



Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve Authority



Regional initiative on Black Sea Coastal Wetlands - BlackSeaWet

Working Plan for 2010

1. Background

Coastal wetlands in the Black Sea include a wide variety of habitats and flora and fauna species. 2,486,372 ha of Black Sea coastal wetlands are considered to be of national and international importance and 35 sites totaling 1,953,576 ha, are designated as Ramsar sites. These ecosystems provide important services and benefits to people that have economic value. They also have a vital role in ensuring the health of the Black Sea itself, buffering it from some of the upstream impacts of agriculture, industry, forestry and urbanization and providing habitats that are important to the life cycle of many of the species living there. Despite the clear importance to biodiversity and benefits to people, Black Sea coastal wetlands have been seriously degraded in recent years. This has been related to unsustainable industry, agriculture, aquaculture, silviculture, navigation and tourism related practices. The result is that many Black Sea coastal wetlands are no longer able to perform their natural functions and is denying local people access to the resources that they use in their day to day lives.

The geographical focus of BlackSeaWet regional initiative is represented by the Black Sea coastal countries. The need for the Initiative is well supported by Contracting Parties in the region. For today, 5 of them - Bulgaria, Georgia, Romania, Turkey and Ukraine have supported the initiative. It is expected that in future Russian Federation also will join to BlackSeaWet regional initiative.

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2. The Vision of BlackSeaWet Initiative

The overall aim of new regional initiative – BlackSeaWet is to catalyze the conservation and sustainable development of Black Sea coastal wetlands. Wetland wise use and conservation has been initiated in the region for many years through various unrelated regional and national activities. A Regional Initiative will stimulate and coordinate cooperation around coastal wetlands issues in the region, acting as a means to address regional issues, share knowledge and expertise to address shared issues amongst different countries and stakeholders in the region and stimulate the development of capacity to address them. The issues require a multi-stakeholder approach that engages with government, civil society and increasingly the private sector. The Regional Initiative will undertake to bring these parties together. The BlackSeaWet Initiative will strongly promote the goals of the Ramsar Strategic Plan 2009-14. Of the five main goals, the Initiative will strongly contribute to the realization of 1-4 (the fifth not being relevant in the region as all countries are already Contracting Parties):

Goal 1. Wise use: Promotion of the wise use of coastal wetlands is a key focus of BlackSeaWet. Territorial spatial planning, water resource management, river basin and coastal zone management, agricultural management, and sustainable management of economic activities and other decisions affecting wetlands all need to take more account of wise use. Furthermore fully recognizing the values and functions of wetlands, including the wide range of social benefits and cultural significance embodied in them, particularly for people directly dependent upon wetlands are also an important part of BlackSeaWet. Regional cooperation will enable sharing and the development of new approaches / experiences.

Goal 2. Wetlands of International Importance: Although many of the major Black Sea coastal wetland are listed, maintenance of the ecological character of Ramsar sites is one of the most important and difficult tasks for today. Facilitation of information exchange and stimulation of monitoring of ecological characteristic of coastal wetlands are important parts of BSW.

Goal 3. International cooperation: Sound International cooperation is a crucial part of BSW. It is planned to bring a new level of cooperation between all the main stakeholders in the region related to coastal wetlands management, conservation and research. In addition cooperation on specific issues that confront the region's wetlands and species such as pollution from the Black Sea, the conservation of migratory water bird species and avian influenza will be important foci of the Initiative.

Goal 4. Institutional capacity and effectiveness: BlackSeaWet will build the regional capacity to implement the Convention focusing on enhanced CEPA activities to catalyze implementation of wise use. A strong emphasis will be placed on engaging civil society and strengthening their engagement in planning and decision making processes. Furthermore fundraising will be a key area with a strong emphasis on engaging the EU through its Nearest Neighbor Programme and the developing Black Sea Synergy Initiative to develop a major regional wetlands focused initiative.

In 20 years time the coastal wetlands of the Black Sea and Azov Sea will be sustainably used, with healthy ecosystems that provide the basis for conservation of wetland dependent biodiversity and support services for people throughout the entire area.

3. BlackSeaWet strategic objective

The overall aim of new regional initiative – BlackSeaWet is to catalyze the conservation and sustainable development of Black Sea coastal wetlands.

Key strategic targets will be to:

- Stop the loss and degradation of wetlands and their biodiversity by 2020;
- Ensure wise use principles are integrated into coastal zone development;
- Engage local people in planning and decision-making;
- Complete the ecological network around the Black and Azov Sea coasts;
- Combine wetland conservation in integrated water resource management and integrated coastal zone management approaches;
- Mainstream wetland conservation in sectors whose activities are contributing to degradation.

The first meeting of the Management Body elected Mr. Grigore Baboianu as Chairman of the Management Body.

4. The work plan for the 2010

The work plan for 2010 has, as starting point, the first meeting of the Management Body of the Initiative in February 2010. Presently the Ministries and non-governmental organizations designated their representatives in the Management Body. Part of the 2009 objectives and activities will continue in 2010 as the Initiative was delayed due to organization setbacks.

4.1. Establishing of the Coordination Unit

Romania offered to establish the Coordinating Unit at the DDBRA for 2010. They would consult NGOs about the participation in the Coordinating Unit.

4.2. Formalizing the National Working Groups

During 2010, National Working Groups should be established as far as it is possible in each country for the implementation of BlackSeaWet. The NWG will provide their input for the Coordination Unit.

4.3 Action Plan for 2011 - 2015

- Wetlands International to send to the Coordination Unit a general structure
- Coordination Unit to send this structure to all members
- NWG to provide their input to the structure to the Coordination Unit

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- Coordination Unit to submit for approval to the next meeting of Management Body

4.4. Creation of a structure of reporting on the overview of current status wetlands international importance in Black Sea coastal area, their trends and possibility for development of network of Ramsar sites in the region

The Coordination Unit should make contact with the Mediterranean Wetlands Observatory to clarify the suitability of their methodology for BlackSeaWet and report to the next meeting of the Management Body.

4.5 Compiling existing GIS maps of coastal Black Sea wetlands

Send existing GIS maps to DDBRA for eventually posting on the BlackSeaWet website.

4.6 Conducting of overview of current status of International Waterfowl Census and possibility to develop census of migratory water birds

Wetlands International will use the opportunity of ongoing projects in Black Sea region to prepare an overview of current status of IWC in the region, print it and disseminate among participants of BlackSeaWet

4.7. Conducting CEPA related activities

Communication, education and public awareness (CEPA) activities have been recognized as being of key importance to implementing the BlackSeaWet Initiative. They offer structured opportunities for all BlackSeaWet members and partners to be involved in planning, implementation and review of the activities and facilitate exchange between the Ramsar Secretariat and the Initiative participants.

Raising public awareness on wetlands conservation and development of communication and collaboration are among the top priorities for the BlackSeaWet Initiative. The targets of the Initiative will require a strong commitment to CEPA activities.

Integrated approaches to river and coastal zone management are identified as a key target and will require activities to raise awareness at all levels from local to Ministerial on the importance of these approaches.

A second target is the involvement of local people in planning and decision making; this will require intensive CEPA activities at local levels and the communication of the results to regional stakeholders to promote learning and replication across the region. It is anticipated that support for Ramsar's CEPA objectives will be strengthened in a number of areas.

4.7.1 The main objectives of the CEPA activities are:

- Improvement of the flow of important and useful information related to the BlackSeaWet Initiative activities and development among all parties involved in the structure and operation of the Initiative;
- Ensuring adequate communication within the BlackSeaWet Initiative and its coherent visibility and image promotion;
- improvement in stakeholders' knowledge of the value of wetlands for people ;
- encouragement of school students to study the coastal wetlands;
- promotion of environmental education for decision makers and managers;
- development of educational centers for coastal wetlands;
- inclusion of the coastal wetlands protection subject in the visitors' centers programme.

4.7.2 The main objectives will be addressed by the following activities:

4.7.2.1. BlackSeaWet website

The website of the Initiative will be created by the Coordination Unit, containing all necessary information. The website will be updated regularly. All important activities and milestones of the Initiative will be available on this website: first meeting of the Management Body, Action Plan of the Initiative, Work Plan for the current year, information about National Working Groups and Interim Coordination Unit and any other information about the projects of the Initiative.

4.7.2.2. Leaflet for the promotion of BlackSeaWet Initiative

A general information leaflet (draft) will be prepared by the Coordination Unit for adoption by the Management Body in order to inform the public about the Initiative and the actions for the coastal wetlands conservation. With the help of the members the draft leaflet text will be translated into members' languages. They should also provide photos prior to the next meeting of the Management Body.

In addition to the information provided by the website, these materials will be disseminated through visitor's centers and other partner institutions.

The goal is to raise public awareness among children and students on the importance of conserving the coastal wetlands and their ecological status. The activities must not only inform, but also to encourage an attitude that influences positively the coastal wetlands.

The National Working Groups are encouraged to produce additional materials and to send them to the Management Body in order to be used on a larger scale.

4.7.2.3. Celebration of international days related to the Black Sea wetlands:

- **World Wetlands Day (the 2nd of February)**

- **International Black Sea Day (the 31st of October)**

These activities provide an occasion to celebrate the ways in which wetlands enrich our lives. On these days, a number of governments, NGOs and environmental associations organize events for the public, including wetlands visits, bird watching trips, film screenings and children's contests. Each member

of the MB will prepare concrete proposals of activities for the celebration of these days.

4.7.2.4. Organization of media releases

Each MB member should plan disseminating information to raise awareness of civil society, government and private sector stakeholders of wetland values and degradation danger.

4.8. Organizing a second Management Body meeting

This action is necessary considering 2 aspects:

- not every partner was able to participate to the first meeting and actively exercise its role;
- a second meeting will help partners reinforce their commitment and also offer the possibility for those who haven't nominated a representative from the beginning.

A face to face meeting will also allow a better evaluation of the situation, better communication and easier decision-making process.

During the first half of October 2010, possibly in the Danube Delta, the second Management Body meeting will be organized.

Agenda points for the second meeting of the Management Body will be the following:

- adopt Rules of Procedures;
- adopt the Work Plan 2011 and budget;
- adopt the Action Plan 2011 – 2015;
- brain-storming session for the Communication Plan;
- adopt the structure of reporting on the overview of current status wetlands international importance in Black Sea coastal area;
- adopt a Logo for the BSW;
- receive and endorse the reports of National Working Groups;
- adopt the structure and content of the BSW website including the content of the general information leaflet;
- adopt rules for accepting the project proposals and labelling the projects that contribute to the BSW Initiative's objectives;
- decide on the date and venue of the next meeting of the Management Body;
- decide on the hosting country for the Coordination Unit for 2011.

4.9. Preparation of several project proposals

Evaluating the projects already implemented in the region whose focal points overlap with the Initiative's objectives. Finding different sources of financing will ensure the self-sustenance of the Initiative. All partners will be involved. Cooperation between different countries in identifying the problems and addressing them by projects initiatives will allow the best ideas to be put in practice. Such ideas and proposals should be submitted to the Management Body in the second meeting.

The Coordination Unit will circulate the draft of the Working Plan 2010 and Terms of Reference to the participants to the first meeting of the Management Body by the end of February, asking for their comments and inputs. After receiving them by mid March, the Coordination Unit will integrate them into the documents and send the final version to all members of the Management Body and other observers.

This document is also to be considered as Minute of the Meeting of the Management Body from Tulcea, 16th-17th of February 2010.

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