

Process Framework for Involuntary Restrictions

CEPF Grant 111692

Center for Large Landscape Conservation

Connectivity, Capacity, and Cats: Building Resiliency in the Mountain Ecosystems of Koytendag,
Turkmenistan

1. **Grantee organization:** Center for Large Landscape Conservation (CLLC)
2. **Grant title:** Connectivity, Capacity, and Cats: Building Resiliency in the Mountain Ecosystems of Koytendag, Turkmenistan
3. **Grant number:** 111692
4. **Grant amount (US dollars):** approximately \$150,000
5. **Proposed dates of grant:** 1 May 2021 – 28 February 2023
6. **Countries or territories where project will occur:** Turkmenistan
7. **Date of preparation of this document:** 1 May 2021

8. Project background

The Mountain Ecosystems of Koytendag (MEK), located in southeast Turkmenistan on the border with Uzbekistan, cover a total area of 93,343 hectares. It consists of the Koytendag Reserve (zapovednik) and four contiguous State Sanctuaries that are designated under Turkmenistan law as Wildlife Sanctuaries (zakazniks). The Koytendag State Nature Reserve (SNR) is categorized as an IUCN Protected Area Category Ia and the four Sanctuaries as Category IV. We intend to work across all of MEK.

Koytendag SNR, responsible for all of MEK, has 43 staff (33 permanent and 10 contract) spread over four departments - administration, scientific, protection (with 19 rangers), and wildlife management. These staff are responsible for the nominated property as a whole. The staff have basic training across a range of technical areas including reporting and monitoring of wildlife (particularly birds and their habitats), camera trapping, bird, plant and mammal surveys, use of GPS, and management plan preparation. The majority of staff, especially rangers, are recruited from local communities. Patrolling and monitoring activities by rangers are mostly concentrated in the SNR, the core zone of the property. Currently, the number of rangers is not adequate, nor is the knowledge level, for monitoring MEK. SNR especially does not have resources to maintain patrolling or any minimum research activity. Camera traps have not been deployed and checked since 2019 and more generally information on species distribution and trends is very limited. METT scorecards have been submitted in the past but do not reflect the real management status and effectiveness of the SNR. The current Management Plan (2015-2019), while very comprehensive, has not been implemented due to lack of funds.

Areas within MEK are also significantly overgrazed. Local herders from the villages of villages of Khodzapil, Koyten, Karabulak, Garlyk and Svinzovii Rudnik (villages that have respectively 1030, 4847, 35, 1745 and 3570 people- the entire Koytendara valley is home to about 50,000 people) use the sanctuaries for livestock grazing, though illegal grazing in the SNR is also reported. While there are no statistics on the number of livestock, the Government's national policy to increase livestock numbers has led to increases in livestock numbers in the Koytendag region. Livestock owners are organized in herding associations which regulate access and we are not aware of any dialogue between MEK and such associations to address grazing. The MEK is also under some development pressure, including invasive tourist infrastructure, as well as mining development.

In 2012, the Government of Turkmenistan launched a process to nominate MEK as a UNESCO World Heritage site. A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the Ministry of Nature Protection of Turkmenistan (now the Ministry of Agriculture and Environment Protection of Turkmenistan, which oversees MEK) and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) allowed for RSPB to provide technical support to Koytendag to assist preparation of the World Heritage nomination dossier, produce the above-mentioned management plan, and provide resources and training for key reserve staff. This

process also included some initial surveys of the site's biodiversity with a special focus on cave biodiversity. In 2015, IUCN provided a technical evaluation of the World Heritage Site nomination for MEK and concluded not to inscribe the site under natural criteria. The recommendation included, inter alia, that: Turkmenistan monitor grazing pressures in the designated wildlife sanctuaries; more effectively plan for increasing tourism demand; ensure that no mining prospecting licenses and/or operations will be permitted within the protected area and its buffer zone; and encourage Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan to enhance collaboration in order to improve coordination between Koytendag State Nature Reserve (Turkmenistan) and the adjoining Surkhan Strict Nature Reserve (Uzbekistan), in particular to support improved transboundary management of wildlife populations, such as Markhor. The evaluation team also recognized that the caves of Koytendag are likely to support distinctive cave fauna, especially the Kaptarhana cave, which currently does not fall within the boundaries of the protected area. The further investigation of this distinctive cave fauna and protection of the Kaptarhana could provide the needed justification to inscribe MEK in the UNESCO World Heritage List.

Last but not least, this project will by engaging with local communities through the employment of "community-liaisons" strive to build bridges with the neighboring communities, to not only raise awareness about protected areas but also creating informal community mechanisms for wildlife monitoring and patrolling for violations and poaching.

CLLC will respond to the needs of Koytendag via team based in Ashgabat that undertakes the following:

1. Building the capacity of reserve staff and rangers to manage protected areas
2. Monitoring of wildlife, vegetation, and cave fauna
3. Engagement of the surrounding communities
4. Promotion of landscape planning with national agencies
5. Promotion of transboundary cooperation

The goal of this project is to improve the management of 40,000 of protected area inside the State Nature Reserve and 20,000 hectares of surrounding "non-protected" production landscapes. Conceivably, the project will limit livestock grazing inside the reserve (which is already illegal) and will change grazing regimes outside the reserve.

9. Participatory implementation

CLLC has consulted with the Ministry of Agriculture and Environmental Protection, to align the priorities of this project with governmental priorities and plans for Koytendag Reserve. This resulted in:

- Memorandum of Understanding between CLLC and the Turkmenistan Ministry of Agriculture and Environment; Saparmuradov Jumamurad, Head of Environmental Protection and Hydrometeorology, CBD Focal Point (19 April 2021)

Further, CLLC has been working with the Central Asia Desert Initiative (CADI), already working with the Ministry on Persian leopards, and with the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) in Koytendag, on the Eurasian lynx.

Each of the key personnel on the project, including Shirin Karryeva, John Linnell, Petra Kaczensky, and Tatjana Rosen have been working in Turkmenistan or Koytendag for more than seven years and have

ensured that the design of this project is in line with local needs. In particular, Component 3 of the project, on engagement of surrounding communities, involves improving relations between reserve authorities and the communities, particularly people grazing livestock.

10. Criteria for eligibility of affected persons

Eligible people will include local herders from the villages of Khodzapil, Koyten, Karabulak, Garlyk and Svinzovii Rudnik (villages that have respectively 1030, 4847, 35, 1745 and 3570 people). Herders graze cattle and goats inside the reserve, which may be more strictly controlled or stopped due to project interventions. Grazing regimes in park buffer zones may also be affected.

11. Measures to assist the affected persons

CLLC anticipates improved patrols by reserve staff to ensure local adherence to already existing limits on grazing and entry into the reserve. There will be no new laws or regulations put in place. Nevertheless, it is possible that individuals currently grazing their animals in the reserve, illegally, will now be instructed by the reserve staff to take their animals to other available public land.

CLLC project personnel will work to minimise any impact on local people through the following activities.

Firstly, through facilitation of joint-stakeholder meetings, we aim to mediate improved communication between the reserve staff and the local grazing communities so that they can work together to resolve and develop solutions to illegal grazing through dialogue, reducing the likelihood of the need for enforcement by the reserve staff. We anticipate that results of these meetings would include (1) reserve staff have greater understanding of situation faced by local herders leading to proportionate responses to illegal grazing; (2) grazers have better understanding of reserve management and increasingly opt to use pasture land outside of the reserve and (3) the reserve commits to work with and support local grazing communities to adopt improved pasture management techniques in public lands outside of the reserve, lessening the need for people to use the reserve territory.

Secondly, CLLC will help pastoral communities to address barriers they face to grazing in the areas outside of the reserve. Working closely with the local grazing associations and with the support of local pasture experts, we will develop an action plan for sustainable pasture management. The plan will include clear guidance to support those people currently using grazing areas in the reserve on how to make better and more efficient use of pasture areas outside of the reserve. The plan will be based on improved understanding of pasture use in the landscape (including the physical, social and economic barriers to greater use of pasture areas outside of the reserve) and this will be developed following completion of interviews with at least 40 local people and through meetings with the local Pasture Committees.

12. Conflict resolution and complaint mechanism

CLLC will ensure that local stakeholders are aware of the work and understand how to voice complaints, if any. We will:

- Post information in local languages in reserve headquarters, in each village, and at our own offices in Ashgabat.

- Hold public meetings explaining our activities. CLLC will host meetings at the start of the project in reserve offices and in the surrounding villages. In these meetings CLLC staff will introduce the CEPF project, inform stakeholders about CLLC as an organization, and share information on how to contact CLLC and CEPF representatives throughout the project period.

CLLC will create fliers about the project's objectives and planned activities, and these will also include contact information for CLLC staff. Fliers will be distributed to each of the five surrounding villages to further increase local awareness of the project activities

During all meetings and in general interactions with the public, CLLC personnel will inform local people and other stakeholders that they have the right to raise a grievance at any time with CLLC, Koytendag SNR reserve personnel, or CEPF about any issue relating to the project. Before starting the project implementation, local communities will be informed of the objectives of the grant. They will be given telephone numbers and e-mails of contact persons at CLLC, the reserve, and CEPF. This information will also be put on all education materials that will be produced during this project implementation including posters, brochures, and booklets. Contact information of the Regional Implementation Team and CEPF will be made publicly available in local languages. If CLLC receives a grievance, it will communicate the grievance, together with a proposed response, to CEPF and the RIT within 15 days.

We will inform stakeholders that grievances should proceed in the following order below. If the stakeholder is unsatisfied with the response at any step, they may proceed further.

- Project Coordinator, CLLC. Shirin Karryeva, shirinkarryeva.sk@gmail.com, +993 65562264
- Tam Leader, CLLC. Tatjana Rosen, naryntrosen@gmail.com, +993 63823843
- Begench Atamuradov, RIT country coordinator, atamuradovbegench62@gmail.com, +99365602382
- Lizza Protas, RIT Team Leader, WWF-Russia, lprotas@wwf.ru
- CEPF Executive Director: cepfexecutive@conservation.org

13. Implementation Arrangements

The project will be led from Ashgabat, with reserve-based work taking place out of Bazardepe. Primary field-facing and community-facing personnel are:

- Project Coordinator, Shirin Karryeva
- Awareness Coordinator, Aknabat Potaeva
- Community Liaison 1, to be determined
- Community Liaison 2, to be determined