

## **CEPF Final Completion and Impact Report**

<b>Organization's Legal Name:</b>	Association for ecology and tourism ECOTOURISM-2016, Ohrid
<b>Project Title:</b>	Preserving Belchishta Wetland, North Macedonia, through Engagement with Municipality and Local Stakeholders
<b>Grant Number:</b>	CEPF-110222
<b>Hotspot:</b>	Mediterranean Basin II
<b>Strategic Direction:</b>	2 Support the sustainable management of water catchments through integrated approaches for the conservation of threatened freshwater biodiversity
<b>Grant Amount:</b>	\$112,099.24
<b>Project Dates:</b>	June 01, 2020 - August 31, 2022
<b>Date of Report:</b>	November 11, 2022

### **IMPLEMENTATION PARTNERS**

Municipality of Debrca as crucial partner received some form of direct capacity development support, through organizational strengthening (such as training, site visits, newly established contacts with experts), provision of equipment and infrastructure.

Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning was consulted for the process of preparation and submitting of the Study for valorization of the values of the wetland and also for the selection of species subject to Conservation action plans.

NGO activists from environmental and farmer sector, students and tour guides were part of capacity building, conservation training and site visits activities.

University professors and individual experts in biology, forestry, hydrogeology, water quality and agriculture brought considerable conservation expertise through their field work and reports produced that will be used in designation of the wetland as protected site.

Faculty for Tourism and Hospitality in Ohrid: we established cooperation with the Faculty for the activity "School for volunteers monitoring", thus recruiting 7 participants from the department Tourism which will be future tourist guides. The remainder of 8 participants were from the local communities.

Faculty of Agricultural Sciences and Food, Ss. Cyril and Methodius University of Skopje: we have signed an Agreement for transfer of Plant Genetic Resources.

Municipal organization of the Red Cross, Ohrid: we made GPS Mapping of Belchishta through field visit to map and made way-points along with accurate GPS device.

Local community landowners and individuals as partners were often selected because they knew the area and they knew the wetland issues wanted to work with. This meant they were in a good position to suggest which activities might appeal to the target beneficiaries, they could highlight particular concerns or needs that people around the wetland might have, and they helped ensure these were addressed.

## CONSERVATION IMPACTS

Planned Long-Term Impacts: 3+ years (as stated in the approved proposal)

Impact Description	Impact Summary
<p>Designation of Belchishta Wetland (137 ha) as a new Protected Area</p>	<p>The Council of the Municipality of Debrca on 14 March 2022 officially adopted the Decision for proposal on protection of the Belchishta Wetland as protected area (401 ha) in the Category Park of Nature. Link to the Decision:</p> <p><a href="https://www.moepp.gov.mk/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/Odluka-na-sovet.pdf">https://www.moepp.gov.mk/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/Odluka-na-sovet.pdf</a></p> <p>The initiative for declaring Belchishta Wetland as protected area was submitted to the MOEPP as an official Proposal for declaring Belchishta Wetland a protected area in the Nature Park category together with a Study for valorization. In accordance with the Law on Nature Protection, MOEPP prepared a Draft-Decision on declaring Belchishta Wetland as a protected area in the category IV – Park of the Nature. The initiative for declaring Belchishta Wetland as protected area was accepted by the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia, which adopted the Decision on the acceptability of the proposal of the National Council for Nature Protection. The National Council Council on its meeting adopted the Decision and gave support to the proposal of Belchishta Wetland to be protected in the in the Category Park of Nature (IV Category according to Macedonian legislation and IUCN too). Public hearing is expected in late October and official proclamation as Nature Park by the end of 2022</p>
<p>Through Conservation Action Plans and Guidelines for monitoring, a minimum of 5 (and up to 10) endangered species see their local conservation status improved (stabilization/improvement of population at local site)</p>	<p>Conservation action plans and Guidelines for monitoring were prepared for flora and fauna for 8 priority species and 2 priority habitats, listed in the Global IUCN Red List of Threatened Species, as the following:</p> <p>Plants: 1. Water Dock (<i>Rumex hydrolapathum</i>) NT (locally rare)  Mammals: 1. Eurasian otter (<i>Lutra lutra</i>) (NT, locally threatened)  Birds: 1. Grey-faced Woodpecker (<i>Picus canus</i>) LC, 2. Montagu's Harrier (<i>Circus pygargus</i>) LC and 3. European Turtle dove (<i>Streptopelia turtur</i>) VU  Insects: 1. Large copper (<i>Lycaena dispar</i>) (NT)  Reptiles: 1. European Pond Turtle (<i>Emys orbicularis</i>) NT, locally rare</p>

Impact Description	Impact Summary
	<p>Amphibia: 1. Macedonian newt (<i>Triturus macedonicus</i>) (Not evaluated)</p> <p>Habitats: 1. Alluvial forests with <i>Alnus glutinosa</i> and <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> (<i>Alno-Padion</i>, <i>Alnion incanae</i>, <i>Salicion albae</i>) and 2. Wet grasslands</p> <p>The plans are intended to be used in the Management Plan of the Belchishta Wetland as a tool for identifying and prioritising measures to maintain and or to restore the populations of these species across their range within the wetland. They provide information about the status, ecology, threats and current conservation measures for each species and list the key actions that are required to improve their conservation status.</p>
<p>The knowledge on freshwater biodiversity of Belchishta Wetland area (137 ha), part of Lake Ohrid Catchment Management Zone (CMZ) is improved, a monitoring system is in place and information shared with municipality</p>	<p>We have established a comprehensive overview of data through field research and over 14 reports on flora and fauna. Through further activities we do systematic development of citizen science and participatory research; Soon a hydro-monitoring system will be established and at least 3-year monitoring of the Alder forest.</p>
<p>Eco-tourism is promoted as a local tourism activities (with at least 1000 visitors annually after year 2025), thanks to new ecotourism infrastructure and promotional products (bird watching tower, gazebos, info---signs, movie, reports)</p>	<p>The interest for visiting Belchishta Wetland is steadily in increase thanks to new ecotourism infrastructure and promotional products (bird watching tower, gazebos, info---signs, movie, reports). The Municipality of Debrca and Ohrid, as well as the National Agency for Tourism Development will incorporate the wetland into the complete eco-touristic package as part of the wider UNESCO-protected region. The project has also paved the way for wetland to receive free tourism promotions and press, eligibility for funding that supports its protection and preservation.</p>
<p>At least 30 farmers of the area adopt more sustainable water management practices (covering 400 ha) and biodiversity friendly practices and improve livelihoods</p>	<p>30 farmers of the area have been trained and gathered knowledge on sustainable water management practices and biodiversity friendly practices. On a long term they will receive "green direct payments" if they comply with mandatory practices that benefit the environment (soil and biodiversity in particular). This is in accordance with the national incentive programmes, in particular for the farmers which land belongs to protected area</p>
<p>A management plan/ study for valorization is prepared, adopted and start to be implemented for Belchishta Wetland (137 ha), part of the Ohrid Lake CMZ</p>	<p>Study for valorization is prepared, adopted and start to be implemented for Belchishta Wetland. Within the Study a draft-proposal Management plan is also prepared. Municipality of Debrca is fully supportive of proclamation of the wetland as protected area and draft proposal for community-based management plan in the Study for valorization.</p>

Impact Description	Impact Summary
	Local communities within the area of the wetland are willing to accommodate these village – based management plan to be incorporated into the wetland’s conservation planning.

Planned Short-Term Impacts: 1 to 3 years (as stated in the approved proposal)

Impact Description	Impact Summary
A “School for volunteers monitoring” is set up and at least 10 local people (ensuring gender equality) are engaged for long-term monitoring of species	We have established a 10-participants base, to regularly collect monitoring data that identify potential environmental concerns of Belchishta Wetland and act as a baseline for future scientific assessment We are developing a web site that will make environmental monitoring information easily accessible to the public. Work is near completion on an interactive web-based GIS mapping tool, which will provide citizens of all ages with the capacity to enter, store, retrieve and manipulate a database of monitoring data and resources.
Cooperation platform associating NGOs, experts, municipality of Debrtsa is established and functional	Cooperation platform associating NGOs, experts, municipality of Debrca is established and functional. Opportunities for furthering coordination and data dissemination are still available (e.g., with Hydrobiological Institute, Ohrid, individual experts engaged in the project, Faculty of Tourism St. Klement Ohridski, Ohrid, tourist guides)

### Unexpected impacts (positive or negative)?

Positive Impacts:

- We have been asked to assist Municipality of Debrca in the creating educational curriculum and establishing collections in the Museum of Belchishta Wetland;
- We have been approached to expand our activities to aiding communities to identify and implement sustainable community projects across the municipality;
- We have increased the research activities on the hydrogeology of the wetland due to budget savings;
- The extensive networking and partnership creation.

## PROJECT RESULTS/DELIVERABLES

### Overall results of the project:

The aim of the project was to conserve biodiversity, facilitate ecotourism development, and promote its wise-use to integrate the municipality and community conservation models into the national planning and protected areas planning processes.

The impact of the project was three-fold, firstly on the awareness of local communities, secondly on the extension of tourist infrastructure needed for development of ecotourism activities, and thirdly on the conservation of biodiversity and natural resources towards proclamation of the wetland as Nature Park. The official request for gazettelement of Belchishta Wetland as Nature Park (IUCN Category IV) has been submitted to the Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning.

The project indicators, such as number of species and habitats covered with field research, Conservation action plans produced, increase of the number of ecotourism facilities and

improved income levels through increase of income being earned from ecosystem activities, indicate that the project will have a high impact on natural resource conservation and livelihoods, which otherwise could have been deteriorated over time. The impact of the project recommendations/interventions on biodiversity conservation and sustainable livelihoods are yet to be seen as the proclamation of the protected area will happen by the end of 2020.

These project inputs provided opportunities to influence faster designation of protected area Belchista Wetland and wetlands policy and planning. The conservation measures resulted in production of 11 reports on: plants, fungi, algae, reptiles, amphibians, mammals, birds, fish, aquatic invertebrates, insects and seeds. Additionally, one expert in water quality was hired which produced report in physico-chemical properties of the wetland's waters. This was followed by surveys, exploration, collection, and preparation of specimens toward building an inventory of floral and faunal diversity of the area. Emphasis was being given on the species belonging to rare, threatened, and endangered categories included in the National lists and Red Books and IUCN Red Data Book. The research resulted in discovery of important taxa, endangered species according to the National Red List of Fungi 2021 as well as new (*Cortinarius bibulus*, *Entoloma euchroum*, *Marasmiellus confluens*, *Xeromphalina campanella*) and rare species for the country (*Gyrodon lividus* - EN, *Lactarius omphaliformis* - EN)

Ex-situ measures were undertaken by field research and production a Report on seeds, along with valuable collection of 45 most important old varieties and important wild plant species' native to Belchishta Wetland. The collection was handed over to the Faculty of Agricultural Sciences and Food, Skopje. The samples stored in the gene-bank will be accessible for scientific purposes and safeguarded for use in plant breeding in the future. The project has yielded significant results in terms of developing conditions for ecotourism development through installation of wooden infrastructure. The infrastructure includes: 3 information signs, 3 gazebos and 1 observation tower and is fit-for-purpose for future ecotourism development like birdwatching tourism and particularly nature photography tours.

Three information signs are placed around the wetland and include information on wetland. The observation tower provides a view of the surrounding wetland area. That is an excellent location for birdwatching, as the wetland lies along important migration flyways for many birds, which stop here to rest. The gazebos provide shade, shelter, ornamental features in the wetland landscape, and a place to rest for guided nature tours and occasional visitors. The biodiversity conservation was initiated through development of Conservation action plans and Guidelines for monitoring prepared for 8 priority species and 2 priority habitats, listed in the Global IUCN Red List of Threatened Species. The plans are intended to be used in the Management Plan of the Belchishta Wetland as a tool for identifying and prioritising measures to maintain and or to restore the populations of these species across their range within the wetland. Thus the project has contributed towards the achievement of the national environmental benefits. Finally, this activity provided a tool for the long-term monitoring of the Belchishta Wetland.

Preparation of Study for valorization of Belchista Wetland: the study assessed flora and fauna and socio-economic features of the wetland. The study is an important tool to influence stakeholder attitudes, attract new funding both for the Municipality of Debrca and NGOs, to inform land-use decisions, and help to declare the wetland as protected areas. Moreover, the study also increased not only the social acceptance and attainment of conservation objectives, but the economic valuation of the Belchishta Wetland that raise new arguments in favor of biodiversity conservation.

For the very first time field research for Study on the hydrogeological characteristics of the area of Belchishta Wetland has been conducted. The Study quantifies the values of wetland water resources and determines the underground water vulnerability as well as pressures on the qualitative status and risks from underground water pollution. The findings of the

study play an important role in creating wider support for wetland's protection and management in the future, including ensuring resources for its hydro-monitoring. Conservation and sustainable development of the Belchishta Wetland trainings involved local stakeholders with the objective to inform them about the possibilities for their involvement in future management arrangements, policies, projects and activities, while also presenting an overview of the value of wetland and its basic functions. Experts provided information about protection and monitoring of most important fish and bird species, development of green businesses sustainable agricultural land management around the wetland, best practice recommendations that will enhance the quality and sustainability of the agriculture within the wetland area. According to their questions, interaction as well as discussion we can conclude that there is a positive attitude and enthusiasm for the establishment of the protected area. Additionally, the stakeholders are cherishing the attitude to protect their "extremely valuable place.

Through the School for volunteers monitoring we have established at least a 10-participants base, to regularly collect monitoring data that identify potential environmental concerns of Belchishta Wetland and act as a baseline for future scientific assessment.

Project results are still being supported through robust dissemination of video and printed materials and online publications.

Production of short movie: 2 versions were prepared: one in Macedonian, one in English.

The movie is distributed through the social media and electronic communication tools, websites and its website links are sent to NGOs, schools, public institutions and the public at large. We are quite sure that the film will improve people's attitudes toward the nature and significantly influence behaviors and perceptions of Belchishta wetland management.

Facebook project fan page @belchishtawetland was also created and is regularly updated, so the project activities were seen and noticed on the newsfeeds of over 600 fans.

We also produced different branded souvenirs with attractive design. They can serve as incentives for people to engage with the project and to inspire curiosity. They were distributed to the project stakeholders and in the Municipality of Debrca.

Field excursions on the wetland were organized for journalists, municipality officials, NGO activists and interested citizens for presentation of the project results.

Promotion of the project results was also present over the duration of the project on the news websites, TV stations, Facebook pages dealing with envir

**Results for each deliverable:**

<b>Component</b>		<b>Deliverable</b>		
<b>#</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Results for Deliverable</b>
2.0	Baseline assessments of the status and conservation, in-situ and ex-situ measures for the most important Belchishta Wetland's fauna and flora species	2.2	A Report on field research of mammal species produced and shared with stakeholders	A Report on field research of mammal species was produced and shared with stakeholders, including the Municipality of Debrca, Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning, local communities, researchers, Institute of Biology - Saints Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje and others.
2.0	Baseline assessments of the status and conservation, in-situ and ex-situ measures for the most important Belchishta Wetland's fauna and flora species	2.9	Prepared a report compiling all the naturalist data, i.e. summary of all reports in one	A report compiling all the naturalist data, was prepared, i.e. summary of all reports in one. It was used in the preparation of the Study for Valorization
1.0	Charter establishing a platform for strengthening of the cooperation between relevant stakeholders in collaborating in project activities, protection and promotion of the Belchishta Wetland	1.1	Charter signed by local partners for the project team to move towards the common mission	Charter was signed on 8/10/2020 and the cooperation with the Municipality and project stakeholders towards the common mission went smoothly over the duration of the project and beyond. Charter was signed by the Major, representatives of the communities of Novo Selo and Belchishta (farmers, land-owners, owners of small businesses, hunters).
2.0	Baseline assessments of the status and conservation, in-situ and ex-situ measures for the most important Belchishta	2.1	A Report on field research of plant species (including fungi and algae) produced and shared with stakeholders; reviewing and validating the report	A Report on field research of plant species (including fungi and algae) produced and shared with stakeholders, including the Municipality of Debrca, Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning, local communities, researchers, Institute of Biology

Component		Deliverable		
#	Description	#	Description	Results for Deliverable
	Wetland's fauna and flora species			- Saints Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje and others.
2.0	Baseline assessments of the status and conservation, in-situ and ex-situ measures for the most important Belchishta Wetland's fauna and flora species	2.3	A Report on field research of bird produced and shared with stakeholders	A Report on field research of bird produced and shared with stakeholders, including the Municipality of Debrca, Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning, local communities, researchers, Institute of Biology - Saints Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje and others.
2.0	Baseline assessments of the status and conservation, in-situ and ex-situ measures for the most important Belchishta Wetland's fauna and flora species	2.4	Report on field research of insect species prepared and shared with stakeholders	Report on field research of insect species prepared and shared with stakeholders, including the Municipality of Debrca, Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning, local communities, researchers, Institute of Biology - Saints Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje and others.
2.0	Baseline assessments of the status and conservation, in-situ and ex-situ measures for the most important Belchishta Wetland's fauna and flora species	2.5	A Report on field research of fish species produced and shared with stakeholders	A Report on field research of fish species produced and shared with stakeholders, including the Municipality of Debrca, Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning, local communities, researchers, Institute of Biology - Saints Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje and others.
2.0	Baseline assessments of the status and conservation, in-situ and ex-situ measures for the most important Belchishta Wetland's fauna and flora species	2.6	A Report on field research of amphibian and reptile ) produced and shared with stakeholders	A Report on field research of amphibian and reptiles produced and shared with stakeholders, including the Municipality of Debrca, Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning, local communities, researchers, Institute of Biology - Saints Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje and others.

Component		Deliverable		
#	Description	#	Description	Results for Deliverable
2.0	Baseline assessments of the status and conservation, in-situ and ex-situ measures for the most important Belchishta Wetland's fauna and flora species	2.7	A Report on field research of molluscs species produced and shared with stakeholders	A Report on field research of molluscs species produced and shared with stakeholders, including the Municipality of Debrca, Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning, local communities, researchers, Institute of Biology - Saints Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje and others.
2.0	Baseline assessments of the status and conservation, in-situ and ex-situ measures for the most important Belchishta Wetland's fauna and flora species	2.8	A Report on seeds collection produced and shared with stakeholders / At least seeds from 30 fruits varieties and wild plants safeguarded and stored in seed's bank	Report on seeds, along with valuable collection of 45 most important old varieties and important wild plant species' native to Belchishta Wetland, was shared with stakeholders The collection was handed over to the Faculty of Agricultural Sciences and Food, Skopje. On 19 November 2021 the project team signed in Skopje an Agreement for transfer of Plant Genetic Resources with PhD Sonya Ivanovska, Chief of the Department of Genetics and Artificial Selection. The samples stored in the genebank will be accessible for scientific purposes and safeguarded for use in plant breeding in the future
3.0	Preparatory work for a new protected area	3.1	A summary report with most important information of the field research activities produced and shared with stakeholders	A summary report with most important information of the field research activities produced and shared with stakeholders, including the Municipality of Debrca, Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning, local communities, researchers, Institute of Biology - Saints Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje and others. The research resulted in discovery of important taxa, endangered

Component		Deliverable		
#	Description	#	Description	Results for Deliverable
				<p>species according to the National Red List of Fungi 2021 as well as new and rare species for the country. Species richness is high, taking into account the core area of the wetland of 401 hectares. It can be summarized as the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 9 amphibian species, which represents 64,2 % of the total amphibian fauna of N.Macedonia</li> <li>- 14 species of reptiles, which represents 43,5 % of the total reptile fauna of N.Macedonia</li> <li>- 33 mammal species, which represents 37% of the total mammalian fauna of N.Macedonia</li> <li>- 4 fish species: 3 members of the family Cyprinidae and 1 member of the family Salmonidae</li> <li>- 73 species of daily butterflies, or 35.6% of the butterfly fauna in N.Macedonia</li> <li>- 85 bird species, which represents 27 % of the total ornithofauna of N.Macedonia</li> <li>- 224 plant species</li> <li>- 83 fungal species</li> <li>- 30 species of aquatic invertebrates (benthic fauna) belonging to 8 systematic groups</li> </ul>
3.0	Preparatory work for a new protected area	3.2	A report on proposal for proclamation of the wetland as protected area produced in MK and EN language and shared with stakeholders	A report on proposal for proclamation of the wetland as protected area was produced in MK and EN language and shared with stakeholders. It was used in the preparation of the Study for Valorization
3.0	Preparatory work for a new protected area	3.3	Conservation action plans and Guidelines for	Conservation action plans and Guidelines for monitoring were prepared by the consultant

Component		Deliverable		
#	Description	#	Description	Results for Deliverable
			monitoring prepared for 5 up to 10 priority species/habitats, listed in the Global IUCN Red List of Threatened Species	<p>engaged for Study for valorization and experts for flora and fauna for 8 priority species listed in the National legislation and Global and IUCN Red List of Threatened Species, as well as for 2 priority habitats, as the following:</p> <p>Plants: 1. Water Dock (<i>Rumex hydrolapathum</i>); National legislation: protected; IUCN category: LC  Mammals: 1. Eurasian otter (<i>Lutra lutra</i>) National Red List of mammals: VU; IUCN category: NT  Birds: 1. Grey-faced Woodpecker (<i>Picus canus</i>) National legislation: protected, IUCN category: LC, 2. Montagu's Harrier (<i>Circus pygargus</i>) National legislation: strictly protected, IUCN category: LC and 3. European Turtle dove (<i>Streptopelia turtur</i>) National legislation: protected; IUCN category: VU  Insects: 1. Large copper (<i>Lycaena dispar</i>) National legislation: strictly protected, IUCN category: LC  Reptiles: 1. European Pond Turtle (<i>Emys orbicularis</i>) Preliminary National Red List of Reptiles: VU; IUCN category: NT  Amphibia: 1. Macedonian newt (<i>Triturus macedonicus</i>) National legislation: strictly protected; IUCN category: DD  Habitats: 1. Alluvial forests with <i>Alnus glutinosa</i> and <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> (Alno-Padion,</p>

Component		Deliverable		
#	Description	#	Description	Results for Deliverable
				Alnion incanae, Salicion albae) and 2. Wet grasslands
3.0	Preparatory work for a new protected area	3.4	Valorization Study finalized, communicated to Municipality and submitted to Ministry of Environment and Phycisal Planning	Valorization Study was finalized, communicated to Municipality and submitted to Ministry of Environment and Phycisal Planning
4.0	Development and implementation of trainings, info-days and "School for volunteers monitoring"	4.1	Reports and attendance list of 2 three-day trainings on the topics:1)Receiving ecotourism revenues as an incentive for conservation of Belchishta W 2)Sustainable agricultural/farmland management in the Belchishta Wetland region (attended by 15 partic.each	Reports on 2 three-day trainings were prepared along with attendance list. Each was attended by 15 participants.
4.0	Development and implementation of trainings, info-days and "School for volunteers monitoring"	4.2	"Manual for volunteer monitoring" is produced and shared with interested stakeholders (online and hard copy) and at least 15 local students (gender balanced) engaged in the "School for volunteers monitoring" as demonstrated by list of volunteers.	Manual for volunteer monitoring" was produced and shared with interested stakeholders (online and hard copy) and at least 15 local students (gender balanced) were engaged in the "School for volunteers monitoring", demonstrated by list of volunteers.
4.0	Development and implementation of trainings, info-days and	4.3	Three Study visits of the Belchishta Wetland made for at least 36 participants	3 Study visits of the Belchishta Wetland made for at least 36 participants (gender balanced) and additional 12 study visits of the Belchishta

Component		Deliverable		
#	Description	#	Description	Results for Deliverable
	"School for volunteers monitoring"		(gender balanced), as demonstrated by pictures posted on our website and Facebook fan page	Wetland made for 144 participants (gender balanced), due to budget savings, as demonstrated by pictures posted on our website and Facebook fan page
4.0	Development and implementation of trainings, info-days and "School for volunteers monitoring"	4.4	Two Info-days held: 2 days in villages Novo Selo and Belchishta, for at least 50 participants, gathered information about wetland risks and threats, as demonstrated by pictures posted on our website and Facebook fan page	Two Info-days held: 2 days in villages Novo Selo and Belchishta, for at least 50 participants, gathered information about wetland risks and threats, as demonstrated by pictures posted on our website and Facebook fan page
4.0	Development and implementation of trainings, info-days and "School for volunteers monitoring"	4.5	One Press conference held for presentation of project results / produced at least 10 media releases aired by TV stations and news websites	A press conference was held for presentation of project results / produced at least 10 media releases aired by TV stations and news websites
5.0	Provision of wooden infrastructure and interpretation to provide a platform for promoting ecotourism development	5.1	Three wooden gazebos set up in the wetland	Three wooden gazebos were set up in the wetland: one placed at the south west edge of the wetland, nearby Novo Selo village, and two are placed in the village Belchista, nearby the Museum on Belchishta Wetland which is under construction
5.0	Provision of wooden infrastructure and interpretation to provide a platform for promoting ecotourism development	5.2	Three Way-marking and interpretive signs set up around the wetland	Three Way-marking and interpretive signs were set up around the wetland: one next to the bird observation tower and two signs are erected at the side of the local roads which lead to the wetland

Component		Deliverable		
#	Description	#	Description	Results for Deliverable
5.0	Provision of wooden infrastructure and interpretation to provide a platform for promoting ecotourism development	5.3	One Bird observation tower erected in the area of the wetland	One bird observation tower was erected nearby Novo Selo village at the southwest edge of the wetland
5.0	Provision of wooden infrastructure and interpretation to provide a platform for promoting ecotourism development	5.4	An EIA study for the soft infrastructure made and submitted to/approved by CEPF before any work starts on the field	An EIA study for the soft infrastructure was made, submitted and approved by CEPF
6.0	Promotional activities and project visibility	6.1	300 Branded souvenirs made and distributed to stakeholders	We hired a graphics designer and printing company to design and produce 300 souvenirs such as: personalized wooden key holders, napkin holders, boxes for keeping things, paper bags, t-shirts, thermoses, earrings – with pictures and logos of the flora and fauna of Belchishta Wetland. They are distributed among the stakeholders.
6.0	Promotional activities and project visibility	6.2	300 project Leaflets made and distributed to stakeholders	We have produced and distributed 150 leaflets about Belchishta Wetland’s values and project activities. They were distributed among stakeholders through various project events.
6.0	Promotional activities and project visibility	6.3	30 photos/posters of the wetland made and distributed to stakeholders	30 photos/posters of the wetland were made and distributed to stakeholders
6.0	Promotional activities and project visibility	6.4	One documentary movie for Belchishta Wetland filmed and distributed through the social media and electronic communication tools	A documentary movie for Belchishta Wetland was filmed and distributed through the social media and electronic communication tools; Link: <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UaA1krWsBOI&amp;t=112s">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UaA1krWsBOI&amp;t=112s</a>

Component		Deliverable		
#	Description	#	Description	Results for Deliverable
				Duration: 12:37 minutes; Language: Macedonian with English subtitle
6.0	Promotional activities and project visibility	6.5	Facebook project fan page about project activities and products created and regularly updated by the project team	Facebook project fan page about project activities and products was created and regularly updated by the project team
6.0	Promotional activities and project visibility	6.6	Made at least 25 appearances in local TV and radio stations, reports on news websites about project activities about project activities and products	<p>At least 25 appearances in local TV and radio stations, reports on news websites about project activities were made. Here are some links:</p> <p><a href="https://meta.mk/potpishan-memorandumot-za-zachuvvanje-na-belchishkoto-blato-so-angazhiranje-na-opshtina-debrca-i-lokalnichiniteli/">https://meta.mk/potpishan-memorandumot-za-zachuvvanje-na-belchishkoto-blato-so-angazhiranje-na-opshtina-debrca-i-lokalnichiniteli/</a></p> <p>Twitter:  <a href="https://twitter.com/hashtag/%D0%B1%D0%B5%D0%BB%D1%87%D0%B8%D1%88%D0%BA%D0%BE%D0%B1%D0%BB%D0%B0%D1%82%D0%BE">https://twitter.com/hashtag/%D0%B1%D0%B5%D0%BB%D1%87%D0%B8%D1%88%D0%BA%D0%BE%D0%B1%D0%BB%D0%B0%D1%82%D0%BE</a></p> <p>News at the municipal website:  <a href="https://debrca.gov.mk/archives/3944?fbclid=IwAR2o81Fjh0VUT53a2Gt2FPZpbqXodYVBv9-iIU_RBrDTt1TkzCow2bl4b0">https://debrca.gov.mk/archives/3944?fbclid=IwAR2o81Fjh0VUT53a2Gt2FPZpbqXodYVBv9-iIU_RBrDTt1TkzCow2bl4b0</a></p> <p><a href="https://www.ohridnews.com/zachuvani-semi-a-od-stari-avtohtoni-sorti-zem-odelski-kulturi-od-regionot-na-belchishkoto-blato/?fbclid=IwAR3qb4J8vn-">https://www.ohridnews.com/zachuvani-semi-a-od-stari-avtohtoni-sorti-zem-odelski-kulturi-od-regionot-na-belchishkoto-blato/?fbclid=IwAR3qb4J8vn-</a></p>

Component		Deliverable		
#	Description	#	Description	Results for Deliverable
				<p>KKkqdt4tAjO_3mazw2gvZ1nmT4FMXdGJysXm dkG0Ax6mmYXg  <a href="https://time.mk/c/e0bf3c7119/zacuvani-seminja-od-stari-avtohtoni-sorti-zemjodelski-kulturi-od-regionot-na-belciskoto-blato.html">https://time.mk/c/e0bf3c7119/zacuvani-seminja-od-stari-avtohtoni-sorti-zemjodelski-kulturi-od-regionot-na-belciskoto-blato.html</a>  <a href="https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=950948012174606&amp;id=144057569530325">https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=950948012174606&amp;id=144057569530325</a>  <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YvFdouNvrSY">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YvFdouNvrSY</a> (16:02 - 19:49 minute)  Round table:  <a href="https://www.facebook.com/144057569530325/photos/pb.100063510979086.-2207520000../972059186730155/?type=3">https://www.facebook.com/144057569530325/photos/pb.100063510979086.-2207520000../972059186730155/?type=3</a>  <a href="https://mia.mk/%D1%82%D1%80%D0%BA%D0%B0%D0%BB%D0%B5%D0%B7%D0%BD%D0%B0-%D0%BC%D0%B0%D1%81%D0%B0-%D0%BF%D0%BE%D1%81%D0%B2%D0%B5%D1%82%D0%B5%D0%BD%D0%B0-%D0%BD%D0%B0-%D0%B">https://mia.mk/%D1%82%D1%80%D0%BA%D0%B0%D0%BB%D0%B5%D0%B7%D0%BD%D0%B0-%D0%BC%D0%B0%D1%81%D0%B0-%D0%BF%D0%BE%D1%81%D0%B2%D0%B5%D1%82%D0%B5%D0%BD%D0%B0-%D0%BD%D0%B0-%D0%B</a></p>
7.0	Project management	7.1	Performance, financial and other reports consolidated by "Ecotourism 2016", submitted to CEPF in a due time	Performance, financial and other reports consolidated by "Ecotourism 2016", submitted to CEPF in a due time
7.0	Project management	7.2	Strengthened the organizations capacities of ECOTOURISM 2016	The organizations capacities of ECOTOURISM 2016 were strengthened during the project implementation: we mobilized our resources (human, financial, material) to maximize quality and timeliness of project delivery

### Tools, products or methodologies that resulted from the project or contributed to the results:

Please find in the Annex the following:

- Manual on Monitoring protocols for Belchishta Wetland (Sini Viroi)
- Study for valorization of Belchishta Wetland – Nature Park
- Conservation Action Plans for Belchishta Wetland - Nature Park
- Study on the hydrogeological characteristics of the area of Belchishta Wetland (Sini Viroj), Debrca Municipality

### PORTFOLIO INDICATORS

Portfolio Indicator Number	Portfolio Indicator Description	Expected Numerical Contribution	Expected Contribution Description	Actual Numerical Contribution	Actual Contribution Description
3.0	Number of sites that gain official permanent protection status and number of hectares covered			401	The area of 137 hectares stated in the project proposal was enlarged to 401 hectares. The proposed zonation is based on the regulations of the Law on Nature (Art. 104-107), sectoral reports produced in the field work, consultations with the local communities, Municipality of Debrtsa, Ministry of Environment, as well as on field visits to the area.
2.1	Number of threatened freshwater species seeing status improved (i.e., short-term increase in population and/or breeding success)			4	The following freshwater species are of special interest for conservation and will receive improved status:  - Ohrid minnow ( <i>Pelagus minutus</i> ), IUCN

Portfolio Indicator Number	Portfolio Indicator Description	Expected Numerical Contribution	Expected Contribution Description	Actual Numerical Contribution	Actual Contribution Description
					<p>Status: DD, Macedonian endemite according to the national legislation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Lesser whirlpool ram's-horn snail (<i>Anisus vorticulus</i>) (Gastropoda), listed by the IUCN in the NT (near threatened) category.</li> <li>- Macedonian newt (<i>Triturus macedonicus</i>)</li> <li>- European pond turtle (<i>Emys orbicularis</i>) classified as Vulnerable (VU), according to the IUCN and the Preliminary National Red List of Reptiles</li> </ul> <p>With the monitoring of these species in the Management plan (to be prepared after the declaration as protected area), we will inevitably gain even more detailed knowledge about the condition of Belchishta Wetland The Management plan will take into consideration the national "Actions to achieve the national goal 10" as action 4 indicates "Protection and</p>

Portfolio Indicator Number	Portfolio Indicator Description	Expected Numerical Contribution	Expected Contribution Description	Actual Numerical Contribution	Actual Contribution Description
					<p>revitalization of swamp / water habitats and riparian habitats".</p> <p>Also the monitoring activities, along with Conservation action plans produced in this project, will directly and indirectly work towards meeting the National Goals in the light of protection of the overall biodiversity of the Republic of Northern Macedonia.</p>
2.4	Number of Freshwater KBAs in priority CMZ with improved information on biodiversity, shared with stakeholders			1	<p>Ilinska Planina, KBA code: MKD06</p> <p>Within the project fieldwork activities, we have obtained new data on the Species of Fauna and Flora, Habitats and Ecosystems in the Belchishta Wetland. The natural values of the area, can be briefly summarized as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The wetland with its almost undisturbed environment is well known for decades for its specific biodiversity which makes it a biodiversity hotspot with a high natural value.</li> <li>• Belchishta Wetland with its fresh water springs and Alder forest represents</li> </ul>

Portfolio Indicator Number	Portfolio Indicator Description	Expected Numerical Contribution	Expected Contribution Description	Actual Numerical Contribution	Actual Contribution Description
					<p>a home for numerous endemic and other species.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The valorization of species and habitats shows that there are several species of fish (e.g. <i>Pelagus minutus</i>), reptiles (e.g. <i>Elaphe qatuorlineata</i>, <i>Emys orbicularis</i>, <i>Natrix tessellata</i>, <i>Testudo hermanni</i>), amphibia (e.g. <i>Triturus macedonicus</i>), birds (e.g. <i>Streptopelia turtur</i>, <i>Rallus aquaticus</i>, <i>Picus canus</i>, <i>Pernis apivorus</i>, <i>Ixobrychus minutus</i>, <i>Gallinula chloropus</i>, <i>Circus cyaneus</i>, <i>Botaurus stellaris</i>), mammals (e.g. <i>Myotis blythii</i>, <i>Miniopterus schreibersii</i>, <i>Ursus arctos</i>, <i>Lutra lutra</i>), insects (e.g. <i>Lycaena dispar</i>), fungi, plants (e.g. <i>Rumex hydrolapathum</i>, <i>Carex elata</i>, <i>Malus florentina</i>), gastropoda (e.g. <i>Anisus vorticulus</i>) and habitats (e.g. Alkaline fens, Alluvial forests with <i>Alnus glutinosa</i> and <i>Populus alba</i> riparian galleries), that deserves protection. The info was shared through the online</li> </ul>

Portfolio Indicator Number	Portfolio Indicator Description	Expected Numerical Contribution	Expected Contribution Description	Actual Numerical Contribution	Actual Contribution Description
					links of the Study and on the various events: trainings, info-days,eco-campaign events, media presentations and alike.
4.6	Number of KBAs for which information on plants is improved			1	Total 224 plant taxa were registered in the wetland. In total three taxa are present on the National List of protected and strictly protected plant species published in Official Gazette: Carex elata, Malus florentina and Rumex hydrolapathum. Many of the plant species registered in Belchishta Wetland are assessed in Mediterranean, European and Global Red Lists of threatened plant species. Also worth to mention is the species: Anacamptis morio (L.) (status: NT, according to the IUCN Global assessment). We expect declaration as protected area - Nature park to be in place by the end of 2022.

## GLOBAL INDICATORS

### Protected Areas

Protected areas that have been created and/or expanded as a result of the project. Protected areas may include private or community reserves, municipal or provincial parks, or other designations where biodiversity conservation is an official management goal.

<b>Name of Protected Area</b>	<b>WDPA ID*</b>	<b>Latitude</b>	<b>Longitude</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>Original Total Size (Hectares)**</b>	<b>New Protected Hectares***</b>	<b>Year of Legal Declaration or Expansion</b>
Belchishta Wetland (EN) - Белчишко Блато (МК)		41.315118	20.820011	North Macedonia	0	401	2022

\*World Database of Protected Areas

\*\*If this is a new protected area, 0 should appear in this column

\*\*\* This column excludes the original total size of the protected area.

## Key Biodiversity Area Management

Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs) under improved management—where tangible results have been achieved to support conservation—as a result of the project.

KBA Name	KBA Code	Size of KBA	Number of Hectares with Improved Management
Ilinska Mountain	MKD06		401

## Production Landscapes

Production landscapes with strengthened management of biodiversity as a result of the project.

A production landscape is defined as a site outside a protected area where commercial agriculture, forestry or natural product exploitation occurs.

Name of Production Landscape	Latitude	Longitude	Hectares Strengthened	Intervention
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## Benefits to Individuals

- **Structured Training:**

Number of Men Trained	Number of Women Trained	Topics of Training
17	13	Protection and monitoring of most important fish and bird species; Development of green businesses (growing medicinal mushrooms, food security) Biological means to fight against pests Good agricultural practices (meadows management, growing honey plants) Ecotourism development: examples and good practices

- **Cash Benefits:**

Number of Men – Cash Benefits	Number of Women – Cash Benefits	Description of Benefits
200	100	With the declaration of the Belchishta Wetland as Nature Park, the benefits to individual could be summarised as follows: - Increased revenue from grants: the farmers, land owners and beekeepers for the

Number of Men - Cash Benefits	Number of Women - Cash Benefits	Description of Benefits
		<p>"best management practices" receive agri-environmental subsidies; Tourist guides receive incomes from development of ecotourism in the wetland and its wider area; Five households have increased incomes from food services and accommodation. Ten local residents open green businesses (growing medicinal mushrooms) and receive incomes.</p>

## Benefits to Communities

View the <b>characteristics</b> column below with the following corresponding codes:	View the <b>benefits</b> column below with the following corresponding codes:
1- Small Landowners	a. Increased Access to Clean Water
2- Subsistence Economy	b. Increased Food Security
3- Indigenous/ Ethnic Peoples	c. Increased Access to Energy
4- Pastoralists / Nomadic Peoples	d. Increased Access to Public Services
5- Recent Migrants	e. Increased Resilience to Climate Change
6- Urban Communities	f. Improved Land Tenure
7- Other	g. Improved Use of Traditional Knowledge
	h. Improved Decision-Making
	i. Improved Access to Ecosystem Services

Community Name	Community Characteristics							Type of Benefit									Country	Number of Males Benefitting	Number of Females Benefitting
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i			
Belchishta village	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	North Macedonia	130	120											
Novo Selo village	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	North Macedonia	30	27											
Botun village	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	North Macedonia	60	50											

### Characteristics of "Other" Communities:

## Policies, Laws and Regulations

View the <b>topics</b> column below with the following corresponding codes:			
A- Agriculture	E- Energy	I- Planning/Zoning	M- Tourism
B- Climate	F- Fisheries	J- Pollution	N- Transportation

C- Ecosystem Management	G- Forestry	K- Protected Areas	O- Wildlife Trade
D- Education	H- Mining and Quarrying	L- Species Protection	P- Other

No.	Name of Law	Scope	Topics																
			A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	
1	Decision for proposal on protection of the Belchishta Wetland as protected area in the Category Nature Park	National	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>					
2	Approval for the need for designation Belchishta Wetland as protected area under category Nature Park (link to the info - under point 17: <a href="https://vlada.mk/2022-85">https://vlada.mk/2022-85</a> )	National	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**“Other” Topics Addressed by the Policy, Law or Regulation:**

No.	Country/ Countries	Date Enacted/ Amended	Expected impact	Action Performed to Achieve the Enactment/ Amendment
1	North Macedonia	March 14, 2022	Proclamation of the Belchishta Wetland as Nature Park	Prepared Study for valorization of Belchishta Wetland and run extensive consultation process with various stakeholders through workshops, consultation meetings

No.	Country/ Countries	Date Enacted/ Amended	Expected impact	Action Performed to Achieve the Enactment/ Amendment
2	North Macedonia	September 27, 2022	Proclamation of the Belchishta Wetland as protected area - Nature park	Prepared Study for valorization of Belchishta Wetland and run extensive consultation process with various stakeholders through workshops, consultation meetings

### Companies Adopting Biodiversity-friendly Practices

A company is defined as a for-profit business entity. A biodiversity-friendly practice is one that conserves or uses natural resources in a sustainable manner.

Name of Company	Description of Biodiversity-Friendly Practice	Country/Countries where Practice was Adopted

### Networks and Partnerships

Networks/partnerships should have some lasting benefit beyond immediate project implementation. Informal networks/partnerships are acceptable.

Name of Network/Partnership	Year Established	Country/ Countries	Established by Project?	Purpose
Partnership between our NGO and Faculty for Tourism, Ohrid	2022	North Macedonia	Yes	Engaging students - future tour-guides in the School for volunteer monitoring. This partnership will continue beyond project termination, as the engagement is recognized as practical work, for the students in the last year of studies.

## Sustainable Financing

Sustainable financing mechanisms generate funding for the long-term (generally five or more years). These include, but are not limited to, conservation trust funds, debt-for-nature swaps, payment for ecosystem services (PES) schemes, and other revenue, fee or tax schemes that generate long-term funding for conservation.

Name of Mechanism	Purpose	Date Established	Description	Country/Countries	Project Intervention	Delivery of Funds?
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## Globally Threatened Species

Globally threatened species (CR, EN, VU) on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species, benefitting from the project.

Genus	Species	Common Name (English)	Status	Intervention	Population Trend at Site
Streptopelia	turtur	European Turtle Dove	VU	Preparation of a conservation action plan; Regular monitoring activities with the declaration of the wetland as protected area	Stable

## LESSONS LEARNED

In general:

The major lessons learnt from the project include the fact that community based approach and involvement of all the stakeholders, and mid-sized areas/regions (up to 500 hectares) are the ideal approaches for the success of such a project. The contribution of community towards field work activities (help in hardly accessible places or knowledge about the wetland's past) and technical support and logistics by the Municipality, was enormous and the activities took place at a minimum cost.

Project coordinator and assistant were surprised to see how many people were willing to step forward to assist and volunteer for the project. Project staff believe that one of the strengths of the project is that it provides something tangible, that people and the Municipality will receive incomes through the newly status of protected area, ecotourism infrastructure, further scientific research and alike. Wise-use interventions that have livelihood benefits are quicker to promote for adoption by communities. Additionally, when the work is outdoors, with formal training and the provision of tools, people are likely to show up. The participatory conservation working model can be transferred, adopted and applied by other organisations on a national level.

By design, day-to-day project implementation was a collaborative endeavour between our NGO, CEPF and Municipality of Debrtsa. This allowed activities to be implemented smoothly, at a minimum cost and in a timely fashion. The joint planning helped to harmonize projects' approaches and timing of activities. The Municipality of Debrtsa sees this project as an opportunity for them to establish their credibility in preserving biodiversity at the ground level. The landowners and local communities are fully aware that considerable part of their survival is dependent on the wetland and biodiversity in there. The other NGOs, both from Debrtsa and Ohrid, are eager to upscale the successful initiatives.

In particular:

A number of factors were critical in successful completion of the project, none more so than the consistency of national coordination including the identification of local partners, preparation for project activities including stakeholder and government consultations. Thus, we learnt the following: always take into account the resources and time required for database entry, as well as analysis and report preparation. Often they are more laborious and time consuming than the actual data collection. This is in the context that we needed almost 2 additional months to prepare the final version of the Study for valorization, as government consultations lasted longer than expected. So, it is important that project like this one, with policy and legislative components give priority to getting these underway at the earliest possible stage of project implementation in order to ensure the maximum possible time frame to bring them to fruition prior to project termination. Moreover, under the circumstances of COVID 19 throughout the entire project, the rigorous and diligent annual project implementation review process as carried out by the project management team is essential to the efficient and effective execution of the activities.

Dissemination requires knowledge of the audience, what they can do, and what information they need to affect changes in behavior: before the Eco-campaign and trainings we visited many households in the villages Belchishta, Novo Selo and Botun and this helped us gather traditional knowledge about how to best conceptualize the campaign events. As a result, we were able to reach as many as 10.000 people, including the city of Ohrid.

The force majeure factors associated with the COVID 19, made some changes in the implementation environment which required adaptive management. The project review

process, identified an array of budget modifications. These changes led to the more efficient and targeted use of project resources and improved project outcomes: Hydrogeological Study, zooplankton research, procurement of additional field supplies, GIS mapping of the wetland.

The project team sometimes resulted in delays in completing some activities. In the future, a dedicated administrator should be engaged at project inception to ensure that they can focus on the relevant activities, unlike project staff who had to split their focus and were occupied with other project activities, sometimes a few days in a row doing fieldwork activities on the wetland. Therefore, we started with weekly updating of the complete schedule of deliverables, which assisted greatly in monitoring deliverable timelines and communicating accordingly with consultants and stakeholders.

## **SUSTAINABILITY/REPLICATION**

We could summarize the successes /challenges related to the sustainability and replicability of our project's in the following points:

(a) catalyzed behavioural changes in terms of use and application, by the relevant stakeholders and capacities developed: trainings and workshops in some degree will develop sustainable harvesting regimes regarding mowing (Payment of ecosystem services), planting autochthonous varieties. We may say that have secured to some extent community support for important species conservation by the extensive campaign, developing close relations with them, interviews and non-formal discussions. We got a built-in partnership with many farmers, hunters, shepherds. Involving them in some activities like camera-trap monitoring, production of local food for various project events, we got quite a lot of interest and engagement from the community.

(b) provided incentives to contribute to catalyzing changes in stakeholder behaviour: at least 5 households and 3 owners of houses in villages Belchihsta and Novo Selo, are interested so far in applying to the national IPARD (Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance for Rural Development) program to adapt their houses for tourist accommodation; at least 4 volunteers that attended the Schools for volunteer monitoring are in contact with us and are eager to deepen their knowledge and see themselves as nature tour guides in the near future

(b) contributed to institutional changes: the Municipality of Debrca is planning to employ 2 rangers to supervise, manage, and perform conservation of Belchishta Wetland resources. Moreover, the Municipality is also planning to enforce its capacities through opening unit for environmental protection

(c) contributed to policy changes (on paper and in implementation of policy): The process of receiving national approval for the protected area in Macedonia is usually lengthy process which may take a few years and goes beyond the life of the project. The project was designed to ensure that the legislation was enacted, however that target was changed at mid-term. Expected proclamation should take place by the end of this year. The Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning, will therefore complete the process for enacting the proclamation for protected area by making the Law on proclamation as Nature Park and the Management plan will be implemented over the next years.

(e) contributed to sustained follow-on financing (catalytic financing): this project is strong drive to secure funding from various donors. The outcomes of the project have provided the catalyst for the follow up activities under the project Enhancing the protection of Belchishta Wetland, funded by the US Forest Service (September 2022 – August 2024). The project focus in on bio-monitoring of the Alder Forest and hydro-monitoring of the wetland’s water resources. There wetland will be future NATURA 2000 site which will ensure additional support. There are other donors and initiatives active in the region Albania-Macedonia – Greece (like Prespa – Ohrid Trust Fund), very likely to expand their activities in Belchishta Wetland.

## ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL SAFEGUARDS/STANDARDS

Due to the nature of this project, which was focused on the proclamation of a new protected area, a safeguard on involuntary restrictions was triggered. We prepared a Process framework at the start of the project. We identified local fishermen, farmers and hunters as mostly affected community members and users of natural resources. We gave special attention to those groups during project implementation, and no conflicts arose. A complaint mechanism was prepared and widely distributed, but no grievances were submitted to the project team.

Safeguards on Environmental Aspects was triggered because of investment in a small trail, gazebo and birdwatching tower. An Environmental Impact Assessment, based on the CEPF’s standard format, was prepared. As stated in the EIA local community was consulted for site selection. No negative impacts on biodiversity were observed, either during the construction or postconstruction. Also, no complaints were received.

## ADDITIONAL COMMENTS/RECOMMENDATIONS

## ADDITIONAL FUNDING

<b>Total Amount of Additional Funding Actually Secured (USD)</b>	\$30,000.00
<b>Breakdown of Additional Funding</b>	<p>The continuation of part of the project was secured by the US Forest Service with the implementation period September 2022 - August 2024. The funding comprises the following components:</p> <p>Alder Forest Monitoring, control and enforcement = 10000 \$</p> <p>Procurement of hydrological equipment and establishment of regular hydro-monitoring = 6500 \$</p> <p>Media campaign, organizing events and raising public awareness activities = 6000 \$</p> <p>Personnel = 7500 \$</p>

## **INFORMATION SHARING AND CEPF POLICY**

CEPF is committed to transparent operations and to helping civil society groups share experiences, lessons learned and results. For more information about this project, you may contact the organization and/or individual listed below.

organization name: Association for ecology and tourism ECOTOURISM-2016, Ohrid email address: [ekoturizamoh@gmail.com](mailto:ekoturizamoh@gmail.com)