target SNRs together to share their experiences and examine whether mentoring by the staff from Zuvintas and Kamanos might be appropriate.

ix. Enforcement of reserve boundaries and regulation strengthened
The Project funded the construction of roadblocks and erected barriers on the entrance roads to the Viesvile Reserve and boundaries were marked. However, other efforts to strengthen enforcement at the Reserve have been limited due to loss of staff, including one inspector, following budget cuts. Despite this, enforcement efforts are judged successful by Reserve staff as they now have a vehicle for the inspectors and staff spend much time trying to educate locals about the value of the SNR which they believe is changing attitudes and behaviour (which they measure by a decline in the number of people caught trespassing on the Reserve, although this could just be a reflection of reduced enforcement effort and recording).

Outcome 4: Wetland biodiversity protected in Zuvintas Biosphere Reserve
Major threats identified at this site during the project design stage were: an altered hydraulic regime in the catchment which was negatively impacting wetland biodiversity; water pollution from mostly urban but also agricultural sources; and overgrowth of woody vegetation in Reserves bogs, meadows and fens. It should be noted that the local situation regarding the wetlands at Zuvintas is very complex and it was very unclear at the beginning of implementation what actions and activities were needed to restore the wetland, e.g. what to do with the old sluice dams, and decisions had to wait until the completion of a detailed study, which took time and introduced a considerable delay (2 years) on the implementation of some activities at this site.

i. Management plan under implementation (indicator 24 - 'Management plan developed and under implementation')
The management plan for the Zuvintas SNR was developed through the GEF Project and approved by the MoE in May 2006 (OJ, 2006, No 75-2881), and GEF funds have been used for initial implementation. Again, the management plan is short with a detailed zoning map and brief narrative text that essentially presents the legal document that establishes the plan and a list of related legal provisions.

A GEF Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool (METT) form was completed three times for the site. The score has increased from the baseline of 51.4 in 2004 to 69.2 by end of October 2010 suggesting a substantial increase in management effectiveness at the site.

ii. Biosphere Reserve established (indicator 25 – 'Documentation establishing the Biosphere Reserve approved')
The Project supported the production of all materials required for Zuvintas' application as a MAB site. These were prepared and delivered to the MAB Secretariat in November 2009 (letter No 4S-324 of Lithuanian National Commission for UNESCO of 27/11/2009). The proposal was discussed at an Advisory Committee meeting by the MAB ICC Bureau in June 2010 and given a positive response, but Lithuania is still waiting for official confirmation of its new status, which is expected in 2011.

iii. Environmentally friendly agricultural practices introduced in buffer zone of biosphere reserve (indicator 26 - 'Farms have adopted environmentally friendly agricultural practices')
One of the threats to Zuvintas Lake mentioned in the Project Document is eutrophication related to fertiliser loads applied to farming land surrounding the lake (the proportion of agriculture is much greater around this site than the other SNRs, and the area is characterised by many small farms, each comprising only a few hectares).

The Project has initiated several agriculture projects, including organizing and publishing a guidebook specifically for local farmers describing management methodologies that benefit conservation and the landscape. The Project also organized activities to promote 'eco-farming' around Zuvintas Lake through collaboration with the local agricultural college at Simnas, which included training on farming techniques, environmental requirements of programmes within the Lithuanian Rural Development Plan, and how to access EU funds for subsidies. The Project supported the development and implementation of a 56-hour training course with more than 56 farmers attending in 2007, and 62 farmers in 2008, with most of the participants from the Dovine River Basin (project area). An additional 39 individual consultations on eco-farming were provided to local farmers by an expert whose time was covered by the Project. The farmers encouraged by the project activities on eco-farming established the NGO "Versme" which has 23 members and is attended by farmers interested in eco-farming. The members share experience and 9 farmers have submitted formal applications to apply for eco-farm 'certification'. Since this process takes at least two years only one farm in Simnas ward has so far been certified[65]. Finally, the project has been pioneering beef cattle both as a "sustainable" income source and method for clearing meadows (see below).

[65] The MTE mentions that there were '14 eco-farmers with a total of approximately 300 ha (all grain production) eligible for EU support and… Project worked to secure a buyer for their product and Scan-Agro agreed to buy 2,000 tons of grain, exceeding the farmers' current 900-ton capacity'. This suggests that the number of interested/active farmers has declined since late 2008. However, when questioned by the FET, key municipal interviewees were not able to say how many farmers have adopted environmental friendly agriculture practice around Zuvintas so the true figure is unclear.

iv. Restored hydrological regime in the Dovine River and Zuvintas Lake (indicator 27 - 'Implementation of first priority measures of water management plan in Zuvintas')
The watershed that includes the Zuvintas SNR includes Meteliu Regional Park in the south, several small lakes and streams near settlements and farms in the center and Zuvintas in the north, all of which are 'linked' via a complex system that regulates the water table[66].

In order to address these issues, the Project mobilised funding and actively participated in a Dutch PIN/Matra programme 'Management and Restoration of Natura 2000 sites in the Dovine River Basin' in 2006, which involved (among other things) the use of systems modeling and assessment of pollutants and sources. The high quality comprehensive study and action plan that resulted sets out the priority actions for the restoration of the hydrological regime in the Dovine river and Zuvintas lake by altering water control infrastructure, and includes technical drawings for management of the water table and regulation of pollutants, with information on CD included in the publication.

The GEF Project has since helped fund-raise for some of these priority actions, and began implementation of critical activities, including repair/reconstruction of sluice gates (transformation of the former sluice gate into overflow-type spill weir with fish ladder), removing or reducing the height of dams as well as blocking drainage canals, considered critical to maintain natural flows. In connection with this, in 2008, the NHF together with local partners (Marijampole Municipality, Marijampole State Forest Enterprise and Zuvintas Biosphere Reserve Directorate) was successful in securing funding from EU LIFE+ funds for a proposal to implement priority hydrology restoration actions in the Reserve, and the project began in early 2009, which is currently focusing on restoration of water levels of southern part of Amalva peatland. At the time of the FE, the sluice gate at Dusia Lake (the source of the Dovine River) has been constructed (through GEF funding). Two others dams have also received GEF Project support to develop their technical designs (although construction costs are from other sources). One of these (Zuvintas) has been completed and it is hoped to begin construction of the other (Simnas) in 2011. In addition, repair of 1.74 km of the Zuvintas wetland protective dike had been completed up to the FE (the technical design was provided through GEF funds with construction costs met by EU LIFE+ financing).

The Project provided all demonstration sites with water monitoring equipment to measure water level and basic chemistry. Unfortunately, this equipment does not measure phosphorus, which comes from the local fishponds and is considered to be a major pollution threat to Zuvintas[67]. The fishponds are operated through the MoA and regulating impacts has apparently proven challenging. However, a road bypass is being constructed which has destroyed part of the fishponds and the remainder will then be cleaned (dredged?) when the bypass is finished (funded from EU sources). Detailed chemical monitoring of the Zuvintas Lake is also carried out twice per year by the EPA.

The MTE suggested that the Project should work with the local municipalities, the EPA, MoE and the MoA, SFEs and the Zuvintas Reserve administration within the Dovine watershed to improve monitoring, alleviation and regulation of pollutants, including those originating from the fish ponds. It was suggested that the Project should seek to establish a local working group to support implementation of the Dovine plan and demonstrate multi-sectoral cooperative conservation. It is not clear whether this was established.

v. Water and air pollution reduced in Zuvintas (indicator 28 – 'Investments in water and air pollution undertaken')
The heating plant in Simnas town was rebuilt and adapted for reed/wood fuel use (implemented through project LIT/OP3/01/06/20 "Innovative usage of bio-fuel resources for heating of Simnas, and improving ecological status of Zuvintas BR and other adjacent lakes" (March 2006 – March 2008)). The Simnas, Azuoliniai and Krosna wastewater treatment plans were also constructed during the Project period, according to implementation of the National Water Management Plan and financed through the EU Structural Funds mechanism (184 houses (678 inhabitants) were connected to the expanded sewerage in Simnas and total coverage increased from 27.1 % to 41.5 % of the town's population). No direct GEF funding appears to have been provided for these and they seem to have been included in the Project as sources of co-financing.

vi. Selected meadow, fen, and bog habitats restored (indicator 29 – 'Overgrowth of critical meadow, fen, and bog habitats halted')
Selected areas of meadow, fen and bog habitats are under restoration with 23.2 ha of meadows under grazing (in cooperation with local farmers) and 52 ha of meadows cut for hay, dense aquatic vegetation covering 90 ha of the lake cleared, 74.5 ha of bushy area cleared, and 20.5 ha of surrounding bogs managed at the FE point. The total area under active management has reached 367 ha. A technical project on restoration of water levels (damming drainage ditches) in

[66] Zuvintas lake was an important source of water for the area of Marijampole in Soviet times. To ensure permanent water supply to Marijampole city a decision was taken to use additional water resources from Meteliai, Simnas and Zuvintas lakes through the Dovine River in the 1970s and 1980s, which led to increased eutrophication of Zuvintas Lake with a resultant loss of biodiversity value.
[67] It should be noted that, prior the Project, it was believed that the water coming from the 100 ha fishponds was cleaner than the water in the river, so impacts stemming from the fishpond were not noted in the Project Document. The Project worked to identify this problem and inform the local authorities.

the southern Amalva peatland is also under implementation funded largely from a EU LIFE+ project with GEF Project support. A total of 34 dams have been constructed to block old drainage canals affecting 107 ha of former drained peatland.

To facilitate active management at the Reserve, the Project purchased, and provided training on, a machine to remove floating vegetation that was encroaching on the wetland and 'choking' the lake (the result of eutrophication from upstream pollution).

In addition, the Project purchased 15 Hereford beef cattle[68] from Latvia in 2006 to use as a 'conservation tool' to keep valuable wetland meadows from scrubbing up with willows *Salix* and other tree species and bushes. The cattle were offered to local farmers under a contract with the Zuvintas Reserve Directorate whereby the farmers were given ownership rights to calves in return for grazing the animals in areas determined by the Reserve administration. The cattle are actually owned by a club (the 'Zuvintas Friends Association') and under a 5-year leasing agreement, two farmers rent the cattle and have ownership rights to calves[69]. The herd is currently around 32 cattle and they help keep about 25 ha or meadows plus 3-5 ha of wetlands of the Reserve clear[70]. Heifers are retained while bulls/steers may be sold for beef. After 5 years, farmers must return 15 cows between the ages of 3-8 years to the Reserve.

The idea of using beef cattle for wetland grazing is innovative in Lithuania. It was partly sold to the local farmers under the argument that meat from the cattle would fetch a premium price in Lithuania because beef cattle are not common (people will pay more for food marketed as a specialty) and the meat originated from cattle that were helping to protect Lithuania's nature heritage. However, there appears to have been little market analysis or product development. According to the farmer interviewed by the FET, the current market for such meat is very small and not considered financially sustainable. Another perceived disincentive to farm beef cattle is that dairy cattle produce both meat and milk, so farmers have two potential income streams. Beef cattle can certainly help with wetland conservation in Lithuania but whether farmers will adopt them more widely is unlikely at present. The farmer interviewed by the FET stated that his main reason for agreeing to the scheme was that the beef cattle distinguished him from neighbours but he had serious reservations about whether they would make him any money and had not decided whether he would continue after his contract with the Reserve came to an end. He also commented that other farmers in the area were watching to see what happened before deciding whether they would also adopt beef cattle. Consequently, whilst clearly a useful wetland biodiversity management tool, the FET feels it is too early to say whether the experiment with beef cattle will be sustainable financially[71].

It should also be noted that although there are opportunities for farmers using beef cattle as a tool to manage biodiversity rich wetlands for conservation (e.g in Natura 2000 sites) to qualify for agri-environmental subsidies, many people stated to the FET that such payments were not attractive. There seems to be a number of reasons for this, but the principal one is that payments are simply too low (229 EUR/ha for lands unsuitable for farming, and 168 EUR/ha for lands suitable for farming) to act as an incentive for farmers to change practice and take on risk (apparently payments for oil-seed rape are much more attractive). As a results, the uptake of such schemes in Lithuania has been very poor particularly those farming large areas[72]. In terms of using agri-environment payments through the Rural Development Fund to promote wetland management that benefits biodiversity, an important factor is that wetland sites overgrown with bushes and shrubs do not qualify for agri-environmental payments under current rules because the payments can only be provided for agricultural land in good condition[73]. Also, there appear to be artificial constraints which also discourage farmers, such as the requirement to only cut hay after 15th July, which goes against traditional farming practice in the region.

[68] Beef cattle are hardier and much more suited to wetland conditions than the more common diary and they also consume higher quantities of shrubs and other meadow impacting species.

[69] The PIT commented that the '*Nature Heritage Fund has signed an agreement according to which the cattle ownership rights were transferred to an NGO "Zuvinto biciuliu draugija" (Zuvintas friends association) with a condition to take care of and enlarge the herd.*'

[70] The PIT commented that '*In Lithuanian conditions we need 0.5–1 cow per ha then grazing for nature conservation purposes. So the managed area depends on number of cattle. Our main goal within the project was to test appropriate management methods. The expanding of beef cattle is foreseen through the EU Life+ project'.*

[71] The PIT commented that '*Small number of farmers was directly related to the small number of beef cattle purchased (15 cows and 1 bull). Project had limited amount of funds to purchase larger herd of cattle. Moreover, it would have been highly irrational to spread 15 cows among, lets say, 15 owners.*' However, the FE would like to make the point that no other farmers have copied the idea independently – they are waiting to see what happens with the Project's scheme.

[72] According to the figures from the National Paying Agency, only 8% of farmers have taken up the schemes related to the measure 'Natura 2000 payments and payments linked to Directive 2000/60/EC' and 23% are receiving 'agri-environment payments', which compares with 68% of all farmers who are receiving funds from the 2007-2013 RDP budget.

[73] The PIT commented that when '*wetland especially overgrown with bushes or trees…qualifies as mire or forest… then those areas are restricted for agri-environmental payments as this is not agricultural land. The division into land use types for each plot is stated in the Land Cadastre and it is difficult to change it.*'

vii. Public support and awareness for conservation of Zuvintas reserve increased (indicator 30 – 'Statistically significant positive changes in awareness and public support')
The Project part-funded the construction of a wooden raised walkway and wooden observation tower with interpretative materials (mostly pictures of species that can be seen around the reserve), which was opened in July 2007. These facilities are very close to the Reserve headquarters, are very popular with visitors, and have been featured in local and national media. The visitor's centre within the headquarters building has also been improved for education and awareness raising activities through GEF and EU funds, and equipped with basic field work and study equipment which schools can use when visiting the centre.

The Project supported the development of 20 individual lesson plans for local schools linked to the nature path, with lesson plans being published on the Reserve website and materials for teachers and for students, and linked to the national curricula, and were tailored with specific examples from the Zuvintas Reserve and it's surrounding region. The education programme was developed through the Project's 'Public Awareness and Education Workgroup', which included a member of staff from the NHF. The materials, based on good source materials from around the Baltics (including Sweden) were tested on school children in Marijampole and schools in the Marijampolė and Alytus regions are the main target users of the education programme at Zuvintas. The Project sponsored two seminars for local teachers (Marijampolė and Alytus) to introduce them to the use of the lesson plans and educational materials and facilities on offer at the Zuvintas BR. As at Kamanos, this approach has been well received by local teachers because having regular classes outside of classroom greatly increases enthusiasm for the subject among schoolchildren.

The following publications related to Zuvintas Reserve have been funded in part or completely and/or developed by the Project: 'Tourist guide for Meteliai-Zuvintas region'; 'Booklet - Zuvintas biosphere reserve'; 'Management and Restoration of Natura 2000 sites in the Doviner River Basin' (Wageningen International, The Netherlands); 'Management Plan for the Dovine River Basin'; and leaflets 'Zuvintas Biosphere Reserve Management Plan' and Zuvintas Biosphere Reserve'.

The Project also commissioned a study on the awareness of the public around Zuvintas and whether this changed during the lifetime of the Project (see above). The scores in 2009 were lower than in 2005 when the first survey was undertaken (again see above for explanation for the lower score).

Outcome 5: Wetland biodiversity protected in Girutiskis Strict Nature Reserve
Girutiskis Strict Nature Reserve (1,483 ha) is only a very small part of the larger Labanoras Regional Park (553 sq kilometres) and Aukstaitija National Park (30,000 ha). The entire area is filled with wetlands, for instance, in Labanoras, there are an estimated 300 significant, isolated wetlands/lakes and rivers. Key threats identified in the Pro Document were: disturbance from tourism causing habitat damage (a popular site due to its proximity to water bodies in Labanoras Regional Park and its scenic value); drainage of the bog; and overgrowth of open bog habitats by trees. Girutiskis doesn't have a separate Directorate, and is managed by the Labanoras Regional Park and Aukstaitija National park directorate.

i. Girutiskis reserve established as Ramsar Site
This Project activity is not identified in the logframe as a target for the Project, although is listed as a key Project activity in other sections of the Project Document. Despite project implementation lasting nearly 6 years, Girutiskis SNR has still not been officially nominated as a Ramsar Site. Although the MoE has expressed its willingness to propose the Girutiskis SNR as Ramsar site in the past, it is clearly not been a priority. The FET understood that the nomination papers had been sent to the Director of the Labanoras Regional Park/Aukstaitija National Park for consideration and review, although the FET was not able to interview the Director to confirm this. One interviewee claimed that some senior Government officials have no appreciation of the benefits of Ramsar status (and as Lithuania is not eligible to significant financing from Ramsar for its sites there is no financial incentive), so there is no pressure from government to list sites.

ii. Management plan under implementation (indicator 31 – 'Management plan developed and under implementation')
The management plan for the Girutiskis SNR was developed through the GEF Project and approved by the MoE in June 2007 (OJ, 2007, No 68-2684) and GEF funds have been used for its initial implementation. As Girutiskis is within the Labanoras Regional Park/Aukstaitija National Park complex it is included within a management plan for the Labanoras Regional Park (which is currently being revised with NHF assistance). Therefore for the Girutiskis SNR a 'Nature Management Plan' was developed, which specifies nature management activities. Again, the management plan for Girutiskis SNR is brief (one page map with 5 pages of narrative text)[74] with a zoning plan showing where different activities should take place.

[74] The PIT made the observation that although the management plan for Zuvintas Biosphere Reserve is 8 pages with a map, the one for Girutiskis, although shorter, is actually more detailed given its much smaller area.

A GEF Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool (METT) form was completed three times for the site . The score has increased from the baseline of 59.6 in 2004 to 62.0 by end of October 2010, suggesting that there had been a only a small improvement in management effectiveness at the site. This probably reflects the fact that the Girutiskis SNR is still essentially treated as an exclusive area and there is no easy access to the site for visitors (see below).

iii. Enforcement of reserve boundaries and regulations strengthened (indicator 32 – 'Decrease of trespassing')
One threat identified during project design was illegal vehicle access to parts of the protected area and traffic disturbance to the wetlands from a road that passed too close. The Project supported the construction of roadblocks to discourage off-road vehicle use in part of the greater protected area complex, and the improvement of another to direct traffic away from Girutiskis, and barriers on the entrance roads to the reserve. The Project assisted with the closure of one dirt road and the improvement of another to direct traffic away from Girutiskis (Juodapurvis-Paluknis-Antaliede bypass built in 2007). Apparently, this has worked well and was supported by the local community (although this couldn't be confirmed by the FET). As result, visitors now tend to go to the more open lake areas of the Park.

The boundaries of the Girutiskis SNR have also been marked with Project support, but a visit by the FET indicated that the current signage is not sufficient (examples of signs being torn down or covered by vegetation) and boundary markers need to be replaced or improved and barriers maintained. Although there is still some low level seasonal picking of cranberries and mushrooms within the SNR it is much less than formerly (according to the Directorate staff) and the summer of 2010 was very wet so access was even more difficult in this last year.

Unfortunately, as for the other Reserves, recent budget restrictions have meant staff cuts at the Labanoras Regional Park administration with the loss of an ecologist, who helped with inspection duties, and now there is just one inspector responsible for the whole region. It was pointed out to the FET that the Park has smaller number of staff for its size than any other Regional Park, which is surprising given the high levels of visitors. As a result, inspection work is now focused on the cranberry and mushroom picking seasons when pressure is likely to be greatest.

iv. System of entrance fees established and operational (indicator 33 – 'Users fee approved and in operation')
Again, the strategy at Girutiskis was to control disturbance from tourism through introduction of a system of users fees combined with increased enforcement of reserve boundaries and regulations, and public information campaigns for tourists and local stakeholders. It was envisaged that the system of users fees would remain in place after Project termination and contribute to the costs of increased enforcement and regular public awareness campaigns. Again, the user fee system was not established. This was because the Project design team was not aware that at the time there was no legal basis for charging for entry to the site (there still isn't, although it is currently being discussed), and also the nature trail and visitor centre at Girutiskis were not developed. Partly in response to a recommendation by the MTE, the Project commissioned a study of the opportunities and options for developing an integrated system of tourism services in Lithuania's protected area system, examining fee-paying nature-based tourism including the legal situation governing the collection of fees. This was produced by the Tourism Development Institute under a consultancy in 2009, and its conclusions are currently being discussed by the SPAS and protected area staff.

v. Selected tracks of open bogs, meadows and fens restored (indicator 34 – 'Overgrow of critical meadow, fen, and bog habitats halted')
Only 3.6 ha of open fens and meadows in the Reserve has been identified in need of active management, which has been targeted through the GEF Project. Drainage of the bog is also less of a problem than formerly as the GEF Project activities at the site – blockage of Soviet-era drainage channels through construction of traditional earth dams has been very effective (witnessed by the FET). These have helped raise the water table for an area of 298ha of bog over the last 5 years, and reduced colonisation by trees (mostly *Pinus sylvaticus*), helped by European Beavers *Castor fiber*, and only 1.8ha of the SNR now requires active removal of trees. Removal of bushes and trees is undertaken jointly with the local SFE (there is a good relationship between SNR authority and SFE). In total 301.6 ha of the SNR has been targeted for restoration activities by the Project.

vi. Increased public support and awareness from local communities and tourists on wetland biodiversity in Girutiskis (indicator 35 – 'Statistically significant positive changes in awareness and public support')
In addition to the "standard" project public awareness support provided to all project areas (i.e., websites, brochures, training, informational booklets, etc.), the Project supported the development of an information system for Labanoras, including several information facilities such as sign boards and shelters to educate visitor and channel impacts. The Project also purchased a mini-van to support the protected area's "green schools" and 'children's camp' programmes.

The Project did not construct a visitor's centre at the Januliskis village (southern end of the Girutiskis SNR) as originally planned. This was because Labanoras RP administration did not have sufficient staff to work at the centre, which was also viewed as too far distant from the Park headquarters for staff to manage easily. In addition, the nature trail originally proposed for the southern end of the SNR (which was to link with the visitors centre in Januliskis) was

not built, again because of its distance from the Park headquarters but also because it was felt that visitor impacts to wetland habitats in the SNR needed to be minimized (this was still the view in the RP staff interviewed by the FET[75]). In the end a decision was taken to relocate to the trail to an alternative less sensitive site closer to the Labanoras Regional Park headquarters, some 12km form the Girutiskis SNR, where access for visitors would be much easier and they could be more easily monitored and controlled.

The Project cooperated with a private investor in the development of small hotel with restaurant next to the Regional Park headquarters, which offers Lithuanian cultural heritage cuisine. The main input of the Project was supplying the owners with information on wetlands and nature conservation and values, and indeed the restaurant has a 'wildlife' theme (unfortunately, most of it stuffed and mounted on the walls!). This hotel has provided important opportunities for the Regional Park to develop tourism-related activities and become important for the local economy.

The Project also commissioned a study on the awareness of the public around Girutiskis and whether this had changed during the lifetime of the Project (see above). The scores in 2009 were lower than in 2005 when the first survey was undertaken.

Outcome 6: Formal intersectoral mechanism for replication of best lessons learned in conservation of inland wetland biodiversity established and operational

i. 'Institutionalisation' of best practice and lessons learned (indicators 36 – 'A plan for replication of best lessons developed and an executing unit formally established' and 37 'Plan for replication of best lessons approved by the institutions participating in the multisectoral working group')
The Project has delivered many important results and pioneered new approaches to wetlands management and conservation, which have relevance to other wetlands sites and protected areas in Lithuania, other Baltic states and the general region, such as restoration of the hydrological regime at Kamanos using plastic dams that can be erected cheaply, quickly and by Reserve staff, the use of beef cattle at the Zuvintas Reserve as a wetlands management 'tool', and the use of an amphibious reed cutting machine at Zuvintas for controlling wetland vegetation, all of which are innovative for Lithuania.

At the project design stage it was considered important to capture these experiences and try to mainstream the Project's 'best practice' and 'lessons learned' within institutions that either had direct responsibility for wetlands e.g. MoE and MoA, or which impact wetlands, e.g. Ministry of Economy. This was considered important enough to require a second Project Objective. Although this was lost in the revision of the logframe, the associated Outcome (6) and activities were kept.

The intention was to create a 'Multi-sectoral Wetlands Working Group' (MWWG) which would act as a conduit for integrating results, best practice and lessons learned in wider sectors[76]. Membership of the MWWG was not defined at the project design stage, but was expected to include representatives of the main actors influencing wetland conservation in Lithuania, and the specific mandate, level and location of the MWWG would be defined in more detail as part of full project implementation. However, in general terms, it was expected that the work of the MWWG would include: the codification of lessons, instruments and guidelines from experiences gained at the five Project sites; the design of a multisectoral plan for replication of best practices to other wetlands in Lithuania; the production of material on best practices for widespread dissemination; and information and capacity building programs for implementation of new practices by staff in different agencies and organizations, as appropriate. In more specific terms, the MWWG was to be tasked with exploring lesson learned, best practices and replication modalities in the agriculture, forestry, tourism and nature conservation sectors, and areas of integrated land use planning, sustainable harvest of wetlands products, and wetland restoration, with analysis of policy support measures to ensure effective adoption of best practices in these other sectors and areas.

No detailed analysis of the successes and failures of the Project or formal, structured lesson learning had been undertaken by the MTE stage, although Project results had been documented in official reports and some generic

[75] Visitor numbers in the greater area are quite high and there is the potential for considerable damage to sensitive wetland habitats unless visitors are managed carefully. Labanoras and Aukstaitija, for instance, have over 300,000 visitors each year and an estimated 2,000 -3,000 tents are pitched in the protected area every day during peak season. Garbage collection is also a problem and a full-time job for a park-contracted company. Consequently, tourism and development management is one of the main challenges for the small number of protected area staff. The development of second homes in "natural" areas such as Labanoras have also become an issue in recent years, with abandoned farmsteads being developed into vacation homes and prime property located next to small lakes and other wetlands. The protected area works hard to regulate development, but this is a challenge. Outside of protected areas there is very little regulation and development in riparian zones has been significant in recent years.

[76] Specifically, the Project Document states that the Project will '*establish a formal intersectoral mechanism - the Multisectoral Wetlands Working Group - for replication of best practices and lessons learned in conservation of inland wetland biodiversity, mainstreaming wetland management requirements into sectoral policy - primarily agriculture, forestry and tourism – to contribute to the conservation and sustainable use of wetlands and their biodiversity'* (Section 2.b.4.2).

guidance ('how to' manuals) had been produced on some topics related to wetland conservation, e.g. how to construct nature trail paths and develop interpretative materials, based on information sources from other countries (i.e. not based directly on the Project's experience). In addition, the MWWG had not been created by the MTE stage and the MTE expressed a concern over the slow delivery of this Outcome and recommended that the Project develop a clear strategy for comprehensively addressing the outstanding replication, policy and institutionalization issues remaining under Outcome 6.

FE interviews revealed that the delays over delivery of Outcome 6 were in part due to lack of ownership of the proposal to create the MWWG (it appears to have been largely promoted by UNDP-GEF and the international consultant during the PDF-B stage) and there was reluctance among the relevant ministries to create a new 'wetland specific' inter-ministerial committee with independent decision-making powers. Judging from interviewee's comments this arrangement was never going to work, and no one interviewed was able to provide a successful example of such a highly specialised intersectoral structure within government that hadn't been completely designed and owned by nationals. However, a member of the PSC suggested a possible way out of the problem – to establish the National Ramsar Committee (NRC), and have it adopt the tasks assigned to the MWWG[77]. The NRC was established by the MoE order No D1-374 on 01/07/2009, and comprises representatives from national authorities, scientific institutions, NGOs and private sector (and includes the GEF Project Manager as a member, see Annex 10). Its first meeting took place in Vilnius on 17th January 2010. The NRC was briefed on GEF project (most members were already either members of the PSC or had had substantial contacts with the Project) and commented on the draft TORs for the economic analysis of peatlands study and the development of draft National Peatlands Strategy, but there has been no meeting since (and onlt the Minister can call a meeting, so it's not clear how effective the NRC is likely to be).

The National Peatland Strategy and economic analysis of peatlands are currently being developed by two consultancy companies under supervision of the PIT (begun in January and February 2010). At present, it is not clear what the process for stakeholder participation in development of the final version is, or how the draft MPS will be adopted by government, nor who will take responsibility for its implementation or where funding will come from for the Strategy.

It should be noted that there is some confusion in project reports and correspondence, including emails to the FET, over the title of the NPS. In some documents it is called the ''National Strategy for the Sustainable Use of Mires and Peatlands', and in others the 'National Wetlands Strategy' or 'National Peatlands Strategy'. Given that it focuses on peatlands and does not include lake and river systems or coastal wetlands, the title should be standardized and it is suggested that only'National Peatlands Strategy' is used, or NPS for short.

ii. Legal acts supported by the Project (indicator 38 – 'Draft sectoral policies and legislation prepared and submitted') According to the PIRs, 10 legal acts have been supported by the Project, in the areas of nature management, use of nature resources, forest management, wetland restoration, protected areas planning, and land acquisition. These are:

a) Rules on visiting of strict nature reserves approved by the order No 278V of the State Protected Areas Service of 29/12/2004;
b) Cepkeliai SNR Management Plan approved by the order No D1-489 of the MoE of 12/10/2005 (OJ, 2005, No 124-4433);
c) Forest Management Plan of Taurage State Forest Enterprise approved by the order No D1-202 of the MoE of 24/04/2006 (OJ, 2006, No 51-1899);
d) Viesvile SNR Management Plan approved by the order No D1-243 of the MoE of 18/05/2006 (OJ, 2006, No 60-2146);
e) Kamanos SNR Management Plan approved by the order No D1-244 of the MoE of 18/05/2006 (OJ, 2006, No 60-2147);
f) Zuvintas BR Management Plan approved by the order No D1-310 of the MoE of 23/06/2006 (OJ, 2006, No 75-2881);
g) Girutiskis Wetland Nature Management Plan approved by the order No D1-333 of the MoE of 15/06/2007 (OJ, 2007, No 68-2684);
h) Akmene Municipality Council decision No T-141 of 20/06/2007 (enabling 79.2 ha of land in buffer zone of the Kamanos reserve took out from privatization);
i) Amalva Wetland Nature Management Plan approved by the order No D1-532 of the MoE of 22/11/2007 (OJ, 2007, No 110-4523); and,
j) The amendments (regulating cranberry picking by locals) to the Rules on visiting of strict nature reserves issued by the State Protected Areas Service order No V142 of 01/09/2009.

[77] This also delivered another benefit in that it ended criticism by the NGO and scientific communities that the GoL had failed to established the NRC even though Lithuania had been a signatory of the Ramsar Convention since 1993.

During PDF-B stage the project team also played an active role in discussions on the rules for preparation and approval of management plans for the SNRs. These rules were approved by order No 456 of the Ministry of Environment of 23/08/2002. The Project has also made recommendations to the SSPA for improvements to the current regulations related to tourism services in protected areas of Lithuania, as well as recommendations for improvements to the Law on Protected Areas to Parliament's Environmental Committee. The drafting of the NPS is also considered a contribution to this set of activities in that it will set out policy recommendations covering wetland biodiversity relevant to the agriculture, forestry, nature conservation, business and economy, and water sectors.

Annex 10: METT scores for the five Project sites showing change over Project period

Question	Work Program Inclusion 2003					Project Mid-term 2006					Project completion 2010				
	CNR	KNR	VNR	ZBR	LRP	CNR	KNR	VNR	ZBR	LRP	CNR	KNR	VNR	ZBR	LRP
1	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
2	2	2	2	2	1	2	3	2	2	2	2	3	2	2	2
3	2	2	3	1	1	2	3	3	3	2	2	3	3	3	1
4	1	1	3	1	2	2	2	3	2	2	3	3	3	3	2
5	2	2	2	3	2	2	2	2	3	2	3	2	2	3	3
6	1	2	2	1	1	2	2	3	3	2	2	2	3	3	2
7	1	0	0	0	1	2	2	2	3	1	3	2	3	3	1
8	3	3	3	0	2	3	3	3	1	2	3	3	3	3	3
9	2	1	3	2	1	2	3	3	2	2	2	3	3	2	1
10	2	2	2	2	1	2	3	2	2	2	2	3	2	2	2
11	2	2	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	1	3	3	2	2	2
12	2	3	3	2	1	2	3	3	2	1	2	2	2	1	1
13	2	3	2	2	2	2	3	2	2	2	2	2	3	2	2
14	2	2	2	1	1	2	3	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	2
15	2	2	2	1	1	2	1	2	1	2	2	1	2	1	2
16	2	2	2	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
17	2	3	3	2	2	2	3	3	2	2	2	2	3	2	2
18	1	1	2	1	2	2	2	2	1	3	2	2	2	3	3
19	2	3	3	1	3	2	3	3	2	3	2	3	3	2	3
20	2	1	2	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	3	2	2	1
21	2	2	2	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	3
22	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
23	1	1	0	0	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
24	1	2	0	1	1	2	2	0	2	2	2	3	1	2	2
25	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	0	2	2
26	0	3	1	3	3	0	3	1	0	3	3	3	1	2	3
27	1	1	2	1	2	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
28	2	2	3	2	2	3	2	3	3	2	3	3	3	3	2
29	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	2	2	1	2	2
30	1	2	2	2	1	2	3	3	2	2	2	3	3	2	1
Subtotal	49.7	55.9	57.9	41.4	48.6	56.9	69.3	64.1	59.0	57.9	66.2	70.3	66.2	65.2	60.0
Additional questions															
7a	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
7b	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
7c	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	0
23a	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0
23b	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0
27a	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1
Total	**50.7**	**55.9**	**57.9**	**41.4**	**49.6**	**61.9**	**73.3**	**66.1**	**61.0**	**59.9**	**70.2**	**74.3**	**68.2**	**69.2**	**62.0**

Change in score compared with previous one

- Unchanged - Increased - Decreased

CNR - Čepkeliai Strict Nature Reserve; KNR - Kamanos Strict Nature Reserve; VNR - Viešvilė Strict Nature Reserve; ZBR - Žuvintas Biosphere Reserve; LRP - Labanoras Regional Park

Annex 11: Capacity building – attendance of Project participants in international training courses

Date	Country	Topic	Name of participant	Position	Institution	Remarks
5–8 Oct 2004	The Netherlands	Workshop on nature management "Dissemination of ecological knowledge and practical experiences for sound planning and management in raised bogs and sea dunes	Mr Andrejus Gaidamavicius	Biologist	Labanoras RP	
			Mr Irmantas Jasinskas	Director	Kamanos SNR	
			Mr Virgilijus Monsevicius	Head of Research Unit	Cepkeliai SNR	
			Mr Arunas Pranaitis	Director	Zuvintas BR	
			Mr Argaudas Stoskus	Project assistant	NHF	
13–16 Oct 2004	Sweden	Workshop on Sustainable Wetland Management	Mr Arunas Pranaitis	Director	Zuvintas BR	Funded by INTRREG project Bird rich wetlands of international importance, nature reserves and cultural landscapes as resources for sustainable developments in rural areas
			Ms Milda Skamarakaite	Project Assistant	NHF	
			Mr Argaudas Stoskus	Project assistant	NHF	
4–24 Apr 2005	The Netherlands	International Training of Trainers on Wetland Management (88/05)	Mr Argaudas Stoskus	Project assistant	NHF	Funded by International Agriculture Centre Wageningen UR
25–26 May 2005	Latvia	Sudy tour on wetland management to Engure nature park and Kemeri NP. Exchange of experience	Mr Gintaras Baublys	Chief Ekologist	Zuvintas BR	Funded by INTRREG project Bird rich wetlands of international importance, nature reserves and cultural landscapes as resources for sustainable developments in rural areas
			Mr Zenonas Gulbinas	Project Manager	NHF	
			Ms Rita Jakuciuniene	Chief Specialist	SPAS	
			Ms Edita Lydiene	Chief Specialist	SPAS	
			Mr Arunas Pranaitis	Director	Zuvintas BR	
			Mr Gytis Salys	Chief Ekologist	Zuvintas BR	
			Mr Zydrunas Sinkevicius	Chief Specialist	Zuvintas BR	
			Mr Argaudas Stoskus	Project assistant	NHF	
22–26 Aug 2005	Latvia, Estonia	Workshop on nature management (raised bogs and sea dunes)	Mr Irmantas Jasinskas	Director	Kamanos SNR	
			Mr Vaidotas Grigaliunas	Head of Research Unit	Kamanos SNR	
			Mr Arunas Pranaitis	Director	Zuvintas BR	
			Ms Sigute Sprainaityte	Biologist	Kamanos SNR	

			Mr Argaudas Stoskus	Project assistant	NHF	
11–14 Sep 2005	Germany	Workshop on Natura 2000 sites and Tourism	Ms Egle Platukyte	Information Specialist	Kamanos SNR	Funded by Federal Agency for Nature Conservation
			Mr Kastytis Gedminas	Chief Specialist	SPAS	
21–23 Sep 2005	Estonia, Tartu	Workshop on Wetland Management, Rural Development, Sustainable Ecotourism & Education	Ms Jurgita Butrimaite	Chief specialist	Alytus municipality	Funded by INTRREG project Bird rich wetlands of international importance, nature reserves and cultural landscapes as resources for sustainable developments in rural areas
			Ms Jolita Kizeliene	Chief specialist	Alytus municipality	
			Mr Arunas Pranaitis	Director	Zuvintas BR	
			Ms Sigita Rackauskaite	Chief specialist	Alytus municipality	
			Ms Milda Skamarakaite	Project Assistant	NHF	
			Mr Argaudas Stoskus	Project assistant	NHF	
			Ms Vilija Verveckiene	Head of Division	Alytus municipality	
27 Nov–03 Dec 2005	England	Training "Rethinking Education for Sustainable Development in a Changing World"	Ms Egle Platukyte	Information Specialist	Kamanos SNR	
16–18 May 2006	Sweden, Göteborg	Wetland seminar on restoration of mires and wet forests	Mr Vaidotas Grigaliunas	Head of Research Unit	Kamanos SNR	In the frame of the Nordic-Baltic Wetlands Initiative (NorBalWet). GEF funded travel costs only
			Mr Gediminas Rascius	Project Manager	NHF	
			Mr Darius Triausys	Director	Kamanos SNR	
9–11 Oct 2006	Germany	Workshop on Wetland management	Ms Jurgita Butrimaite	Chief specialist	Alytus municipality	Funded by INTRREG project Bird rich wetlands of international importance, nature reserves and cultural landscapes as resources for sustainable developments in rural areas
			Ms Jolita Kizeliene	Chief specialist	Alytus municipality	
			Mr Arunas Pranaitis	Director	Zuvintas BR	
			Mr Argaudas Stoskus	Project assistant	NHF	
			Ms Vilija Verveckiene	Head of Division	Alytus municipality	
25–26 Jul 2006	Poland, Wygri NP	Seminar on Tourism development in sensitive areas	Mr Eugenijus Drobelis	Deputy Director	Dzukija NP	Funded by Pare project "Integrating Dzukija National Park and Cepkeliai Nature Reserve into a common tourism area in the border regions of Lithuania and Poland"
			Mr Gitautas Kibirkstis	Chief Geographer	Cepkeliai SNR	
			Mr Jonas Klimavicius	Director	Cepkeliai SNR	
			Ms Jurga Labanauskiene	Information Specialist	Cepkeliai SNR	
			Mr Mindaugas Lapele	Head of Nature Heritage Unit	Dzukija NP	
			Mr G. Norkunas	Specialist	Dzukija NP	
			Ms L. Plutaleviciute	Specialist	Dzukija NP	
			Mr Argaudas Stoskus	Project assistant	NHF	

			Mr Gintaras Valentukevicius	Head of Information Unit	Dzukija NP	
			Ms R. Valuckaite	Specialist	Dzukija NP	
28–31 May 2007	Finland	Workshop on Sustainable Tourism	Ms Jurgita Butrimaite	Chief specialist	Alytus municipality	Funded by INTRREG project Bird rich wetlands of international importance, nature reserves and cultural landscapes as resources for sustainable developments in rural areas
			Ms Jolita Kizeliene	Chief specialist	Alytus municipality	
			Mr Ramunas Krugelis	Chief Specialist	Meteliai RP	
			Mr Arunas Pranaitis	Director	Zuvintas BR	
			Mr Zydrunas Sinkevicius	Chief Specialist	Zuvintas BR	
			Mr Argaudas Stoskus	Project assistant	NHF	
26 Jun–3 Jul 2007	Italy	Educational tour on the management of Visitor Centres and Environmental Education Centres in Italian PAs	Ms Onute Grigaite	Ecologist	Cepkeliai SNR	Costs of travel (4 persons) only. The rest paid by project "Skills Development of Protected Area's Staff"
			Mr Virgilijus Monsevičius	Head of Research Unit	Cepkeliai SNR	
			Ms Egle Platukyte	Information Specialist	Kamanos SNR	
			Mr Gediminas Rascius	Project manager	NHF	
			Ms Asta Useliene	Biologist	Viesvile SNR	
			Mr Raimundas Zukovskis	Ecologist	Labanoras RP	
20–22 Sep 2007	Estonia, Lepanina	Seminar on wetland monitoring	Ms Sigute Sprainaityte	Biologist	Kamanos SNR	In the frame of the NorBalWet, partly organised and financially supported through the INTERREG III B project „Tuned management and monitoring of transboundary protected areas in North-Livonia as a support for local development, WETLIVONIA“.
			Mr Alvidas Urbonas	Head of Managemet Unit	Kamanos SNR	
3–5 Apr 2008	Poland	PA staff training in Poland on capercaillie breading in captivity	Mr Algis Butleris	Director	Viesvile SNR	
			Mr Eugenijus Drobelis	Deputy Director	Dzukija NP	
			Mr Mindaugas Lapelė	Head of Managemet Unit	Dzukija NP	
			Mr Argaudas Stoškus	Project assistant	NHF	
			Ms A. Šiaudvykienė	Laborantė	Viesvile SNR	
			Mr R. Zizas	Magistrantas	LFI	
25–26 May 2009	Germany	Study tour on the management of shalow lakes and peatlands. Dümmer Nature Conservation Station	Mr Jonas Kazakevičius	Chief Enginer	Marijampole municipality	Funded by LIFE+ project Nr. LIFE07 NAT/LT/000530 „WETLIFE“
			Mr Arūnas Pranaitis	Director	Zuvintas BR	
			Mr Argaudas Stoškus	Project assistant	NHF	
16–19 Sep 2009	Latvia,	Biosphere reserve staff and	Mr Arūnas Pranaitis	Director	Zuvintas BR	

	Salacgriva	experts meeting on biosphere reserve management	Mr Gediminas Raščius	Project manager	NHF	
			Mr Dalius Sungaila	Chief Specialist	MoE	
19–23 Apr 2009	Latvia	Experience exchange visit on nature guiding activities	Mr Mindaugas Lapelė	Head of Managemet Unit	Dzukija NP	Funded by Norway grants project No 2004-LT0008-NVO-1EEE/NOR-02-056 "Capacity building through the preporation of the Nature Guide Training Programme supporting nature tourism development within protected areas"
			Ms Lina Klimavičiūtė	Culture Specialist	Veisiejai RP	
			Ms Ona Motiejūnaitė	Lecturer	VPU	
			Mr Almontas Kulbis	Lecturer	JGC	
			Ms Aušra Birgelytė	Programme Coordinator	NHF	
26–30 Apr 2010	Germany	Study tour on Nature School activities	Mr Mindaugas Lapelė	Head of Managemet Unit	Dzukija NP	Funded by Norway grants project No 2004-LT0008-NVO-1EEE/NOR-02-056 "Capacity building through the preporation of the Nature Guide Training Programme supporting nature tourism development within protected areas"
			Ms Lina Klimavičiūtė	Culture Specialist	Veisiejai RP	
			Ms Ona Motiejūnaitė	Lecturer	VPU	
			Mr Almontas Kulbis	Lecturer	JGC	
			Ms Aušra Birgelytė	Programme Coordinator	NHF	
14–15 May 2010	Latvia, Tervete	Teacher's workshop in Tervete Nature Park	Ms Ona Sutkuvienė	Teacher	Akmenė	Funded by Latvia–Lithuania cross border cooperation programme. Project LLII-062 "Environmental education network for sustainable commmunities".
			Ms Vilija Šerpenskiene	Teacher	Akmenė	
			Ms Alma Steponavičienė	Teacher	Raudėnai	
			Ms Vilija Lapėnienė	Teacher	Raudėnai	
			Ms Sigita Dacytė	Teacher	N. Akmenė	
			Ms Ilona Paleckienė	Teacher	N. Akmenė	
			Ms Angelė Kazlauskienė	Teacher	Akmenė	
			Ms Vilija Gineitienė Gaudušienė	Teacher	Mažeikiai	
			Ms Dalytė Gaudušienė	Teacher	Mažeikiai	
			Ms Jolanta Jurėnienė	Teacher	Viekšniai	
			Mr Almontas Kulbis	Lecturer	JGC	
			Mr Vaidotas Grigaliunas	Head of Research Unit	Kamanos SNR	
			Ms Emilija Jagminienė	Specialist	Kamanos SNR	
			Ms Aušra Urbonienė	Information Specialist	Kamanos SNR	
			Ms Aušra Birgelytė	Programme Coordinator	NHF	
1–3 June 2010	Latvia, Tervete	Youth workshop in Tervete Educational center	Ms Kristina Grigaliūnienė	Information Specialist	Kamanos SNR	Funded by Latvia–Lithuania cross border cooperation programme. Project LLII-062

			Mr Alvydas Urbonas	Head of Managemet Unit	Kamanos SNR	"Environmental education network for sustainable commmunities".
16–23 Aug 2010	Norway, Åkersetra	Study in Hamar Nature School	Ms Ona Sutkuvienė	Teacher	Akmenė	Funded by Latvia–Lithuania cross border cooperation programme. Project LLII-062 "Environmental education network for sustainable commmunities".
			Ms Irena Zubavicienė	Teacher	Akmenė	
			Ms Vilija Lapėnienė	Teacher	Raudėnai	
			Ms Sigita Dacytė	Teacher	N. Akmenė	
			Ms Angelė Kazlauskienė	Teacher	N. Akmenė	
			Ms Jolanta Jurėnienė	Teacher	Viekšniai	
			Mr Darius Triausys	Director	Kamanos SNR	
			Mr Alvydas Urbonas	Head of Managemet Unit	Kamanos SNR	
			Ms Aušra Urbonienė	Information Specialist	Kamanos SNR	
			Ms Aušra Birgelytė	Programme Coordinator	NHF	

Source: PIT

Annex 12: Opinions of success, failures, strengths and weakness of the Project recorded during FE interviews (transcribed from interview notes and in no particular order)

i. Perceived 'successes' of the GEF Project by interviewees

- Chance for experts to collaborate to produce joint publications – "People from different fields got together"
- Chance for cooperation of SNR staff with scientific institutions
- Farmer involvement in the management of the Zuvintus wetlands
- Purchase of equipment for cutting reedbeds
- 360 degree panoramas for Zuvintus available on website
- Educational methods and materials developed by Project now included in other programmes by other teachers
- Helped teachers and school children to view nature in another way
- SNR staff have begun to independently generate new ideas and projects and "opened the door to new ideas"
- Has helped encourage lots of activities between the staff and Offered opportunity for SNR staff to work as a team
- Helped build cooperation between Reserve staff and local people
- Provided important high quality information about wetlands in Lithuania and their values among SNR staff, and lots of new knowledge on wetland restoration
- Built capacity of local communities to be involved in work at the Reserve
- Zuvintus watershed restoration project (Dovine River Basin project)
- Infrastructure for visitors provided through Project allows people to visit and get closer to nature - now possible for anyone to visit a SNR (except Girutiskis) – "may have been the first contact a person had with a wetland"
- "Project has provided infrastructure which has enabled the SNR to be open for people to visit physically as well as psychologically"
- "Created a good place to be and to bring guests to the municipality"
- Tangible results – "not just reports and talking" and practical outputs such as infrastructure
- Opportunity for the NHF to develop
- Opportunity to use GEF financing as co-financing to raise significant EU funds for wetland conservation
- The Project allowed the testing of the 'citizen involvement components' e.g. working with farmers
- Viesvile fish ladder, which also helped increase awareness among local people ("people stop to take pictures of the fish ladder now") and "people didn't understand at first, but Project opened their eyes to conservation and how it can be reconciled with human needs"
- Project provided the basis for testing a variety of approaches to conservation
- GEF project acted as a catalyst – opened up the possibility for other projects and "Can see now what you can do through a project – not just ideas"
- Development and implementation of management plans for the SNR – "good model with a page annotated map"
- Change in attitude towards the SNR both among local people and SPAS at national level
- Facilitated the change of attitude on management at the SNR among staff and at national level (no longer seen as an area that should be just protected and is exclusive) in part by providing resources to demonstrate what was possible
- "The project was delivered!"
- "Good focus on activities for school children, as they are the future generation"
- Project provided opportunities and infrastructure for Nature Classes
- Restoration of wetlands at the SNR (Kamanos)
- "Did things we never did before!" and "Things were done which he thought would never be achieved such as the fish ladder"
- Capercaillie captive breeding programme
- Stimulated discussion on environmental issues (first major biodiversity project in the country)
- Increased attraction of SNR to tourists (as there are now better facilities)
- Now have other ideas of things that can be done and project has 'given them a framework to grow'!
- Management Plan for the Zuvintas Biosphere Rerserve (acceptable to locals and good solution from nature management point of view)
- Bukta forest trail which promotes the botanical value of the forest
- Changes in the attitudes/minds of foresters towards nature and improved understanding of activities

- Allowed focus on managing protected species e.g. *Crex crex* (as opposed to simply allowing succession with no intervention) – opportunity to do some 'species-centred conservation' (as SNR is protecting habitats not species)
- "Best project we've had" – lots of practical things develivered (infrastructure, information centre, some area managed)
- Education (nature) trail at the SNR
- Improved relationships between stakeholders and provided opportunity for communication between key stakeholders and opportunities for "interactions of many different groups with different agendas"
- Focus on Girutiskis was useful as it didn't have a separate administration so needed the extra attention – project forced the administration to take on the management of the SNR (more emphasis on the SNR than previously – wouldn't have happened without the GEF Project)
- Equipment, especially computer, provided by the Project (administration really needed them)
- Demonstrated that you don't need lots of money to get something done
- GEF project provided the possibility to demonstrate that PAs are valuable for civil society
- Restoration of hydrological regime at Zuvintas and improvement in hydrological conditions at wetlands, e.g. Kamanos - good demonstrations of how to restore wetlands
- Contributed to helping to fulfill the EU Water Framework Directive
- Contributed to development of Water Basin Management Plans
- Good demonstration of management for biodiversity conservation which was expanded and could be applied in other places
- 'One of best examples of donor-funded projects in Lithuania'
- 'Best project in the SNRs' because it improved the relationship with local people, and changed behaviour of local people, who had a new understanding about nature
- Helped access significant amount of other funding, e.g. EU LIFE+ and encouraged possibility of use of Structural Funds for wetland conservation
- First time invited people in municipal authority to work on wetlands
- Provided a 'School for stakeholders' on wetland issues
- NHF has grown and become a strong partner
- "Project helped me understand EU policy on biodiversity"
- "We now considers BD when planning land reclamation measures"
- Gained experience of communicating with teachers in a different way to normal
- "Staff had opportunity to go on study visits"
- Project opened minds to other NGOs on what is possible
- "GEF financing allowed us to demonstrate that PA are for civil society"
- First big biodiversity project that delivered its objectives and it helped significantly build capacity e.g. staff of Biodiversity Department
- Project has helped changed the paradigm from old Soviet view on how to preserve biodiversity in protected areas to a new one that involves active management
- "People from far away have come to see wetlands now not just from the local area"
- "The best contact we've had with any NGO in Lithuania"
- Project text helped us fill in project application form for PAN Parks application
- High demonstration value of nature management which was explained and could be done in other places
- Differed from many other donor projects in that it put money into developing infrastructure in combination with education programme
- 'GEF team has opened the door for us to new projects'

ii. Perceived 'failures' of the GEF Project by interviewees

- Website – reports page needs updating (reports up to 2007) and many links especially with SNR don't work
- Not enough workshops for teachers – Project should have had a greater focus on education activities
- Education activities only really developed to any extent with schools at two sites and needed for the other three SNRs
- Need to address how to get more school children to the SNR (bus for the SNR?)
- Development of nature-tourism venture at fish ponds at Cepkaliai
- Cranberry farm at Viesvile
- The SNR staff should have been more involved at the beginning of the project at the design stage
- Didn't do enough things
- Concern that lack of cutting in forests (by SFE) may lead to decline in forest biodiversity as mosaic not maintained (does research need to be done here?)
- Not able to do as much due to currency fluctuations
- Permit system at Labanoras/Girutiskis

- Construction of the Visitor Centre and Nature Trail at Girutiskis
- No serious focus on raising awareness of decision-makers/politicians and still very low awareness of value of wetlands among
- Failure to persuade GoL to list Girutiskis as Ramsar site during Project
- Non-deliverance of Outcome 6 with no MWWG (not realistic as a separate body with decision-making powers) and slow delivery of NPS
- Biodiversity impact difficult to assess (Zuvintas has monitoring stations in bog but not being regularly collected due to lack of funds – should be done by EPA who are responsible for monitoring)
- Not done enough to restore hydrological regimes but the GEF project has provided a good demonstration
- Biosphere Reserve status for Zuvinatas under MAB Programme (although application believed to be in final stages, awaiting decision from UNESCO)
- Limited number of farmers using beef cattle at Zuvintas

iii. Perceived 'strengths' of the GEF Project by interviewees

- Very good project team, open and willing to share experience and talk with local community (good communicators)
- Good cooperation and collaboration of Project team with SNR staff, and Project had "Good connections with other groups"
- Good organizational skills of PIT
- Very engaged and committed PIT - 'We didn't need to push people on the project – they just did it" and "They completed what they said they were going to do"
- PIT had very good fund-raising capabilities and very good work linking to EU funds
- Very good adaptive management on the Project
- Project had common actions and good partnerships
- Flexibility of GEF approach compared with EU projects
- Project had a good design – which made it easier it understand and implement
- Project had different sets of activities at different sites and good linkage between activities – "more integrated than most projects"
- "Project had high potential as a model for what can be done for wetland conservation that can be copied to other areas"
- First large biodiversity project at the time had a variety of measures and a 'holistic', coherent approach to wetlands
- Specific focus on the wetlands
- Long period of Project allowed time to properly develop activities

iv. Perceived 'weaknesses' of the GEF Project by interviewees

- Poor communication between PIT and some stakeholders (some people stated that they didn't know much abut the project and some national level groups didn't feel they were kept adequately informed of what the project was doing)
- No real 'failures' but design was perhaps too ambitious
- Too many 'fantastic ideas' to start with that were unrealistic (interviewee puts this down to inexperience and lack of information on the site)
- Too ambitious to start with given the timescale
- The idea of 'institutionalisation' was not clear and understood in practical terms
- Difficult to separate out the GEF project from other donor funded projects - 'They all seem to merge into one'