

Safeguards Compliance Memorandum

Project Information

Project Name	Danube River Basin Hydromorphology and River Restoration
GEF Focal Area	International Waters
Safeguards Categorization	B

Project Description

The project aims to ‘Strengthen integrated and harmonized approaches for river restoration and aquatic biodiversity conservation in the Danube River Basin (Bosnia-Herzegovina, Moldova, Montenegro, Serbia, and Ukraine)’ by assisting the five non-EU countries respond to the EU WFD expectations for monitoring and assessing hydromorphological pressures, and to identify measures to address these pressures. The project components include the following;

Component 1 will support a basin-wide approach for addressing and monitoring pressures from hydromorphological alterations.

Component 2 is focused on applying this regional approach (Water Framework Directive (WFD), Flood Directive (FD), Danube River Basin Management Plan (DRBMP), Sava River Basin Management Plan (SRBMP)) at the national level.

Component 3 will involve the preparation of one transboundary pilot project across two non-EU Member States and preparation/implementation of one pilot per non-EU Member State, demonstrating hydromorphological pressure reduction and integrated approaches in river basin and flood risk management planning and implementation. The pilots will demonstrate good practices in river basin management with respect to addressing pressures from hydromorphological alterations and assist with increasing capacity on project design and preparation for financing.

Component 4 will support knowledge management and sharing across the whole Danube River Basin and specifically support the five target countries of this project enhance their capacity and knowledge on HYMO pressure reduction through an effective dissemination of good practices and experiences.

Project Location and Salient Physical Characteristics Relevant to the Safeguard Analysis

Botar River, Ukraine: The Botar River belongs to the Danube River basin and is the left tributary of the Tisza River. Over the years, the Botar River was channelized mainly for irrigation purposes and strengthened with dykes dividing the river into two parts – Old Botar and New Botar. The source of the River comes from the south facing hill of the volcanic Avashsky Mountains. The plain in the interfluves is a former place of wetlands, floodplain forests and swamplands. There are small forests in plains and slopes of hills of the volcanic Avashsky Mountains which remain the main center of natural biodiversity concentration. There are 39 species of higher vascular plants included into the Red Book of Ukraine and 60 Species included into the Regional Red List of Zakarpattia, in the interfluves of the Tisza-Tur Rivers. Among them oak Burgudian, Selaginella Helvetica, Sagina subulate which is seldom found in the region and cannot be found outside the area. There are 100 species of birds living in the interfluves of the Tisza-Tur area. Five of them (the black Stork, the Montagu’s harrier, the lesser spotted eagle, the great gray shrike, the Eurasian eagle-owl) are included in the Red Book of Ukraine. More than 20 species of

mammals have been discovered in the area. Among them are brown bears, lynxes, wildcats, European polecats, and otters included in the Red Book of Ukraine.

The Karaš River, Serbia: Karaš is an international river originating in the Anina Mountains in Romania. The total surface of the basin is 1447 km² of which approximately 12% is in Serbia and the rest is in Romania. The river length in Serbia is around 30 km. Karaš represents the last partially free flowing river in the Banat region in Serbia, with some stretches conserving their natural riverbed conditions. The river is partially trained and channelized, especially the lower part, which is directed into the Danube-Tisza-Danube canal, an important hydro-engineering system for flood control in the region. Due to river regulation works, the hydromorphology of the Karaš has been greatly altered. The river mouth has been moved approximately 14 km to the north, to be incorporated into the last part of the Danube-Tisza-Danube canal. Furthermore, there are two weirs and one barrage on the Serbian stretch of the river. The first weir is right next to the village of Jasenov, the second weir is in the Straža locality, and the barrage is near the Vojvodinci village. The weirs were built in the beginning of the 20th century for diverting water into mills; these mills however are not functioning at present.

The Beleu Lake, Moldova: The Beleu Lake, situated in the Lower Prut areas of Cahul District, is the core area of the Lower Prut Nature Reserve. Beleu Lake is comprised of a network of wetlands and flooded forests (mainly willow), which all form a unique ecosystem with globally protected species. The vegetation type is similar to the Danube of neighboring Romania and Ukraine. The lake area is also an important area for nesting birds such as egret, spoonbill or glossy ibis as well as providing habitat for a number of other species (white pelicans, swans, predator birds etc.). Within the reserve are found rare species of mammals such as Eurasian otter, European mink and over 30 species of fish – carp, crucian carp, bream, orfe rapacious, roach salmon and pike. The Beleu Lake area was recognized as a Ramsar site on June 20, 2000, and was recently included in the Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve. The Beleu lake is surrounded by two communities/villages - Valeni and Slobozia Mare, which traditionally depend upon local resources provided by the wetlands (fish, wood/biomass, fodder, water). The area of the Lower Prut Nature Reserve protected area (wetland) is 1691 hectares and the size of the lake itself is about 500 – 1000 hectares (depending on the water level/flooding). Around the wetland are flooded forests consisting mainly of willow (which is invasive), Russian Olive bushes and rare white poplar. Owing to flooding situation, the willow is conquering areas around the lake and making the lake's water level shrink rapidly (over the last 12 years willow forests increased by 200 ha).

Safeguards Policy	Triggered	Explanation
Environmental and Social Risk Management	Yes	Overall, the environmental and social impacts of the project are expected to be positive. However, small scale, localized negative effects may arise during the implementation of some site-specific activities including during the construction of small infrastructure for erosion control, rehabilitation of riverbeds including excavation of the riverbed, and channeling of the water to improve water flow. Therefore, the project has been classified as a Category B project. Since the precise locations for the activities proposed for the three pilots under Component 3 will only be known during project

		<p>execution when feasibility studies have been conducted, three Environmental and Social Management Frameworks (ESMFs) have been developed by the lead Executing Agency, International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR). The ESMFs have been prepared in a consultative and participatory manner and include a set of implementable mitigation measures to be used to develop situation-specific Environmental and Social Management Plans (ESMPs) once locations are chosen and the viability of activities has been assessed.</p>
Natural Habitats	Yes	<p>The overall environmental and social impacts of the proposed project are expected to be overwhelmingly positive and the project's expected impacts on Natural Habitats are also expected to be significantly positive, through efforts to address impacts from hydromorphological alterations through river restoration and nature-based solutions. Nonetheless, potential minor small-scale impacts on Natural Habitats may occur during excavation of riverbeds and construction of small infrastructure for erosion control. Provisions have been made in the ESMFs to adequately address such possibilities. Any relevant sub-grant financed activity under the project will be screened for its potential to cause negative impacts to natural habitats under the ESMF procedures. If any such activity is likely to cause irreversible or significant damage to habitats it will be excluded from project grant funding.</p>
Indigenous People	No	<p>There are no indigenous people in the project areas.</p>
Involuntary Resettlement	Yes	<p>The project is not expected to involve land acquisition leading to involuntary resettlement of project affected persons (PAPs). All project activities will be executed on government or community-owned lands. Project activities are also expected to positively affect local communities' access to livelihoods. However, some of the planned activities may have some minor effects on the livelihoods of local communities, such as temporarily restricting access to grazing or fishing areas and potentially limiting duck rearing activities. To mitigate any adverse impacts, all activities that may affect local communities' access to livelihoods should be closely coordinated with</p>

		community representatives and only carried out after consultations with all relevant stakeholders. If disturbance of access to livelihoods cannot be avoided, full and timely compensation shall be provided to all livelihood users, irrespective of their formal land ownership status or title. Full details regarding these measures are provided in the ESMFs.
Pest Management	No	The project will not involve the procurement or the use of pesticides.

Summary of Key Safeguards Issues

Describe any safeguard issues and impacts associated with the proposed project. Identify and describe any potential large scale, significant and/or irreversible impacts:

There are no potential indirect and/or long-term impacts anticipated. The project is designed to foster subprojects in the intervention area that have favorable long-term socioeconomic and environmental impacts.

Describe measures taken by the Project Team to address safeguard policy issues. Provide an assessment of borrower capacity to plan and implement the measures described:

Three Environmental and Social Management Frameworks (ESMFs) have been prepared for activities to be implemented in Botar River, Karas River and Beleu Lake in order to meet WWF's Environment and Social Safeguards Integrated Policies and Procedures. These ESMFs have been disclosed in their respective countries and on WWF's websites. During project execution, site specific safeguards plans will be prepared and disclosed for specific activities.

The PMU will be strengthened by a safeguards specialist who will coordinate the execution of the ESMFs. The Executing Agency and partners have not executed a project previously with WWF GEF and trainings and capacity building will be provided on WWF Environment and Social Safeguards Integrated Policies and Procedures (SIPP) to the PMU prior to the commencement of project activities.

Identify the key stakeholders and describe the mechanisms for consultation and disclosure on safeguard policies, with an emphasis on potentially affected people:

During project preparation, there were several extensive stakeholder consultations/workshops. In Ukraine, the translated executive summary was disclosed on August 19 2019 on the webpage of the TRBWRD, in an article in local newspapers and a printed version was disclosed in village councils. In Serbia, the ESMF (executive summaries on English and Serbian and the whole document in English) was disclosed on the WWF Adria website on August 16 2019 and on the website of the public water management company (Vode Vojvodine) on August 19 2019. Additionally, the documents were shared with relevant stakeholders which were involved in the preparation of the proposal for the pilot. In Moldova, the ESMF document was translated into Romanian, the national language. Both Romanian and English versions of the ESMF were distributed through emails sent on August 15 2019

to a number of stakeholder institutions (Agency Moldovan Waters, Agency Moldsilva, Nature Reserve Lower Prut, local public authorities of Valeni and Slobozia Mare villages) as well as to many experts (including EUWI+ project). Moldovan Waters disclosed the ESMF (in both Romanian and English) on their website on August 16 2019. The ESMF was recirculated by INQUA and other NGOs. The ESMF document was discussed during a field meeting with the administration of Nature Reserve Lower Prut [Biosphere Reserve Lower Prut] and local public authority of Valeni village, with participation of Moldovan State University and land/forest engineer experts. The Nature Reserve Lower Prut disclosed the ESMF information on their Facebook page on September 9 2019. The WWF GEF Agency disclosed the ESMF on their Safeguard Resources Website on September 11 2019.

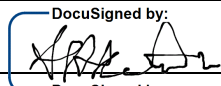
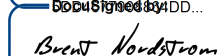
Monitoring and Compliance

Have satisfactory calendar, budget and clear institutional responsibilities been prepared for the implementation of measures related to safeguard policies? Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> NA <input type="checkbox"/>
Have costs related to safeguard policy measures been included in the project cost? Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> NA <input type="checkbox"/>
Does the Monitoring and Evaluation system of the project include the monitoring of safeguard impacts and measures related to safeguard policies? Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> NA <input type="checkbox"/>
Have satisfactory implementation arrangements been agreed with the borrower and the same been adequately reflected in the project legal documents? Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> NA <input type="checkbox"/>
Have relevant safeguard policies documents been sent to WWF-US? Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> NA <input type="checkbox"/>
Have relevant documents been disclosed in-country in a public place in a form and language that are understandable and accessible to project-affected groups and local NGOs? Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> NA <input type="checkbox"/>

Disclosure Requirements

Environmental and Social Management Framework/ Process Framework and Indigenous Peoples Planning Framework	
Date received by WWF-US	04 September 2019
Date Disclosed on WWF-US website	11 September 2019
<i>In country Disclosure:</i>	
Date Disclosed on International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR) website	1 August 2019
Date Disclosed in Ukraine, Serbia and Moldova partner offices	19 August 2019

Approvals

Anushika Karunaratne, Safeguards Coordinator		Date: 11/15/2019
Brent Nordstrom, Safeguards Compliance Officer		Date: 11/17/2019