

Call for Letters of Inquiry Mediterranean Basin Biodiversity Hotspot Small Grants

Eligible Countries:	Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and North Macedonia
Opening Date:	Monday, 28 th October 2019
Closing Date:	Wednesday, 18 th December 2019
Budget:	US\$5,000 to US\$30,000
Project Timeframe:	Projects can start from 1 st March 2020 at the earliest, and must be completed by 30 th May 2022.

CEPF and BirdLife International, as [regional implementation team](#) (RIT) for the hotspot, are inviting proposals in the form of Letters of Inquiry (LOIs) for small grants from non-governmental organizations, community groups, private enterprises, universities and other civil society organizations. Applicants are advised to read this Call for Proposals document in full and submit LOIs under the scope of this call.

BACKGROUND

The [Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund \(CEPF\)](#) is a joint initiative of l'Agence Française de Développement, Conservation International, the European Union, the Global Environment Facility, the Government of Japan, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, and the World Bank. A fundamental goal is to ensure civil society is engaged in biodiversity conservation. Additional small grant funding to the Balkans sub-region has been provided by the MAVA Foundation.

The Mediterranean Basin Hotspot is the second largest hotspot in the world and the largest of the world's five Mediterranean-climate regions. CEPF's niche for investment in the Mediterranean was formulated through a participatory process that engaged civil society, donor and governmental stakeholders throughout the region. The resulting Investment Strategy (2017-2022) is documented within the Ecosystem Profile, available [here](#). This investment strategy comprises of a series of strategic directions, broken down into investment priorities outlining the types of activities that will be eligible for CEPF funding.

ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

Non-governmental organizations, community groups, universities and private enterprises may apply for funding. Individuals must work with civil society organizations to develop applications rather than apply directly.

Organizations must have their own bank account and be authorized under relevant national laws to receive charitable contributions.

Government-owned enterprises or institutions are eligible only if they can demonstrate that the enterprise or institution has:

- a legal personality independent of any government agency or actor;
- the authority to apply for and receive private funds; and
- may not assert a claim of sovereign immunity.

Grants cannot be used for:

- the purchase of land, involuntary resettlement of people, or activities that negatively affect physical cultural resources, including those important to local communities.
- activities adversely affecting Indigenous Peoples or where these communities have not provided their broad support to the project activities.
- removal or alteration of any physical cultural property (includes sites having archaeological, paleontological, historical, religious, or unique natural values). Proposed activities should observe all other relevant safeguard and social policies as set out on the [CEPF website](#).

ELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES

The scope of this call is limited to the types of activities and locations described below.

LOIs will **only be accepted for these Strategic Directions and countries**:

- **Strategic Direction 2 (Sustainable management of water catchments)**
- **Strategic Direction 4 (Conservation of plants)**
- **Countries: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and North Macedonia.**

Proposed projects must support either Strategic Direction 2 or Strategic Direction 4. If you wish to apply for both Strategic Directions you must complete a separate LOI for each one.

Project proposals should be built on **biodiversity conservation as a fundamental component**, and should demonstrate positive impacts on the conservation status of biodiversity.

Where relevant, applicants are encouraged to submit LOIs which harmonize with existing national or regional initiatives. Synergies with other organizations are also eligible, with one lead organization submitting the application, and project partners with clear roles stated in the LOI.

Applicants based outside of eligible countries may submit an LOI as long as the project deliverables are focused on the conservation need within an eligible country. International organizations are

encouraged to involve local organizations or communities as project partners and/or explain how local stakeholders will be engaged as part of project implementation.

I) Strategic Direction 2: Sustainable management of water catchments

Nearly one-third of the Critically Endangered species found in the hotspot are freshwater animals and plants. They occur in a wide range of freshwater ecosystems, including rivers, lakes, karst cave systems, ephemeral desert water courses and coastal marshes. The need for freshwater for agriculture and human consumption is one of the most persuasive reasons for the sustainable management of natural resources. Nevertheless, the hotspot’s freshwater ecosystems are poorly represented in national protected areas networks, they are under pressure from over-use and pollution, and the species that live in them suffer from over-exploitation and disturbance. Climate change is likely to make these problems worse.

CEPF funding will address the need to improve knowledge on important sites for freshwater biodiversity, using this as an opportunity to build capacity for research and conservation action on freshwater organisms. Beyond that, funding will also focus on site-based action, working with local stakeholders and through engagement with government and private sector stakeholders to ensure connectivity within catchments.

There have been significant improvements in the identification and definition of freshwater Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs) in the hotspot, and of the threatened species they support. A number of Catchment Management Zones (CMZs) have also been identified which take into account hydrological connectivity and the threats outside KBA borders, to better inform management actions. Some freshwater KBAs are identical to CMZs, and others are contained within CMZs. At present the most effective method for setting priorities for freshwater ecosystems is to prioritize the CMZs. Specific CMZs were identified as priorities for CEPF support, alongside 2 additional freshwater KBAs which fall outside of these areas (Table 2).

CEPF is looking for:

- **LOIs which address Strategic Direction 2 through one or more of the Investment Priorities (see Table 1).**
- **LOIs which only focus on one or more of the CMZs and KBAs listed in Table 2.**
- **LOIs which clearly demonstrate how project activities will benefit threatened species.**

Table 1: Strategic Direction 2 and Investment Priorities

Strategic direction	Investment priorities
2: Support the sustainable management of water catchments through integrated approaches for the conservation of threatened freshwater biodiversity.	2.1: Enhance the knowledge base on freshwater biodiversity and the importance of freshwater ecosystem services.
	2.2: Take action to reduce threats and improve management of selected sites in priority freshwater catchments with the participation of local stakeholders.
	2.3: Engage with government, private sector and other stakeholders to support integrated river basin management practices that reduce threats to biodiversity in priority Catchment Management Zones (CMZs).

Details on Investment Priorities under Strategic Direction 2:

- Investment Priority 2.1.** *Enhance the knowledge base on freshwater biodiversity and the importance of freshwater ecosystem services.*
 Information on the distribution, population and threat status of freshwater biodiversity within priority CMZs is, in many cases, inadequate to allow identification of the most urgent sites for conservation action, or to act as a baseline against which to judge improvements. In addition, the biological, social and economic values of ecosystem services from intact water catchments are poorly understood and not widely appreciated by decision makers. CEPF will support grantees to collect this information as a first step towards taking conservation action
- Investment Priority 2.2** *Take action to reduce threats and improve management of selected sites in priority freshwater catchments with the participation of local stakeholders.*
 CSOs supported by CEPF grants are most likely to be able to take direct conservation action at specific sites, where working with management agencies or local stakeholders can change behavior and reduce the impact of specific threats.
- Investment Priority 2.3** *Engage with government, private sector and other stakeholders to support integrated river basin management practices that reduce threats to biodiversity in priority CMZs.*
 Although the most appropriate level for direct action by CSOs is at clearly defined sites, the connectivity of freshwater systems makes it highly likely that action will also be needed at the river basin level to address problems with water quality, water volume and flow and disturbance to habitat. This will involve influencing those actors from government and/or the private sector who are involved with or have the authority to influence these issues.

Table 2: Eligible Areas for this Call for Proposal

Country	Area type	Catchment Management Zone
Albania	Catchment Management Zone	Lake Butrint catchment
Albania, North Macedonia	Catchment Management Zone	Lake Ohrid catchment
Albania, Montenegro	Catchment Management Zone	Lake Skadar catchment
Albania, Montenegro	Catchment Management Zone	Lower Bojana river basin
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Catchment Management Zone	Trebizat drainage including Imotsko polje
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Catchment Management Zone	Popovo polje and Trebišnjica
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Catchment Management Zone	Neretva delta and associated springs/lakes including Hutovo Blato
North Macedonia	Catchment Management Zone	Doirani Lake catchment
Montenegro	Catchment Management Zone	Catchment surrounding Niksic
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Key Biodiversity Area	Livanjsko polje and Busko Lake
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Key Biodiversity Area	Mostarsko Blato

An interactive map of the hotspot can be accessed [here](#), use the top right-hand 'Layer list' icon to select the layer you need e.g. CMZ.

Figure 1. Map of CMZs in Albania

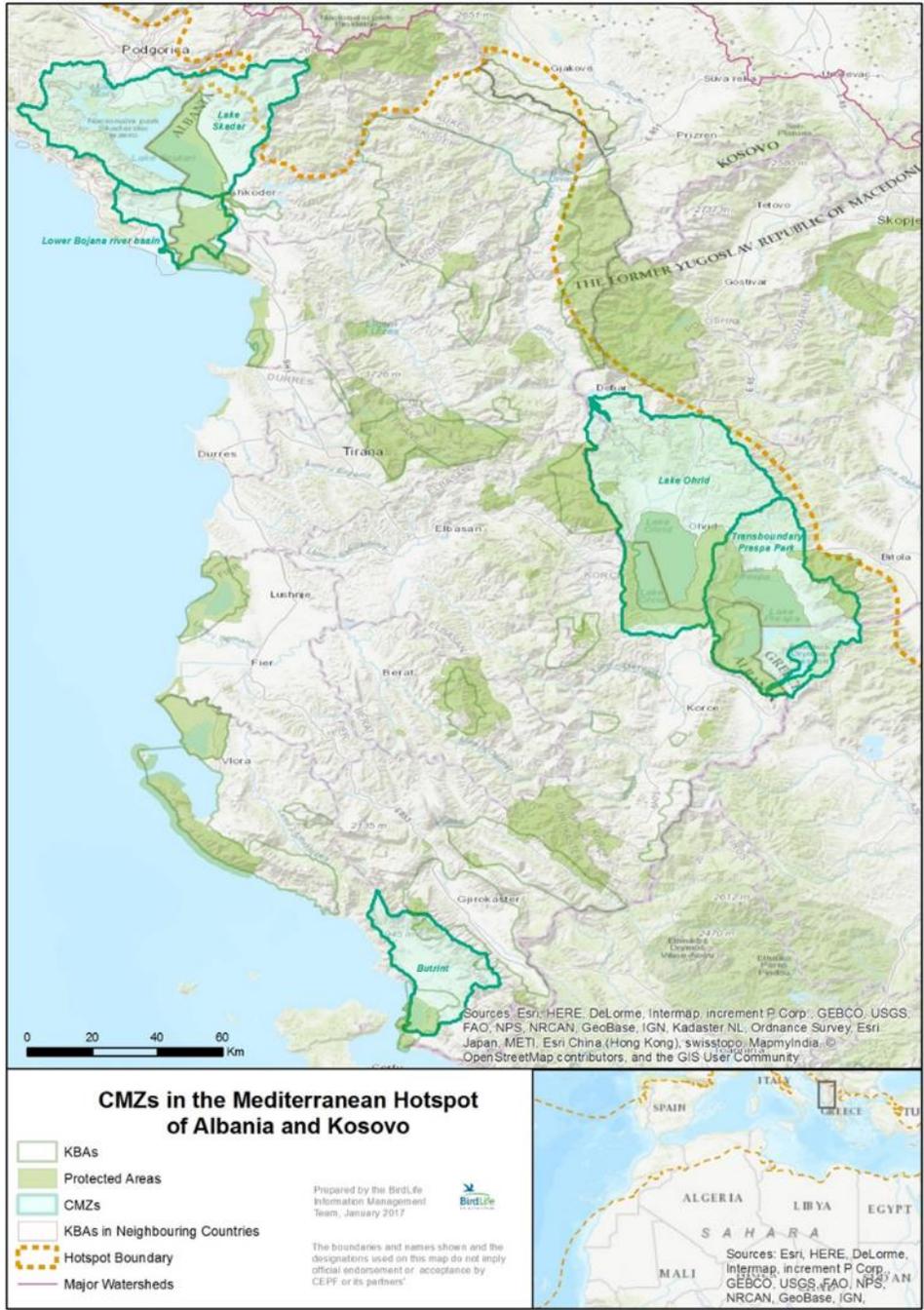
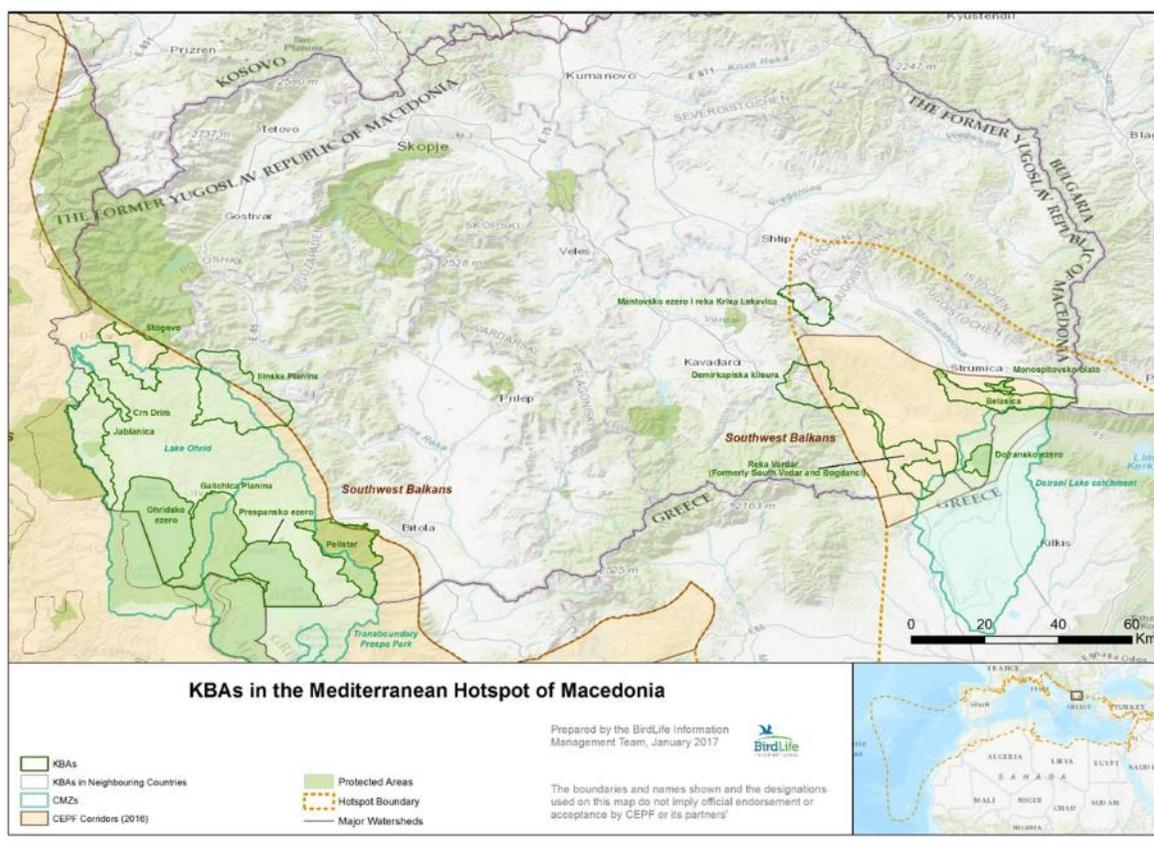


Figure 4. Map of CMZs in North Macedonia



II) Strategic Direction 4: Conservation of Plants

The Mediterranean Basin Hotspot is defined primarily on the basis of the presence of its unique botanical communities, with an exceptionally high number of endemic plants. This strategic direction is focused on the conservation of threatened plants, including improving knowledge on the distribution and conservation status of the Mediterranean’s endemic plants.

The limited range and very specific habitat requirements of some threatened plants means that their conservation can be tackled effectively by local CSOs working on the ground with limited resources, often in partnership with protected areas managers or local land owners. Projects under this strategic direction will support direct conservation action, and aim to strengthen the botanical knowledge and skills of scientists, conservationists and land managers.

CEPP is looking for LOIs which:

- **Address Strategic Direction 4 through one or more of the Investment Priorities specified in Table 3.**
- **With activities within Albania, Bosnia and Hercegovina, Montenegro and North Macedonia (more than one country can be covered in a single LOI).**

- **Activities must be focused on the sites or plant species matching one or more of these criteria:**
 - Sites with plant species in threat categories Critically Endangered (CR) in the [IUCN Global Red List](#)
 - Sites with plant species that have not yet been assessed in the Global Red List, but that would qualify for CR according to the [IUCN global Red List criteria](#) and thresholds.
 - Site restricted endemics (SRE), which include:
 - Taxa occurring in only one site (and nowhere else in the world)
 - Extent of occurrence less than 100 km²
 - Area of occupancy less than 10 km²

Priority will be given to projects that:

- Demonstrate that they are focused on one or several priority species or are addressing a priority need for the conservation of plants.
- Demonstrate that they will lead directly to action for the conservation of threatened and endemic plant populations.
- Include, where possible, a significant component of capacity building for plant conservation, either for the project implementers, or their local partners
- Address the conservation of sites where there is a demonstrable need for funding and opportunity for success.

Projects proposals which focus on KBAs identified in the Ecosystem Profile will be prioritized due to the known biodiversity value of the site. If conservation work is to be conducted outside of a KBA, the coordinates for the site/s must be included in the LOI.

Additional information about the site must be fully explained in the LOI e.g. its ownership and management, if it is a Protected Area, if there are any local communities within or nearby it, and if there are any threats faced.

If a plant species is not currently assessed under the IUCN Global Red List, applicants must clearly state in the project rational why this plant species needs special conservation attention, using IUCN criteria and thresholds. If a site restricted endemic (SRE) species is proposed, the applicant must justify it against the criteria listed above. Justification may include references to previous work conducted for the species, detail on the habitat where it occurs and the threats faced.

Table 3: Strategic Direction 4 and Investment Priorities

Strategic direction	Investment priorities
4: Strengthen the engagement of civil society to support the conservation of plants that are critically endangered or have highly restricted ranges.	4.1: Increase knowledge and skills to support assessment and planning for the conservation of plants, and foster the emergence of a new generation of young professionals in plant conservation.
	4.2: Support integration of plant conservation into the management of protected areas.
	4.3: Support innovative actions for the conservation of important populations of plants, working with land owners and managers.

Details on Investment Priorities under Strategic Direction 4:

- **Investment Priority 4.1** *Increase knowledge and skills to support assessment and planning for the conservation of plants, and foster the emergence of a new generation of young professionals in plant conservation*

One of the challenges in continuing the process of identifying IPAs, assessing the conservation status of plants, and taking action for their conservation, is the limited number of people in the region with the necessary botanical skills. CEPF will support projects that have a strong element of developing practical botanical skills, including survey, in situ protection and, in some cases, ex situ protection. This will involve working with traditional educational institutions (i.e., universities, research institutes, etc.), as well as working to improve the skills of other groups with the potential to contribute to plant conservation, including protected areas managers, members of voluntary societies and land managers.

- **Investment Priority 4.2** *Support integration of plant conservation into the management of protected areas*

Populations of threatened plants are often located within protected areas but are still threatened because management (or lack thereof) does not address their specific conservation need. CEPF grantees will work with protected area managers to identify threats and potential solutions, and include specific actions for the preservation of endangered plants in the management plans for protected areas.

- **Investment Priority 4.3** *Support innovative actions for the conservation of important populations of plants, working with land owners and managers*

Many threatened plant populations survive in managed landscapes, outside protected areas, and are potentially threatened by changes in land use practices. CEPF grantees will work with land users and landowners to identify threats and promote improved management practices to preserve rare plant populations.

APPLICATION PROCESS

Applications (LOIs) can be written in **English, Serbian, Croatian, Bosnian, Montenegrin, Macedonian or Albanian.**

Please **download the Letter of Inquiry form** in the language of your choice:

- [English](#)
- [Serbo-Croatian¹](#)
- [Albanian](#)

Applicants **must** submit their Letter of Inquiry by the deadline to: CEPF-MED-RIT@birdlife.org.

You will receive an acknowledgement from the RIT confirming your submission.

¹ For simplicity, the form was originally designed as Serbo-Croatian, but the CEPF team is aware of the existence of other official languages in the countries of the former Yugoslavia, and that they are mutually intelligible, so please note that you can enter the letter of intent in your own language (including Macedonian).

The LOI review process will take approximately 8 weeks from the deadline date. The review committee will select the strongest LOIs which meet the eligibility criteria in Section 5 and 6. All applicants will receive a response from the RIT following the review of their project.

Applications which have been accepted will be moved to the second stage and asked to elaborate their LOI with a more detailed budget and logframe. Final approved LOIs will be awarded a small grant, with an agreement made between BirdLife International, as the RIT for the Mediterranean Basin Hotspot, and the applicant's institution (the "grantee"). Grants will be denominated in United States dollars and grant agreements will be in English.

REFERENCE MATERIALS

All applicants are advised to review the CEPF Investment Strategy for the Mediterranean Basin, which provides more detail on the types of activity CEPF will fund under each Investment Priority.

- Ecosystem Profile: [English](#)
- Ecosystem Profile - Technical Summary: [English](#), [Arabic](#), [French](#)
- Mediterranean hotspot map [here](#)

CEPF is committed to integrating gender into its portfolio. Applicants should design projects and write proposals that consider gender issues in the achievement of their conservation impacts. CEPF has developed several resources that can help applicants to design, implement and evaluate gender-aware projects ([CEPF Gender Toolkit](#)) and understand what CEPF seeks in a proposal ([CEPF Gender Fact Sheet](#)). Visit the [CEPF and Gender webpage](#) to learn more about how CEPF addresses gender in the projects it supports.

Help and resources:

- [Eligibility and How To Apply](#)
- [Frequently Asked Questions](#)
- [Safeguard Policies](#)
- [12 Tips for Getting Your Grant Idea Funded](#)
- [CEPF Projects database](#)

CONTACT

Before applying, applicants are encouraged to discuss project ideas and eligibility, please contact:

- Milica Mišković, Small Grant Coordinator for the Balkans; milica.miskovic@pticesrbije.rs, tel: +381 213023361.
- Granit Gashi, Small Grant Assistant for Albania, granit.gashi@pticesrbije.rs.

For general queries about the CEPF Mediterranean Basin Hotspot programme, please contact:

- Salwa Elhalwani, Small Grant Manager; Salwa.Elhalawani@birdlife.org or visit www.birdlife.org/cepf-med