

Combined Safeguard Plan

Stakeholder Engagement Plan
Environmental Impact Assessment – Environmental Management Plan

CEPF Grant 113043

Biodiversity Conservation Fund of Kazakhstan

**Improving the management efficiency of specially protected natural areas of the Western Tien
Shan, Phase II**

Kazakhstan

Grant Summary

- 1. Grantee organization:** Biodiversity Conservation Fund of Kazakhstan (FSBK)
- 2. Grant title:** Improving the management efficiency of specially protected natural areas of the Western Tien Shan
- 3. Grant number:** 113043
- 4. Grant amount (US dollars):** approximately US \$100,000
- 5. Proposed dates of grant:** 1 August 2022 – 31 July 2023
- 6. Countries or territories where project will take place:** Kazakhstan
- 7. Date of preparation of this document:** 14 April 2022

8. Project Background

Western Tien Shan plays a key role in stabilizing the environmental situation in the most difficult part of Central Asia in terms of natural and socio-economic situation. The nearby foothills are one of the most densely populated in the world. Here, on the most beautiful and rich in species diversity part of the mountains of Central Asia, we plan the implementation of this project.

On the territory of the Western Tien Shan, have been preserved unique forests: walnut and wild fruit, juniper and spruce-fir, broad-leaved and tugai. The Western Tien Shan is characterized by the close proximity of contrasting biological communities. Communities of the boreal and tundra type are located here next to the communities of the subtropics and deserts.

There is no other place at these latitudes with such a high concentration of the ecosystem and species diversity of flora and fauna in such a limited area.

CEPF Ecosystem Profile designates “The Western Tien Shan Mountains” (bordering Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan and extending to Tajikistan) as Priority Corridor 9 and include several KBAs, including:

Aksu-Zhabably (a Kazakh state natural reserve coincident with CEPF Priority KBA KAZ 8) (in the Turkestan and Zhambyl regions).

Karatau (part of a Kazakh state nature reserve coincident with CEPF KBA KAZ 1) (in the Turkestan region).

Ugam (roughly coincident with Kazakh national park Sairam-Ugam, coincident with CEPF KBA KAZ 5) (in the Turkestan region).

FSBK has an ongoing grant with CEPF (which we call Phase 1) to work in and around the three named parks above, and at a national level, to improve site management (SD 2) and corridor management (SD 3). The three reserves fall under the control of the Ministry of Ecology, Geology, and Natural Resources and its subordinate agency, the Committee of Forestry and Wildlife.

The Western Tien Shan contains unique forests (walnut, wild fruit, juniper, spruce-fir, broad-leaved and tugai), and is noted for the proximity of contrasting biological communities (boreal and tundra type are located next to subtropics and deserts). The area is under threat from climate change, irrational use of water, fires, poaching, pollution, and deforestation.

Our approach to improving site and corridor management is to work from “above,” from the “middle,” and from “below.” The context for this is described here.

Issues from Above – International Agreements

Three nature conservation institutions (i.e. three KRBS) and the Kazakh part of the Western Tien Shan form part of the Transboundary Serial World Heritage Site - Western Tien Shan.

On March 17, 1998, in Bishkek, the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic, the Government of the Republic of Uzbekistan and the Republic of Tajikistan signed an Agreement on cooperation in the field of conservation of biological diversity of the Western Tien Shan.

In 2018, the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic, the Ministry of Agriculture of the Republic of Kazakhstan and the State Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan signed a Memorandum on the management and protection of the "Western Tien Shan" Transboundary Serial WHS. Within the framework of this Memorandum, the Action Plan for the implementation of the Memorandum for 2018-2022 was approved. Since then, no significant work has been undertaken, but the MoU calls for the establishment of a regional committee and a 5-year regional management plan.

The Government of Kazakhstan positions itself as a leader in the region in conservation. In the context of improving the management of the three named parks and the overall corridor, the Government is motivated to take actions on the Regional Committee and on the Kazakh portions of the World Heritage Site. In other words, the Government is inclined to improve the management of its parks, if only to signal to the other countries that Kazakhstan is a leader.

Issues from Above – National Law

Separate from the World Heritage Site, but also an issue from “above” is national policy. The 2006 law, “On Specially Protected Natural Areas,” provides the legal basis for the creation and management of state protected areas. In 2017 and 2018, provisions were added to this law calling for the creation of civil society Coordination Councils for each protected area. This was an important and welcome step for CSOs and local populations, but the provisions have critical limitations:

- The activities of Coordination Councils are limited to the development/promotion of ecotourism and recreation.
- The chair of the Coordination Council is, by definition, either the head of the protected area or his deputy, and chair alone determines the composition of the council.
- There is no mechanism for ensuring transparency of the Coordination Council or monitoring its decisions.
- Coordination Councils have no mechanism to ensure gender equity or to address, through their composition, any disadvantaged group.

Given this scenario, Coordination Councils rarely meet.

Nevertheless, President of Kazakhstan Kassym-Zhomart Tokayev, in his address to the people on September 1, 2020, instructed the Government to “start implementing practical measures to improve the environmental situation, legislatively and normatively to protect national parks and other natural resources of Kazakhstan . . . to approve long-term plans for the conservation and rational use of biological diversity.”

The fact that provisions for civil society participation exist under the national law, and that the President has voiced his support for better conservation, create a rationale for action to improve the law’s provisions.

Issues from Middle

Even absent changes to the protected area law provisions, Coordination Councils can be made more functional. The heads of the three targeted KBAs have indicated their interest in this. Until now, the Coordination Councils in these parks have typically limited their activities to promotion of one-time participation events, like a “March for Parks” and environmental festivals. However, the heads of the parks have indicated their interest in allowing true participation, including involvement, cooperation, and delegation. This is a good time for action.

Issues from Below

Public awareness of the value of protected areas is limited, both surrounding the three target KBAs and throughout the country. Parks were often created without a great deal of public input, and as noted, there is limited participation by local communities or CSOs in park management or oversight. Thus, communities have limited incentives to work with park managers or support their efforts.

Apart from having the chance to participate in Coordination Committees, noted above, the communities surrounding the three target parks would benefit from awareness about the value of the parks, and would benefit from knowing about the simple measures they can take to protect the parks and surrounding habitats.

Poor awareness of the population about the role of parks, about the importance of biodiversity, about the causes and consequences of global climate change, including for local communities, insufficient efforts to create and maintain direct interest, largely determine their exclusion from environmental activities. Unlike CSOs, which, as a rule, are to some extent already oriented towards environmental protection and participation in park management, the majority of the population requires such approaches that would ensure a direct interest of their representatives in environmental activities.

Phase 1 of this grant, and now Phase 2, address each of these issues, strengthening the regional committee for the world heritage site, strengthening Kazakh national law for protected areas, strengthening protected area coordination councils, and engaging local communities to improve their awareness about the value of parks and key biodiversity areas and participation in the management of specially protected areas.

Additional elements of Phase 2

Improved engagement between the protected areas managers, the local population and the local administration, achieved during Phase 1, will lead to a decrease in the number of livestock grazing directly on the borders of the Karatau and Aksu-Zhabagly nature reserves. In particular, one of the problems of the Karatau Reserve is that water sources on pastures near its borders disappear during the dry season, and livestock is forced to enter directly into the territory of the Reserve, where sources of drinking water remain at this time. At the same time, the food base of ungulates, including argali, suffers. One of the requests of the shepherds is to water the existing pastures in the territories further from the boundaries of the reserve. Thus, the FSBK will provide practical assistance in watering pastures, in particular, those located in the Beresek River valley. A somewhat different kind of problem exists on the borders of the Aksu-Zhabagly nature reserve, in particular, in the Aktobe rural district, which borders Kyrgyzstan. Due to the interruption of the supply of irrigation water from Kyrgyzstan, the peasants of the district have lost a significant part of the income that crop production brought them, and are forced to survive solely on livestock farming. At the same time, their cattle also graze near the borders of the Aksu-Zhabagly Reserve. At the same time, the insufficiency of fodder grown in the fields does not allow the transfer of livestock, at least partially, to stall keeping. FSBK will provide practical assistance in installing pumps (hydraulic rams) for pumping water from nearby streams to irrigate gardens and fields for growing fodder and in attracting donors to solve the problem with irrigation water.

Conceivably, if water extraction were done in the wrong way and if new pastures are incorrectly established, there could be negative environmental impacts, even as those are offset by the improvements *inside* the reserve. As described below, animal grazing that is relocated outside of the reserves will still be done as low impact as practical.

Possible negative consequences for the environment from the movement of animals to pastures remote from the boundaries of the reserve will be minimized through the development and adoption of new pasture management plans, which will necessarily take into account the issues of biodiversity conservation.

The installed pumps (hydraulic rams) have a capacity of no more than 7.2 cubic meters / hour, and a submersible electric pump will be installed in the well (also no more than 10 cubic meters / hour), so they will not suffer negative consequences for the environment.

FSBK will engage an experienced expert who will organize the development of a district pasture management plan that takes into account biodiversity conservation issues, with the mandatory participation of representatives of the population and farmers.

9. EIA-EMP) Status of the area affected

The area outside of the three reserves has no formal protected status and state and land owners are free to cultivate it and use it as they wish, within legal boundaries. This includes installing pumps to divert up to **(capacity up to 2 liters/sec)** for small-scale irrigation or provision of water to livestock. The herders do not need permission to graze their animals in the area.

Special permission from government agencies for the installation of pumps is not required due to low power. The pumps will be installed on the cordons of nature reserves or on the territories of peasant farms, except for one designed to supply irrigation water for the garden of the Kulager farm. There is interest and a preliminary agreement with the local administration.

The actual locations of intended pasture are already in a non-pristine state. Key biodiversity area boundaries noted by CEPF are somewhat crude, but may cover these pastures. Regardless, the pastures are outside the protected area.

10. 2. (EIA-EMP) Anticipated impact

Moving livestock grazing outside of protected areas (into buffer zones) will have a net **positive** impact on conservation.

Grazing in areas designated for pasture will have nominal negative impact if the area is already degraded – no endemic species, no water courses draining into rivers with globally threatened aquatic biodiversity. Thus, there will be no marginal worsening of the condition of the land from its current state.

Water extraction will only occur from rivers and streams that are not protected or home to threatened aquatic biodiversity, and only at volumes that do not reduce stream flow below critical environmental thresholds. Thus, there is no negative impact expected from the water extraction.

A new district pasture management plan will be developed with the direct participation of the communities and farmers and will take into account biodiversity conservation issues. Representatives of the communities and farmers will supervise the implementation of the management plan.

11. (EIA-EMP) Mitigation measures

Mitigation will cover three elements.

- 1. Location of pasture and related fodder cultivation.** Animals will be pastured in areas that are not protected and that have been inspected to ensure there are no endemic or threatened species.
- 2. Number of cattle grazed.** The density of animals will be kept low enough such that they do not overgraze or create manure waste in such amounts that negatively affects streams. Regulation will be carried out on the basis of adopted pasture management plans.
- 3. Location and volume of water extracted, with associated monitoring.** Location of pumps and volume pumped will be per local regulations and review by a local authorities, meeting whichever standard is stricter, to ensure proper in-stream flow of the river. Pumps will be stopped if stream levels fall below the standard.

12. (EIA-EMP) Monitoring and evaluation

Pasture committees will be created in rural districts, which will include elders, representatives of peasant farms, farmers, NGOs and women's councils.

The community outreach expert will work with grazing communities to determine the extent to which the adopted pasture management plan is being followed, in particular the sustainable number of animals in each location, and collect quarterly reports on this during grazing periods.

Authorized state bodies will control the operation of pumps for water supply for irrigation and pasture watering.

Media journalists will assess the effectiveness of the project during special info tours.

The level of public awareness will be assessed based on the results of the survey.

13. (EIA-EMP) Permissions

Permission is not required to move animals outside of park boundaries and back on to state-owned public grazing land and private grazing land.

Special permission from state authorities to install pumps is not required due to their low productivity: less than 2 l / s or 7.2 cubic meters / hour. According to the legislation of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the decision to install water pumps with a production volume of up to 50 cubic meters **“is not issued a permit, and a contract for subsoil use is not issued, because the owner of the land plot receives the right to subsoil use with the acquisition of the right to the land plot” (Article 66 of the Water Code of the Republic of Kazakhstan).**

14. Summary of Previous Stakeholder Engagement Activities

Prior to Phase I of this grant, FSBK received the endorsement of the heads of each nature reserve to begin this work, including:

Aksu-Zhabagly Nature Reserve, Director A.N. Menlibekov (October 2020)

Karatau Nature Reserve, Director A.K. Niyazov (October 2020)

Sairam Ugam Reserve, General Director S. Zh. Kyntaev (October 2020)

Over its lifespan, FSBK has conducted more than 100 training events, organized 16 nurseries and gardens, and delivered programs to over 5,000 schoolchildren.

As part of the project first phase implementation, three four-hour trainings were held with representatives of CSOs with a total number of 60 people, including 27 women, followed by online support for two months. As a result, 10 project proposals were prepared, 9 proposals were submitted to donors, 6 were approved.

On selected 3 farms, demonstration ecological sites with orchards were created, where three five-day master classes were held for local residents and NGO representatives, made by the participants, three demonstration ecological sites were tested and transferred according to acts to peasant farms. 50 representatives of NGOs and peasant farms, including 17 women, took part in the master classes.

Excursions were held for schoolchildren and adults to three pilot PAs with a total number of 150 people and university students 50 people, two information tours with the participation of the media in three target PAs.

Two volunteer organizations have been registered, one of the statutory goals of which are: protection and conservation of the environment and wildlife, conservation of biodiversity, involvement of citizens, including youth, in volunteer activities.

15. Project Stakeholders

While the project will work with national and international policy makers based in Nur Sultan and in the neighboring countries of Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, for the purposes of this plan, “stakeholders” are defined as communities living around Aksu-Zhabagly Nature Reserve, Karatau Nature Reserve, and Sairam Ugam National Nature Park. These are mainly the territories of four administrative districts of the Turkestan region: Tyulkubassky, Sairam, Tolebi, Kazgurt and one district of Zhambyl region: Zhualynsky. The total population of these administrative districts is 650 thousand people.

Important stakeholders are the Departments of Education of the target regions administrations and universities that train students of environmental specialties, with which memorandums of cooperation have been signed.

16. Stakeholder Engagement Program

Related to the stakeholders named above, FSBK has been:

- Working to expand the composition of Protected Area Coordination Councils to include representatives of local communities and civil society organizations.
- Work to expand the participation of representatives of local communities and civil society organizations in meetings of the Coordinating Councils of specially protected natural areas.
- Introduction of elements to improve the infrastructure of the target specially protected areas.
- Promoting awareness of the value of the three protected areas through various print and social media and education programs, holding creative contests, through social networks and conducting training seminars.
- Involvement of the local population in volunteer activities, in particular, by officially registering new CSOs and assisting them in raising funds for the implementation of statutory activities.
- Use of three environment demonstration sites on local farms showing people, in particular local entrepreneurs and volunteers how they can utilize appropriate technologies for water and energy use to better manage their own land and have alternative sources of income.
- Implementation of installations using renewable energy sources for the extraction and supply of irrigation and drinking water, in particular for pastures watering.
- Supporting the Regional Committee work for the Management of the World Heritage Site.
- Support for the Coordinating Councils of target protected areas, monitoring their work.
- Promotion (advocacy) of proposals for amendments to the legislation of the Republic of Kazakhstan, contributing to the conservation of biodiversity.

17. Consultation methods

FSBK will use awareness surveys, town hall meetings, town hall meetings, informal discussions with community members, and key informant interviews. Once the project is going, we will then hold workshops and exchange visits on the demonstration farms. Critically, we will promote the role of

communities and civil society groups on the Protected Area Coordination Councils to “consult” directly with Nature Reserve authorities.

18. Other Engagement Activities

FSBK will apply its experience in improving the composition and operation of the Coordination Council in Korgalzhinsky Reserve to the three target parks.

The Project Manager and FSBK Director will work with the park directors to consider revising the composition of the Coordination Councils. This will include reviewing the gender balance of participants, reviewing the most active and relevant CSOs working in communities surrounding each park (regardless of the “type” of CSO that they are), and designing a transparent process to solicit and invite CSOs to nominate members for the Council.

In addition, a monitoring group will be created in each protected area to monitor the implementation of the decisions of the coordinating council, and it will be practiced to hold open online meetings with the participation of representatives of CSOs and the local population who are not part of the coordination councils.

An expert will be involved to develop a pilot pasture management plan for one of the administrative districts (Sairan) with the participation of representatives of the local population and farmers.

Coordination councils will be created separately in each of the three target PAs and will be based in the settlements where the PAs directorates are located.

19. Timetable

The project will proceed over 10 months on an opportunistic schedule in the following order:

- Conducting excursions for local entrepreneurs and volunteers to demonstration ecological sites
- Conducting info tours for journalists
- Promotion (advocacy) of a proposal to improve the existing legislation regulating the activities of protected areas and issues of biodiversity conservation
- Support for the activities of coordinating councils of target PAs, involving the participation of the population in their work
- Continued consultations at the international level
- Support to the Regional Committee for the Management of the World Heritage Site
- Conducting final info tours for journalists in order to evaluate the results of the project

Simultaneous with the above, FSBK will work with the directors of the three parks to open the Coordination Councils to applications from interested civil society.

20. Resources and Responsibilities

The team will include a Project Manager, Expert on working with local community, and a PR Specialist, each of whom will lead on different elements of stakeholder engagement.

21. Grievance mechanism

FSBK will work to ensure that local stakeholders are aware of the work and understand how to voice complaints, if any. We will post contact information in local languages at the offices of each of the three protected areas and in appropriate “town halls” or public spaces. We will hold public meetings explaining our activities.

During all meetings and in general interactions with the public, FSBK personnel will inform local people and other stakeholders that they have the right to raise a grievance at any time with FSBK, nature reserve personnel, or CEPF about any issue relating to the project.

FSBK will post telephone numbers and e-mails of contact persons at FSBK, nature reserve authorities, and CEPF. This information will also be put on all education materials that will be produced during this project implementation including posters, brochures, and booklets. Contact information of the Regional Implementation Team and CEPF will be made publicly available in local languages.

We will share all grievances – and a proposed response – with the Regional Implementation Team and the CEPF Grant Director within 15 days. We will inform stakeholders that grievances should proceed in the following order below. If the stakeholder is unsatisfied with the response at any step, they may proceed further.

- Head of the Directorate, FSBK, fundecology@gmail.com, 8-701-725-4543
- Regional Implementation Team via <https://www.mca.earth/en/contacts/>
- Conservation International Ethics Hotline: +1-866-294-8674 / secure web portal: <https://secure.ethicspoint.com/domain/media/en/gui/10680/index.html>

22. Monitoring and Reporting

FSBK will report on this plan every six months. We will also conduct a baseline and final awareness survey that may include comments not only on awareness of the value of the environment, but also on our conduct of the project. We will also conduct surveys of people who participate in training on the demonstration sites.