

STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN FOR SHKODRA LAKE –AN EXPERIENCE FROM ALBANIAN – MONTENEGRIN TRANSBOUNDARY WATERS

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The Strategic Action Plan (SAP) for Shkodra/Skadar Lake has been prepared within the framework of the preparation of Lake Shkodra Integrated Ecosystem Management Project (LSIEMP), with the support of Global Environmental Facility (GEF), World Bank (WB), Ministry of Environment, Forests and Water Administration of Albania (MEFWA) and the Ministry of Tourism and Environmental Protection of Montenegro (MoTE). The SNV Montenegro has had an important consultative role for the preparation of this SAP through a group of international consultants.

The aim of this SAP is to define actions and projects at local, national and bilateral level in Albania and Montenegro, for improving the environmental management and supporting sustainable economic use of the natural resources of Shkodra Lake and its surrounding areas.

The SAP was prepared by drawing upon, first of all, three documents already developed in preparing the GEF/WB project: Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis (by Royal Haskoning, 2006), the Social Assessments for Montenegro (by CEED, 2006) and the Social Assessment for Albania (by Junge, 2006). Further, existing national and local plans, strategies and documents were reviewed; study tours for gathering experience from other transboundary lake areas (Austria and Hungary) were done; consultations with important stakeholders were held, including local community, local and central government, NGOs, donor organizations and the private sector.

The priority actions of this SAP have been defined within the frame of four main strategic goals:

1) Joint Lake Planning and Management. Its priority operational objectives are: strengthen legal framework and improve law enforcement capacities to regulate and control development activities in the area; strengthening the institutional framework for environmental protection and sustainable development; support joint effective trans-boundary management of the Shkodra Lake protected area.

The main proposed action for realizing these objectives are: support a study to analyze existing legal framework for the management of natural resources in Albania, identify gaps and provide recommendations for improvement; support approximation of legislation between both countries to facilitate joint management of the lake; define and set up working groups for different transboundary activities as zoning, monitoring, tourism, fishing, agriculture, basin management, boating and traffic; establish and support a transboundary management committee; establish a joint secretariat for a) networking and cooperation with ongoing projects to avoid overlapping and gain synergy, b) to identify opportunities and mechanisms to receive funding, c) to create joint research funds based on national, international researches and donations of business sector; develop and establish a joint vision on the Lake Shkodra/Skadar, including issuing a joint Newsletter on conservation activities (three monthly and three lingual – support for 4 years) and the creation and promotion of a common label for the trans-boundary protected area /lake region; explore the importance of potential international designations as international RAMSAR site to promote and develop the protected areas and the lake region; creation of joint management plan for the lake, based on national strategic documents in Montenegro and Albania.

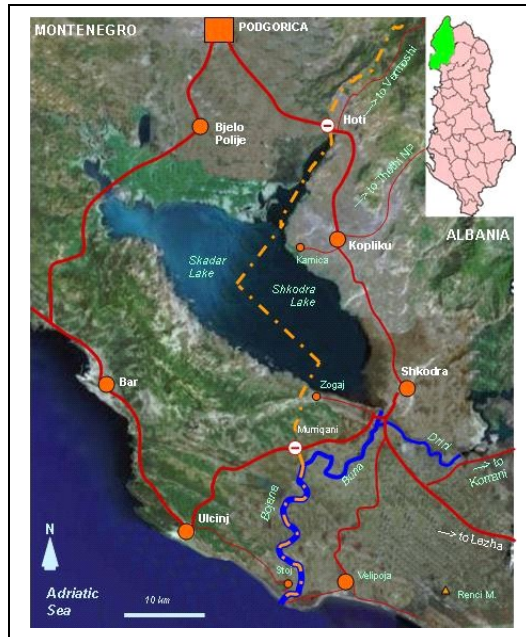


Figure 1: Map of Shkodra Lake and the transboundary wetland area in its watershed.

2) *Monitoring and Research development.* Its priority operational objectives are: establishment of structures and facilities for monitoring and research on the Lake; monitoring of the Lake water quality and water regime; habitat and biodiversity monitoring in and around the Lake; specific research and educational programs; monitoring of socio-economic conditions in the lake area.

The above mentioned objectives could be realized through: establishment of a monitoring unit at Shkodra Lake in Albania; establish automatic monitoring stations for measurements of general physical-chemical elements of the water in accordance with WFD; upgrade the existing biological laboratories for research and monitoring of biodiversity in both countries; setting up an information database and a networked system of monitoring, including software development; preparation of a joint manual for the monitoring program of Lake Shkodra and data distribution; implementation of the monitoring for 4 year, based on monitoring program; monitoring of the vegetation of the lake, focused mostly on macrophytes (map of submerse vegetation); monitoring of the fish population, especially autochthonous species and important species of fish market (carp, eel, bleak, mullet...) and their important habitats for spawning and nursery; monitoring the state of bird populations and their nesting habitats; monitoring the state of rare and endangered species and habitats; implementation of bio-testing to detect environmental threats; develop a study on the water quality of the springs, underground waters and superficial water of the lake and indicate their importance to local communities; periodic studies of trends in local resource use, including the support of a demographic study in Lake area.

3) *Improvement of Protected areas and Natural Resource Management.* Its priority operational objectives are: establish an effective protected area management and zoning system; development of viable and sustainable village economies for local communities; protection, restoration and adaptation of cultural heritage; institutional investment and strengthening of Protected Areas Management; promotion of tourism.

Many actions are required to fulfill the above mentioned objectives, such as: making of a zoning plan, and implement the zoning system (signalization) at the lake; updating or development of the management plans for the protected areas; designing and creating of an administration of the protected area in Albania; develop and/or update regulations and by-laws for the protected area management in Albania; preparation of urban, territorial and development planning for each of the villages around the lake; develop and implement training programs for PA staff; provide equipment for PA staff; improve human capacities of PA in terms of staffing; promotion of village economies based on “wise use” of natural resources; identify and promote pilot projects in commodity chain development that reduce pressure on natural resources and

promote economic development; making of a fishery stock assessment; making of a fishery management plan; identify, define and implement sustainable agricultural pilots in transition zone; inventory of cultural heritage sites and implement pilot projects for their renovations; design and implement pilot projects for improvement of the infrastructure related to tourism development, rehabilitation of damaged natural areas, development of educational and environmental activities, incite local economy development etc.

4) *Realization of Urgent Environmental Investments*. Its priority operational objectives are: prevention of pollution of the lake water and its watershed from a) wastewater, b) solid waste, c) hazardous waste.

The proposed actions for a successful realization of these investments are: waste water treatment of Cetinje municipality and of settlements from around the Lake (Karuc, Vranjina); pilot projects for wastewater treatment using environmental friendly technologies for the touristic buildings (bars, restaurants and hotels) in the areas Shiroke – Zogaj and Shegan; establishment of the wastewater plant of Shkodra; asses the feasibility for introducing wastewater fee to businesses; support for National Park and local municipality in organization of the collection and disposal of solid waste and support activities for cleaning the existing solid wastes along the whole lakeshore; support a project for raising awareness of the local community for the economic benefit (tourism, fishery, agriculture) from reducing and controlling the pollution; establishment of a landfill for the urban wastes of Shkodra and Koplik; inventory of hazardous waste on KAP waste disposal (in Montenegro) and their categorization; project design for hazardous waste disposal in accordance with EU regulations.

First of all, this Strategic Action Plan has shaped and orientated the already approved project “Lake Shkodra Integrated Ecosystem Management Project (LSIEMP)”, which is financed by GEF. The SAP outlines a 10-year plan of actions, which includes both ongoing activities financed by the central and local governments and others (bilateral and multilateral financing institutions, NGOs), as well as activities, which the governments intend to undertake through a combination of budgetary resources and external assistance.

Both sides of the lake, in Montenegro and Albania, have been designated by the respective governments as wetlands of international importance under the Ramsar Convention, and both countries are signatories to a number of relevant international agreements and conventions. Both countries have identified the Lake Shkodra area as a priority for environmental protection, sustainable natural resource management and nature/culture-based tourism development in a number of national and local strategies and plans. This Strategic Action Plan directly supports the realization of these national strategies and plans and fulfillment of these international obligations. The SAP also contributes to the countries common objective of harmonizing policy, legislation and practice with the European Union environmental acquis, particularly the Water Framework Directive, which calls for cooperation in managing transboundary water bodies and resources through a coordinated and integrated watershed level approach.

Major references

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