

Involuntary restrictions – Process Framework

“Conservation of Pelicans, a Key Biodiversity Species of Skadar Lake” Montenegro (# 63087 - Noé Conservation)

A. PROJECT BACKGROUND

Project components will be prepared and implemented.

- (a) The document should briefly describe the project and **components or activities that may involve new or more stringent restrictions** on natural resource use.
- (b) It should also describe the process by which potentially displaced persons participate in project design.

This project aims at protecting a Mediterranean wetland listed as Wetland of International Importance by the Ramsar Convention, the Skadar lake, the biggest lake from the Balkans peninsula, through conservation actions targeting the rarest species of pelican in a world, the Dalmatian Pelican (*Pelecanus crispus*). Symbol of the current threats impacting Mediterranean wetlands, the Dalmatian Pelican is considered as an umbrella species; i.e. the conservation of this emblematic species will benefit the whole ecosystem.

The project also has the ambition to create a greater ownership of their natural heritage by local communities. Shared by two neighboring countries, Montenegro and Albania, Skadar lake is essential for many species, including pale arctic migratory birds like the Dalmatian Pelican. This iconic species is the symbol of the Skadar Lake National Park, which demonstrates the patrimonial importance of the species: Dalmatian Pelican is believed to be a sign of generosity by local communities. Consequently, the project has planned outreaching activities focusing on both heritage symbol and traditional sustainable practices.

Focused on the conservation of this flagship species and its natural habitat, Noé’s project on Skadar lake relies on an innovative approach and is built on four complementary components:

1. Improve Dalmatian Pelican research and monitoring practices.
2. Contribute to Dalmatian Pelican conservation and support management authorities (capacity building).
3. Promote Skadar lake’s natural heritage *via* environmental education campaigns.
4. Promote “pelican-friendly” tourism activities.

This project intends to contribute to the long-term sustainability of Skadar lake management and Dalmatian Pelicans conservation thanks to:

- The revision of the National Action Plan for Pelicans in Montenegro.
- The drafting of Dalmatian Pelican Conservation Plan in Montenegro.
- The revision of the Management Plan for Skadar Lake National Park with a

focus on the protection and safeguard of Dalmatian Pelican and other key biodiversity species.

- The capacity building of local institutions for the implementation of management and conservation plans.

Management and species conservation plans are often conducted during 5-10 years after adoption, thus strategic participation in their development/revision ensures basis for mid-term conservation results.

To this respect, the capacity building provided to various partners and the involvement of local communities from the outset of the project, along with the experiences gained by all partners during this project should foster local ownership and long-term collaboration on which to build the subsequent phase of this project.

Gradual disappearance of Dalmatian Pelican is the result of direct (poaching, disturbance) and indirect threats (habitat loss and overexploitation/degradation of natural resources). Considering that the major threat to Dalmatian Pelican in Skadar is disturbance of breeding colonies (fishing, leisure boats, tourism and poaching), Noé Conservation and partners involved in the project decided to focus their attention on Pelican conservation actions in order to minimize these threats. These conservation actions are the following:

- Providing expertise and necessary equipment to local institutions in order to improve research and non-invasive monitoring techniques like:
 - Carrying out monitoring actions from the Hum hill, nearby the lake, which offers a good sight on the colony and is located far enough from the colony for not causing any disturbance.
 - Use of camera traps and a WebCam on artificial nesting platforms in order to be able to monitor the breeding group on a daily basis during the nesting season without the need of any disturbing site visit.
- Materialization of delimitation (zonation) in an area of restricted access around the colony.
- Development of a patrolling protocol for the rangers and implement patrols within the buffer zone (area of restricted access) from the lake and from the hill Hum.
- Evaluation of the most feasible way of channeling the movements of local users of the lake while allowing patrolling without entering the colony and thus causing any disturbance. The idea of creating a pathway bypassing the colony shall be particularly investigated.

B. PARTICIPATORY IMPLEMENTATION

Several of the activities above-mentioned, like the implementation of a zonation around Pelican colony, the possible implementation of a new boat pathway and channeling tourist/fishermen boats away from the pelican colonies represents a potential prevention of access to some parts of the protected area (Skadar Lake National Park) for local people.

These activities will have potential implications on the use of natural resources by local communities. In this region, the development of human activities is very wide and ancient. Many economic and recreational activities depend on wetlands ecosystems. The project will identify these people through a process of consultations with all stakeholders and, to the extent possible, with local communities. In this way it will seek to mitigate its potential negative impacts. An appropriate mitigation strategy will be identified in close consultation with the project partners, with local, regional and international experience, thanks to the organization of events specifically dedicated to these mitigation issues. The project relies on local and territorial cooperation. Different sectors shall be involved to share socio-economic concerns of sites' managers and to adapt campaigns for sustainable environmental use and management.

Agriculture, fishing, hunting and tourism are the main local economic activities. The project plans to organize and gather existing groups in order to bring together different categories of stakeholders around the questions raised by the potential restriction of access to the lake. The goal of those brainstorming and working sessions will be i) to involve communities from the early stages of the project design onwards, ii) to identify their practices and potential incentives / brakes to ensure the compliance to the new restriction, and iii) to share local and external best practices and determine local sustainable practices in a participatory way.

The creation of a pathway bypassing the colony and the proposition of route for tourist/fishermen boats was the primary concern. Delimitation around rafts for pelican nesting – pelican colony also brought some limitations of movement, especially for local fishermen. In order to prevent any adverse effect on the Pelican colony and other key bird/ aquatic species, experts from Tour du Valat conducted a Conservation Expertise aiming at assessing the environmental impacts of such a boat pathway. Conservation Expertise, together with the involvement of local Albanian and Montenegrin stakeholders and the Skadar Lake National Park in a workshop specially dedicated to these issues, provided information on current types of users, their needs and equipment, current/actual impact on key species, best mitigating approaches and potentially on best geographical location and tracks of the potential pathway. The early proposition of location of boat pathway has been provided by the Natural History Museum of Montenegro using their best knowledge of the movement of fishermen and existing land and water routes. The final decision on its position was done along local stakeholders by GPS mapping of the route most suitable for local communities. This new route respected the needs of local fishermen and created a more favorable exit to open water. The proposed pathway is supposed to avoid disturbance to colonies, both by fishermen and tourist as it goes outside the delimitation and connecting the two main existing pathways. The final decision on the boat pathway was followed by the plan for the National Park to manage the pathway in the long term (cleaning it from vegetation and sedimentation). This Plan shall then be part of the recommendations provided for the revision of the overall Park's Management Plan (Skadar Lake National Park), along with inputs on other matters such as the zones for tourist activities. Delimitations was a result of joint works of all partners, especially local institutions

and follows the local legislation that is already in force. The final version of the delimitation is accepted by the local communities. It goes outside the main fishing locations and existing and future boat pathways.

C. CRITERIA FOR ELIGIBILITY OF AFFECTED PERSONS

(c) Criteria for eligibility of affected persons will be determined. The document should establish that potentially affected communities would be involved in identifying any adverse impacts, assessing of the significance of impacts, and establishing of the criteria for eligibility for any mitigating or compensating measures necessary.

During the implementation of project activities, local fishermen, hunters and tourist workers will be the main public concerned.

1) Fishermen

Fishing on Skadar lake has been the only source of income for generations in the Podhum area. The old and traditional fishing practices are mainly abandoned in favor of fishing methods that bring bigger income but also harm the fish stock. Electric power generators, shoreline nets, fishing at fish hibernation sites in winter, and during spawning season, are some of the methods that are responsible for the diminishing fish stock. All these activities are illegal by national law.

In addition to activities on water, the use of paths and trails, which go through the special reserves, are also in contradiction with the law. Usage of these paths and trails affects nature and brings disturbance to the wildlife inhabiting the shoreline.

The project will support the authorities to enforce laws and regulations in place. The fishing activities will continue to be allowed, enabling fishermen to abide by these regulations. Consultations will take place with fishermen to make sure the regulations are understood, as well as the expected long-term benefits in terms of securization of the fish stocks.

New pathway will not bring any harm to valuable ecosystems. The new boat pathway will lead the fishermen away from the prohibited zone and decrease the incidents of pelican disturbance. This will be done via pathway that will use two main existing waterways and connect them, thus making a shorter way to open water, and lead boats away from the pelican nesting sites. The pathway therefore does not harm the natural habitat of the Lake, but also provides the local population with a faster and safer mean of traveling to open water.

Proposed zonation was developed together with local stakeholders. The exact location of this boat pathway was given by the local communities themselves and was GPS mapped together by fishermen and the project partners. The delimitation includes pelican nesting sites but is also set outside of the main fishing grounds. The area inside delimitation is shallow and unattractive for fishing, but in some periods of high water level there is some fishing activity present. By making the zonation perimeter together with the locals and offering tourist development as an

alternative, we made an agreement with the fishermen to respect the existing zonation.

2) Hunters

Hunting within the Park is illegal. Poaching seems to occur and has negative impact on birds' populations (including pelicans due to disturbance, although not directly targeted). The poachers are not only locals but also hunters that come from Albania on their own accord, or foreign hunters brought by the locals. Locals take foreign hunters to the lake to hunt in the protected area, and are paid for the service in return. This practice is widely spread throughout Montenegro.

The hunting activity within the protected areas is a "leisure activity", and the enforcement of existing regulation won't have implications in terms of livelihood or access to protein sources. Hunting will still be possible, following the regulations, in unprotected areas accessible to the local hunters community. As for the intrusion of foreign hunters provided by the locals, this practice is prosecuted both by the government and the majority of hunters as the devastating results are obvious to all. The actions against this type of poaching are already present in local communities, hunting associations and mainly by National Park rangers and the police forces of Montenegro.

3) Tourism workers

Tourist activities are allowed but not in all parts of the lake. For example, Special Reserve Panceva oka is often targeted by tourist boats because of its ornithological values, even though the entrance there is strictly prohibited. The presence of tourists is rising exponentially and the tourism industry is not managed, resulting in disturbance and harm to bird colonies, especially during nesting period.

The project will support the authorities to enforce laws and regulations in place. The tourism activities will continue to be allowed, enabling the tourism sector abide by these regulations. Consultations will take place with representatives of the tourism sector to make sure the rationale for the limitations are understood. The expected increase in terms of waterbirds population, as a result of better protection, is expected to increase the tourism potential of the area and therefore the financial opportunities for tourism sector at local level. The project will in parallel support sustainable tourism activities – in particular through the development of the Pelican Village concept.

Tourist boats will not be directly affected by the project. The new Management Plan for National Park Skadar lake will contain regulations for the movement of these vessels. By providing recommendations on these regulations, we will only bring expert knowledge from the project partners and create better decision-making, with guidance and recommendations to follow in future.

By providing amendments to the Management plan of National Park Skadar lake we will also support changes issued by the government: lake zonation, better organization of tourism activities, diminishing of illegal activities and better functioning of the ranger service. Zonation set by the project will be a first step towards the final zonation of Panceva oka, and even serve as the first defined core zone for pelican protection, that is accepted by the Public Enterprise National Parks of Montenegro. This will have a clear influence on the movement of the visitors and locals, but it is an integral part of the new National Parks Management Policy. The boat pathway will then serve as a mitigation measure towards locals for the changes issued by the Montenegrin government, and serve more in favor of these people than against them.

D. MEASURES TO ASSIST THE AFFECTED PERSONS

(d) Measures to assist affected persons in their efforts to improve their livelihoods or restore them, in real terms, to pre-displacement levels, while maintaining the sustainability of the park or protected area will be identified. The document should describe methods and procedures by which communities will identify and choose potential mitigating or compensating measures to be provided to those adversely affected, and procedures by which adversely affected community members will decide among the options available to them.

The community consultations will determine the best way to ensure continuance of their activities, but following the local laws and regulations.

Concerning the registered fishermen, and as stated in the project proposal, creation of an information center, along with the workshops on value of local conservation and the plan for boat pathway will provide benefits of clear, short and easily accessible approach to the local villages in the summer time, which will boost the tourism in the area. The boat pathway should lead directly to the villages, remove the impact on pelicans and create better access towards local communities and their products. The tourism will provide additional incomes for local communities impacted and indirectly via the community funds for affected fishermen. The implementation of the "Pelican-Village Network" approach for Podhum area is already planned. This Network will be implemented, based on the "European Stork Villages", a success initiated by EuroNatur in 1994. This initiative has set up a movement to help counterbalance the habitat loss for storks in Europe. Candidates for the title "European Stork Village" are villages or parishes with resident stork colonies. The local people have put time and energy into the protection of storks, for example by adopting extensive farming of large areas of wetland. With the title, the communities are internationally recognized as special cultural and natural heritage sites. In this way we are working to encourage successful approaches to the protection of storks. Similarly, the tourism sector shall be a key stakeholder in order to carry out the feasibility study on the "Pelican-Village Network", to develop tourism activities such as the observation tower at Podhum and the walking-trails on hill Hum and raise awareness on impacts of recreational uses of water bodies.

E. CONFLICT RESOLUTION AND COMPLAINT MECHANISM

(e) Potential conflicts or grievances within or between affected communities will be resolved. The document should describe the process for resolving disputes relating to resource use restrictions that may arise between or among affected communities, and grievances that may arise from members of communities who are dissatisfied with the eligibility criteria, community planning measures, or actual implementation.

An awareness-raising component has been included in this project to ensure all local communities are aware of the location of the protected areas, the buffer zone (area of restricted access inside the protected area) and the implications of the zonation of this area of restricted access, on their natural resource use.

As already described, Noé Conservation facilitated discussions and meetings between stakeholders and local communities (see section B). The involvement of local communities in the implementation of the project ensured fewer grievances.

Upon receipt of a grievance, Noé Conservation and project partners will inform the CEPF implementation team and hold additional meetings with local communities or individuals, to discuss the issues and develop amicable solutions, which will be implemented by the project.

The conflicts that might occur are with illegal fishermen or poachers. Currently, they remain largely unprocessed because of the current legal status of the wardens - they are not entitled to produce legal suits without the involvement of police. In such cases, they are also requested to provide personal data and evidence against the poachers, but in most cases they are not equipped nor instructed to acquire those. This could be solved either by legally empowering the wardens, building much better connection with the police, and by enabling the wardens to acquire needed evidence by taking photos and GPS locations of the illegal activity. The project provided this equipment to wardens (rangers of the Skadar Lake National Park) to implement an effective surveillance with the support of the Natural History Museum of Montenegro in order to prevent that these grievances occur.

F. IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS

(f) The process framework should describe arrangements relating to the following

Administrative and legal procedures. The document should review agreements reached regarding the process approach with relevant administrative jurisdictions and line ministries (including clear delineation for administrative and financial responsibilities under the project).

Monitoring arrangements. The document should review arrangements for participatory monitoring of project activities as they relate to (beneficial and adverse) impacts on persons within the project impact area, and for monitoring the effectiveness of measures taken to improve (or at minimum restore) incomes and living standards.

Management authorities of the lake on both Montenegrin and Albanian sides will be directly involved in the project implementation (mainly with patrolling and training). Other administrative authorities shall also be targeted in order to engage in tourism development and integrate sustainable development with natural resources

conservation. These are ministries (such as the Ministry for sustainable development and tourism in Montenegro), the Working Groups of the Skadar Lake Commission and municipalities (such as the town of Tuzi for instance).

Indeed, the project plans to contribute to the integration of environmental issues in local political and economical decision making by sensitizing stakeholders to environmental issues via awareness and communication campaigns among local population and institutions.

We will also complement all other initiatives in the area finding synergies and joining forces in order to have more unified impact in all aspects of the project. This will be done especially with the Green Home and INCA, and on the project 63088 - Supporting the Long-Term Sustainable Management of Transboundary Lake Skadar. This cooperation has already started through joint meetings, complementing activities and creating a shared message sent to local communities, fishermen, tourist, hunters, leisure visitors, managing institutions and other stakeholders.

Noé Conservation is responsible for overall management of the project, but will require close cooperation with local partners and international institutions cited below.

Tour du Valat, a French research institute, co-founder of the project, positions itself here as a scientific advisor.

Pelicans Species Specialist Group - International Union for Conservation of Nature & Wetlands International (Pelican SSG-IUCN WI), the international group of Pelican experts, shall support the project by sharing strong expertise and recommendations for the project while helping with the dissemination of its outputs.

The Society for the Protection of Prespa (SPP), internationally recognized as a model of transboundary wetlands management and Dalmatian Pelican conservation, shall support the implementation of the project by sharing its expertise in these fields.

EuroNatur, a German foundation with good knowledge of the Balkans, shall contribute to local development actions and direct coordination of certain activities in support of partners in Montenegro and Albania.

The Center for Protection and Research of Birds of Montenegro (CPRB / CZIP in Montenegrin), a Montenegrin association focusing on birds, is in charge of carrying out scientific monitoring and awareness-raising campaigns around Skadar while creating tourism activities.

The Management Authority of Skadar Lake National Park will receive technical training to ensure the implementation of conservation activities in the Park and will be supported to strengthen patrolling.

The Association for Protection of Aquatic Wildlife of Albania (APAWA), an Albanian association, shall contribute to the promotion of best practices, to the vulgarization

of management plans/ regulations and shall contribute to environmental education activities in Albania.

Natural History Museum of Montenegro (NHM), shall be responsible of Pelican research and monitoring activities from the lake, preparation of materials for trainings and for awareness raising, and maintenance of the Pelican database of the project.