

Small Grants – Final Completion and Impact Report

Instructions: CEPF requires that each grantee report on project results and impacts at the end of their grant. To monitor CEPF’s global indicators, CEPF will aggregate the data that you submit with data from other grantees, to determine the overall impact of CEPF investment. The aggregated results of all grantees will be reported on in our annual impact report and other communications materials. Your Final Completion and Impact Report will be posted on the CEPF website.

Ensure that the information provided pertains to the entire project, from start date to project end date.

Please complete all fields and respond to all questions listed below.

Organisation Legal Name: Montenegrin Ecologists Society

Project Title: *Contribution to the future protection and management of priority areas for the protection of the Nikšić Catchment Area, Montenegro*

Grant Number: CEPF-113768

Date of Completion of this Report: 8th February 2024

CEPF Hotspot: Mediterranean Basin Hotspot

Strategic Direction: 2: Support the sustainable management of water catchments through integrated approaches for the conservation of threatened freshwater biodiversity

Grant Amount: 19.873 US\$

Project Dates: 01.12.2022. - 31.12.2023.

PART I: Overview

1. Implementation Partners for this Project (*list each partner and explain how they were involved in the project*)

Croatian Institute for Biological Diversity - involved in the development of the project idea, part of the research and inventarisation of ichthyofauna (ichthyofauna sampling, field tour, taxonomic processing of material, ichthyological).

The NGO Rural Urban / Volim Danilovgrad (VD), acting as a project partner, played a crucial role and made a significant contribution by providing support in organising an educational camp for children on the banks of the River Zeta. Due to their extensive experience, they ensured that all logistical aspects of the camp were taken care of, with special attention given to food preparation for the children. Additionally, their expertise in safety protocols and risk management ensured that the campsite was secure and conducive to a positive learning environment. Through their unwavering dedication and

commitment, Rural Urban / VD elevated the overall experience of the camp, leaving a lasting impact on the children as well as organisers.

NGO The Society of Young Ecologists - Nikšić, a local organisation that contributed to communication and connection with local institutions and schools.

2. Summarize the overall results of your project

Conducted a comprehensive ichthyofauna survey and cave study in the Zeta River vicinity, producing significant ecological data over two research phases.

Accomplished specialised training in electrofishing for 2 young researchers, enhancing local research capacity.

Successful organisation of a five-day educational camp for 16 children, raising awareness about local biodiversity.

The "Fish of the Zeta River" publication has been translated into English, increasing international accessibility. It is available on the MES website through the following link:

<https://drustvoekologa.me/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/Fish-of-the-Zeta-River-1-1.pdf>

Drafted a strategic policy document recommending protection measures for key fish species of the Zeta River.

Results of the project have been sent to the IUCN Freshwater fish expert group.

3. Briefly describe actual progress towards each planned long-term and short-term impact (as stated in the approved proposal)

List each long-term impact from your proposal

a. Planned Long-term Impacts - 3+ years (as stated in the approved proposal)

Impact Description	Impact Summary
Establishment of the protected natural resource Gornja Zeta at the national and international level (nature park, Natura 2000 area, Ramsar area) with sustainable management of freshwater ecosystems of the Upper Zeta River.	The results obtained during the previous CEPF project <i>“Updating the conservation status of important fish species and introducing the local community to the values of the freshwater ecosystem of the unique karst field of the CMZ in the vicinity of Nikšić”</i> were used during the Emerald Green seminar organised by the non-governmental organisation CEE Bankwatch Network (December 2022), at the beginning of this project. At the seminar, based on data on ichthyofauna, the Zeta River was proposed as a potential Emerald area to the decision makers, such as EPA. The data from this project was sent to Bankwatch to be used in similar seminars in future.

<p>Contribution to the creation of the first Red List of fish of Montenegro</p>	<p>The findings have facilitated the crucial process of creating Montenegro's inaugural red list of fish, a significant step in conservation efforts. At the suggestion of the MES team and BIOTA, project partner, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) decided to establish a national red list for fish. Our partners at BIOTA were also approached to provide their offer as leads, which they did, and they were selected amongst other applicants. Dušan Jelić as a representative of BIOTA is now working on the first Red List of fish in Montenegro.</p> <p>On the other hand, results of the project have been sent to the IUCN Freshwater fish expert group.</p>
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b. Planned Short-term Impacts - 1 to 3 years (as stated in the approved proposal)

Impact Description	Impact Summary
<p>At the end of the project, basis for the understanding and protection of the ichthyofauna and speleofauna is highly enriched by the data collected in 5 localities in Nikšić field, on basis of which measures for the protection, management and improvement of the populations of these species have been designed</p>	<p>Impact Summary: Field research was conducted, and comprehensive data was collected to create a detailed report. Moreover, a research abstract based on the project's findings has been approved, with the project results slated for presentation at the upcoming Free Flow Conference in Groningen, Netherlands, from 15th to 17th April 2024. Programme: https://freeflowconference.eu/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/Free-Flow-Conference-Programme.pdf.</p>
<p>At the end of the project, the capacity of the ichthyological community in Montenegro was increased by the training and certification of 3 young ichthyological researchers for conducting electrofishing research techniques and the increased knowledge of 15 school children about the fauna in the Nikšić field</p>	<p>Two young researchers were successfully trained in ichthyological research over a two-day program, encompassing theoretical and practical aspects, culminating in certification. Both researchers have gotten a Certificate of passed training programme, as well as are invited to participate in future research of Biota from Croatia, in order to continue raising their knowledge and expertise in ichthyology. Both researchers already applied to scientific camps that will be organised in Montenegro by Taxon Expeditions this July 2024, and one of the researchers will be employed by MES.</p>

Decision makers at the local and national level recognized the importance of preserving and protection of Gornja Zeta	Local and national decision makers have duly acknowledged the significance of conserving and safeguarding Gornja Zeta, signifying a crucial step in promoting conservation efforts, especially Environmental Protection Agency and Municipality of Nikšić, but also Ministry of ecology, spatial planning and urbanism. Municipality of Danilovgrad is also interested to join their protected area of Lower Zeta with the Upper Zeta.
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4. Were there any unexpected impacts (positive or negative)?

The third member who was supposed to attend the ichthyology training is a representative of the Environmental Protection Agency, who canceled his attendance at the last minute due to last minute obligations.

PART II: Project Products/Deliverables

5. List each product/deliverable as stated in your approved proposal and describe the results for each of them:

#	Deliverable Description	Deliverable Update
	<i>Updated database for ichthyofauna and speleofauna, with a special focus on researching localities for Olm (Proteus anguinus) and cave species</i>	Research permits were obtained from the Environmental Protection Agency and the Ministry of Water Management, Forestry, and Water Management, enabling the comprehensive execution of the study. The research, conducted in cooperation with Biota doo from Croatia and led by Dušan Jelić, focused on various locations, including springs, caves, and streams. The research was conducted in two cycles, with the first research cycle taking place in August, followed by the second in November. An abstract for a scientific paper was submitted and has been accepted for presentation at the Freeflow conference in April 2024.

	<p>At least 3 persons qualified for independent scientific and research work in the field.</p>	<p>Two participants, Jovana Đokić and Aleksandar Kovačević, successfully completed a comprehensive two-day electrofishing training course in basic and intermediate levels, conducted on November 15th, 2023, in Podgorica, Montenegro. The course was aimed at providing concise guidance on selecting fishing equipment and adjusting electrofishing settings to achieve an optimal balance between effective capture and fish welfare within varying ecological conditions. Furthermore, both participants received a Letter of Attendance and a comprehensive Electric Fishing Handbook. This training equipped them with essential skills necessary for independent scientific and research work in the field, particularly in ecological assessments and data collection related to electrofishing operations.</p>
	<p>Students from at least 3 elementary schools from the territory of the CZM basin in the vicinity of Nikšić were educated about the values of biodiversity of this area</p>	<p>An educational camp was organized from June 22 to 26, 2023, at the Aquarius camp in the Zeta River area to educate students from at least 3 elementary schools within the CZM basin near Nikšić. The camp welcomed 16 children (8 boys and 8 girls) from 5 different elementary schools, ages 9 to 13. Throughout the camp, 7 different workshops were conducted, providing a platform for the children to learn about various topics related to nature protection and the values of biodiversity in the area.</p>

	<p>Strengthened cooperation with institutions in the field of nature protection</p>	<p>During the project, we worked to reinforce partnerships with key environmental institutions. In February, we met with Tamara Brajović, a representative from the Ministry of Ecology, Spatial Planning, and Urbanism, where we presented the preceding phase's outcomes and introduced plans for the upcoming project. Further, in January, we engaged with Milan Gazdić, director of Environmental Protection Agency, to share our project results and outline the next phase's activities. It was mutually agreed that the Environmental Protection Agency would participate in our research initiatives and electrofishing training. Regrettably, the agency's representative was unable to attend the training due to personal circumstances.</p>
	<p>Agreed strategic plan</p>	<p>To ensure long-term vision and alignment, we undertook a thorough strategic planning process. Expert Goran Đurović was enlisted to spearhead the development of the plan. This included the preparation of targeted questionnaires for MES members and associates, with their responses providing vital insights. Subsequently, comprehensive two-day workshops were convened, bringing together MES team members and the expert for joint strategic plan development. Leveraging the workshop outcomes and questionnaire findings, we collaborated with the consultant to craft the organization's inaugural strategic plan, marking a significant milestone in our forward trajectory.</p>

6. Please describe and submit any tools, products, or methodologies that resulted from this project or contributed to the results.

1. Field Research Report: A comprehensive report detailing the findings and data obtained during the field research, showcasing the insights gathered from the ichthyofauna and cave objects in the Zeta River area. Report is available on MES website, through the following link:

https://drustvoekologa.me/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/BIOTA-final-report_2023-1.pdf

2. Measures to Protect Key Fish Species: The project also resulted in the formulation of specific measures designed to safeguard crucial fish species in the upper reaches of the Zeta River, which is imperative for the preservation of the area's biodiversity.

3. Translation of "Fish of the Zeta River" Publication into English: As part of the project, the publication created within the previous project on this topic, "Fish of the Zeta River" was translated into English, enabling wider accessibility and dissemination of knowledge about the river's fish species internationally. Translated version is available here: <https://drustvoekologa.me/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/Fish-of-the-Zeta-River-1-1.pdf>

4. Strategic Plan: The development of the organisation's strategic plan was a significant output, providing a structured roadmap for future initiatives and ensuring alignment with our long-term objectives.

PART III: Lessons, Sustainability, Safeguards and Financing

Lessons Learned

7. Describe any lessons learned during the design and implementation of the project, as well as any related to organisational development and capacity building.

“Lessons learned” are experiences you have gained that you think would be valuable successes worth replicating or practices that you would do differently if you had the chance. Consider lessons that would inform project design and implementation, and any other lessons relevant to the conservation community. CEPF Lessons Learned Guidelines are available here:

<https://www.cepf.net/sites/default/files/cepf-lessons-learned-guidelines-english.pdf>.

Important lesson learned during the project was the significance of effective communication with the university and academic community, even after obtaining all necessary permits and informing the relevant institutions. Despite having obtained all required permits and notified the pertinent institutions, there was a degree of dissatisfaction and opposition from the university and academic community. This experience emphasised that merely fulfilling formal and legal requirements is insufficient. It underscored the importance of actively involving and engaging with the academic community in future research endeavours. This aspect is crucial for establishing successful partnerships and garnering community support.

Sustainability / Replication

8. Summarise the success or challenges in ensuring the project will be sustained or replicated, including any unplanned activities that are likely to result in increased sustainability or replicability.

Identified opportunities for local stakeholders to take on monitoring and conservation roles, thereby increasing the project's sustainability. Thanks to this project, the initial research of fish groups, particularly cave species, which were previously poorly understood, has commenced. The research conducted by BIOTA, equipped with innovative technology, represents a pioneering effort in this region. The involvement of participants in electrofishing ensures that Montenegro will have ongoing efforts in addressing these ecological challenges, crucial given the limited capacities in this field. Moreover, the project has sparked the interest of one participant to further study and explore the karst landscapes, caves, and their flora in Nikšić karst field. This has led to the inception of a new project aimed at continuing the exploration of the rich karst ecosystem, an area of significant importance yet often overlooked.

Safeguards

9. If not listed as a separate Deliverable and described above, summarise the implementation of any required action related to social or environmental safeguards that your project may have triggered.

N/A

Additional Funding

10. Provide details of any additional funding that you have secured to support this project.

a. Total additional funding (US\$)

US117\$

b. Type of funding

Please provide a breakdown of additional funding (counterpart funding and in-kind) by source.

Donor	Type of Funding	Amount
Montenegrin Ecologists Society	counterpart	117

Additional Comments/Recommendations

11. Use this space to provide any further comments or recommendations in relation to your project or CEPF.

The Catchment management zone basin in the vicinity of Nikšić should also include the lower Zeta basin, which is incomparably greater in terms of biodiversity. Although this area is protected by national legislation, it is under a lot of pressure. Only as a unique natural flow that is monitored over the entire surface can it give long-term results, ie the KBA should be expanded due to the integral monitoring and

improvement of the catchment area. This is significantly important due to the fact that all threats and activities occurring in the upper basin of the River Zeta have an impact on the ecosystem downstream. At the end, we believe that conservation efforts in this whole area must persist, especially considering the substantial threats, one of which is the proposed project to divert waters from the upper reaches of the Zeta River, redirecting them for increased energy production at the Perućica Hydroelectric Power Plant.¹

PART IV: Impact at Portfolio and Global Level

Contribution to Portfolio Indicators

- 12.** In order to measure the results of CEPF investment strategy at the hotspot level, CEPF uses a set of Portfolio Indicators which are presented in the Ecosystem Profile of each hotspot. Please list these below and report on the project's contribution(s) to them.

Indicator	Actual Numeric Contribution	Actual Contribution Description
5.2_Outcome 5_Number of Regional thematic experience-sharing events	1	Montenegrin Ecologists Society participated in the Emerald Green seminar organised by the non-governmental organisation CEE Bankwatch Network (December 2022), at the beginning of this project. At the seminar, based on data on ichthyofauna, the Zeta River was proposed as a potential Emerald area to the decision makers, such as EPA. The data from this project was sent to Bankwatch to be used in similar seminars in future.

Contribution to Global Indicators

Please report on all Global Indicators that pertain to your project.

13. Benefits to Individuals

13a. Number of men and women receiving structured training.

¹ <https://epa.org.me/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/SPU-Slano-i-krupac-Inovirano-sep-2020-final.pdf>

Report on the number of men and women that have benefited from structured training due to your project, such as financial management, beekeeping, horticulture, farming, biological surveys, or how to conduct a patrol.

# of men receiving structured training *	# of women receiving structured training *	Topic(s) of Training
1	1	Ichtiology and electrofishing
8	8	Educational camp for children on the banks of the River Zeta, learning about biodiversity and ecosystem services.
9	9	Total:18

**Please do not count the same person more than once. For example, if 5 men received structured training in beekeeping, and 3 of these also received structured training in project management, the total number of men who benefited from structured training should be 5.*

13b. Number of men and women receiving cash benefits.

Report on the number of men and women that had an increase in income or cash (monetary) benefits due to your project from activities such as tourism, handicraft production, increased farm output, increased fishery output, medicinal plant harvest, or payment for conducting patrols.

# of men receiving cash benefits*	# of women receiving cash benefits*	Description of Benefits
0	0	0

**Please do not count the same person more than once. For example, if 5 men received cash benefits due to tourism, and 3 of these also received cash benefits from increased income due to handicrafts, the total number of men who received cash benefits should be 5.*

14. Protected Areas

Number of hectares of protected areas created and/or expanded

Report on the number of hectares of protected areas that have been created or expanded as a result of your project. Protected areas may include private or community reserves, municipal or provincial parks, or other designations where biodiversity conservation is an official management goal.

Name of PA*	Country(s)	Original # of Hectares**	# of Hectares Newly Protected	Year of Legal Declaration/ Expansion	Longitude***	Latitude***
N/A						

15. Key Biodiversity Area Management

Number of hectares of Key Biodiversity Areas (KBA) with improved management

Report on the number of hectares in KBAs with improved management, where tangible results have been achieved to support conservation, as a result of your project. Examples of improved management include, but are not restricted to: increased patrolling, reduced intensity of snaring, invasive species eradication, reduced incidence of fire, and introduction of sustainable agricultural/fisheries practices. Do not record the entire area covered by the project - only record the number of hectares that have improved management.

If you have recorded part or all of a KBA as newly protected for the indicator entitled “protected areas”, and you have also improved its management, you should record the relevant number of hectares for both this indicator and the “protected areas” indicator.

Name of KBA	KBA Code from Ecosystem Profile	# of Hectares Improved *
N/A		

16. Production landscapes

Number of hectares of production landscape with strengthened management of biodiversity

Please report on the number of hectares of production landscapes with strengthened management of biodiversity, as a result of your project. A production landscape is defined as a landscape where commercial agriculture, forestry or natural product exploitation occurs.

- For an area to be considered as having "strengthened management of biodiversity," it can benefit from a wide range of interventions such as best practices and guidelines implemented, incentive schemes introduced, sites/products certified, and sustainable harvesting regulations introduced.
- Areas that are protected are not included under this indicator, because their hectares are counted elsewhere.
- A Production Landscape can include part or all of an unprotected KBA.

Name of Production Landscape*	# of Hectares with Strengthened Management**	Latitude***	Longitude***	Description of Intervention
N/A				

17. Benefits to Communities

CEPF wants to record the non-cash benefits received by communities, which can differ to those received by individuals because the benefits are available to a group. CEPF also wants to record, to the extent possible, the number of people within each community who are benefiting. Please report on the characteristics of the communities, the type of benefits that have been received during the project, and

the number of men/boys and women/girls from these communities that have benefited, as a result of your project. If exact numbers are not known, please provide an estimate.

Please provide information for all communities that have benefited from project start to project completion.

Name of Community	Community Characteristics (mark with x)							Country of Community	Type of Benefit (mark with x)								# of Beneficiaries				
	Small landowners	Subsistence economy	Indigenous/ ethnic peoples	Pastoralists / nomadic peoples	Recent migrants	Urban communities	Other*		Increased access to clean water	Increased food security	Increased access to energy	Increased access to public services (e.g. health, education)	Increased resilience to climate change	Improved land tenure	Improved recognition of traditional knowledge	Improved representation and decision-making	Improved access to ecosystem services	# of men and boys benefiting	# of women and girls benefiting		
Nikšić municipality	x					x		Montenegro											x	18	15

*If you marked “Other” to describe the community characteristic, please explain:

8 boys and 8 girls from 5 different elementary schools, ages 9 to 13, mainly from Nikšić municipality participated in the educative camp in nature, next to the Zeta river, where they learned in nature about ecosystem services. Land owner of the camp as well as the land owner of the camp next to the one where we had our camp were also participating in some of the workshops and understood better the nature on their land, and how to show it to tourists who come to camp there.

One female and one male participant, recent students of faculty of Biology, participated in the comprehensive two-day electrofishing training course in basic and intermediate levels. This was an important step in their careers if they continue with their efforts of becoming future experts in Montenegro on fish, which are certainly lacking.

Local community was reached during the fieldwork research, where we had to visit a lot of wells or ask for guidance from the locals to show us the entrances of certain caves. Some of them followed us on our fieldwork visits, curious to learn about our research on their land.

18. Policies, Laws and Regulations

Report on policies, laws and regulations with conservation provisions that have been enacted or amended, as a result of your project. “Policies” pertain to statements of intent formally adopted or pursued by a government, including at sectoral or sub-national level. “Laws and regulations” pertain to official rules or orders, prescribed by authority. Any law, regulation, decree or order is eligible to be included.

N/A

19. Biodiversity-friendly Practices

Number of companies that adopt biodiversity-friendly practices

Please list any companies that have adopted biodiversity-friendly practices as a result of your project. While companies take various forms, for the purposes of CEPF, a company is defined as a for-profit business entity. A biodiversity-friendly practice is one that conserves or uses natural resources in a sustainable manner.

No.	Name of Company	Description of biodiversity-friendly practice adopted during the project	Country(s) where the practice has been adopted by the company
1	N/A		

20. Networks & Partnerships

Number of networks and/or partnerships created and/or strengthened

Report on any networks or partnerships between and among civil society groups and other sectors that you have created or strengthened as a result of your project. Networks/partnerships should have some lasting benefit beyond immediate project implementation. Informal networks/partnerships are acceptable. Examples of networks/partnerships include: an alliance of fisherfolk to promote sustainable fisheries practices, a network of environmental journalists, a partnership between one or more NGOs with one or more private sector partners to improve biodiversity management on private lands, or a working group focusing on reptile conservation.

Do not list the partnerships you formed with others to implement this project, unless these partnerships will continue after your project ends.

No.	Name of Network / Partnership	Year established	Did your project establish this Network/ Partnership? Y/N	Country(s) covered	Purpose
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1	Association of Young Ecologists of Niksic	2016	N	Montenegro	During the project, our collaboration with this organization was strengthened to protect the upper Zeta. We plan to continue working together on activities aimed at preserving this important area.
2	Green Home	2016	N	Montenegro	Collaboration with this organization was strengthened during the project to protect the upper Zeta. Our ongoing cooperation will focus on activities for the continued protection of this area in the future.
3	CEE Bankwatch Network	2016	N	Bankwatch has 15 member groups in 13 countries in central and eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Russia.	Collaboration during the workshop webinar about establishment of Emerald sites on the basis of fish fauna. MES was contact for Montenegro. Thanks to the data gathered in the first project about Lower Zeta, Zeta river has been suggested to be added as Emerald candidate for MNE. This webinar was held during this project, and data gathered through this project were sent to Bankwatch for future Zeta analysis. MES then worked closely with Bankwatch for preparing shadow report on Morača as Emerald site, but for another project.

21. Sustainable Financing Mechanism

List any functioning sustainable financing mechanisms created or supported by your project. Sustainable financing mechanisms generate funding for the long-term (generally five or more years). These include, but are not limited to, conservation trust funds, debt-for-nature swaps, payment for ecosystem service (PES) schemes, and other revenue, fee or tax schemes that generate long-term funding for conservation. To be included, a mechanism must be delivering funds for conservation.

21a. Details about the mechanism

No.	Name of Financing Mechanism	Purpose of the Mechanism*	Date of Establishment**	Description***	Countries
1	N/A				

21b. Performance of the mechanism

For each Financing Mechanism listed previously, please provide the requested information in accordance with its assigned number.

22. Red List Species

If the project included direct conservation interventions that benefited globally threatened species (CR, EN, VU), as per the IUCN Red List, add the species below.

Examples of interventions include: preparation or implementation of a conservation action plan, captive breeding programs, species habitat protection, species monitoring, patrolling to halt wildlife trafficking, and removal of invasive species.

Genus	Species	Common Name (Eng)	Status (VU, EN, CR or Extinct in the Wild)	Intervention	Population Trend at Site (increasing, decreasing, stable or unknown)
Gobio	Gobio skadarensis	Skadar gudgeon	EN	Species monitoring and revision of the IUCN assessment	Unknown
Anguilla	Anguilla anguilla	European eel	CR	Species monitoring and revision of the IUCN assessment	decreasing
Chondrostoma	Chondrostoma ohridanum	Common nase	VU	Species monitoring and revision of the IUCN assessment	Unknown
Salmo	Salmothymus obtusirostris spp. zetensis	Adriatic trout,	EN	Species monitoring and revision of the IUCN assessment	decreasing

Part V. Information Sharing and CEPF Policy

CEPF is committed to transparent operations and to helping civil society groups share experiences, lessons learned, and results. Final completion and impact reports are made available on our Web site, www.cepf.net, and publicised in our e-newsletter and other communications.

Provide the contact details of your organisation (organisation name and generic email address) so that interested parties can request further information about your project.

Organization Name: Montenegrin Ecologists Society

Generic email address: drustvoekologa@gmail.com