

**Stakeholder Engagement Plan**

**1 December 2020**

**CEPF Grant 1110706**

**Biodiversity Conservation Fund of Kazakhstan**

**Improving the management efficiency of specially protected natural areas of the Western Tien  
Shan**

**Kazakhstan**

## **Grant Summary**

1. **Grantee organization:** Biodiversity Conservation Fund of Kazakhstan (FSBK)
2. **Grant title:** Improving the management efficiency of specially protected natural areas of the Western Tien Shan
3. **Grant number:** 110706
4. **Grant amount (US dollars):** approximately US \$150,000
5. **Proposed dates of grant:** 1 December 2020 – 31 May 2022
6. **Countries or territories where project will be undertaken:** Kazakhstan
7. **Date of preparation of this document:** 1 December 2020

## 8. **Introduction**

Western Tien Shan plays a key role in stabilizing the environmental situation in the most difficult part of Central Asia in terms of natural and socio-economic situation. The nearby foothills are one of the most densely populated in the world. Here, on the most beautiful and rich in species diversity part of the mountains of Central Asia, we plan the implementation of this project.

On the territory of the Western Tien Shan, have been preserved unique forests: walnut and wild fruit, juniper and spruce-fir, broad-leaved and tugai. The Western Tien Shan is characterized by the close proximity of contrasting biological communities. Communities of the boreal and tundra type are located here next to the communities of the subtropics and deserts.

There is no other place at these latitudes with such a high concentration of the ecosystem and species diversity of flora and fauna in such a limited area.

CEPF Ecosystem Profile designates “The Western Tien Shan Mountains” (bordering Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan and extending to Tajikistan) as Priority Corridor 9 and include several KBAs, including:

Aksu-Zhabably (a Kazakh state natural reserve coincident with CEPF Priority KBA KAZ 8) (in the Turkestan and Zhambyl regions).

Karatau (part of a Kazakh state nature reserve coincident with CEPF KBA KAZ 1) (in the Turkestan region).

Ugam (roughly coincident with Kazakh national park Sairam-Ugam, coincident with CEPF KBA KAZ 5) (in the Turkestan region).

We propose to work in and around the three named parks above, and at a national level, to improve site management (SD 2) and corridor management (SD 3). The three reserves fall under the control of the Ministry of Ecology, Geology, and Natural Resources and its subordinate agency, the Committee of Forestry and Wildlife.

The Western Tien Shan contains unique forests (walnut, wild fruit, juniper, spruce-fir, broad-leaved and tugai), and is noted for the proximity of contrasting biological communities (boreal and tundra type are located next to subtropics and deserts). The area is under threat from climate change, irrational use of water, fires, poaching, pollution, and deforestation.

Our approach to improving site and corridor management is to work from “above,” from the “middle,” and from “below.” The context for this is described here.

### **Issues from Above – International Agreements**

Three nature conservation institutions (i.e. three KRBS) and the Kazakh part of the Western Tien Shan form part of the Transboundary Serial World Heritage Site - Western Tien Shan.

On March 17, 1998, in Bishkek, the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic, the Government of the Republic of Uzbekistan and the Republic of Tajikistan signed an Agreement on cooperation in the field of conservation of biological diversity of the Western Tien Shan.

In 2018, the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic, the Ministry of Agriculture of the Republic of Kazakhstan and the State Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan signed a Memorandum on the management and protection of the "Western Tien Shan" Transboundary Serial WHS. Within the framework of this Memorandum, the Action Plan for the implementation of the Memorandum for 2018-2022 was approved. Since then, no significant work has been undertaken, but the MoU calls for the establishment of a regional committee and a 5-year regional management plan.[r2]

The Government of Kazakhstan positions itself as a leader in the region in conservation. In the context of improving the management of the three named parks and the overall corridor, the Government will be motivated to take actions on the Regional Committee and on the Kazakh portions of the World Heritage Site. In other words, the Government is inclined to improve the management of its parks, if only to signal to the other countries that Kazakhstan is a leader.

### **Issues from Above – National Law**

Separate from the World Heritage Site, but also an issue from “above” is national policy. The 2006 law, “On Specially Protected Natural Areas,” provides the legal basis for the creation and management of state protected areas. In 2017 and 2018, provisions were added to this law calling for the creation of civil society Coordination Councils for each protected area. This was an important and welcome step for CSOs and local populations, but the provisions have critical limitations:

- The activities of Coordination Councils are limited to the development/promotion of ecotourism and recreation.
- The chair of the Coordination Council is, by definition, either the head of the protected area or his deputy, and chair alone determines the composition of the council.
- There is no mechanism for ensuring transparency of the Coordination Council or monitoring its decisions.
- Coordination Councils have no mechanism to ensure gender equity or to address, through their composition, any disadvantaged group.

Given this scenario, Coordination Councils rarely meet.

Nevertheless, President of Kazakhstan Kassym-Zhomart Tokayev, in his address to the people on September 1, 2020, instructed the Government to “start implementing practical measures to improve the environmental situation, legislatively and normatively to protect national parks and other natural resources of Kazakhstan . . . to approve long-term plans for the conservation and rational use of biological diversity.”

The fact that provisions for civil society participation exist under the national law, and that the President has voiced his support for better conservation, create a rationale for action to improve the law’s provisions.

### **Issues from Middle**

Even absent changes to the protected area law provisions, Coordination Councils can be made more functional. The heads of the three targeted KBAs have indicated their interest in this. Until now, the Coordination Councils in these parks have typically limited their activities to promotion of one-time participation events, like a “March for Parks” and environmental festivals. However, the heads of the parks have indicated their interest in allowing true participation, including involvement, cooperation, and delegation. This is a good time for action.

### **Issues from Below**

Public awareness of the value of protected areas is limited, both surrounding the three target KBAs and throughout the country. Parks were often created without a great deal of public input, and as noted, there is limited participation by local communities or CSOs in park management or oversight. Thus, communities have limited incentives to work with park managers or support their efforts.

Apart from having the chance to participate in Coordination Committees, noted above, the communities surrounding the three target parks would benefit from awareness about the value of the parks, and would benefit from knowing about the simple measures they can take to protect the parks and surrounding habitats.

Poor awareness of the population about the role of parks, about the importance of biodiversity, about the causes and consequences of global climate change, including for local communities, insufficient efforts to create and maintain direct interest, largely determine their exclusion from environmental activities. Unlike CSOs, which, as a rule, are to some extent already oriented towards environmental protection and participation in park management, the majority of the population requires such approaches that would ensure a direct interest of their representatives in environmental activities.

This grant will address each of these issues, strengthening the regional committee for the world heritage site, strengthening Kazakh national law for protected areas, strengthening protected area coordination councils, and engaging local communities to improve their awareness about the value of parks and key biodiversity areas.

## **9. Summary of Previous Stakeholder Engagement Activities**

FSBK received the endorsement of the heads of each nature reserve to begin this work, including:

Aksu-Zhabagly Nature Reserve, Director A.N. Menlibekov (October 2020)

Karatau Nature Reserve, Director A.K. Niyazov (October 2020)

Sairam Ugam Reserve, General Director S. Zh. Kyntaev (October 2020)

Over its lifespan, FSBK has conducted more than 100 training events, organized 16 nurseries and gardens, and delivered programs to over 5,000 schoolchildren.

As part of the proposal process, it conducted reconnaissance to the three regions over the period of June-October 2020 to meet with local communities and ensure their interest in working with us.

#### 10. **Project Stakeholders**

While the project will work with national and international policy makers based in Nur Sultan, for the purposes of this plan, “stakeholders” are defined as communities living around Aksu-Zhabagly Nature Reserve, Karatau Nature Reserve, and Sairam Ugam Reserve. These are mainly the territories of four administrative districts of the Turkestan region: Tyulkubassky, Sairam, Tolebi, Kazgurt and one district of Zhambyl region: Zhualynsky. The total population of these administrative districts is 500 thousand people.

#### 11. **Stakeholder Engagement Program**

Related to the stakeholders named above, FSBK will:

- Work to expand the composition of Protected Area Coordination Councils to include representatives of local communities and civil society organizations.
- Promote awareness of the value of the three protected areas through various print and social media and education programs.
- Establish three demonstration sites on local farms showing people how they can utilize appropriate technologies for water and energy use to better manage their own land.

#### 12. **Consultation methods**

FSBK will use awareness surveys, town hall meetings, town hall meetings, informal discussions with community members, and key informant interviews. Once the project is going, we will then hold workshops and exchange visits on the demonstration farms. Critically, we will promote the role of communities and civil society groups on the Protected Area Coordination Councils to “consult” directly with Nature Reserve authorities.

#### 13. **Other Engagement Activities**

FSBK will apply its experience in improving the composition and operation of the Coordination Council in Korgalzhinsky Reserve to the three target parks.

The Project Manager and FSBK Director will work with the park directors to consider revising the composition of the Coordination Councils. This will include reviewing the gender balance of participants, reviewing the most active and relevant CSOs working in communities surrounding each

park (regardless of the “type” of CSO that they are), and designing a transparent process to solicit and invite CSOs to nominate members for the Council.

In addition, a monitoring group will be created in each protected area to monitor the implementation of the decisions of the coordinating council, and it will be practiced to hold open online meetings with the participation of representatives of CSOs and the local population who are not part of the coordination councils.

We will engage an expert to craft operational guidelines for the Coordination Councils that cover council membership, the conduct of internal meetings, the conduct of public meetings, and the posting of announcements/minutes/decisions to ensure transparency.

Coordination councils will be created separately in each of the three target PAs and will be based in the settlements where the PAs directorates are located.

#### **14. Timetable**

The project will proceed over 18 months on an opportunistic schedule in the following order:

- Baseline awareness survey
- Informant interviews
- Awareness raising plan developed + competition to select three model sites
- Awareness activities started + training on model sites
- Post-project awareness survey

Simultaneous with the above, FSBK will work with the directors of the three parks to open the Coordination Councils to applications from interested civil society.

#### **15. Resources and Responsibilities**

The team will include a Project Manager, Expert on working with local community, and a PR Specialist, each of whom will lead on different elements of stakeholder engagement.

#### **16. Grievance mechanism**

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.

FSBK will work to ensure that local stakeholders are aware of the work and understand how to voice complaints, if any. We will post contact information in local languages at the offices of each of the three protected areas and in appropriate “town halls” or public spaces. We will hold public meetings explaining our activities.

During all meetings and in general interactions with the public, FSBK personnel will inform local people and other stakeholders that they have the right to raise a grievance at any time with FSBK, nature reserve personnel, or CEPF about any issue relating to the project.

FSBK will post telephone numbers and e-mails of contact persons at FSBK, nature reserve authorities, 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.

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.

- Head of the Directorate, FSBK Assylkhan Assylbekov, [astatur@bk.ru](mailto:astatur@bk.ru), 8-701-725-4543
- Head of the Department for Forest and Protected Areas of the Committee for Forestry and Wildlife, Baltabaev Abzal, [a.baltabaev@ecogeo.gov.kz](mailto:a.baltabaev@ecogeo.gov.kz), 8-777-881-14-31
- Lizza Protas, RIT Team Leader, WWF-Russia, [lprotas@wwf.ru](mailto:lprotas@wwf.ru)
- CEPF Executive Director: [cepfexecutive@conservation.org](mailto:cepfexecutive@conservation.org)

## **17. Monitoring and Reporting**

FSBK will report on this plan every six months. We will also conduct a baseline and final awareness survey that may include comments not only on awareness of the value of the environment, but also on our conduct of the project. We will also conduct surveys of people who participate in training on the demonstration sites.