

## CEPF FINAL PROJECT COMPLETION REPORT

### I. BASIC DATA

**Organization Legal Name:** NGO - Black Sea Eco Academy

**Project Title (as stated in the grant agreement):** ``Establishment of Conservation Status of Acipenseridae Family in Georgia``

**Implementation Partners for this Project:**

**Project Dates (as stated in the grant agreement):** 1 September, 2006 – 30 September, 2008

**Date of Report (month/year):** December, 2008

### II. OPENING REMARKS

*Provide any opening remarks that may assist in the review of this report.*

The Acipenseridae family is a unique component of the global biodiversity for being a relic fishes, forming the group of giant anadromous fishes and characterized with high commercial as well as conservation importance. Over the last decades the species of Acipenseridae family are suffering from extensive anthropogenic impact throughout their distribution range in general and in the Black Sea in particular. Their stocks have diminished significantly and species are included in the red data list of number of countries.

The Georgian Black Sea coast was always considered as an important area of occurrence of Acipenseridae species including Beluga (*Huso huso*), Russian Sturgeon (*Acipenser gueldenstaedtii colchicus*), Ship sturgeon (*Acipenser nudiventris*), Star sturgeon (*Acipenser stellatus*), Atlantic sturgeon (*Acipenser sturio*). Due to dramatic decline in number Acipenseridae species have been assigned with the conservation status (red list, etc) in the Black Sea countries. However in Georgia at the moment only one of them is listed in the red data book. No measures are taken for saving and recovery of stocks; moreover there is no reliable up-to-dated information about the current status of their populations.

The particular attention should be paid to the Atlantic sturgeon. Once wide-spread in the North-Atlantic, Baltic, Mediterranean and Black Seas, it represented the valuable and important target for commercial fisheries. However by the end of 19th century its number has reduced and by the mid- 20th century it became globally endangered. Nowadays the small populations of Atlantic sturgeons occur in three areas only: lower reaches of R.Danube, R.Gironde (France), and in the western Caucasus - R.Rioni (Georgia). The latest is of particular interest for scientists, for holding the most numerous population, which was estimated as about 1000 individuals in 1985, against several dozens in 2 other locations. Atlantic sturgeon is a sad example of how the irresponsible fisheries practice of human can lead to the near-extinction state of once abundant species.

The project was mainly focused on the assessment of the current status of all Acipenseridae species in the priority sites, which has not been conducted over the last 15-16 years, define its conservation status and elaborate the National Conservation Action Plan for sturgeons.

### III. ACHIEVEMENT OF PROJECT PURPOSE

*Project Purpose: Current status of Acipenseridae species along the Georgian Black Sea coast defined and the National Action Plan for species conservation prepared that contributes to further conservation activities of Acipenseridae species.*

Planned vs. Actual Performance

| Indicator  | Actual at Completion   |
|--|--|
| <p><b>Purpose-level: Current status of Acipenseridae species along the Georgian Black Sea coast defined and the National Action Plan for species conservation prepared that contributes to further conservation activities of Acipenseridae species.</b></p> | <p>Current status of Acipenseridae species along the Georgian Black Sea coast has been defined through comprehensive field-works and researches in the frame of the given project and results are included in the project scientific report and introductory part of the National Conservation Action Plan.</p> <p>National Conservation Action Plan for Acipenseridae species / Sturgeons has been developed.</p> |
| <p><i>Indicator 1 - Current status of Acipenseridae species along the Georgian Black Sea coast defined and the National Action Plan for species conservation prepared by the end of June, 2008.</i></p>  | <p>See above.</p>  |

*Describe the success of the project in terms of achieving its intended impact objective and performance indicators.*

Two main objectives of the project has been successfully achieved:

1. Current status of Acipenseridae species along the Georgian Black Sea coast has been defined through comprehensive field-works and researches. It should be underlined that such scientific research on Acipenseridae species has not been done since 1991. This project gave opportunity to make the comprehensive scientific work and make one big step forward and update status of Acipenseridae species after 16 years stop. Besides, in the frame of this project, finally it was defined and agreed by key experts that there are six species of Acipenseridae in Georgian Black Sea coast. And, for each Acipenseridae species: (a) population structure; (b) population size; (c) population density / number and (d) population reproductive age; (e) habitats change tendency and (f) existing distribution areas have been defined.
2. National Conservation Action Plan for Acipenseridae species / Sturgeons has been developed and submitted to the relevant Governmental bodies.

***Were there any unexpected impacts (positive or negative)?***

There are two unexpected positive outputs. In addition to the planned outputs, two additional and very important activities were implemented in the frame of the given project:

- ✓ The concept for captive breeding of sturgeons in Georgia has been developed

**AND**

- ✓ The Guideline for the expansion of Kolkheti National Park has been developed. At the moment area of this National Park is **45,446.40 ha** from which 29,704.40 ha is terrestrial and 15, 742 ha is marine. The suggested expansion is aimed to protect the main area for sturgeons breeding and feeding.

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| <b>IV. PROJECT OUTPUTS</b> |
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*Project Outputs: Enter the project outputs from the Logical Framework for the project*

**Planned vs. Actual Performance**

| <b>Indicator</b>  | <b>Actual at Completion</b>   |
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| <b>Output 1: - Already existing reference / literature data on the priority Acipenseridae species and habitats collected, analyzed and communicated</b>         | <p>All reference / literature data on the priority Acipenseridae species and habitats have been compiled and analyzed. Accordingly the relevant brief report covering results of literature review has been prepared and communicated to key stakeholders.</p> <p>Electronic library of the existing literary notes related to sturgeon fishes in Georgia has been created.</p> <p>Information has been prepared on the main geographical and geo-ecological characteristics of the Acipenseridae habitats (reservoirs) in Georgia (Rivers Psou, Bzipi, Gumisa, Okumi, Mokvi, Eristskali, Galidzga, Enguri, Churia, Khobi, Rioni with its tributaries, Supsa, Natanebi, Chorokhi, Paliastomi Lake and the Black Sea Coastal Zone of Georgia).</p> |
| <i>Indicator 1.1: Analysis results are formulated as a brief report and communicated to key stakeholders by the end of October, 2006.</i>                       | See above   |
| <b>Output 2: Local communities' representatives and volunteers (mainly students) selected and trained for further involvement in the project implementation</b> | Territory of sturgeon potential inhabitation was divided into five areas for activities: Adjara, Guria, Poti-samegrelo, Imeteri and "Black Sea". In each area for activity were selected local partners from the field concerned. Questionnaires for the selected local partners were prepared in order to get full information on fishing. Also, each local partner was provided with maps of areas for activities and these maps highlight priority sites for investigation to define sturgeon conservation status. Local partners were provided with information about aims and objectives of the project, instructions how to fill questionnaires.  |

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|   | <p>Local partners made survey among fishermen by our questionnaires. Totally in survey participated 89 fishermen. 21fishermen in Adjara, 11 in Guria, 14 in Imereti, 25 in Poti-Samegrelo and 18 in coastal zone. According to our instructions local partner conducted survey among fish sellers and employers of fish restaurants. Survey data have been analyzed and processed.</p> <p>Local partners identified persons, which have the most important information about sturgeon and arranged meetings with them. At meetings we received additional information about sturgeon state and more accurately defined existing information.</p> <p>Local partner participated in our field trips at they area of activity. During trips were studied important objects and sites for sturgeon conservation.</p> <p>In each phase of the project implementation volunteers were involved. They are students of natural sciences department (ichthyology, hydrobiology and ecology) and locals. In December, 2006 the special training on sturgeon conservation issues was arranged for volunteers and also, information on sturgeon key habitats (Gonio, mouth of Chorokhi river, mouth of Natanebi river, mouth of Supsa river, Maltakva canal, Paliastomi, Poti – fishing port, mouth of Rioni river, Rioni water dispenser) were provided. In addition, a filed trip has been organized for volunteers.</p> |
| <p><i>Indicator 2.1: Local communities' representatives and volunteers (mainly students) selected and trained by the end of November, 2006.</i></p>                                   | <p>See above</p>   |
| <p><b>Output 3: - Filed / research works conducted, key basic data on the priority Acipenseridae species and habitats obtained and analyzed and relevant GIS database created</b></p> | <p>December of 2007 Marine researches sites were identified in Batumi and Kobuleti shelf zones. These research sites were divided by zones according to their depth: 10-40, 40-70, 70-100 m. Action plan for marine–researches was worked out.</p> <p>Marine researches were done, according to the above-mentioned action plan. For researches fishing vessel - ``Regina``was used, owned by LTD “Eldorado”. In particular, 6 trawling were done at :</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Batumi bank 10-40m</li> <li>2. Batumi bank 40-70m.</li> <li>3. Batumi bank 70-100m.</li> <li>4. Kobuleti bank 10-40m.</li> <li>5. Kobuleti bank 40-70m.</li> <li>6. Kobuleti bank 70-100m.</li> </ol> <p>August of 2007 On the Sarpi-Anaklia section of the Georgian coastal zone, sea surveys on all the key isobaths, with the purpose to evaluate the quantity and distribution of</p>   |

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|  | <p>Acipenseridae family, have been carried out with the help of trawl nets and purse seines.</p> <p>40 field-work (expeditions) were arranged. During these field-works key sturgeons habitats (<i>mouth of the Chtokhi river and Chorokhi by itself, flowing in Georgia, mouth of Natanebi river, mouth of Supsa and lower Supsa, Maltakva canal, Paliastomi, mouth of Kulevi river and lower Kulevi, mouth of Enguri river and Lower Enguri river till Enguri hydro electric station, mouth Rioni river and Rioni by itself till Varcikhe hydro electric station</i>) were investigated. Also, existing threats for sturgeons causing by infrastructure developments (<i>Enguri hydro electric station, Varcikhe hydro electric station, Kulevi terminal and port, Rioni water dispenser, Poti landfill and others</i>) were identified and analyzed. During these field-works meetings with experienced fishermen, having important information on sturgeons, were organized and we conducted joint fishing for scientific purposes.</p> <p>Results of the surveys carried out in the sea and inner waters have been fully analyzed. The current quantity and distribution of the Acipenseridae family has been defined, contemporary and historical maps in GIS of the Acipenseridae family (in general and by species) have been developed.</p> <p>The mentioned materials were delivered to the stakeholders.</p> |
| <p><i>Indicator 3.1: Filed / research works conducted, results analysed and relevant GIS database created by the end of December, 2007.</i></p>  | <p>See above</p>  |
| <p><b>Output 4: - Impact of poaching on the priority Acipenseridae species assessed and results submitted to the Ministry of Environment Protection and Natural Resources of Georgia and Environment and Natural Resources Department of Adjara Autonomous Republic</b></p>                                  | <p>System of monitoring of fish sale sites (markets, etc.), places of dislocation of riverside and industrial fishers and discharge of fishes has been developed and monitoring has been performed. We have evaluated the quantitative and qualitative indicators of illegal fishing on Acipenseridae and results / materials were communicated to the Government and key stakeholders.</p>   |
| <p><i>Indicator 4.1: Impact of poaching on the priority Acipenseridae species assessed and results submitted to the Ministry of Environment Protection and Natural Resources of Georgia and Environment and Natural Resources Department of Adjara Autonomous Republic by the end of December, 2007.</i></p> | <p>See above</p>  |
| <p><b>Output 5: - Materials for public awareness raising on importance and conservation of the priority Acipenseridae species and their</b></p>  | <p>The official presentation of the project has been organized in December, 2006. This event was attended by representatives from governmental, non-governmental and scientific sectors. Also, Nugzar Zazanashvili – CEPF Regional Coordinator in the</p>   |

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| <p><b>habitats produced and delivered to key stakeholders</b></p>  | <p>Caucasus and Maka Bitsadze - CEPF Country Coordinator in Georgia participated in this event.</p> <p>The stakeholders` meeting was conducted on 6 April, 2008 where representatives from governmental and non-governmental sectors participated. Also, mass media representatives attended the meeting and accordingly, information on this event was released through local TV. The meeting participants discussed project results.</p> <p>Two scientific articles have been prepared while the implementation of this project and officially submitted to scientific journals for publication: <b>(i) the first article</b> - ``Species composition of Acipenseridae in Georgia`` to the international ``Journal of Ichthyology`` and <b>(ii) the second article</b> - ``Dynamics of Acipenseridae specifies changes in Georgia`` to the international Journal - ``Applied Ichthyology``.</p> <p>The project implementation process has been covered in local Mass Media. In particular 3 press-publications, 3 tv – programmes and 2 radio programmes.</p> <p>Brochures / Acipenseridae species field guide and Poster on sturgeon have been published and communicated to all key stakeholders, volunteers and wide public.</p> |
| <p><i>Indicator 5.1: Materials for public awareness raising on importance and conservation of the priority Acipenseridae species and their habitats produced and delivered to key stakeholders by the end May, 2008.</i></p> | <p>See above</p>  |
| <p><b>Output 6: - Capacity of relevant Government representatives built to strengthen monitoring and halt poaching on the priority Acipenseridae species</b></p>   | <p>Two trainings have been organized instead of one as it was initially planned.</p> <p><b>(1)</b> Training for governmental representatives on sturgeon conservation issues and relevant national legislation was organized on 9 December, 2006. It was extra training upon request of governmental representatives. Training presentations were provided by the Project Coordinator and main specialist of convention inspection for the Black Sea protection Mr. Ramaz Miqueladze. At the training technical and scientific aspects of sturgeons conservation were discussed. Recommendations were provided on how to identify sturgeon species, distinguish local and Caspian species and reveal fact of illegal sturgeon fishing. Information about the training was distributed by local mass-media. Adjara television (regional and satellite channel) broadcasted programme about the training and the article on this training was published in local newspaper “Adjara”.</p> <p><b>(2)</b> With the request of the leadership of the Ecological Inspection of the Ministry of Environment Protection and Natural Resources</p>  |

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|  | <p>of Georgia, the training was carried out in August 2007. The training was attended by about 40 members of the Ecological Inspection, Black Sea Convention Inspection and Local Department of Environment Protection. At the training we discussed all the theoretical and practical issues regarding the illegal fishing on Acipenseridae. Within the framework of the training we made one practical site visit to the site most important in terms of conservation of Acipenseridae family. All the successful trainees received certificates with CEPF Logo. The training was co-funded by the Ecological Inspection. In particular the Ecological Inspection paid for transportation, hotel and per-diems of the trainees, on the whole of 1863 USD.</p>   |
| <p><i>Indicator 6.1: Capacity of relevant Government representatives built by the end of March, 2008.</i></p>  | <p>See above</p>  |
| <p><b>Output 7: - National Conservation Action Plan for the priority Acipenseridae species and habitats elaborated and submitted to the Ministry of Environment Protection and Natural Resources of Georgia and Natural Resources Department of Adjara Autonomous Republic</b></p> | <p>Legal and scientific aspects of conservation of the Acipenseridae family have been analyzed. The draft National Conservation Action Plan has been developed for conservation of the Acipenseridae family. The draft plan has been submitted to the local experts. Their ideas and recommendations have been taken into account.</p> <p>The first stakeholders` meeting was conducted in April, 2008 where representatives from governmental and non-governmental sectors participated. Also, mass media representatives attended the meeting and accordingly, information on this event was released through local TV. The meeting participants discussed the draft National Conservation Action Plan.</p> <p>We organized the final presentation of the National Conservation Action Plan in September, 2008. This event was attended by representatives from governmental, non-governmental and scientific sectors.</p> <p>The National Conservation Action Plan has been submitted to the Ministry of Environment Protection and Natural Resources of Georgia and Environment and Natural Resources Department of Adjara Autonomous Republic.</p> |
| <p><i>Indicator 7.1: National Conservation Action Plan elaborated and submitted to the Ministry of Environment Protection and Natural Resources of Georgia Environment and Natural Resources Department of Adjara Autonomous Republic by the end of May, 2008.</i></p>             | <p>See above</p>  |
| <p><b>Output 8: - Recommendations on the current / updated status of the</b></p>   | <p>Recommendations have been developed for definition of the national status of Acipenseridae family. At the first stage,</p>   |

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| <p><b>priority Acipenseridae species elaborated and submitted to the Ministry of Environment Protection and Natural Resources of Georgia, Natural Resources Department of Adjara Autonomous Republic and IUCN</b></p>  | <p>materials have been submitted to the local experts for review and their ideas and recommendations have been considered.</p> <p>The final recommendations on the current / updated status of the priority Acipenseridae species have been developed and submitted to the relevant governmental institutions and IUCN Southern Caucasus Programme Office based in Tbilisi, Georgia.</p> |
| <p><i>Indicator 8.1: Recommendations on the current / updated status of the priority Acipenseridae species elaborated and submitted to the Ministry of Environment Protection and Natural Resources of Georgia, Environment and Natural Resources Department of Adjara Autonomous Republic and IUCN by the end of May, 2008.</i></p> | <p>See above</p>   |

*Describe the success of the project in terms of delivering the intended outputs.*

**The project progress / success can be summarized as follows:**

- ✓ All reference / literature data on the priority Acipenseridae species and habitats have been analyzed and electronic library of the existing literature related to sturgeon in Georgia has been created.
- ✓ Local communities' representatives and volunteers (mainly students) have been selected, trained and actively involved in the project implementation which itself contributed to public awareness raising in this field.
- ✓ Current status of Acipenseridae species along the Georgian Black Sea coast has been defined through comprehensive field-works and researches.
- ✓ National Conservation Action Plan for Acipenseridae species / Sturgeons has been developed and submitted to the relevant Governmental bodies.
- ✓ The quantitative and qualitative indicators of illegal fishing on Acipenseridae have been assessed through market and restaurants researches and results have been analyzed and communicated to the Government and key stakeholders.
- ✓ Two scientific articles have been prepared while the implementation of this project and officially submitted to scientific journals for publication.
- ✓ Brochures / Acipenseridae species field guide and Posters on sturgeon have been published and communicated to all key stakeholders, volunteers and wide public.
- ✓ Capacity of relevant Government representatives has been built through trainings which will contribute to strengthening monitoring and halt poaching on the Acipenseridae species.
- ✓ The final recommendations on the current / updated status of the priority Acipenseridae species have been developed and submitted to the relevant governmental institutions and IUCN Southern Caucasus Programme Office based in Tbilisi, Georgia.



**In addition to the planned outputs**, two additional and very important activities were implemented in the frame of the given project:

- ✓ The concept for captive breeding of sturgeons in Georgia has been developed

**AND**

- ✓ The Guideline for the expansion of Kolkheti National Park has been developed. At the moment area of this National Park is **45,446.40 ha** from which 29,704.40 ha is terrestrial and 15, 742 ha is marine. The suggested expansion is aimed to protect the main area for sturgeons breeding and feeding.

*Were any outputs unrealized? If so, how has this affected the overall impact of the project?*

N/A

## V. SAFEGUARD POLICY ASSESSMENTS

*Provide a summary of the implementation of any required action toward the environmental and social safeguard policies within the project.*

N/A

## VI. LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE PROJECT

*Describe any lessons learned during the various phases of the project. Consider lessons both for future projects, as well as for CEPF's future performance.*

The main lesson is to have very close and open cooperation with key stakeholders, including governmental people and locals, and partners.

*Project Design Process: (aspects of the project design that contributed to its success/failure)*

The project has been initially properly planned with its logical steps, like

- ✓ Scientific research
- ✓ Updating population status
- ✓ Illegal market research
- ✓ Involvement of locals and volunteers in the processes
- ✓ Training of volunteers and governmental officials
- ✓ Development of National Conservation Action Plan

Such logical planning contributed to the successful implementation of the project.

*Project Execution: (aspects of the project execution that contributed to its success/failure)*

There are two key aspects in this regard:

- ✓ Involvement of all leading experts / scientists working in the field ``sturgeon studies``
- ✓ Close and open cooperation with locals who knows in details what is going on the ground in reality.

**VII. ADDITIONAL FUNDING**

*Provide details of any additional donors who supported this project and any funding secured for the project as a result of the CEPF grant or success of the project.*

| <b>Donor</b>   | <b>Type of Funding*</b> | <b>Amount in USD</b> | <b>Notes</b>  |
|--|-------------------------|----------------------|---|
| Ecological Inspection of the Ministry of Environment Protection and Natural Resources of Georgia | B                       | 1863                 | They financed travel and accommodation of their staff to participate in the trainings organized in the frame of this project. |

*\*Additional funding should be reported using the following categories:*

- A Project co-financing (Other donors contribute to the direct costs of this CEPF project)*
- B Complementary funding (Other donors contribute to partner organizations that are working on a project linked with this CEPF project)*
- C Grantee and Partner leveraging (Other donors contribute to your organization or a partner organization as a direct result of successes with this CEPF project.)*
- D Regional/Portfolio leveraging (Other donors make large investments in a region because of CEPF investment or successes related to this project.)*

*Provide details of whether this project will continue in the future and if so, how any additional funding already secured or fundraising plans will help ensure its sustainability.*

As a result of the given / CEPF-funded project, there are many interesting ideas and proposals to implement real conservation activities for sturgeon, however no funds secured to date. However there are perspectives for additional funding.

**VIII. ADDITIONAL COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is important to contribute to sustainability of the project results and also, make fundraising for follow-up activities which are crucial for sturgeon conservation in future

**IX. INFORMATION SHARING**

CEPF is committed to transparent operations and to helping civil society groups share experiences, lessons learned and results. One way we do this is by making programmatic project

documents available on our Web site, [www.cepf.net](http://www.cepf.net), and by marketing these in our newsletter and other communications.

These documents are accessed frequently by other CEPF grantees, potential partners, and the wider conservation community.

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