



LIFE Prespa Waterbirds - LIFE15 NAT/GR/000936

“Bird conservation in Lesser Prespa Lake: benefiting local communities and building a climate change resilient ecosystem”

Report of the 2nd meeting of the Transboundary Wetland Management Technical Group (TWMTG)

Tuesday 7th of May 2019, Lemos, Prespa

List of participants:

Members of the TWMTG:

Mihallaq Qirjo – Prespa National Park, Albania/Regional Agency for Protected Areas
Andon Boyadzi - Galichica National Park
Arto Ahokumpu – Twining Project, on behalf of the Municipality of Resen
Eleana Kazila – Management Body of Prespa National Park, Greece
Myrsini Malakou – Society for the Protection of Prespa

Observers of the TWMTG:

Mirjan Topi – Protection and Preservation of Natural Environment in Albania
Danka Uzunova – Macedonian Ecological Society

Other participants:

Dejan Dimidzievski – Galichica National Park
Borce Lazarovski, Municipality of Resen
Dejan Manduloski, Food and Veterinary Agency, North Macedonia
Daniela Jovanovska, Macedonian Ecological Society
Irene Koutseri - Society for the Protection of Prespa
Olga Alexandrou - Society for the Protection of Prespa
Julia Henderson - Society for the Protection of Prespa
Giorgos Catsadorakis - Society for the Protection of Prespa
Thanos Kastritis - Society for the Protection of Prespa

A) Agenda of the 2nd meeting of the TWMTG:

Action C5 - Transboundary Wetland Management Technical Group 2 nd Meeting - Tuesday 7 th of May 2019, Lemos, Prespa		
09:30-09:40	Welcome and introduction	SPP
09:40-09:50	Transboundary collaboration on Prespa basin: The Transboundary Wetland Management Technical Group	Thanos Kastritis, SPP
09:50 – 10:10	LIFE Prespa Waterbirds - wetland vegetation management: review of 2018 activities and planning of 2019	Irene Koutseri, SPP
10:10 – 10:30	LIFE Prespa Waterbirds – scientific monitoring: review of 2018 activities and planning of 2019	Giorgos Catsadorakis, SPP
10:30 – 10:50	Incorporation of wetland management activities in the Prespa National Park (GR) work plan	Management Body of the Prespa National Park (GR)
10:50 – 11:10	Wetland management and monitoring activities in the Albanian Prespa National Park	Mihallaq Qirjo, Regional Administration of Protected Areas
11:10 – 11:30	<i>Coffee break</i>	
11:30 – 11:50	Habitat mapping in the littoral zone of Great Prespa (MK), including Ezerani Nature Park	Daniela Jovanovska, MES
11:50 – 12:10	Development of an updated management plan for the Ezerani Nature Park	Arto Ahokumpu, Metsähallitus, on behalf of the Municipality of Resen
12:10 – 12:30	Wetland management and monitoring activities in the Galicica National Park	Andon Bojadzi, Galicica National Park
12:30 – 13:30	Discussion and next steps	
13:30 – 14:30	<i>End of the meeting - Light lunch</i>	

B) Presentation of the LIFE Prespa Waterbirds activities:

The meeting started with an introductory presentation by Thanos Kastritis (project's conservation coordinator) regarding the transboundary aspect of the ecosystem functions in the Prespa lakes and the role of the Transboundary Wetland Management Technical Group (TWMTG). Using the example of waterbirds, the presentation highlighted the transboundary approach which the conservation efforts in Prespa should follow and the main aims of the TWMTG, which are directly aligned with this transboundary approach.

Following this, Irene Koutseri (IK), the project manager of the LIFE Prespa Waterbirds project, presented a review of the wetland management activities carried out in 2018 in the framework of the project, as well as the corresponding operational plan for this year. IK presented the main objectives of the wetland vegetation management and the efforts made during the last year in order to achieve these objectives, i.e. the vegetation cutting carried out both by the project team and the local stakeholders, the use and distribution of the cut reed biomass for local needs and the restoration of two stream mouths. Additionally, the restrictions/constraints encountered were also presented as well as how the project team pursued to address them. Finally, this year's operational plan for the wetland vegetation management was presented with the main activities, priorities and targets identified. During the discussion that followed the



presentations, topics such as the factors for the selection of priority areas for vegetation cutting, as well as the impact of vegetation management on fish spawning and fish populations were discussed.

The next presentation by Giorgos Catsadorakis (GC - project's scientific expert) addressed the scientific monitoring scheme of the project, which aims to evaluate and assess the effect of the vegetation management on population sizes, breeding performance and use of space by the target waterbirds, as well as to assess the effects of management on fish. GC presented the methods used for the monitoring of the target species' breeding population and breeding performance, the habitat use of the target species and the quality of the fish spawning grounds, as well as the limitations that these methods have. The methods include direct counts from vantage or other selected sampling points and using a drone for aerial photos. In addition, the results for 2018 monitoring were presented as well as this year's monitoring plan. After the presentation, the following issues were discussed:

- How the conditions of the lakes, such as the water level and the modification of the habitats, affect the wildlife populations and consequently the relevant monitoring methods.
- The methodology used for counting reed passerine birds in order to establish of the non-intervention zones in the littoral zone of Lesser Prespa.
- The need for closer collaboration and exchange of expertise on monitoring issues between the national parks and the environmental NGOs.

C) Presentation of the wetland management activities by the Management Body of Prespa National Park:

On behalf of the Management Body of Prespa National Park (MBPNP), IK presented the main management and monitoring activities of the MBPNP and their coordination by the Wetland Management Committee (WMC). More specifically, the decisions taken in 2018 by the WMC regarding the management of the area were presented and how the directions of the WMC are incorporated in the planning and the implementation of the LIFE Prespa Waterbirds project.

D) Presentation of the wetland management activities in the Albanian Prespa National Park:

Mr. Mihallaq Qirjo from the Regional Agency for Protected Areas (AL), representing the Albanian Prespa National Park, presented the management of the reedbed in the Albanian part of the Lesser Prespa, focusing on the use of the produced reed biomass. A project is under development in order to examine the potential use of the reed biomass as fuel in the form of briquettes. A series of experiments were carried out in order to assess the quality of the biomass, in terms of calorific value, production of ash, etc. The main conclusion was that the cut reed could be used as fuel efficiently if the briquettes contained a mixture of reed and wood material. The next phase of the project includes the calculation of cost of the production of the mixed reed-wood briquettes in order to determine the financial sustainability of the project. A series of other technical issues are being analyzed, such as the available sources of the wood material or the procedure for drying the material. The production and sale of the briquettes is planned to be done by a local farmer's association and the material will be used mainly for the heating of public buildings. During the discussion that followed, it was highlighted that the success of this project is expected to significantly contribute to the reduction of the problem of overcutting firewood in the Albanian Prespa, as an alternative source for heating will be available for the local needs.



E) Presentation of the habitat mapping in the littoral zone of Great Prespa in North Macedonia:

Ms Daniela Jovanovska from the Macedonian Ecological Society presented the mapping of wetland habitats, which was carried out last year in the north part of Great Prespa in North Macedonia. In total 21 habitat types were identified, of which 12 of them can be characterized as important; 6 habitat types included in the EU Habitats Directive, 2 habitat types which should be included in the Directive (considering their status and conservation importance) and 4 habitat types with high ecological importance for regional biodiversity. For each important habitat, its distribution, area (ha) and threats were presented, as well as recommendations including general and specific conservation and management actions which should be taken. The issues of land ownership and how private owned land could be put under management in the framework of a management plan and/or spatial planning were discussed. Additionally, the importance of a cadastral map and the spatial planning for the management of the littoral zone of Great Prespa were also stressed.

F) Presentation of the management guidelines for the Prespa Lake Nature Monument (MK):

Mr. Arto Ahokumpu presented the management guidelines for the Prespa Lake Nature Monument, which will be included, as an Annex, in the existing Management Plan. The guidelines focus on the Natura 2000 species and habitats and they have been designed to be clear and straightforward in order to be easily followed and implemented. The “Strategy” of the guidelines was presented, which includes the mission of the Resen municipality and other institutions, the vision regarding the biodiversity and the different stakeholders, the management goal and objectives, as well as the prerequisites which are necessary for the successful implementation of the management plan, such as law enforcement within the protected area. The second part of the guidelines includes the management principles for aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems, as well as the actual management measures that should be taken. The main management measures were presented and discussed, which include, amongst others, the regulation of fishing and hunting, the management of the reedbed and other habitats and the implementation of a monitoring programme. During the discussion that followed the presentation, the methodology used for the development of the management guidelines was also discussed, as well as the problem of law enforcement within the protected areas.

G) Presentation of the management and monitoring activities in the Galicica National Park:

Mr. Andon Bojadzi presented the process for the zonation within the Galicica National Park. The revalorization of the important areas was carried out in order to classify the areas in three different zones: i) strict protection, ii) active management and iii) sustainable use areas. The initial zonation was put under consultation with different stakeholders, in order to achieve a consensus, for example relating to urbanized areas.

Mr. Dejan Dimidzievski presented the monitoring programme of the Galicica National Park, which consists of two phases. During phase I (2010-2014) four thematic areas were selected (abiotic environment, priority habitat types, priority plant species, priority animal species) together with a number of parameters for each thematic area. The main methods, limitations and results for each parameter were presented. The second phase of the programme was not implemented due to limited resources, but the monitoring activities will still be continued under the framework of a new project funded by the UNDP.



H) Discussion - Conclusions

During the final discussion of the meeting, the members of the TWMTG expressed their willingness and the necessity to continue the operation of the TWMTG after the end of the LIFE Prespa Waterbirds project. It was highlighted that although the wetland of Prespa faces similar challenges and needs across the three countries there are different levels of management implementation. Therefore, the collaboration between the environmental NGOs and the national parks in the three parts of the Prespa basin is essential and should be continued and enhanced. This kind of cooperation should not be project based but have a strategic long term character. As the implementation of the trilateral agreement for the transboundary Prespa Park is still pending, non-formal types of cooperation between the national parks and the NGOs of the area should be promoted. For example, the Galicica National Park will try to apply a transboundary public hearing for the revision of the Park's management plan, a practice which could be also replicated for the corresponding management plans in Greek and Albanian Prespa.

The next meeting of the TWMTG is planned to be organized in spring 2020, when the 2nd phase of the reedbed management in Greek Lesser Prespa will be completed.