

**Process Framework for Involuntary Restrictions**

**Date 11.6.2020.**

**CEPF Grant: MEDII-2019-CfP4-LG**

**Grantee: Regionalni Resursni Centar**

**Improved Protection and Sustainable Management of River Ecosystems  
in the Neretva Delta, Trebizat and Mostarsko Blato**

**Project Location: Bosnia and Herzegovina (Hutovo blato, river Neretva, river Trebizat,  
Mostarsko blato)**

## **Grant Summary**

1. Grantee organization.  
Regionalni Resursni Centar (ReReC)
2. Grant title.  
Improved Protection and Sustainable Management of River Ecosystems in the Neretva Delta, Trebizat and Mostarsko Blato
3. Grant number  
110227
4. Grant amount (US dollars).  
99 510 USD
5. Proposed dates of grant.  
01.04.2020 – 30.09.2021.
6. Countries or territories where project will be undertaken.  
Bosnia and Herzegovina: Hutovo blato, river Neretva, river Trebizat, Mostarsko blato
7. Date of preparation of this document.  
11.6.2020.

### **A. Project background**

The area of the Neretva Delta as well as Mostarsko Blato is one of the Key Biodiversity Area in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Climatic, hydrological, orographic conditions ensure that this area is inhabited by 310 bird species), over 700 vascular plants, 13 amphibian species, 17 reptile species, 28 mammal species, 44 fish species and other organisms found favorable here vetoes for life. Not only are favorable conditions for plant and animal species, this space provides all conditions for human life. However, the area of the Neretva Delta is exposed to impacts through intensive agricultural production of early fruits and vegetables, increasing urbanization, hydro regional facilities, tourism, illegal waste disposal, hunting, poaching, floods, fires and other pressures coming from the immediate environment.

All these pressures on space and biodiversity have led to the inclusion of the Neretva Delta and Mostarsko Blato in hotspots at the Mediterranean level. The threat to freshwater ecosystems, including bird and fishery species, is further conditioned by the lack of fresh water in the Neretva Delta area, which results in loss of habitat for birds and fish spawning with pronounced salinization, which adversely affects the biodiversity and sustainable development of the entire delta (agriculture).

Major anthropogenic threats such as illegal poaching of birds and fish, infrastructure projects (dams), urbanization and unsustainable tourism, agriculture, domestic and industrial pollution; combined with natural phenomena such as fluctuations in water levels, floods and the effects of climate change, eutrophication, succession of shambles, floods, fires, etc., have led to a decline in the numbers of birds, and with them fish stocks

From the anthropogenic threats mentioned above, illegal poaching of birds and fish poses a very complex problem towards biodiversity and the conservation of indigenous species of fish and wetland birds throughout the Neretva Delta and Mostarsko Blato. The main forms of illegal poaching are fishing during prohibition, fishing during low water levels, and fishing by illegal means (spears, electricity and

inappropriate nets - long holes, set in circular "traps"). The situation with birds is similar. These illegal practices are devastating bird and fish stocks that are closely related to the food chain.

This project aims is to contribute to the effective protection and conservation of the fishery fund In KBA - Trebižat, Mostarsko Blato, the Neretva Delta, by empowering communities and local stakeholders to participate in natural resource management and developing sustainable economic opportunities.

Regionalni Resursni Centar project is built on four complementary components:

1. Empowerment and integration of key stakeholders in 4 KBA (Hutovo Blato, Neretva Delta, Trebižat, Mostarsko Blato) and their staffing and technical equipment
2. Sensitizing the public and supporting the eradication of illegal fishing practices and developing and promoting sustainable use of water resources within the KBA Area
3. Ensuring sustainability of management and use of natural resources through joint actions and formalization of cooperation among local, county and cross-border stakeholders.
4. Media promotion of project activities and results

The project will focus on the empowerment of key stakeholders (fishery companies in the Municipality of Čapljina (ŠRD "BJELAVE", ŠRD "ŠIROKI BRIJEG" and NGOs (ČAPLJA Association and NDF), local communities (municipalities Čapljina, Stolac, Široki Brijeg). These individuals will contribute to the promotion of integrated management of natural / water resources and the development of sustainable economic activities.

Promoting the integrated management of water resources in the Neretva Basin would contribute to better protection and conservation of fish stocks, fisheries, increase fish populations, preserve overall biological diversity and develop sustainable tourism activities through sport fishing, photo safaris, recreation, nature stay, etc.

## **B. Participatory implementation**

Project objective is to gain support from local stakeholders and communities to ensure the long-term sustainability of the project with promoting the protection of endangered fish species and creating economic opportunities based on sustainable use natural resources. During the implementation of this project, ReReC will

- a. work to connect partners and stakeholders and foster co-operation between them and at the municipal, county and cross-border level;
- b. support the process of establishing a solid framework for cooperation among local stakeholders that will underpin long-term joint cooperation for the sustainable management of the Neretva Delta ecosystem.
- c. carry out a series of activities related to strengthening the role and position of NGOs in the protection and management of natural resources in the Herzegovina region in a project that will:
  - contribute to the strengthening of strategic documents - Management Plans and Fisheries Basis, by giving recommendations for updating local regulations and plans, thus creating instruments for the conservation and sustainable use of the fisheries fund. Managing authorities will be able to better manage the protected areas through the expanded involvement of various stakeholders and through measures to promote fisheries and develop sustainable activities. In addition, the aim is also to enable local civil society organizations to receive direct support from donors to maintain continuity of work in the Mediterranean basin and, where appropriate, to replicate it to other beneficiaries.

- build the capacity of the Fisheries Service, an NGO with local stakeholders to promote and support participatory natural resource management. This approach will complement the methodology implemented during previous projects, which focused on the conservation of habitats and bird populations in the Neretva Delta and Mostarsko Blato.
- encourage co-operation at local and cross-border level through the establishment of structures / signed co-operation agreements bringing together different categories of stakeholders and empowering them to function under the coordination of the local ReReC structure, and subsequently on an autonomous basis.
- be based on equipping and capacity building of local partners: procurement of equipment (bicycle, aggregate, network, uniform). Capacity building is the first milestone to ensure the ability of local organizations to sustain key activities in the long term.
- develop sustainable economic activities, especially ecotourism in the Neretva Delta and birdwatching that is just taking place in the winter and ecological and sport fishing. Economic sustainability is seen by fisheries societies, which will continue to enrich the waters of the Neretva Delta through continuous stocking, and will sell more fishing licenses, which will also create economic benefits for fisheries societies. By creating fish farming zones and spaces, additional economic value will be gained for the local population. In this way, fisheries societies could also become partially self-sustaining.

Working with local communities to combat poaching and illegal exploitation of gravel and identify potential places for the development of sport fishing will further improve ecological conditions and create the basis for the development of ecological and sustainable tourism (sport fishing, fish farming, etc.), the development of sustainable economic activities (sport recreation fishing), including water management and the strengthening of management structures to develop the environmental sustainability of the project.

The technical and organizational strengthening of civil society organizations and the management of natural areas of the institution will allow the continuity of their mobilization in favor of the conservation of the fishery fund and the endangered species subject to the project.

### **C. Criteria for eligibility of affected persons**

Wetlands such as the Neretva Delta with Hutovo Blato support a wide range of ecosystem services: biological, hydrological, but also economic and cultural. Previous activities to protect and conserve the biodiversity of this area through the establishment of the Hutovo Blato Nature Park have not brought certain benefits / benefits to the local population as planned. Non-support is evident in the increasing poaching of fish and birds in a whole area. To change this approach and the local people to participate more in the activities, we decided to sensitize them through workshops and engage in anti-poaching activities. Poaching as an illegal activity disrupts the entire ecosystem and the unauthorized development of other compatible activities: bird watching, sport fishing and even economic. The most dangerous practice is fishing with electricity, which can cause mortality of all living animals within a 10 m radius around the boat. This phenomenon is becoming more and more pronounced as a means of poaching. Fishing with nets, peaks, night hunting is also on the rise.

Control of illegal poaching is very demanding because control and surveillance measures are weak and inconsistent across the fishing / hunting area managed by the fishing society and the Hutovo Blato Nature Park. Rangers and fishermen of Bjelave and Park are not cooperating and are additionally exposed to pressure and inconvenience. Due to limited actions, rangers / fishermen are exposed to increasing physical risks and threats, making it difficult for them to perform their duties properly. Corruption political

relationships affect the outcome of judgments, which leads the whole situation to absurdity and places the guard service in a hopeless position.

Poachers will not be considered affected persons, because they are used an illegal way of hunting. Hunting activities are prohibited and only professional fishermen from associations will be considered endangered. Restricting access is not expected to affect the local community - the project will mainly promote best practices.

The project will focus on the empowerment of key stakeholders (fishery companies in the Municipality of Čapljina (ŠRD "BJELAVE", ŠRD "ŠIROKI BRIJEG" and NGOs (ČAPLJA Association and NDF) and local communities (municipalities Čapljina, Stolac, Široki Brijeg). These individuals will contribute to the promotion of integrated management of natural / water resources and the development of sustainable economic activities. Promoting the integrated management of water resources in the Neretva Basin would contribute to better protection and conservation of fish stocks, fisheries, increase fish populations, preserve overall biological diversity and develop sustainable tourism activities through sport fishing, photo safaris, recreation, nature stay, etc. Through these benefits, the local population could improve their economic situation but also contribute to enrich the area with new tourism facilities that will integrate the wider socio-political community.

#### **D. Measures to assist the affected persons**

The project will strengthen the technical and human capacity of fishermen's associations, NGOs and the Hutovo Blato Nature Park through educational workshops, technical equipment and professional and safety assistance in carrying out the regular tasks of controlling, monitoring and verifying the legitimacy of the work of individuals and economic operators in the fisheries sector. The project will also contribute to a greater sensitization of the public and other users of space and waters on the importance of protecting and conserving freshwater ecosystems, and thus the fishery fund.

The project might therefore impact mostly:

- Sport fishing societies in the Neretva Basin ("BJELAVE" Čapljina, "Neretva 1933" Mostar, "Trebizat" Ljubuski, "Amur" Grude, "Bregava" Stolac, "Široki Brijeg") and NGOs (Association "ČAPLJA" Čapljina, NDF, Lijepa Nasa, EHO, ŠREK "VIDRA" Ljubuški, LD "Galeb") – they will have benefits directly from the project through capacity building, improvement of their work and working conditions, and direct involvement in the protection, use of natural resources and sustainable tourism activities. They will be able to build long-term plans for the protection and improvement of the status of the fishery fund in the Neretva Delta and Mostarsko Blato. Also, they will be in a position to address current challenges and threats affecting overall biodiversity through various projects and activities within the cooperation agreement: poaching, illegal exploitation of gravel, uneven operation of hydroelectric power plants, illegal construction, intensive tourism, intensive agriculture, etc. which can ultimately result in sustainable management of the entire catchment area.
- Rangers, fishermen and NGOs who play a major role in protecting biodiversity, as they prevent the destruction of fish reserves, the degradation of natural habitats, and the disturbance of animals found throughout this area. This project will directly support the day-to-day work of the guard service and the rangers in the Park. Increase their legal role in the pursuit of poaching, which will increase their security on duty.

- Through networking, collaboration and synergy with fisheries, rangers, NGOs, police, inspectors and the Agency, local communities will increase the quality of biodiversity protection in KBA areas located in the basin.
- The local community will finally get serious control and users of fish stocks (Fishermen's Society), and will be able to develop sustainable activities in which the local population have evenly participate through the organization of sports competitions, organizing gastronomic event, participation in sports and recreational activities.
- The local community, decision-makers, managing authorities and beneficiaries of fisheries funds by creating a network of coordination platforms for biodiversity conservation, capacity building and stakeholder engagement.

#### **E. Conflict resolution and complaint mechanism.**

Prior to the implementation of each of the project activities, the beneficiaries of the project will be informed of the objectives and activities of the project and of the existence of a grievance mechanism. For the purpose of the project and its visibility, we would create a website where all activities related to the project would be published. At the same time, it would also use the website to inform the public and project beneficiaries and use others to use the project results. The visibility of the project would be made through the printing of promotional materials: leaflets, posters, jumbo posters, brochures on KBA areas that are the subject of the project. In this way, they would further give visibility and transparency to the project and make the results available to the general public. Moreover, the printing budget provided for every workshop will allow to distribute a presentation of the project presenting also the grievance mechanism.

An awareness-raising component has been included in this project, through tight set of consultations and workshops, to ensure that local communities have participated. ReReC will facilitate discussions and meetings between stakeholders and local communities. The involvement of local communities in the implementation of the project and continuous communication and presence of the team in the field will ensure fewer grievances.

Upon receipt of a grievance, ReReC and project partners will inform the CEPF implementation team and hold additional meetings with local communities or individuals, to discuss the issues and develop amicable solutions, which will be implemented by the project. We will share all grievances – and a proposed response – with the Regional Implementation Team and the CEPF Grant Director within 15 days. If the claimant is not satisfied following the response, they may submit the grievance directly to the CEPF Executive Director at [cepfexecutive@conservation.org](mailto:cepfexecutive@conservation.org) or by surface mail. If the claimant is not satisfied with the response from the CEPF Executive Director, they may submit the grievance to the World Bank at the local World Bank office. The dedicated email account for grievances can be indicated in the different communication and sensitization tools that will be developed in the framework of the project.

The conflicts that might occur are with illegal fishermen or poachers. However, activities are planned so that rangers, representatives of fishing companies, police and the inspector go on joint patrols where they will apply the laws and regulations on poaching. Such strengthening of cooperation will also contribute to the reduction of conflicts.

#### **F. Implementation Arrangements**

Implementation of the project and its safeguard mechanisms will be done by Regionalni Resursni Centar as a leading partner on the project. Regionalni Resursni Centar will inform partners of the obligations under

the conflict resolution and complaint mechanism, and discuss with them the practical implementation mechanisms suggested, before actual implementation. These discussions will be held during the meeting that will be organized before as well as during the project. ReReC is responsible for overall management of the project, but will require close cooperation with local partners and stakeholders.