

LIFE Project No.:
LIFE06 NAT/SK/000114
**Conservation of Senne and Medzibodrozie SPAs
in Slovakia**



FINAL REPORT

Covering the project activities from 15/11/2005 to 14/05/2011

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*Poľovnícke
zdrúženie
Ostrovík*



Senné



Iňačovce



Hažín



Blatná Polianka

Data Project

Project location	Slovak Republic, Administrative region(s) NUTS II Slovakia East, Košice region, Michalovce, Sobrance, Senné and Medzibodrožie SPAs	
Project start date:	15/11/2005	
Project end date:	14/11/2010	Extension date: 14/05/2011
Total Project duration (in months)	60 months	Extension months 6 months
Total budget	1,325,556 €	
EC contribution:	662,778 €	
(%) of total costs	50 %	
(%) of eligible costs	100 %	

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2 List of key-words and abbreviations

Key words:

Slovakia, Senne SPA, Medzibodrozie SPA, birds, restoration, conservation, habitat management, wetlands, Natura 2000

Abbreviations:

AES	Agri–environmental scheme
EFF	European Fisheries Fund
DONA	DONA - The private company farming at Senne fish-ponds
HA	Hunting Association
INEX	International organisation for youth mobility
MoE	Ministry of Environment of Slovak Republic
MoA	Ministry of Agriculture of Slovak Republic
NFM	Norwegian Financial Mechanism
NNR Senné	Senne National Nature Reserve
NSRDP	National Strategic Rural Development Programme
PR	Progress Report
pSCI	Proposed Sites of Community Interest
MTR	Mid-Term Report
SAC	Special Areas of Conservation
SNC	State Nature Conservancy of Slovak Republic
SOVS	Society for the Protection of Birds in Slovakia (SOS/BirdLife Slovakia since August 2006)
SOS/BirdLife Slovakia	Slovak ornithological society / Birdlife Slovakia
SOS	Slovak ornithological society / Birdlife Slovakia
SPA	Special Protection Area
SVP	Slovak Water-Management Company
UNDP/GEF project	GEF- funded project Integration of Ecosystem Management Principles and Practices into Land and Water Management of Laborec-Uh region (Eastern Slovakian Lowlands)

3 Executive Summary

This is the Final Report on the project LIFE 06/NAT/SK/000114 Conservation of Senne and Medzibodrozie SPAs in Slovakia. The Report covers the period from 15/11/2005 to 14/05/2011. It includes description of the activities undertaken within the project span and evaluation of the project results and impact.

The Project objective was to restore favourable conservation status of breeding and migrating birds from Annex I of Birds Directive and regularly migrating bird species in Senne and Medzibodrozie SPAs through securing appropriate habitats in key locations. In order to reach this objective, 33 specific actions were implemented.

The Project preparatory actions started with elaboration of Management Plan for Senne SPA. The draft of the Plan was prepared by the project team and experts involved, the formal approval of the document was not achieved in the project span. Technical projects were elaborated for building of water gates in both project sites and as well as restoration of the dyke in Senne National Nature Reserve. The proposal for Pilot aqua-environmental scheme on fishponds was developed and submitted to Ministry of Agriculture. However, it was not formalised through inclusion into the Operational Program “Fisheries of the Slovak Republic 2007-2013”, neither was it tested by Fish farming company Dona at Senne Fishponds. Procurement of works, goods and services was implemented in accordance with the Procurement Act. Originally foreseen EIA Studies in respect to construction of water management infrastructure were not finally required as confirmed by County Environmental Office in Kosice.

The targeted purchase of 50 hectares of wet meadows important for birds in Senne SPA was exceeded. Total of 54,3731 ha of land was purchased by SOS/BirdLife Slovakia at Ostrovik Meadows

Non-recurring management in the project sites was focused on restoration of water regime and habitats for birds, and on development of the tourist infrastructure. Two larger water gates and three smaller sluices were built in Senne SPA and 2 water gates were built in Medzibodrozie SPA. Water regime was thus improved on 990 ha of wet meadows. Dyke at the Senne NNR was restored and consequently water table level on the pond in the reserve was stabilised at levels favourable for water birds. Improved water level in the NNR positively affected bird habitats and populations including qualifying species of European concern, Two species of European importance, *Grus grus* and *Haliaeetus albicilla*, started to breed first time ever in the NNR. More than 200 ha of meadows and 14,5 ha of wetlands were restored directly through implementing tailored restoration measures. 0,91 ha and 2,17 ha of respectively breeding and feeding habitats were restored in Senne SPA. Restored breeding and feeding habitats in Medzibodrozie SPA totals to 0,3 ha. The small infrastructure that was possible to establish within a framework of the project included, *inter alia*, instructional trail with 13 information boards, 5 bird watching towers, 5 rest places, all in Senne SPA. Complementary to the present Project, in Medzibodrozie SPA, instructional trail, information centre and 2 watching towers were established. Non-recurring management activities in Medzibodrozie SPA were subject of Project modification and mostly were financed through the financial assistance from EEA/Norwegian Financial mechanism that the SNC received for implementing the project “Conservation of diversity of water birds at the Eastern Slovakian Lowland. In this project site, total of 1098 ha of birds habitats was restored.

Recurring management in Senne SPA was focused on maintaining favourable habitats conditions for birds in purchased land at Ostrovik meadow. The effort to launch implementation of aqua-environmental scheme on Senne fish-ponds failed. However, it did not have substantial negative impact on reed and other vegetation at Senne commercial fish ponds.

Public awareness and dissemination of results were ensured through a broad scope of various actions. As much as 35 presentations were presented in local schools and for the public. 24 guided tours and 14 conservation camps were organised in Senne SPA. 56 meetings and other events with various stakeholders, including 2 excursions to properly managed NATURA 2000 sites, took place. The attractive informational materials, including T-shirts, poster, brochure, stickers, the book “Birds of the “Senne” in the past and present”, were produced and distributed. Mowing exhibition “Natural values of SPAs Senne and

Medzibodrozie” received a good response. From its opening in Zemplinske museum in Michalovce in 2006 it was seen by more than 9700 visitors at various locations. In total 7 information signs with project logo were installed at both Project sites. The project web site, available in Slovak, English and Hungarian, was visited by some 32 000 visitors. The intensive contact with media was established and maintained through the whole Project span.

Overall project management and monitoring of the Project impact was ensured by the project team and the steering committee and through monitoring of status of birds and habitats. Results are presented in annual and summary monitoring reports.

As at 14/05/2011, 1 023 398,15 € has been incurred when implementing the project actions. This amount represents 77,21 % of the original budget.

Environmental benefits of the project are clearly visible and measurable after finalizing of all planned construction works (sluices, water gates, reparation of dyke). Areas of restored meadows and wetlands exceeded the original targets and status of breeding/feeding/migrating birds, especially Annex I species and species with priority value for conservation in Senne and Medzibodrozie SPAs in restored habitats have generally improved. Regular monitoring of the birds established under the project allows for informed management of the species in the long term.

Degraded meadows and wetlands at Senne SPA (Blata and Ostrovik locations) were abandoned for more than 10 years and they suffered by lack of water, but also by spreading of invasive weed species as a consequence of long abandonment. After mulching most of bushes and weeds were removed, and after recovery of hydrological regime through building of water gates and sluices these habitats now support breeding of several threatened bird species. Furthermore since habitats restoration started, thousands of birds stop here during the spring migration.

Below table summarizes the main achievements within a framework of individual actions as at 14/05/2011, the project ending date.

A. Preparatory actions/management plan preparation

Action (Number and title)	Status	Description of Achievement/Progress
A1 – Elaborate Management plan for SPA Senne	Technically completed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elaboration of Management plan for SPA Senne progressed as follows: • SOS/BirdLife Slovakia internal expert preparatory workshop held • Meeting with land owners and land users held • 3 meetings with expert-ornithologists held • 1 meeting with expert-ichthyologist held • Various meetings between SOS/BirdLife and SNC held and additional data collecting done • Draft of Management Plan completed, text is finalized by SOS/BirdLife and SNC • External opinion for Management Plan elaborated • Draft Mng. plan revised as per external comments • Mng. plan submitted to formal internal consultation within the SNC • Draft mng plan revised after issuing Regulation of the MoE, through which “Senianske rybniky SPA” were designated in accordance with national nature conservation act • Consultations held concerning harmonizing of conservation objectives for different designations in area of Senne SPA • Consultations held concerning presentation of conservation status of targeted birds in the MP

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All additions and remarks included into final version of the MP Finalised MP sent from SNC to MoE in 02/2010
A2 – Elaborate projects for water regime restorations in SPA Senne and Medzibodrozie	Completed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Technical projects for 3 water gates in Senne SPA prepared and delivered Technical projects for 3 water gates in Medzibodrozie SPA elaborated Building permission obtained in August 2008 for construction of water gates in Medzibodrozie Building permissions obtained in 2009 for building of water gates in Senne SPA Contractor selected for building of 2 water gates in Senne and 3 water gates in Medzibodrozie SPA
A3 – Elaborate pilot aqua-environmental scheme for protection of birds and its habitats in intensively managed fishponds	Completed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meeting between MoE and MoA on compensation measures at NATURA 2000 sites on fishponds held on 27/03/2006 Proposal for Pilot aqua- environmental scheme on fishponds submitted to MoA. in 09/2006 by SNC Aqua environmental scheme not integrated into strategic and operational documents that make use of Fishery Fund in Slovakia
A4 – Prepare tenders, select contractors and suppliers	Completed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tenders, contractors and suppliers were selected with regards to specific action needs
A5 – Elaboration of Environmental Impact Assessment Study	Completed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meeting between EIA expert and SOS/BirdLife representatives held on 10/07/2007 Consultations with MoE took place in 12/2007 Request for decisions concerning obligation to carry out EIA in respect to water infrastructure in Senne SPA sent to County Environment Office in Kosice in 02/2008 County Environmental Office confirmed that EIA was not needed in 06/2008 Request for decisions concerning obligation to carry out EIA in respect to water infrastructure in Medzibodrozie SPA sent to County Environment Office in Kosice in 12/2008 County Environmental Office confirmed that EIA was not needed for water management infrastructure in Medzibodrozie 01/2009

B. Land purchase

B1 – Purchase of wet meadows important for birds in Senné SPA	Completed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Total of 54,3731 hectares owned by SOS/Birdlife Slovakia in SPA Senne as of 31/12/2010
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C. Non-recurring management

C1 – Restore flooding regime in wet meadows in SPA Senné	Completed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Various meetings on water regime restoration and proposed building of water gates and sluices in SPA Senne with SVP, Hydromeliorácie, Regional Office of Environment and State Water Administration held Consultations concerning approval of construction of water gates with concerned land owners and users (Slovak Land Fund) in progress Consultations held with Regional Environment Office in Michalovce concerning building permit
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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two larger water gates selected for construction Water gate Senné Water gate Iňačovce • Arrangements for renting land for construction completed • Contractor – Ekostav , s.r.o. selected • Building supervisor – INGESS- Milan Godocik selected • Construction works delayed due to extreme floods in summer • Construction works on 2 water gates in Senne and Inacovce were completed in 11/2010 • 3 sluices completed at locations Blata and Trnava
C2 – Restore water regime and repair dykes in existing Nature Reserve in SPA Senne	Completed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Field survey of dyke, water inlet and outlet by SVP, OZ Košice done in 08/2007 • Technical project and budget prepared by project engineer of SVP in 08/2007 • Construction work on dyke by SVP started on 16/10/2007 • Construction work on dyke, water outlet and inlet was completed in 08/2008 • Water regime restored in Nature Reserve in SPA Senne, building acceptance procedure completed
C3 – Restore abandoned or destroyed meadows and degraded wetlands in SPA Senné	Completed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More then 200 hectares of restored meadows • 14,5 ha directly restored wetlands • 427 ha of restored wetlands as result of implementing restoration measures
C4 – Create new alternative breeding and feeding habitats for birds in SPA Senne and SPA Medzibodrozie	Completed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Breeding habitats at Senne SPA with area 9 100 m² • Feeding habitats at Senne SPA with area 21 700 m² • Feeding and breeding habitats at Medzibodrozie SPA with area of 3 000 m²
C5 – Install small infrastructure to improve control of the sites and allow regulated access of public	Completed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 towers for monitoring/birdwatching built in Senne SPA • 13 information boards placed in Senne SPA • 1 Information trail in Senne SPA • 5 small bridges • 5 rest places with shelter in Senne SPA • 52 “Access banned” signs and marks • 1 traditional well restored in Inacovce village • Information centre in Cicarovce village, Medzibodrozie SPA • 1 instructional trail in Besa polder, Medzibodrozie SPA • 3 rest places in Besa polder, Medzibodrozie SPA • 2 monitoring/visitors towers in Medzibodrozie SPA
C6 - Restore water regime in SPA Medzibodrozie (locations polder Besa and Cicarovce)	Completed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 water gates built in Medzibodrozie SPA

D. Recurring management

D1 – Maintain favourable habitat conditions for birds in purchased land, wet meadows and wetlands	Completed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 54 hectares of purchased land managed for birds by SOS • Machinery for habitat management purchased
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D2 – Test and implement pilot aqua-environmental scheme	Terminated	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Letter from SNC addressed to DONA (fish-pond users) requesting cooperation in aqua-scheme sent • meetings with DONA regarding aqua-scheme held in 2007 • Scheme not implemented by DONA • Action became obsolete since formal aqua environmental scheme was not adopted and accordingly birds friendly management of fish ponds could not be ensured even if pilot aqua environmental scheme was implemented
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E. Public awareness and dissemination of results

E1 – Inform local communities and general public on the values of the sites	Completed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 35 presentations for schools or general public • Cooperation with 5 schools established and maintained during project implementation • 24 guided tours • 14 youth conservation camps • 8 other events
E2 – Prepare and distribute information and promotion materials on the project	Completed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • T-shirts produced, 200 pcs. • Poster printed, 1000 pcs. • Stickers printed, 10 000 pcs. • Book on birds of SPA Senne printed, 1 000 pcs. • Information brochure printed, 6000 copies • Leaflet on Senne SPA printed, 6 500 copies • Information and promotion materials distributed
E3 – Prepare exhibition about the natural values of SPAs Senne and Medzibodrožie	Completed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exhibition installed and opened for public in Zemplinske museum in Michalovce on 11/05/2007 • Exhibition accessible to 2000 visitors during International Day of Museums in Michalovce on 18/05/2007 • Exhibition displayed in Zemplinske museum in Michalovce between 11/05/2007 – 30/09/2007 • Exhibition displayed in VI.Elementary school in Michalovce on 05/10/2007 • Exhibition displayed in I.Elementary school in Michalovce between 11-24/10/2007 • Exhibition displayed in a high school Gymnazium L.Stura in Michalovce between 24/10/ - 05/11/2007 • Exhibition displayed in TIC (Tourist Information Centre) V. Kapušany 01-05/2008 • Exhibition displayed in 06/2008 in Primary School in Velke Kapusany • Exhibition displayed in Iňačovce (11/2008) • Exhibition displayed in MoE Bratislava (02/2009) • Vlastivedene museum in Trebisov (16/04 – 15/07 2009) • Eastern -Slovakia museum in Kosice (17/09 – 11/10/2009) • Avescentrum, Senne (28/11/2009 -15/09/2010) • Mestske museum Filakovo (4/10/-22/10/2010) • Zemplinske museum Michalovce (23/10/2010 -) • More then 9 700 visitors
E4 – Erect and maintain information signs with project logo	Completed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7 information signs prepared in 07/2007 • 4 information signs installed in villages Senne, Inacovce, Blatne Remety and Blatna Polianka in 08/2007 in SPA Senne • 1 information sign installed in village of Inacovce in 07/2008

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 information signs installed in respectively Besa and Cicarovce in 10/2008
E5 – Prepare and update project web site	Completed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project website launched at http://www.life-senne.sk • Slovak, English and Hungarian versions available • Cca 32 000 visits to the website
E6 – Keep regular contacts with media and promote the project	Completed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 press conferences • 2 site visits for media • 10 press releases • 38 media articles, 7 TV shots/reportages 1 Radio program
E7 – Keep regular communication with stakeholders and prepare a visit to properly managed Natura 2000 site	Completed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 56 meetings with various stakeholders organized • 4 field trips • 2 site visits to properly managed Natura 2000 site within EU (Hungary, Czech Republic) • 3 other events with stakeholders
E8 – Disseminate and exchange scientific results and conservation experience on the project	Completed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 13 presentations • 2 Scientific articles (printed in Tichodroma) • 4 other articles
E9 – Prepare and present video film about the project sites	Completed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 copies of 26 minutes long video in TV quality (beta cam) • 1 premiere in national TV in the project span • 320 copies DVD for lectures and presentations • Presented in 5 x in the Project span
E10 – Train SNC and project staff in wetlands management	Completed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training held in 2009 in 2 blocks
E11 – Produce Layman’s report	Completed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Layman’s report printed in 1000 copies
E12 – Promote Agro-environmental Scheme	Completed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 980 ha under the agri-environmental scheme at Senne SPA • 800 ha under the agri-environmental scheme at Medzibodrozie SPA

F. Overall project management and monitoring

F1 – Plan, manage, monitor and report project	Completed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project Manager selected, formal appointment effective since 01/11/2006 • Regular meetings held • Midterm Report produced in 03/2008 • Project Manager resigned in 07/2008 • Since 08/2008 project management shared by technical P. M. and administrative PM • Medzibodrozie Site manager and Project Ranger appointed in 10/2008 • Second Progress Report produced in 08/2009 • Third – present Progress Report produced in 04/2010 • 1st Request for the Project Modification produced 12/2007 , effective 05/2008 • 2nd Request for Modification produced in 04/2010 • Fourth Progress report produced in 02/2011 • Final Report produced in 11/2011
F2 – Manage and monitor finances	Completed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • System for managing of finances was developed and implemented by SOS/BirdLife Slovakia • Midterm payment request submitted in 03/2008 • Final Payment request submitted in 11/2011

F3 – Prepare after LIFE Conservation Plan	Completed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After LIFE conservation plan elaborated
F4 – Monitor restoration progress and development of habitats	Completed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Habitat survey prepared and implemented • 25 dipwells installed in Senne SPA in 8-14/10/2008 • 5 dipwells installed in Medzibodrozie SPA in 9/10 – 04/11/2008 • Regular monitoring of ground water in dipwells • Habitat monitoring in project sites • 2009 Habitats Monitoring report elaborated • Habitat monitoring in project sites at SPAs Senne and Medzibodrozie done in year 2010 • Regular monitoring of dipwells done in 2010 • 2010 Habitats Monitoring report elaborated • Summary Habitat Monitoring report elaborated
F5 – Monitor bird populations and assess conservation status in project sites	Completed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular monitoring of birds • Report on monitoring of birds for 2006 elaborated • Report on monitoring of birds for 2007 elaborated • 3 monitoring camps organized during breeding season – 04/2008,05/2008,06/2008 • Report on monitoring of birds for 2008 elaborated • 1 monitoring camp in SPA Senné in 1st Q 2009 organized • Report on monitoring of birds for 2009 elaborated • Regular monitoring of birds done in both project areas and 5 co-ordinated bird counts done in SPA Senne during 2010 (in March, April, May, June and November) • Report on monitoring of birds for 2010 elaborated • Summary report on monitoring of birds elaborated
F6 – Schedule regular steering committee meetings	Completed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project Steering Committee meeting held on 19/10/2006 in Michalovce • Project Steering Committee meeting held on 12/12/2007 in Iňačovce • Project Steering Committee held on 02/08/2008 • Project Steering Committee held on 6/11/2008 • 2 meetings of the Project Steering Committee held in 2009 • Meeting of the Steering Committee held on 29/10/2010 in Senne village
F7 – Independent Audit	Completed	Audit Report elaborated

4 Introduction

The Senné depression as well as lowlands of Medzibodrožie, were regularly flooded in the past on spring. Consequently, economic activities were limited to fishing and grazing, arable land was situated on higher quality soils only, usually at slightly elevated positions of the lowlands. Often flooded lowlands were also habitats for waterfowl as long as the rivers were not regulated and lowlands were not drained by a network of melioration canals in the 1960-ies and 70-ies, which completely changed the whole landscape. Oxbows were cut off the rivers and in wet parts of the lowlands large tracts of land were dried up to extend area for arable land. However, gradually, it had become clear that these originally wet areas were not suitable for intensive agriculture because of permanently rewetted soils. In between, number of valuable wetlands and marshes, once being habitats for waterfowl, already disappeared. Meadows and pastures were wet only in the spring, but during summer they were already dry.

In the 1970-ies, a fishpond-system was built in the Senné depression. The system was divided into two parts: productive fishponds for intensive production of fish and one fishpond devoted to nature protection. The later was designated as Natural Nature Reserve for protection of waterfowl. A permanent water surface (600 ha of fishponds and 213 ha of the NNR) in Senné depression has become an important breeding site for waterfowl. The importance of the site has been recognized even internationally, through recognition of the site as the Ramsar site, a Special Area of Conservation and Special Protection Area. However, the reserve, become threatened because of water was disappearing from it through damaged dyke. This in combination of evaporation of water in summer time, led in some cases even to drying up of the NNR.

The area referred as Medzibodrožie is a very diverse area, unique by a number of oxbows around Latorica river, by wet meadows, pastures and former pastures, floodplain forests, marshes, and also by arable land. Since 1990, it was partly protected as Latorica protected Landscape Area. In 2008 part of the area was designated as SPA. The area is important for its diverse wild fauna and flora. A number of wetlands in Medzibodrožie SPA has been threatened by drying up and abandonment of meadows and consequent degradation of meadow and wetland habitats important for birds.

Both sites were well known among ornithologists, however, they were not that known among the wider public: even local population was not aware of the natural values and their importance for sustainable life in their region.

These factors, together with the increasing negative impact of conflicting interests of local stakeholders (commercial fishponds – industry, hunting on protected bird species) in combination with lack of public support and inadequate capacity of state institutions in nature protection to address the problems led to unfavourable status of targeted bird species in both SPAs.

The present LIFE-Nature project „Conservation of Senné and Medzibodrožie SPAs in Slovakia“ was therefore designed, to restore favourable conservation status of breeding and migrating birds from Annex I of Birds Directive and regularly migrating bird species in Senné and Medzibodrožie SPAs through securing appropriate habitats in key locations.

5 LIFE –project framework

5.1 Project Sites

Senne Fish Ponds Special Protection Area features typical wetlands habitats. The site is confirmed to be of international importance since 1990, when it was designated as Ramsar site. The site is located in a formerly seasonally-inundated large, flat depression within the Východoslovenská nížina Lowland (East Slovakian Lowland) on an important waterbird migration route. It includes one large pond with adjacent seasonally-flooded grasslands and shrub swamps and commercial fish-farming ponds. Commercial fish farming conflicts with birds conservation objectives. It is one of the most important breeding and resting sites of rare, endangered and vulnerable water birds in Slovakia, including globally threatened and migratory species. The site regularly supports bird species listed as priority for LIFE funding *Aythya nyroca*, *Botaurus stellaris*, *Crex crex* and *Phalacrocorax pygmaeus* – all of them were at unfavourable conservation status before the project started.

Medzibodrozie Special Protection Area is another complex of wetlands comprised of numerous habitats and plants associated with lowlands. The site has a high density of oxbows, shallow wetlands, canals and alluvial meadows. The project area was selected in Northern part of the SPA area, North of the Latorica river, in historical area of Použie, in so-called Beša polder in municipal areas of Beša and Čičarovce villages.

In the contexts of birds conservation, this area was heavily affected by several unfavourable factors: first of all it was a construction of the polder – an occasional accumulation area for floodwaters of Latorica and Laborec rivers. The polder is surrounded by dykes. This led to drying up the area, abandonment of meadows and consequent overgrowing by bushes.

The site supports bird species listed as priority for LIFE funding: *Aythya nyroca*, *Botaurus stellaris*, *Crex crex* – all of them with unfavourable conservation status.

In both project sites, the following bird species from Annex I of the Birds Directive regularly occur:

Hérons, ibises

- Spoonbill (*Platalea leucorodia*), criterion species in Senné SPA
- Purple Heron (*Ardea purpurea*), criterion species in both SPAs
- White Egret (*Ardea alba*), criterion species in both SPAs
- Little Egret (*Egretta garzetta*), criterion species in both SPAs
- Night Heron (*Nycticorax nycticorax*), criterion species in both SPAs
- Bittern (*Botaurus stellaris*), criterion species in both SPAs

Wildfowl

- Ferruginous Duck (*Aythya nyroca*), criterion species in Medzibodrozie SPA and regularly occurring species in Senné SPA

Rails

- Corncrake (*Crex crex*), regularly occurring species in both SPAs

Raptors

- Marsh Harrier (*Circus aeruginosus*), criterion species in both SPAs

Waders

- Redshank (*Tringa totanus*), criterion species in both SPAs
- Black-tailed Godwit (*Limosa limosa*), criterion species in Senné SPA
- Avocet (*Recurvirostra avosetta*), criterion species in Senné SPA

Gulls and terns

- Whiskered Tern (*Chlidonias hybridus*), criterion species in both SPAs

5.2 Project participants

The **Project beneficiary was the State Nature Conservancy of the Slovak Republic** It is a public agency for nature and landscape protection supervised by the Ministry of the Environment. The SNC is the principal agency entrusted with coordination of NATURA 2000 network in Slovakia. It contributes to setting national environmental standards and policies, co-ordinates the protected area network, performs bio-diversity monitoring and assessment, operates information system on taxons and habitats, maintains information networks, and organises environmental events. It also contributes to the preparation of State of the Environment reports in Slovakia. The SNC is widely involved in various forms of international co-operation within nature conservation sector and, *inter alia*, performs responsibilities of the Scientific Authority of CITES - Convention on International Trade with Endangered Species of Fauna and Flora. Since 2008, the SNC also manages the caves opened to public. The SNC operates through regional units coordinated by the headquarters located in Banska Bystrica.

The SNC had the following partners in the project.

Partner 1 - Slovak Ornithological Society/BirdLife Slovakia, for the purpose of this project referred as SOVS or SOS, is a national non-governmental and not-for-profit organisation, founded in 1993 as “Society for the Protection of Birds in Slovakia” with a scope of activities covering the whole area of Slovakia. It is registered with the Slovak Ministry of Interior as Civil Society under the number VVS/1-900/90-7511-3. The mission of SOVS is to protect birds and their habitats and in wider sense to protect biological diversity. Since 1994, SOVS has been representing Slovakia in the world-wide organisation BirdLife International. In August 2006, the Society merged with Slovak Ornithological Society and started to use a new legal name Slovak Ornithological Society/BirdLife International. The registration number and legal status of the organisation remained the same. SOS took active part in development of international network of Important Bird Areas (IBAs), preparation of the scientific proposal of SPA network in Slovakia, establishment of Criteria and Indicators for assessment of Conservation Status of birds listed in Annex I of the Birds Directive and monitoring and preparation of action plans for endangered bird species. SOS has been taking active part in formulation of national environmental policy through commenting on draft legislation, strategies and programmes related to nature conservation, agriculture and other sectors significantly influencing conservation status of birds and its habitats. Its expert activities include monitoring of endangered species, conservation management of Important Bird Areas and coordination of practical conservation actions.

Partner 2 - Zemplínske Múzeum Michalovce was founded in 1957 and is funded by Kosice Self-governing Region. The main goal of the museum is to collect, save and present to the public all values of the Zemplin region in Eastern Slovakia. The museum prepares exhibitions presenting natural values of the region.

Partner 3 - Municipality of Senné village is an independent territorial and administrative unit of the Slovak Republic. The municipal office consists of local elected representatives and the mayor. It has only few employees. The village has 730 inhabitants.

Partner 4 - Municipality of Iňačovce village is an independent territorial and administrative unit of the Slovak Republic. The municipal office consists of local elected representatives and the mayor. It has only few employees. The village has 633 inhabitants.

Partner 5 - Municipality of Blatná Polianka village is an independent territorial and administrative unit of the Slovak Republic. The municipal office consists of local elected representatives and the mayor. It has only few employees. The village has 176 inhabitants.

Partner 6 - Municipality of Hažín village is an independent territorial and administrative unit of the Slovak Republic. The municipal office consists of local elected representatives and the mayor. It has only few employees. The village has 465 inhabitants.

Partner 7 - Ostrovik Hunting Association, Senné (HA Ostrovik) was founded in 1968 as civic association. It has some 15 members and manages area of 2 050 hectares in cadastre of Senné village. The

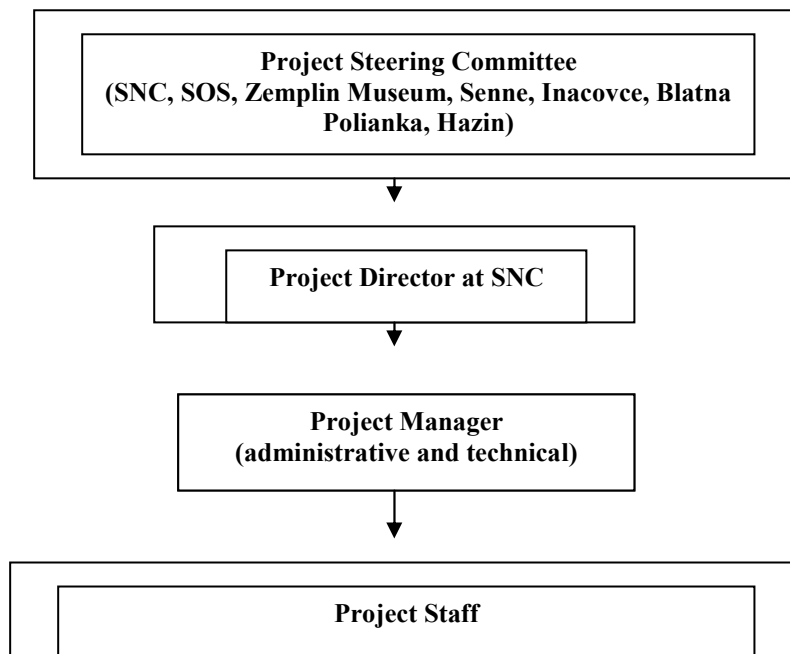
association implements also exhibitions and other activities for general public in close cooperation with the municipality of Senne.

5.3 Project management

The SNC coordinated the Project through its Project department, by the project Director. At the early stages of the Project, the SNC entered into formal Cooperation Agreements with all the 7 Project partners.

The project team was composed of personnel appointed by the SNC and the Project Partners. Everyday activities of the project team were coordinated by the Project managers appointed by SOS. Details of the project staff, including its compositions are described below under description of Action F1.

There were changes on some positions, when persons could not continue working further on the project. The project was overseen by the project Steering Committee composed of representatives of the seven project participants. The SC held its formal meetings six times during the Project span. This was considered as sufficient since all the participants were in frequent working contacts. Below simple organigram shows the organisation of the Project Management.



5.4 Project challenges

The Project was confronted with several circumstances that prevented its implementing in accordance with the Grant Agreement. Some of them were subject of the formal Project modification. The major problems included the following:

(i) Need to change a project area and modify the Action A6:

Shortly after the project commencement it had become apparent that due to external changes in land ownership the originally planned project activities within a framework of the Action C6 were not possible to implement at locations “Veľký les”, “Vilhán” and “Pri prameni” (Medzibodrožie SPA), because substantial part of the land planned to be influenced by restoration measures was sold to a new owner, who did not support proposals for any restoration actions.

In order to meet the original objective of the project it was necessary to identify other project area within Medzibodrozie SPA and prepare a formal request for project modification. Newly suggested location – polder in the vicinity of Beša and Čičarovce villages, proved to be adequate for achieving the Project goals. On-site visits revealed that the area required restoration of its water regime because since the building of flood-prevention dykes at Latorica River in 1950s, the area suffered from lack of water and, consequently, water birds habitats were degrading. Building of 3 water gates was suggested there with expectations of positive effects on wetlands and meadows in the area and ultimately on conservation status of water birds.

This situation has caused substantial delay in implementing project activities at Medzibodrozie SPA. However, restoration of water regime at the polder was finally achieved, although it was completed beyond the project span.

(ii) Inability of the SNC to ensure the committed level of the project co-financing

The proposed changes in location of Action C.6 affected the original project co-financer, land owner Mr. Jozef Halász, in the area at Leles. He was unable further to keep his commitment in a newly identified project area at Besa and Cicarovce. Thus, the State Nature Conservancy had overtaken his financial commitment in addition to its original financial commitment.

However, due to overall restrictions on the SNC budget in last years (firstly due to Government ambition to meet economic criteria conditioning introduction of Euro since 2009 and later due to financial crisis), the SNC was unable to implement timely its overall co-financing commitment. Lack of funds resulted in delay of several actions, particularly of investment actions, planned within Senne SPA, and threatened the implementing of Action C6 in the Medzibodrozie SPA.

In order to secure sufficient level of funds needed for achieving the project goals, the SNC applied for a support from the EEA/ Norwegian Financial mechanism. In 2008, it received a preparatory grant of 19 563 EUR (referred as “seed money”), which was used, *inter alia*, for drawing a technical documentation for 3 water gates at Besa polder. On 20 August 2009, an agreement granting a support from EEA /Norwegian Financial Mechanism to the project “Conservation of Diversity of Waterbirds and their Habitats in Eastern Slovakian Lowland “ in amount of 328 640 EUR became effective. These funds were used complementary to actions funded within a framework of the present LIFE project (i.e. were not be accounted as the present project costs) and enabled the SNC and its project partners to restore water regime within Besa polder, as well as to carry additional actions in the project area, particularly development of small ecotourism infrastructure at Medzibodrozie SPA and ultimately extent conservation benefits of the present project.

(iii) Failure to test and introduce aqua environmental schemes into conservation practice in Slovakia

Pilot aqua-environmental scheme, that was prepared within a framework of Action A.3 and foreseen for implementing as Action D.2 was not integrated into relevant strategic and operational documents in Slovakia. Details of the effort made in support of aqua environmental scheme are presented under description of the Action A3 below.

With the aim to test feasibility of the proposed aqua-environmental scheme, relevant measures were consulted with DONA - private company farming at Senne fish-ponds at early 2007. Several meetings with DONA were held, but DONA was not interested in testing the scheme. Major reason for refusing the cooperation was the stated negative perceptions of absence of legally regulated compensations for loss in fish production caused by protected birds. They were also of the opinion that the funds budgeted for testing of the scheme within the framework of the present project were insufficient to cover the expected loss in fish production.

(iv) Delayed legal designation of the Senne SPA

The Senne SPA was formally designated on 17/09/2009 according to the National Nature Conservation Act through the Decree No. 436/2009 issued by the MoE. Pending legal designation restricted farmers to apply for certain agri-environmental schemes in Senne SPA in the present programming period in this project area (Action E12). Only, the agro environmental schemes initiated in the previous programming period were implemented.

(v) Severe weather conditions and consequent heavy floods in 2010

Winter 2009/2010 was severe and long, and followed with heavy floods in May and June 2010. First smaller floods occurred in the project sites already in the 2nd half of December 2009: during 2009 Christmas time. These were not specifically reported to the EC, because it was expected that they would have no influence on the Project. In early 2010, the SNC completed contracts for building water gates in Senne and Medzibodrozie SPAs (both attached to the 3rd Progress Report).

However, construction was not possible to start on time. Winter was long and water from melting snow permanently stayed on sites. These were completely soggy, not accessible by any machinery. On top of this, heavy rains arrived in the first half of May. Meadows, channels where water gates were to be constructed, access roads, ect. were completely over flooded. Polder near village of Besa was partly filled with the water already in May. Next wave of rains arrived subsequently in June. Polder was then filled with water on 66 % of its capacity.

Since water gates were key measure for achieving Project objectives, extension of the project ending date was requested.

5.5 Project Modifications

In response to issues described under above, three project modification requests were submitted by the beneficiary in the project span.

The 1st Request for the project modification was submitted in 12/2007. The request covered the following issues:

1. Change of the Name of the Project Partner

The Project Partner 1, then Society for the Protection of Birds in Slovakia, representing Slovakia in BirdLife International since 1994 merged with the Slovak Ornithological Society in August 2006. The new legal name of the Project Partner 1 became Slovenská ornitologická spoločnosť/BirdLife Slovensko (Slovak Ornithological Society/BirdLife Slovakia). However, its legal status, its mission, scope of activities, technical role in the Project and financial commitment remain unchanged. Overall, the change had no influence on any aspect of implementing the project, therefore it was described in above subchapter 5.3.

2. Change in the nature and content of the Actions

Circumstances were described in above subchapter 5.3.

3. Change in the finance plan of the Project

Circumstances were described in above subchapter 5.3.

Communication with 1st Additional Clause acknowledging the modification as requested was received by the SNC in May 2008 through letter dated 13/05/ 2008.

The second Request for Modification communicated through the letter re SOPSR 1246/2010 dated 29/04/2010 included

(i) Change in the Legal Name of Project Site Senne SPA to Senne Fish Pond SPA

(ii) Decrease of the budget in costs categories “External Assistance” and “Durable Goods – Infrastructure” and consequent decrease in the overall project budget and respective EC and Beneficiary contributions.

The Modification request was aimed at decreasing of the overall project budget by 179 500 Eur, for the reasons of (a) failing to implement pilot aquaenvironmental scheme (90 000 EUR) and (b) inability to ensure committed level of co-financing and consequently financing building of water gates at Medzibodrozie Project Site (89 500 EUR) from Norwegian/EEA Financial Mechanism.

The EC responded that formal modification of the Grant Agreement for the above stated reasons was not needed.

The third Request for Modification communicated through the letter re SOPSR/2321/2010 dated 28/07/2010 related to change in the project Ending Date for the reasons of the extreme seasonal and annual precipitations in 2010 and consequent floods at the project area, which did not allowed for implementing the project actions in a timely manner and within the framework of the originally agreed project span.

The EC responded positively and the Project implementation period was extended by six months, e.g from 14/11/2010 till 14/05/2010.

Minor change related to economic status of the SNC in the project span occurred at discretion of the MoE.

The economic status of the SNC, based on the decision by Minister of the Environment No 2007 č.73/2007 – 1.8., from 05/12/2007, was changed from budgetary organisation (i.e. funded in full from the state budget) to a „contributory“ organisation (i.e. one receiving only certain contribution from the state budget for its statutory activities, and generating income from services for funding its additional activities).

The SNC was merged with the Administration of the Slovak Caves, based on the decision of Minister of the Environment No 2007 č.74/2007 – 1.8., from 05/12/2007. Both decisions become effective on 01/01/2008.

Its status of public institution remained unchanged. Scope of its activities was extended to cover administrations of caves opened to public. Focus and scope of its “conservation” activities remained unchanged. The changes were reported to the Commission by an email correspondence.

Overall, the above change had no influence on any aspect of implementing the project.

6 Technology

In order to achieve improving of conservation status of Annex 1 species occurring in the project sites, the Project applied a comprehensive approach to conservation of the species and its habitats in consideration of the identified threats and in line with priority actions listed in European species action plans for *Aythya nyroca*, *Botaurus stellaris*, *Crex crex* and *Phalacrocorax pygmeus*.

The basic assumption for improving conservation status of targeted bird species was creation of new or restoring existing but degraded habitats. In this respect, the key assumption was restoration of water regime in the project site.

In order to ensure creation and maintaining favourable habitat conditions in the most effective way and for infinitive period, more than 50 ha of land was purchased by SOS in Senne SPA.

Proper ways of managing meadows as habitats that represent breeding and feeding habitats for birds was discussed with local land owners and users and existing incentives in Slovakia were bringing to their attention in order to make them participating in conservation of birds within as well as beyond the scope of the present project.

To ensure the long-term protection of the targeted species, project also included elaboration of management plan for Senne SPA.

Extensive work was dedicated to raising of public awareness on the natural values of project sites through presentations, excursions and various kinds of promotional materials. These was complemented by developing small tourist infrastructure that allows the public to visit project sites and, at the same time, makes an area attractive for visitors from other regions/countries and thereby reveals unknown economic value of the area for local population.

7 Results

Below, there are basic information for each action that describe expected and actual results of the project, discrepancies compared to project proposal and how the action was implemented.

Expected results: refer to results foreseen in the project proposal

Actual achievements: summarize the achievements reached by the end of the project, i.e. the final achievements within the framework of the present Project, but not necessarily ultimate achievements within a framework of the site conservation strategies.

Action status: describes status of the action – i.e. the extent to which the individual action was implemented within the Project span.

Modification of the activity against the plan: describes necessary major adjustments/modification of the action compared to the project proposal.

Planned completion date: refers to completion date in accordance with time-table in the Project proposal.

Actual completion date: refers to actual completion date.

Reasons for delay: explains reasons for discrepancy between planned and actual completion dates.

Description: describes how the Action was implemented.

A.1 – Elaborate Management plan for SPA Senne

Expected results:

- 1 planning workshop executed
- 1 management plan for SPA Senne adopted and under implementation

Actual Achievements:

- Several meetings held for preparation of management plan
- Draft management plan for the Senne SPA elaborated at early stages of the project and used as an informal management guidelines for managing the area. Several measures from the plan implemented, particularly actions funded by the Project
- Updated and revised draft of the Management plan for Senne SPA submitted to the MoE in early 2010 with a request for approval

Action status: Management plan for Senne SPA technically completed, partly implemented, formal approval is pending.

Modification of the activity against the plan: Formal approval of the management plan not achieved in the project span

Planned completion date: 1Q/2007

Actual completion date: 02/2010 - technical completion only

Reasons for delay: Development of the management plan was influenced by existing general situation with management plans for SPAs in Slovakia. Absence of clear methodology that would be technically and politically acceptable resulted in repeated demands for revisions of the draft plan, however, without tangible progress towards initiating formal approval process.

Description:

The process of preparation of Management plan for Senne SPA started at the early stages of the project with a series of meetings with different specialists and with landowners and users. These meetings were

considered more efficient than holding the first planning workshop originally foreseen in the Project Proposal. Between February 2006 and February 2007 seven meetings were held. Minutes from the meetings were provided as Annexes A_1_1 – A_1_7 to the Midterm Report. In 2007 the preparation of draft management plan followed through various technical meetings. On 07/02/2007 the meeting with experts – ornithologists was held in SOS/BirdLife Slovensko office in Michalovce. Favourable conservation status was defined for the following bird species: *Botaurus stellaris*, *Ardea purpurea*, *Ardea alba*, *Egretta garzetta*, *Nycticorax nycticorax*, *Platalea leucorodia*, *Recurvirostra avosetta*, *Crex crex* and *Circus aeruginosus*. On 08/03/2007 another meeting with ornithologists was held. The favourable conservation status was defined for *Aythya nyroca*, *Chlidonias hybridus*, *Limosa limosa* and *Tringa totanus*. After defining favourable conservation status that is a reference status for the purpose of formulating conservation objectives, the actual status of individual species (population size, trends, etc.) was assessed.

On 20/03/2007 the meeting with an expert - ichthyologist was held. Consultations were focused on composition of fish species in Senne ponds, data on fish species in Senne SPA and management measures focused on preventing lack of oxygen in natural waters.

On 27/09/2007 the meeting of SOS/BirdLife Slovensko and SNC - Latorica PLA, that was in charge of Senne SPA was held. The aim of the meeting was to review data included in internal documentation of SNC – Latorica PLA in Trebisov, revision of chapter on flora, and completing data on zoological research and monitoring in Senne SPA.

On 02/10/2007 the meeting of experts ornithologists and SNC was held again. The meeting focused on assessing present status of habitats of targeted bird species, defining favourable status of habitats and delineation of functional zones in the SPA area.

In December 2007 and January 2008 consultation meetings were held with the aim to finalize draft management plan. The maps of breeding and feeding habitats of priority bird species in Senne SPA were also elaborated. Drafting of management plan for Senne SPA was completed in early 2008. The draft Management plan included management measures proposed for the SPA in the period 2008-2017 and was provided to EC as Annex A.1.8. to the Midterm Report in spring 2008.

Later in 2008, comments coming out from external expert review (Mr. Peter Sabo) were integrated to the draft plan. The draft Management Plan was further submitted to the internal consultation within the SNC. Further comments on draft management plan were received in July 2009 from the SNC expert Mr. Trnka, who was addressing issues regarding presentation of the bird species of conservation importance in the management plan. In particular he commented on assessment of conservation status of Annex 1 species for which the SPA had been designated, nomenclature of bird-names used in the MP and numbers and trends of Annex 1 bird species in Senne SPA. These comments were evaluated and further discussed within project team and they were integrated into the plan in the second half of 2009.

The project team further consulted draft plan with Administration office for Latorica PLA. Chapter 7.3 Implementing of management measures was further elaborated.

On 17/09/2009 the Senne SPA was formally designated in accordance with the National Nature Conservation Act through the Decree No. 436/2009 issued by the MoE. The copy of the Decree was provided as Annex A_1_1_el to the 3rd Progress Report. Relevant information regarding the legal designation of the area was included into the management plan.

In autumn 2009, Daphne - Institute of Applied Ecology provided comments to the draft management plan in its capacity of Project Participant in GEF funded project „Integration of Ecosystem Management Principles and Practices into Land and Water Management of Laborec – Uh Region. In that project, Daphne had been responsible, *inter alia*, for management planning for Senianske rybníky pSCI/SAC, thus focusing on species and habitats of European interest other than birds species. Daphne stressed that Senne SPA overlaps with the three other designations, including pSCI/SAC, that have different conservation objectives than these of SPA and thus, it was important to harmonize management measures proposed for birds with those required for maintaining favorable conservation status of habitats and species of conservation importance present in the area. Daphne provided results of habitat mapping in the area and review of possible management conflicts.

A meeting between Daphne, the project team and SNC – Administration Office for Latorica PLA took place in Michalovce on 08/09/2009, where the comments were discussed in detail. The draft management plan was

then further revised to include information on habitats of European importance and to avoid above-mentioned conflicts. In early 2010, revisions of Draft Management Plan were continuing. Revisions were made also as regards abundance of some qualifying bird species.

Updated draft of Management plan was sent to MoE through the letter re: 1123/2010 dated 19/04/2010. Since MoE had not responded, the SNC urged the MoE in early 2011 to start the approval process and/or to issue a guarantee concerning its implementation. Until the time of the submission of the present report, no formal response from the MoE has been received. Only, one meeting was called at MoE on 27 July 2011, focused not only on Senne SPA management plan. The meeting confirmed the following general expectations:

1/ Management Plan for Senne SPA will only be approved after new Nature Conservation Law¹ is approved and effective,

2/ Management Plan for Senne SPA will have to be revised again in order to update it and to adjust its content and format in accordance with requirements for Management Plans included in the new law.

Annex A_1_1 contains updated draft management plan – version 2010

Annex A_1_2 contains Minutes of the Meeting at MoE on 27/07/2011

A.2 – Elaborate projects for water regime restorations in SPA Senne and Medzibodrožie

Expected results:

- 1 technical project for water regime restoration in Senne SPA meadows
- 1 technical project for water regime restoration for Senne National Nature Reserve
- 1 technical project for water regime restoration for project site in SPA Medzibodrožie

Actual Achievements:

- technical project for water regime restoration at Senne National Nature Reserve
- technical projects for water regime restoration for Senne SPA
- technical projects for water regime restoration for project site in Medzibodrozie SPA

Action status: completed

Modification of the activity against the plan: N/A

Planned completion date: 2Q/2007

Actual completion date: 01/2010

Reasons for delay: The project underestimated the complexity of the planning and permitting procedure that took substantially more time than expected. In case of Medzibodrozie SPA, the timing of planning was influenced by the need for relocation of the project site – for more information pls. refer to the first project modification request by the SNC.

Description:

Technical projects are necessary tool for guiding construction process. They are also precondition for issuing the building permission. Engineering company Hydroprojekt Kosice s.r.o. was contracted for the elaboration of technical projects for water gates. Water gates should allow regulating water regime at meadows targeted by the project and thereby their restoration/maintenance at status favourable for waterbirds. The effort started on 03/04/2007 when consultation meeting was held with Dipl. Ing. J. Kutný, water management engineer. The meeting was focused on preparation the technical projects for building of water gates in Senne and Medzibodrozie SPAs. On 04/04/2007 field visit to the proposed building sites for the water gates at Senne SPA in surroundings of Blatné Remety, Iňačovce and Senné villages took place. The expert and project staff explored all sites where building of water gates on melioration channels was planned. The site visit was

¹ New Nature Conservation Law is being drafted, date of approval is hardly to be predicted in consideration of the current political situation in Slovakia and the early parliamentary elections expected in March 2011.

important in terms of exploring site conditions and enabling selection of the best technical solution in consideration of the project goals. Water gates were proposed for channels K-23, O-2 and O-33 administrated by Hydromelioracie Bratislava s.p.. Technical projects for building of 3 water gates in Senne SPA were completed in August 2007. From technical projects it became clear that two larger water gates complemented with smaller sluices would be sufficient to reach targets set for Senne SPA. Therefore, it was decided that only water gates close to Senne and Inacovce will be constructed. The land on the construction sites had to be rented. Land renting agreements were signed between the SNC and Senne village (Senne water gate) and between the SNC and Hydromelioracie, s.p. (Inacovce water gate).

The building permissions for two water gates have been obtained in 2009. The permission for water gate Senne was issued in 25/08/2009 and has become effective on 19/09/2009. The permission for water gate Inacovce was issued on 21/12/2009 and has become effective on 19/01/2010. Two permissions for shrub cutting, necessary for preparation of the locality for construction of water gate Senné have been obtained (02/12/2009 and 22/12/2009).

The technical project “Restoration of Senne National Nature Reserve” for reparation of damaged dyke, water inlet and outlet, was elaborated by Slovak Water Management Enterprise (SVP š.p), its Košice Division, Michalovce Office for Catchment Area of Laborec River, in 08/2007.

As concerns Medzibodrozie SPA, the action was subject to the Project Modification. Technical documentation was elaborated for building of the three water gates in new location, which was the polder near Besa and Cicarovce villages within Medzibodrozie SPA. For this purpose, the SNC raised funds from the joint EEA/Norwegian Financial Mechanism Seed Money. These costs were not accounted to the Project costs.

Technical Documentation for Medzibodrozie water gates was submitted by the SNC to the Environment District Office in Michalovce with a request to issue respective building permits. Building permit was issued on 22 August 2008 and become effective on 27 August 2008. Building permit was submitted as Annex _C_6_1 to the 2nd Progress Report.

All the technical documentation is available at SNC. Water gates were built and the Senne dyke reconstructed under actions C1, C2 and C6.

A.3 – Elaborate pilot aqua- environmental scheme for protection of birds and its habitats in intensively managed fishponds

Expected results:

- 1 Pilot –aqua environmental scheme proposal for Senne Fish ponds prepared and promoted

Actual Achievements:

- 1 Pilot –aqua environmental scheme proposal for Senne Fish ponds prepared and promoted

Action status: completed

Modification of the activity against the plan: N/A

Planned completion date: 2Q/2006

Actual completion date: 2007

Reasons for delay: N/A

Description:

The aqua environmental scheme was elaborated within a framework of the present project; however, in spite of substantial efforts of the project team it was not included into the Operational Program “Fisheries of the Slovak Republic 2007-2013”.

Nevertheless, since the scheme have been elaborated, some measures included in the proposed aqua environmental scheme, such as changes of water table levels or the application of chemicals, are reflected in

expert opinions elaborated by the SNC for the purpose of relevant decision-making processes in the conservation practice.

Therefore, in spite of the absence of a formal scheme, no apparent changes occurred on the fish ponds in terms of distribution of macrophytes and the targeted species have suitable breeding conditions there.

Below we list a review of steps taken by the project team and the project participants in support of the formal adoption of aqua environmental scheme:

1/ In December 2005, SOS/BirdLife Slovensko (then SOVS), requested the Ministry of Agriculture to be a member of the working group for European Fisheries Fund that was responsible for preparation of operational program for fishery sector. This request was refused by the Ministry of Agriculture. However, the SNC, project beneficiary, became a member of the working group.

2/ The MoE originally intended to designate all the SPAs included in the National SPA list until the end of 2006. Therefore, at the meeting on 27 March 2006, the MoE suggested that 10% of funds that would be regulated by the Fisheries Operational Program be allocated for compensation payments. The SNC and the SOVS participated at the meeting.

The following measures were proposed to be considered for compensations:

- Time control of changing of water table levels
- Cleaning of fish ponds
- Time restrictions on fishing with fish hook in breeding sites
- Restrictions on fertilizing and fish feeding in breeding period
- Keeping a littoral vegetation

Furthermore, the MoE suggested support to additional activities that had not been foreseen in the operational programme, such as creation of islands planting littoral vegetation, replacement of fertilizers, and transfer to fish cultures with more species.

However, position of Ministry of Agriculture was different. MoA stated that in consideration of the total available allocation for Slovakia in amount of 12,1 mil. € for 7 years long programming period, investments in aqua environmental measures in amount of 10% of the total allocation, were not adequate/sufficient for addressing compensations for loss on fish production caused by birds of conservation importance.

Furthermore, they were of the opinion that allocation of 10 % from the total allocation for aqua environmental measures would “decreased the generally low amount of funds available for development of fishery sector, and decreased its effectiveness and competitiveness“. The fish farmers had the same position.

3/ MoA elaborated „Narodny strategicky plan rybneho hospodarstva 2007-2013“ (2007-2013 National Strategic Framework for Fisheries). MoE elaborated comments to the Strategic Framework. SOVS also elaborated the remarks to the Strategic Framework.

Comments were aimed at integration of Natura 2000 and fish farming in NATURA 2000 sites into compensations systems (NATURA 2000 payments and aqua environmental schemes) in respect of actions that are additional to the standard aquaculture practices. Comments also included criticism of the MoA approach that tended to ignore possibilities for introducing compensations for fish farmers.

On 06/06/2006 SOSV took part in the meeting with Ministry of Agriculture regarding the remarks to the National Strategic Framework for Fisheries. Some 12 amendments of the Plan were proposed by SOVS.

4/ In September 2006, the SNC submitted the proposal for aqua-environmental measures on fishponds to MoA. MoA did not accept the proposed measures.

5/ The Project team elaborated detailed proposal for aqua environmental measures/scheme especially tailored for Senne fish ponds. The scheme was specific for 5 fishponds with best preserved stands of reed beds at Senné-fishponds. The proposal included, *inter alia*, measures for the protection of reed-beds in commercial fishponds. The proposal was consulted with experts – ichthyologists as well as with representatives of

DONA Fish Farm. Initially, representatives of the Fish Farm accepted the proposal, but finally they refused it.

6/ SOVS made an effort to lobby at the EEF through BirdLife International in order to achieve that proposed measures are integrated into Fishery support program 2007-13 and thus applied in the EU member states – table with specific suggestions and their integration into EEF support system. (BirdLife International lobbied for adoption of aqua environmental scheme in new member states from the Central and Eastern Europe, in which there are commercial fishponds with significant populations of water birds of conservation importance, namely Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Latvia, Rumania and Poland).

7/ Representatives of MoA met with the EC representatives in Brussels on 22-23/06/2006 and consulted proposed 2007-2013 National Strategic Framework for Fisheries. They did not, however, consult inclusion aqua environmental schemes into the Framework.

8/ Approved 2007-2013 National Strategic Framework for Fisheries does not include aqua environmental schemes. However, SWOT analyses of the Framework identify damage to fish caused by water birds feeding on fish as a threat. In the same context, increased costs of fish farmers caused by designating of NATURA 2000 sites are mentioned.

9/ Despite a formal absence of aqua environmental scheme in Slovakia, the SNC and SOVS are consulted each year by the MoE concerning dates for filling in and discharging fish ponds.

Documentation to this action, including proposed Aqua environmental scheme for Senne Fish ponds, was submitted as Annexes A_3_1 – A_3_4 to the 2nd Progress Report.

A.4 – Prepare tenders, select contractors and suppliers

Expected results:

- Tenders are prepared
- Contractors and suppliers providing the most cost-effective services are selected

Actual Achievements:

- Procurement of goods, work and services in compliance with national legislation
- Contractors and suppliers provided the most effective services

Action status: completed

Modification of the activity against the plan: N/A

Planned completion date: 2Q/2010

Actual completion date: 2Q/2011

Reasons for delay: Extension of the Project ending date

Description:

The contractors and suppliers for particular project actions were selected through procurement processes, in compliance with the Slovak Procurement laws and the LIFE requirements. Price survey (“market research”) has been used most frequently in selection of the supplier/ contractor in consideration of the expected contract values.

A.5 – Elaboration of Environmental Impact Assessment Study

Expected results:

- 1 EIA study for technical project for water regime restoration in Senne SPA meadows
- 1 EIA study for technical project for water regime restoration for Senne National Nature Reserve
- 1 EIA study for technical project for water regime restoration for project site in Medzibodrozie SPA

Actual Achievements:

- EIA confirmed as not obligatory for project actions

Action status: completed

Modification of the activity against the plan: EIA not implemented

Planned completion date: 12/2007

Actual completion date: N/A

Reasons for delay: N/A

Description:

The Action started with consultations on conditions for environmental impact assessment of actions C1, C2 and C6. These actions aimed at water regime restoration in Project Sites. In 2007 (10/07/2007), the meeting between EIA expert and SOS/BirdLife representatives was held in Košice. Minutes of the meeting were provided as Annex A.5.1 to the Midterm Report. EIA Department at Moe was also consulted on this matter.

From consultations, it had become clear that in consideration of the nature and extent of planned construction activities within the present project, and in accordance with then applicable Environmental Impact Assessment Act No. 24/2006, EIA was not obligatory. However, since all activities in question were to be implemented in SPAs, in accordance with the Nature Protection Law No. 543/2002, it had been still obligatory to request decision from the competent authority – County Environment Office in Kosice – as whether planned activities could have negative impact on the protection of targeted birds and their habitats and consequently if EIA was needed.

Therefore, the SOS/Birdlife (letter dated 27 May 2008) and the SNC (letter dated 4 December 2008) addressed the Regional Environment Office in Kosice with query about the need to carry out EIA of activities to be implemented in respectively Senne and Medzibodrozie SPAs within a scope of the project. Regional Environment Office in Kosice responded through letters dated 25 June 2008 and 9 January 2009, that EIA in respect of planned construction activities in respectively Senne and Medzibodrozie SPAs was not needed. Details of this communication were provided as Annex A_5_1 to the 2nd Progress Report.

B.1 – Purchase of wet meadows important for birds in Senné SPA

Expected results:

- 50 hectares of land purchased in the Ostrovik Meadow area within Senne SPA

Actual Achievements:

- 54,3731 ha of land purchased in the Ostrovik Meadow area within Senne SPA

Action status: completed

Modification of the activity against the plan: N/A

Planned completion date: 4Q/2007

Actual completion date: 12/2010

Reasons for delay: Negotiating of land purchase took longer in few cases than expected

Description:

Ostrovik meadows represent one of the most important sites at Senne SPA in Slovakia. It is an area of wet meadow with a system of small old river-beds and a very important breeding habitat for many bird species, particularly those associated with water. Moreover, the meadows are an important stopover site and the feeding habitat for many migrating birds.

In the past, when the meadows were regularly managed, they were a breeding site for such rare species as *Limosa limosa* and *Tringa totanus*. However, management of the meadows was interrupted for a long period and water regime required restoration in order to improve habitat conditions for the species once widespread, but then disappearing.

In order to secure long-term protection and control over this core area for breeding and migrating birds SOS/BirdLife Slovakia decided to purchase land at this specific site.

In the period 2006 – 2010 total of 54,3731 hectares of land have been purchased at Ostrovik meadows by SOS.

The most of the purchased land is classified as permanent grassland (acronym TTP is used in Slovak for reference). The conservation clause was included on the ownership certificates or to the contract of purchase.

As requested by the EC and in order to prove that the land was purchased within the normal market prices. The respective land prices assessment was elaborated by the authorized expert Mr. J. Slimák, Prešov. In his expert assessment No 30/09 (Annex B_1_1_el to the 3rd Progress Report, reattached as Annex B_1_6 to the present report) land parcels prices at Ostrovik site near village of Senne were confirmed at 0,498€/m² at the time of land purchase. This justifies the price stated in respective land purchase contracts.

As requested by the EC, all purchased contracts are included in Annexes B_1_4 and B_1_5. Copies of land ownership certificates with conservation clause were provided as Annex B_1_7 to the Midterm Report and are re-attached as Annex B_1_3 to the present report. Final maps showing purchased land parcels are attached as Annexes B_1_1 and B_1_2 to the present report.

SOS/BirdLife Slovakia regularly manages the land. Management actions on purchased land within a project span are described under Action D1.

Annex B_1_1 Map of the purchased land

Annex B_1_2 Map of location of the purchased land within Senne SPA

Annex B_1_3 Copies of land ownership certificates

Annex B_1_4 Copies of purchased contracts (relevant to land where ownership certificate include conservation clause)

Annex B_1_5 Copies of purchased contracts (relevant to land where ownership certificate does not include conservation clause)

Annex B_1_6 Expert price certificate

C.1 – Restore flooding regime in wet meadows in SPA Senné

Expected results:

- 2 water gates and 2 sluices in Blata area in the North West of Senne SPA
- 1 water gate in the south part of Senne SPA
- 1 water gate and 1 sluice in Šianec area in the east of Senne SPA
- Approximately 350 hectares of restored flooding regime

Actual Achievements:

- 1 water gate at Inacovce and 2 sluices in Blata area in the North West of Senne SPA
- 1 water gate at Senne - South
- 1 sluice in Trnava area in the east of Senne SPA
- Approximately 990 ha of restored flooding regime

Action status: completed

Modification of the activity against the plan: N/A

Planned completion date: 4Q/2008

Actual completion date: 4Q/2010

Reasons for delay: Building of water gates was delayed because of financial constraints of project participants, delayed responses from certain affected stakeholders and unfavorable climate conditions in 2010.

Description:

In August 2007, the technical projects for building of 3 water gates in Senne SPA were prepared by engineering company Hydroprojekt Kosice s.r.o. (under Activity A.2). Relevant permits were obtained from few affected stakeholders. Consultations were made with concerned authorities regarding the procedure to issue a building permit. Details were described in the Midterm Report.

Analysis of impact of projected water gates on the hydrology of the area proved that 2 water gates were sufficient to control hydrology of the area with regard to the needs of targeted bird species of conservation importance. Building of water gates was, however, delayed because of lack of funds and delayed responses from certain affected stakeholders. In between the validity of previously obtained permits and agreements from users expired and it was necessary to renew them.

In 2008, all permits necessary for obtaining a formal permit for location of water gates were renewed. The SNC started arrangements for long term renting of land on which water gates will be built. Such Land renting agreement is an obligatory annex to the Application for a Building Permission.

Ekostav, a.s. Michalovce was contracted for building of the two larger water gates. The Works Contract was attached as Annex C_1_2_el to the 3rd Progress Report. INGESS - Milan Godocik was contracted for building supervision.

The works on Inacovce water gate (on channel K23) finally started only in early 07/2010 and on Senne water gate (on channel O2) in early 09/2010. It had not been possible earlier because of extreme rains, subsequent floods, and overall inappropriate conditions at building locations and their vicinity.

The constructions were technically completed in 11/2010. Water gates were formally overtaken from the contractor by the SNC staff on 11/11/2010. The documentation for building acceptance process was prepared in 12/2010. A manipulation regulation was drafted in early 2011. Documentary photos were provided in Annex C_1_1_el to the 4th progress report.

Senne and Inacovce water gates have positive influence on respectively 666 ha and 323 ha of birds habitats in Senne SPA.

In addition to the 2 larger water gates, three smaller sluices were built in Senne Project Site – 2 sluices at Blata area in 2009 and 1 sluice in Trnava area in 2011. Few documentary photos were provided in Annex C_1_1_el to the 3rd Progress Report.

Final map of all water gates and sluices built within a framework of the present project at Senne SPA is provided as Annex C_1_1 .

C.2 – Restore water regime and repair dykes in existing Nature Reserve in SPA Senne

Expected results:

- Repaired dyke of Senne National Nature Reserve (1300 m section)
- New water outlet
- Repaired water inlet
- 668 hectares positively influenced by restored water regime

Actual Achievements:

- Repaired dyke of Senne National Nature Reserve (1300 m section)
- New water outlet
- Repaired water inlet
- 704 hectares positively influenced by restored water regime

Action status: completed

Modification of the activity against the plan: N/A

Planned completion date: 4Q/2008
Actual completion date: 2Q/2008
Reasons for delay: N/A

Description:

The activity started by mowing the top of the dyke in Senne SPA in August 2006 in order to allow for detailed inspection of the dyke. The inspection revealed suspected defects/failures of the dyke, the water outlet was damaged and its function was not sufficient, metal parts had corroded, insulation was not adequate, stability of dam base was weakened, some slopes or parts were sliding down, and water inlet was not fully functional. The comprehensive list of defects was compiled and consulted with experts.

Technical project for restoration was developed under the Action A2 in August 2007. Slovak Water Management Enterprise was contracted for restoration works on the dam. Restoration works started on 16/10/2007. Works continued during October and November 2007 by repairing of the dyke by stones from a quarry and by gravel. Water outlet was sealed and partly fixed by concrete. After a short break in winter 2008, the works on reparation of dyke were resumed by the SVP at early spring. Continuously, the SVP completed the restoration work on the dyke and on inlet and outlet. On 22/05/2008, during the field inspection of works, the SNC requested the SVP to address certain deficiencies in the work. Building acceptance procedure was successfully completed on 05/08/2008 (Annex C_2_1 to the 2nd Progress Report).

After completion of the procedure in August 2008, the pool/pond in the Senne Reserve was filled in with the water. No deficiencies in the dyke were revealed in autumn and winter 2008/2009. The reserve was immediately colonized by water birds.

Water levels in the Senne NNR were regularly monitored in the lowest part of the NNR, at the water-outlet. Results of this monitoring are presented in Habitats monitoring report in Annex F_4_1. Generally, monitoring proved that there was sufficient level of water in the NNR and water level has been stabilized after restoration.

This Action C2 has affected positively in total 213,31 ha of the NNR. Additional 490,69 ha of total water surface of 704 ha, belonging to fish pond system at Senne, has been affected as well. This is because elimination of water loss from the NNR and consequent substantially lower need for additional donation of water to the NNR water body after restoration (reduced perhaps to addition of water lost naturally by evaporation, or to periods with low precipitation in some periods of the year).

C.3 – Restore abandoned or destroyed meadows and degraded wetlands in SPA Senné

Expected results:

- 200 hectares of restored meadows
- 10 hectares of restored wetlands

Actual Achievements:

- More than 200 hectares of restored meadows
- 14,5 ha directly restored wetlands
- 427 ha of restored wetlands as result of implementing restoration measures

Action status: completed

Modification of the activity against the plan: N/A

Planned completion date: 1Q/2010

Actual completion date: 2Q/2011

Reasons for delay: Formal extension of the project ending date

Description:

Restoration of abandoned or destroyed meadows and degraded wetlands in Senne SPA was carried out in the period 2006 – 2011. Restoration was based on mulching, mowing, removing of self-seeding woods and removing illegal waste dumping. Priority was given to waterlogged depressions, which were not intensively used for agriculture or even were abandoned. Favorable water regime on the restored meadows and wetlands will be kept by operation of water gates and sluices built under Action C1.

Restoration activities were described in detail in previous reports. Below table presents review of restoration effort in Senne SPA in the project span. Some 240 ha of meadows and 14,5 ha of wetlands were restored.

Senne SPA – review of activities for restoration of meadows

Measure	Site	Area (in ha)	Dates	Who	Action
Mulching	Blatá	53	1.9.2006 – 30.11.2006	PD Agropol – land user	C3
Mulching	Blatá	170	2008	PD Agropol – land user	C3
Mulching	Moľva southern part of SPA	67	09/2008	PD Vysoká nad Uhom – land user	C3
Mowing	South from Senné village	7	20.10.2008	Project team	C3
Mowing	Blatá	170	08/2009	PD Agropol – land user	C3
Mowing	Moľva southern part of SPA	67	09/2009	PD Vysoká nad Uhom – land user	C3
Mulching	Blatá	60	10/2010	PD Agropol – land user	C3
Mulching	Senné	1,5	10_2010	PD Vysoká n. Uhom – land user	C3

Senne SPA – review of activities for restoration of wetlands

Measure	Site	Area (in ha)	Dates	Who	Action
Cutting scrubs in depressions	Blatá	14	26.07.2007	Working camp SOVS	C3
Mulching of depressions	Blatá	14	10.11.2007	local farmer Mr. Jozef Knežo, M.Benku 13, Michalovce	C3
Cleaning of illegal waste dumping	Šianec	0,1	3.8.2008	Working camp SOVS	C3
Cutting of scrubs	Blatá	0,4	30.3.2009	Project team	C3
Deepening of depressions by excavator	Blatá	0,2	23.10.2009	Fi Grapex	C3
Restoration of channel banks,	Ostrovík	0,25 ha of channel and adjacent banks, 100 ha is expected impact of the measure	31.8.2010	Fi Grapex	C3

Restoration of field road forming a kind of “dyke” along Blata meadows	Blatá	0,1 ha, expected impact of the measure is 300 ha	5.11.2010	Fi Grapex	C3
Deepening of depression	Trnava	0,25	4/2011	Peter Osif – FISO	C3
Restoration of dyke	Trnava	0,2 ha of restored dyke, expected impact of the measure is 27 ha	4/ 2011	Peter Osif - FISO	C3

Annex C_3_2 to the 3rd Progress Report showed map with Action C3 measures implemented in the period 2006-2009. Annex C3_C4_D1 to the same report showed review of different measures implemented under actions C3, C4 and D1 and confirmed that no overlapping was between the actions. Annex C_3_1 to the present Final report includes maps showing restoration measures implemented in 2010 – 2011.

C.4 – Create new alternative breeding and feeding habitats for birds in SPA Senné and SPA Medzibodrožie

Expected results:

- 2 new locations with suitable breeding habitats at Senne SPA with area 2 x 1000 m²
- 1 new location with suitable breeding habitats at Medzibodrožie SPA with area 1000 m²
- 3 new locations with feeding habitats at Senne SPA with area 3 x 200 m²
- 2 new locations with feeding habitats at Medzibodrožie SPA with area 2 x 200 m²

Actual Achievements:

- breeding habitats at Senne SPA with area 9 100 m²
- feeding habitats at Senne SPA with area 21 700 m²
- feeding and breeding habitats at Medzibodrožie SPA with area of 3 000 m²

Action status: completed

Modification of the activity against the plan: N/A

Planned completion date: 3Q/2008

Actual completion date: 1Q/2011

Reasons for delay: Delay was caused by relocation of the project site, financial constraints of the beneficiary and unfavorable weather conditions in 2010

Description:

The restoration works was initiated in December 2007 in the Ostrovik meadow on land purchased by SOS/BirdLife Slovakia north of village Senné after necessary permits were obtained. The restoration was completed at early spring 2009. Details of the restoration progress were described in previous reports.

Altogether 0,91 ha (9 100 m²) breeding habitats and 2,17 (21 700 m²) ha of feeding habitats were created under the present Action C4 in Senne SPA.

Review of implemented measures was presented in Annex C3_C4_D1 to the 3rd Progress Report. For more convenient reference it is presented below in the present Final Report.

Measure	Site	Area (in ha)	Dates	Who	Action
Creation of breeding habitats	Ostrovík	0,59	12/2007	Firma Madma s.r.o.	C4
Transport of soil from breeding habitat No. 1	Ostrovík	0,3	1/2008	Technické a záhradnícke služby mesta Michalovce	C4
Creation of feeding habitats	Ostrovík	0,6	1-3/2008	Madma s.r.o	C4
Deepening and extension of breeding and feeding habitats	Ostrovík	Breeding habitats extended by 0,32 ha Feeding habitats extended by 1,57 ha Altogether 0,91 ha (9 100 m ²) breeding habitats and 2,17 (21 700 m ²) ha of feeding habitats were created	11/2008	Firma Madma s.r.o.	C4
Associated travel costs of the project team					C4

In Medzibodrozie SPA, the Action was delayed for the reason of financial constraints of the project participants as well as for the reason of unfavorable weather conditions in 2010. Under circumstances, restoration was only implemented in 03/2011. Details are presented at below table.

Measure	Site	Area (in ha)	Dates	Who	Action
Deepening of breeding and feeding habitats	Besa Polder	0,3	3/2011	Grapex	C4

Annex C_4_1 shows location of newly created breeding and feeding habitats in Senne SPA

Annex C_4_2 shows location of newly created breeding and feeding habitats in Medzibodrozie SPA

C.5 – Install small infrastructure to improve control of the sites and allow regulated access of public

Expected results:

- 2 towers for monitoring built in SPA Senne
- 12 information boards placed within and around SPA Senne
- One 20 km long Information bicycle trail around the SPA Senne
- 4 bicycle bridges and 4 footbridges
- 4 birdwatching towers located in SPA Senne
- 5 rests with shelter will be placed in SPA Senne
- 50 “Access banned” signs and marks

Actual Achievements:

- 5 towers for monitoring/birdwatching built in Senne SPA
- 13 information boards placed within and around Senne SPA
- 1 Information trail in Senne SPA
- 5 small bridges

- 5 rest places with shelter in Senne SPA
- 52 “Access banned” signs and marks
- 1 traditional well restored in Inacovce village
- Information centre in Cicarovce village, Medzibodrozie SPA
- 1 instructional trail in Besa polder, Medzibodrozie SPA
- 3 rest places in Besa polder, Medzibodrozie SPA
- 2 monitoring/visitors towers in Medzibodrozie SPA

Action status: completed

Modification of the activity against the plan: N/A

Planned completion date: 3Q/2008

Actual completion date: 4Q/2010

Reasons for delay: Formal extension of the project ending date and financial constrains of the project participants.

Description:

Under the present Action C 5, small tourist infrastructure was built in both project sites. In Senne SPA, the infrastructure was financed under the present project as foreseen in the Project proposal. In addition, Inacovce village raised funds for reconstruction of traditional well, that well complements instructional trail developed under the present project. In Medzibodrozie SPA the infrastructure was financed under the project SK 0121 – Conservation of Diversity of Waterbirds and its Habitats in Eastern Slovakian Lowland financed through EEA/ Norwegian Financial Mechanism, but not accounted to the present project. It represents a leverage effect of the present project. Step-by step development of infrastructure was described in previous reports and documented with illustrative Annexes.

Below table presents review of all the infrastructure, including its type, date of completion and responsible project participant.

Type of infrastructure	Project Site	Date of completion	Source of financing	Responsible participants
Senné watching tower	Senne SPA	October 2011	SENNERESTSK	SNC
Ináčovce watching tower	Senne SPA	August 2011	SENNERESTSK	SNC
Blatná Polianka watching tower	Senne SPA	December 2011	SENNERESTSK	SNC
Ostrovik watching tower	Senne SPA	May 2011	SENNERESTSK	SOS/BirdLife Slovakia
Sirmajky watching tower	Senne SPA	May 2011	SENNERESTSK	SOS/BirdLife Slovakia
Small bridge Ostrovik and Iňačovce/UHLISKO above K23 channel	Senne SPA	July 2009	SENNERESTSK	SOS/BirdLife Slovakia
Blatna Polianka small bridge and iron bridge – Ostrovik	Senne SPA	May 2011	SENNERESTSK	SOS/BirdLife Slovakia
Small bridge in Blatna Polianka	Senne SPA	April 2011	SENNERESTSK	Blatná Polianka municipality
Small bridge in Inacovce near well	Senne SPA	July 2008	SENNERESTSK	Iňačovce

Rest place Ostrovik	Senne SPA	April 2011	SENNERESTSK	SOS/BirdLife Slovakia
Rest place Iňačovska well	Senne SPA	April 2011	SENNERESTSK	SOS/BirdLife Slovakia
Rest place near Blatna Polianka	Senne SPA	April 2011	SENNERESTSK	SOS/BirdLife Slovakia
Rest place in Senné village	Senne SPA	May 2011	SENNERESTSK	Senné municipality
Rest place in Iňačovce village	Senne SPA	May 2011	SENNERESTSK	Iňačovce
Rest place in Blatná Polianka village	Senne SPA	May 2011	SENNERESTSK	Blatná Polianka
Senné instructional trail _12 boards	Senne SPA	July 2007-May 2011	SENNERESTSK	SOS/BirdLife Slovakia
Senné instructional trail _1 board	Senne SPA	May 2011	SENNERESTSK	Hažín
Iňačovská studňa well, restoration	Senne SPA	August 2008	Zelené oázy	Iňačovce

Instructional trail at Medzibodrožie	Medzibodrožie SPA	June 2011	NFM	SNC
3 Rest places	Medzibodrožie SPA	April 2011	NFM	SNC
Monitoring tower near Cicarovce	Medzibodrožie SPA	August 2011	NFM	SNC
Monitoring tower near Beša	Medzibodrožie SPA	April 2011	NFM	SNC
Information centre in Cicarovce	Medzibodrožie SPA	April 2011	NFM	SNC

Annex C_5_1 shows map with small tourist infrastructure at Senne SPA

Annex C_5_2 shows map with small tourist infrastructure at Medzibodrožie SPA

Annex C_5_3 shows map with details of instructional trail and info boards at Senne SPA

Annex C_5_4 shows pictures of infrastructure at Senne SPA

Annex C_5_5 shows pictures of infrastructure at Medzibodrožie SPA

C.6 - Restore water regime in SPA Medzibodrožie (locations Veľký les, Vilháň, Pri prameni) modified to restore water regime in SPA Medzibodrožie (locations polder Besa and Cicarovce)

Expected results:

- 3 new water gates built in Medzibodrožie SPA
- 500 hectares of habitats improved by water regime

Actual Achievements:

- 2 new water gates built in Medzibodrožie SPA
- 1 098 hectares of habitats improved by water regime

Action status: completed

Modification of the activity against the plan: This activity was modified in terms of location of the action (the large part of the original project site near Leles village was sold in July 2006 and the new owner did not agree to co-operate in the project), its content and its financing. The SNC requested the project modification submitted in 12/2007. The 1st Supplementary Agreement covering this modification was communicated to the SNC in 03/2008. The modification was based on relocation of the project site and adjusting the action to

the new site conditions. Construction of water gates was financed through the project SK 0121 – Conservation of Diversity of Waterbirds and its Habitats in Eastern Slovakian Lowland financed through EEA/ Norwegian Financial Mechanism, but not accounted to the present project.

Planned completion date: 1Q/2009

Actual completion date: 3Q/2011 – beyond the completion date of the present project

Reasons for delay: The Action was delayed for multiple reasons. Initially, because it was necessary to modify it. Later, for the reasons of financial constraints of the beneficiary and consequent need to raise additional funds for implementing the action. And finally, for the reason of heavy floods in 2010 resulting in the formal extension of the Project ending date.

Description:

Technical documentation for building of the three water gates in Medzibodrozie Project Site was elaborated under Action A2. For this purpose, the SNC raised funds from the joint EEA/Norwegian Financial Mechanism Seed Money. These costs were not accounted to the present Project costs.

Technical Documentation was submitted by the SNC to the Environment District Office in Michalovce with a request to issue a building permit. Building permit was issued on 22 August 2008 and become effective on 27 August 2008. (see Annex _C_6_1 to the 2nd Progress Report for building permit).

Ekostav, a.s. Michalovce was contracted for building the three water gates at Medzibodrozie Project Site early in 2010. The Work Contract was attached as Annex C_6_1_el to the 3rd Progress Report. Construction works, however, could not start in 2010 due to extreme seasonal as well as annual precipitations and consequent unfavorable site conditions. The Beša polder was filled with water from floods in early June. The water remained in the polder some 2 months. However, the meadows remained waterlogged and access to water gate building sites was impossible for machinery. Details were described in the 3rd Request for project modification concerning the Change in the Project Ending Date, communicated through the letter re SOPSR 2321/2010 dated 28/07/2010.

The construction started in spring 2011. Water Gate No 2 on Besiansky Channel and Water gate No. 3 on Velky Channel near Cicarovce village were successfully completed. Water Gate No.1 on Besiansky Channel was not possible complete. Digging of footing bottom for water gate caused massive seepage of the shifting sands from the bedrock, which made impossible to continue with construction.

The two water gates influence the area of 1 098 hectares.

As mentioned above, the construction was financed through the project SK 0121 – Conservation of Diversity of Waterbirds and its Habitats in Eastern Slovakian Lowland financed through EEA/ Norwegian Financial Mechanism, but not accounted to the present project.

It is understood that amount of 89 500 EUR, originally budgeted for building of water gates at this project site will be deducted from the total eligible project costs.

Map showing location of the water gates, including water gate No. 1 and their respective areas of influence in attached in Annex C_6_1.

Effects of water gates on the status of birds will be monitored continuously within a framework of the After-life Conservation Plan.

D.1 – Maintain favourable habitat conditions for birds in purchased land, wet meadows and wetlands

Expected results:

- 40 hectares of purchased land managed for birds by SOVS
- Machinery for habitat management purchased

Actual Achievements:

- 54 hectares of purchased land managed for birds by SOVS
- Machinery for habitat management purchased

Action status: completed
Modification of the activity against the plan: N/A
Planned completion date: 4Q/2010
Actual completion date: 4Q/2010
Reasons for delay: N/A

Description:

More than 54 ha of land was purchased by SOS at Ostrovik meadows at Senne SPA under the Action B1. Within the project span the land was regularly managed – mostly mulched and mowed in the period 2006 – 2010. In order to ensure long-term management on purchased land in a sustainable way, the tractor with mowing machine was purchased (Tractor Zetor 7441.12 Proxima and mowing machine ZTR 165) in 12/2007. The tractor was delivered to Michalovce and subsequently to Senne on 21/02/2008.

In January 2008, existing water gate influencing water at Ostrovik meadow was closed. This allowed keeping water at the meadow longer. Once a month (07/03/2008, 03/04/2008, 28/04/2008, 12/05/2008, 28/05/2008, 20/06/2008), small plots situated on the edge of dray and wet sections of the meadow were mowed – in total cca 1 000 m² and biomass was removed out of the meadow. Such management kept breeding habitats of *Charadriiformes* in a favorable status.

In March 2009 consultation took place with the farm at Vysoka nad Uhom concerning cattle grazing at Ostrovik meadow (See Annex D_1_1 to the 2nd Progress Report). At the same year, 2 signs restricting access of public to the area were installed under Action C5.

In 2010, the area was not managed for most of the year for the reason of extreme precipitations and consequent flooding of the meadows. Mowing was possible only later in 2010, mainly at the beginning of November.

Below table shows review of management measures implemented on purchased meadows at Ostrovik meadow in the project span.

Measure	Site	Area	Dates	Who	Action
Mulching	Ostrovik	20 ha	2006 ,2007	SOS	D1
Removal of self-seeded shrubs	Ostrovik	cca 900 m ² at length of 100m	2008 ,2009	SOS	D1
Restoration of small wetland	Ostrovik	cca 1 000 m ²	2008		
Mulching	Ostrovik	80 ha	2008	SOS	D1
Mowing		30 ha			
Mowing	Ostrovik	50 ha	2009	SOS	D1
Mowing	Ostrovik	38 ha	2010	SOS	D1

Annex D_1_1 contains map showing managed area in 2010

Annex D_1_2 contains map showing managed area in the period 2006 – 2010

D.2 – Test and implement pilot aqua-environmental scheme

Expected results:

- Pilot aqua environmental scheme implemented
- Economical and other data gathered.

Actual Achievements:

Action failed

Action status: terminated

Modification of the activity against the plan: N/A

Planned completion date: 3Q/2009

Actual completion date: N/A

Reasons for delay: N/A

Description:

Pilot aqua-environmental scheme tailor made for the Senne fishponds managed by Dona, Ltd. at Senne SPA was developed under action A3. Scheme involved compensation payments for loss of income/payments for creation and protection of reed-beds on commercial fishponds. The scheme targeted 5 fishponds with best preserved grows of reed beds. Part of the fish-ponds are situated in the buffer zone of Senné NNR, part of them are outside of the buffer-zone.

The initial meeting between the Project team and DONA concerning the scheme was held on 23/01/2007. Dona shown the interest in the scheme, but requested more time to consider it in detail. On 14/03/2007 letter from SNC requesting cooperation on aqua-environmental scheme was sent to DONA along with the pilot scheme (copy of the letter was attached to Midterm report as Annex D_2_1). On 26/03/2007 the second meeting with DONA s.r.o. held. The scheme was refused by fishpond managers. They stated that the amount to be paid under the scheme was insufficient and they complained about general insufficiency of compensation payments for nature protection purposes in Slovakia. DONA was repeatedly contacted by the project team and the SNC, however, without any positive results.

Thus testing of pilot aqua environmental scheme, foreseen in the project proposal, failed. Implementing of regular/formal scheme failed as well since the scheme was not included into the relevant strategic and operation documents of the Slovak Republic. Details of the effort to test pilot scheme and to promote formal scheme were described at previous reports and are summarized under Action A3 of the present final report.

It is understood that amount of 90 000 EUR, originally budgeted for pilot aqua-environmental scheme will be deducted from the total project budget.

Documentation to these action was provided in annexes D_2_1 – D_2_4 to the Midterm Report.

E.1 – Inform local communities and general public on the values of the sites

Expected results:

- 20 presentations for schools or general public will be organised in Senne and Medzibodrožie SPAs
- Cooperation with 5 schools will be established and maintained during project implementation
- 20 guided tours will be organized
- 8 youth conservation camps organised

Actual Achievements:

- 35 presentations for schools or general public
- Cooperation with 5 schools established and maintained during project implementation

- 24 guided tours
- 14 youth conservation camps
- 8 other events

Action status: completed

Modification of the activity against the plan: N/A

Planned completion date: 4Q/2010

Actual completion date: 4Q/2010

Reasons for delay: N/A

Description:

In the project span intensive effort was made to inform local communities and general public on the values of the project sites. They included 35 presentations for schools and for general public, 24 guided tours, 14 youth conservation camps, including international ones and 8 other events. Cooperation was established and maintained with five schools. Review of all the events is included in Annex E_1_1.

E.2 – Prepare and distribute information and promotion materials on the project

Expected results:

- 1000 pcs. of poster A2 format, full coloured
- 6000 pcs. of brochure, A5 format, full-coloured, 12 pages
- 1000 pcs. of popular project report (layman's report), A4 format, full coloured, 16 pages
- 200 pcs. of T-shirts
- 1000 pcs. Senne publication, 120 pages
- 10 000 pcs of stickers

Actual Achievements:

- 1000 pcs. of poster A2 format, full coloured
- 6000 pcs. of brochure, A5 format, full-coloured, 12 pages
- 1000 pcs. of popular project report (layman's report – reported under Action A11), A4 format, full coloured, 16 pages
- 200 pcs. of T-shirts
- 1000 pcs. Senne publication, 136 pages
- 10 000 pcs of stickers
- 1 leaflet for tourists and visitors Senné SPA – Map of natural and cultural attractions

Action status: completed

Modification of the activity against the plan: N/A

Planned completion date: 4Q/2010

Actual completion date: 4Q/2010

Reasons for delay: N/A

Description:

By the end of 2007, the following material has been produced namely, T-shirt with birds and logos, 200 pcs, attractive poster size A2 "Protect wetlands and water birds, jewels of Slovak nature", 1000 pcs, stickers with 4 photos of birds and logos, 10 000 pcs. For details see Annex E.2.1 to the Midterm report.

The Book entitled "Birds of Senne in the past and present" was published in 1000 copies in 02/2008. It was compiled by well-known ornithologist, then director Zemplin museum in Michalovce, Mr. Danko who had been researching birds at the site over 30 years. The text of the 136 pages book is richly illustrated with black-and-white photographs and 16 full-colour pictures of breeding bird species.

In March 2009, Brochure “Conservation of wetlands in SPAs of Eastern Slovakia” was published.

In October 2009, Simple leaflet for tourists and visitors “Chránené vtáčie územie Senianske rybníky - Mapa prírodných a kultúrnych zaujímavostí” (Senné SPA – Map of natural and cultural attractions) was published in 6 500 copies. Extra funds were raised for publication of the leaflet from the Carpathian Foundation and thus the publishing costs have not been included in the project costs. For leaflet please refer to Annex E_2_1 to the 3rd Progress Report.

The promotion materials were distributed when appropriate. See Annex E_2_1 to the Present Report for Promotion Materials Distribution List.

Explanation of some questions from the Commission letter from 21 November 2008:

This is to confirm that stickers acknowledging the support from the European Commission were put on all 1000 copies of the book “Birds of Senne in the past and present”. By mistake resulting from misunderstood communication between the former manager of the present project and communication manager of the SOVS, acknowledgement to the donor that provides general support to the SOVS was incorrectly placed on the book.

Stickers were used to ensure proper acknowledgement to the EC on the book.

E.3 – Prepare exhibition about the natural values of SPAs Senne and Medzibodrožie

Expected results:

- Exhibition texts and photos prepared on 20 panels
- 5000 visitors

Actual Achievements:

- Exhibition texts and photos prepared on 16 panels
- 9 700 visitors

Action status: completed

Modification of the activity against the plan: N/A

Planned completion date: 4Q/2010

Actual completion date: 2Q/2011

Reasons for delay: Formal extension of the Project ending date

Description:

The exhibition “Natural values of Senne and Medzibodrozie SPA” was prepared and printed in April 2007. It consists from 16 banners, each of size of 120 x 80 cm. On 11/05/2007 the exhibition was installed and opened for public in Zemplinske museum in Michalovce.

Since then, the exhibition was displayed at 10 other sites (3 schools, 3 museums, 2 information centers and 2 state institutions) including in 2 villages in the project area (Iňačovce, Senne), 3 smaller towns close to project areas (Michalovce, Trebišov, Velké Kapusany), in a large regional town (Košice) and in the capital of Slovakia, Bratislava in the premises of Ministry of Environment. Even it was not always possible to record exact number of visitors, because of its various locations, total number of recorded visitors already exceeded 9 700 at the project ending date.

Pictures of all exhibition banners were attached to the Midterm Report as Annex E_3_2. Below table gives details of exhibition places.

Place of exhibition	City	Duration	Number of participants
Zemplinske museum	Michalovce	11/05/2007 – 30/09/2007	5000
VI.Elementary school	Michalovce	05/10/2007	960
I. Elementary school	Michalovce	11-24/10/2007	619
High school Gymnazium L.Stura	Michalovce	24/10/ - 05/11/2007	832
TIC (Tourist Information Centre)	Velke Kapušany	01-03/2008	Unknown
Municipal Office	Iňačovce	22-28/11/ 2008	Unknown
Ministry of Environment	Bratislava	05-28/02/2009	120
Vlastivedné múzeum	Trebišov	16/04/ - 15/07/2009	830
Východoslovenské múzeum	Košice	17/09/ - 11/10/2009	167
Avescentrum	Senné	28/11/2009 – 15/09/2010	335
Mestské museum	Fiľakovo	4/10/ -22/10/2010	200
Zemplinske muzeum	Michalovce	23/10/2010 – 30/5/2011	650
Total visitors recorded as at 05/2011			9713

E.4 - Erect and maintain information signs with project logo

Expected results:

- 5 information signs erected in the Senne SPA
- 2 information signs erected in the Medzibodrožie SPA

Actual Achievements:

- 5 information signs erected in the Senne SPA
- 2 information signs erected in the Medzibodrožie SPA

Action status: completed

Modification of the activity against the plan: N/A

Planned completion date: 4Q2010

Actual completion date: 3Q/2008

Reasons for delay: N/A

Description:

The 5 information signs for Senne SPA were produced in 07/2007. They were produced of wood, painted and installed in 5 locations: Senne, Blatne Remety, Blatna Polianka and Inacovce villages and at the entrance of the Instructional Trail into the area close to Fish Ponds. Two information signs for Medzibodrožie SPA were produced in 2008 and installed in respectively Besa and Cicarovce villages.

E.5 – Prepare and update project web site

Expected results:

- Fully functioning and updated project web site
- At least 25.000 visits during project period

Actual Achievements:

- Fully functioning and updated project web site
- At least 32.000 visits during project period

Action status: completed

Modification of the activity against the plan: N/A

Planned completion date: 4Q2010

Actual completion date: 2Q/2011

Reasons for delay: Formal extension of the Project ending date

Description:

The web site was launched on 30/11/2006 at the address www.life-senne.sk and was regularly updated, mostly in 4-8 weeks intervals. It is available in Slovak, English and Hungarian versions and supplied with photographs, news etc. Some project deliverables, notable some articles and layman's report can be downloaded from the website.

E.6 – Keep regular contacts with media and promote the project

Expected results:

- At least 2 press conferences
- 2 site visits for media
- At least 10 press releases
- 50 news, interviews or articles in electronic or printed media
- 6 articles in magazines

Actual Achievements:

- 2 press conferences
- 2 site visits for media
- 10 press releases
- 38 media articles, 7 TV shots/reportages 1 Radio program

Action status: completed

Modification of the activity against the plan: N/A

Planned completion date: 4Q/2010

Actual completion date: 2Q/2011

Reasons for delay: Formal extension of the Project ending date

Description:

In the project span intensive contacts were kept with media. They included:

2 press conferences:

The first press conference, introducing the project and its goals, was held in Košice on 28/03/2007 in the Slovak Syndicate of Journalists (SSN). From the project team 4 participants took part, M. Riník, S. Pačenovský, J. Uhrín (SOS/BirdLife Slovakia) and P. Sabo (SNC representative). Nine different media (two press agencies, SITA and ČTK, Slovak Radio, Radio Regina, STV, Új Szó, Pravda, Plus 1 deň) were represented at the conference and the media coverage was very good.

The second press conference was organised on 01/02/2011 at MoE in Bratislava. The press conference was a part of the broader press conference organised by the MoE on the occasion of the World Wetlands Day. The project was represented at the Press Conference by M. Demko, technical project manager, S. Pacenovsky, agriculture expert and by Mr. Ivanko and Mr. Saboslai, Mayors of respectively Inacovce and Senne villages. Viedo movie "Birds Paradise are Senne and Medzibodrozie" was introduced at the press conference as well.

Minister of the Environment and Director of the Nature and Landscape Conservation Department of MoE were also present at the press conference. The Invitation to the press Conference and illustration photos are attached as Annexes E_6_1 – E_6_3.

2 site visits for media:

- 01/04/2007 Senne site visit for public and media. The event was advertised in radio and Slovak Television STV. Some 35 participants including media, and public from from towns of Košice and Michalovce were guided by SOS/BirdLife project team.
- 26/05/2010 - guided tour to Senne SPA, by M. Repel, P. Chrašč, for Slovak Syndicate of Journalists, 7 participants

10 press releases - they are published on project web site or at the website of SOS

38 media articles, 7 TV shots/reportages 1 Radio program – listed in Annex E_6_4 to the present Final report

E.7 – Keep regular communication with stakeholders and prepare a visit to properly managed Natura 2000 site

Expected results:

- minimum of 10 meetings with various stakeholders organized
- 5 lectures undertaken
- 8 common field trips organized
- 1 site visit to properly managed Natura 2000 site within EU (Austria) for 10 stakeholders

Actual Achievements:

- 56 meetings with various stakeholders organized
- 4 field trips
- 2 site visits to properly managed Natura 2000 site within EU (Hungary, Czech Republic)
- 3 other events with stakeholders

Action status: completed

Modification of the activity against the plan: N/A

Planned completion date: 4Q/2010

Actual completion date: 2Q/2011

Reasons for delay: Formal extension of the Project ending date

Description:

For visit to NATURA 2000 properly organized site, Hortobagy in Hungary was selected. Visit took place 24 -25 October 2008. In total, 29 stakeholders participated at the visit, including farmers, Agricultural Payments Agency officers, mayors from villages in the vicinity of Project sites, land users, hunters, Slovak Water Management Institute, officers from District Environment Office in Michalovce. Visit was organized in cooperation with the GEF Funded project “Integration of Ecosystem Management Principles and Practices into Land and Water Management of Slovakia”. Participants had opportunity to see a working example of regional development driven by proper use of nature values. See Annexes E.7.2 – E.7.3 to the 2nd Progress Report for documentation from site visit to Hortobagy.

In co-operation with the GEF funded project “Integration of Ecosystem Management Principles and Practices into Land and Water Management of Slovakia” another excursion, to Moravia Region in Czech Republic and Záhorie region in Slovakia, has been prepared by the project-team for stakeholders from the project area on 30/09/09 – 02/10/09. Altogether 21 participants took part at this second excursion, including mayors, employees of self-government institutions, active people from project area, members of farmers

association, employees of the Slovak Water management institution (SVP), local artists, NGOs staff active in the region, an employee of the Zemplínske museum and 2 participants of the LIFE project team.

During the excursion, the participants visited also a fish-farm at Borský Svätý Jur village at Záhorie region and discussed with fishpond-managers their experiences with fish-farming and addressing fish predation by birds and opportunities and challenges of fish-farming inside protected areas.

Further target of the excursion was the village of Modrá u Velehradu at Moravia, where local mayor and other active people have been successful in protection of local heritage and restoration of the landscape, including building of small artificial lakes and ponds and small fish-ponds in co-operation with forestry association and with farmers.

The third location visited during the excursion was the village of Hostetin in Biele Karpaty mountains in Moravia, where participants has got an overview of ecological buildings, traditional and new technologies of ecological agriculture and utilization of its products and the excursion included also a visit to a functioning biological water-treatment plant.

Photos and detailed report on this excursion is found in the Annexes E_7_1_el and E_7_2_el to the 2nd Progress Report.

Cooperation and cost sharing with UNDP GEF – funded project “Laborec – Uh” allowed for involving more stakeholders and for organizing two visits.

Numerous meetings with various local stakeholders took place in the project span. They are listed below.

In 2006 - 4 meetings:

27/07/2006 in Senne Village - the Project team representatives have informed about the LIFE Project, about the agro-environmental schemes and other aspects related to the Project.

06/10/2006 in Blatne Remety - discussion on conflicts between nature conservation and hunting objectives with representatives of Hunting Association Agronova and members of Zemplin Environmental Forum.

07/10/2006 in Iňačovce, with representatives of Hunting Association Jastrab and fish-pond users

01/12/2006 meeting with stakeholders focused on preparation of Management plan for Senne SPA, followed with filed trip

In 2007 - 5 meetings a 1 training: mostly focused on proposed building of sluices and water gates in SPA Senne:

14/02/2007 meeting with Agronova PD Blatné Revištia

15/02/2007, meeting with stakeholder AgroSpol Michalovce as held in Čečehov

15/02/2007 meeting with stakeholder Nafta a.s. , followed with field excursion on 21/02/2007.

19/02/2007 meeting with private farmer J.Knežo

08/06/2007 a training of farmers regarding the method of mowing with consideration of Corncrake *Crex crex* took place.

01/08/2007 – meeting related to project modification, with stakeholder Lesy SR in SPA Medzibodrozie was held on in Sobrance

In 2008, meetings were held with land users. These meetings contributed to further improving of communication with concerned stakeholders. Land users participated in some actions for the conservation of the birds in the project region.

In 2009, the following meetings with stakeholders took place:

- 2 meetings with land user Mr. Knezo
- 3 meetings with Mr. Kocan, a chairman Vysoká nad Uhom Farm
- 5 meetings with Mayor of Besa village
- 3 meetings with mayor of Senne village, and
- 2 meetings with mayor of Blatna Polianka village.

Various nature conservation issues were discussed at all the meetings. On 1.8.2009 a social event for owners and users of land in Senne SPA was organized near “Iňačovska studna well”. Some 80 participants attended the event.

In 2010, the following meetings with stakeholders took place:

- 3 meetings with land user Mr. Knezo
- 3 meetings with Mr. Kocan, a chairman Vysoká nad Uhom Farm
- 2 meetings with agronomist of Agronova Blatná Polianka
- 4 meetings with Mayor of Besa village
- 5 meetings with mayor of Senne village and
- 2 meetings with mayor of Blatna Polianka village
- 1 meeting with stakeholders in Blatne Remety

Various nature conservation issues were discussed at all the meetings. At the meeting in Blatne Remety, on 25/02/2010 possibilities to involve the Roma people into conservation works at Senne SPA were discussed. On 25/07/2010 a social event for owners and users of land in Senne SPA, village mayors and public was organized near “Iňačovska studna well”. This event related to the Educational trail “Vtáčim rajom” has become already “a tradition”.

In 2011

- 2 meetings with Vysoká nad Uhom Farm – focused on proper land management
- 1 meeting with local farmer Mr. Hankoščák – consultations on mowing
- 1 meeting with Agrosopol Michalovce Farm concerning management of Blata meadows
- 2 meetings with Mr. Knezo followed with field trip focused on mowing Blata meadow and vicinity of Inacovce in February and April
- 1 meeting with Mr. Murnik concerning grasslands restoration in April
- 1 meeting with Agronova Blatná Polianka Farm in May

Thanks to intensive communication between the Project team and local stakeholders well relations have been established with local farmers and mayors and general public. The most problematic stakeholder remains Dona Fish Farm for the reason of conflicting objectives of fish farming and protection of birds feeding also on commercial fish ponds, without availability of proper compensation mechanism.

E.8 – Disseminate and exchange scientific results and conservation experience on the project

Expected results:

- 1 scientific report on the Pilot aqua-environmental scheme
- 2 Scientific articles (printed in Ochrana prirody, Tichodroma)
- 4 articles in farmers’ and hunters’ magazines

Actual Achievements:

- 13 presentations
- 2 Scientific articles (printed in Tichodroma)
- 4 other articles

Action status: completed

Modification of the activity against the plan: N/A

Planned completion date: 3Q/2010

Actual completion date: 12/2009

Reasons for delay: Formal extension of the Project ending date

Description:

Scientific results and conservation experience were presented at various below listed occasions:

07-08/12/2006 Regional Kick-off meeting in Tatranska Lomnica

03-04/03/2007 at regular SOS/BirdLife meeting in Zvolen

27-28/06/2007 at LIFE Platforma meeting in Bratislava

14/15/09/2007 at SOS/BirdLife Ornithological conference

05/04/2008 Member's Meeting of the Slovak Ornithological Society in Zvolen

05 – 06/09/2008 XX..Central Slovakia Ornithological Conference “Applied Ornithology 2008

03/2009 Member's Meeting of the Slovak Ornithological Society in Zvolen

11/09/2009 XXI.Central Slovakia Ornithological Conference “Applied Ornithology 2009

09/2010 Member's Meeting of the Slovak Ornithological Society in Zvolen „Hniezdenie kačice chrapky (*Anas crecca*) v CHVU Medzibodrožie (Nesting of *Anas crecca* in Medzibodrožie SPA“

03/12/2010 workshop organised by Faculty of Natural Sciences of the Comenius University in Bratislava
Poster: „Ochrana chránených vtáčích území Senné a Medzibodrožie na Slovensku (Conservation of Senne and Medzibodrožie SPAs in Slovakia)“ presented from the point of view of nature protection, education and public awareness

07/04/2011 - XV. Days of Water in Michalovce District (Okresné dni vody v Michalovciach)

19-20/05/2011 - Workshop: Wetlands for the future (Seminár Mokrade pre budúcnosť)

17.-19.5. 2011 - VIII Scientific conference with participation of foreign experts „Vplyv antropogénnej činnosti na vodný režim nížinného územia“ na Vinianskom jazere

Several articles exchanging scientific results with a wide scientific community have been published:

Scientific article of 30 pages dealing with avifauna was published in Tichodroma 18, Journal of Ornithology, in 2006.

Article on SPAs Senne and Medzibodrožie and the project published in VTAKY, summer 2006.

Article on Ostrovik meadow in SPA Senne and its values published in BIRDS, winter 2006.

Article on monitoring of birds in SPA Senne published in VTAKY, summer 2007.

A scientific paper concerning first breeding of crane in Slovakia in the SPA Senne was published in scientific ornithological magazine Tichodroma 21

An article “Kraj močiarov, vtákov a komárov” (The country of wetlands, birds and mosquitoes) in Naše poľovníctvo magazine devoted to hunters, nature scientists and public. The focus was on actions at Medzibodrožie .

Technical article: „Súčasný stav populácie chochlačky bielookej na východnom Slovensku (Current status of population of *Aythya nyroca* at Eastern Slovakia)“, by Uhrín, Pačenovský (members of the project team), in Vtáky, summer issue in 2010. Restoration actions implemented within the Project in Senne SPA are also mentioned in the Article.

Articles were provided with previous reports or are available at the project web site.

E.9 – Prepare and present video film about the project sites

Expected results:

- 2 copies of 26 minutes long video in TV quality (beta cam)
- 1 premiere and 2 reprises in national TV
- 10 copies on VHS /DVD for lectures and presentations
- Presented in 40 presentations, lectures and/or film festivals

Actual Achievements:

- 2 copies of 26 minutes long video in TV quality (beta cam)
- 1 premiere in national TV in the project span
- 320 copies DVD for lectures and presentations
- Presented in 5 x in the Project span

Action status: completed

Modification of the activity against the plan: N/A

Planned completion date: 2Q/2010

Actual completion date: 2Q/2011

Reasons for delay: Delayed film production

Description:

Movie Studio KB 6 was contracted for the production of video film “Bird Paradise Senne and Medzibodrozie” in 07/2007. All production work for the video film was completed in 2009 (exterier records). Post production work such as, cutting, editing, music tracks followed afterwards. Shoots (total of 240 min) were digitized. In November-December 2009 commentary was drafted. Broadcasting of video in duration of 26 min in 2011 was agreed with the Slovak TV. Premiere broadcasting was on 23/04/2011 on the Second Channel of Slovak TV. DVD with film in all language mutations (SK, En, G) is attached as Annex E_9_1.

E.10 – Train SNC and project staff in wetlands management

Expected results:

- 15 SNC employees trained
- training material and outcomes widely distributed

Actual Achievements:

- 42 participants at training block A, 39 participants at training block B
- training material and outcomes widely distributed

Action status: completed

Modification of the activity against the plan: N/A

Planned completion date: 1Q/2008

Actual completion date: 2Q/2009

Reasons for delay: Harmonising of the Action with other two cooperating projects

Description:

The training for the SNC and project staff in wetlands management was organized in cooperation with the two other on-going projects: namely “Conservation, Restoration and Wise Use of Calcareous Fens” and “Integration of Ecosystem Management Principles and Practices into Land and Water Management of Slovakia”.

It was organized in two parts so called “blocks”: Block A took place on 12-13 May 2009, in Tatranska Kotlina, and was mainly focus on management of fens. 42 participants attended Block A.

Block B took place on 9.-12. June 2009 in Zemplínska Šírava, Kamenec in hotel Life, with attendance of 39 participants, mainly employees of SNC (botanists, zoologists, ecologists), participants from NGOs, members of the project team and other interested experts. The second part of the training dealt with protection and management of wetlands and wet meadows, with preparation of management plans for wetlands, with topic wetlands and people and a with restoration methods for different types of wetlands according to requirements

of different groups of birds. Lecturers were from Slovak institutions, including SNC, Daphne, SOS/BirdLife Slovakia, SVP and one lecturer was from the RSPB from Great Britain.

For more details, please refer to the following Annexes to the 3rd Progress Report:

Annex E_10_1_CD contains CD with invitations to single blocks, respective programmes and presentations

Annex E_10_2_el contains a short report from Block B

Annex E_10_3_el contains List of participant at Block A

Annex E_10_4_el contains List of participant at Block B.

Below tables show cost sharing of the three projects in implementing the Wetlands Management Training.

Wetland Training Block A

Project	Logging and board	Travel costs	Excursion and transport	Remuneration to speakers/ experts	Refreshments/ workshop material and other costs	Renting of room	Total
GEF1 rich fens ²	1 995,7	694,38	694,38	2 422,7	127,36	150	4 390,23
GEF2 laborec uh ³	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
LIFE SENNE ⁴	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
Total	1 995,7	694,38	694,38	2 422,7	127,36	150	4 390,23

Wetland Training Block B

Project	Logging and board	Travel costs	Excursion and transport	Remuneration to speakers/ experts	Refreshments/ workshop material and other costs		Total
GEF1 rich fens	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
GEF2 laborec uh	1 977,30	582,90	338,-	1 470,-	156,95		4 525,15
LIFE SENNE				1072,-			1072,-
Total	1 977,30	582,90	338,-	2 542,-	156,95		5 597,15

E.11 – Produce Layman’s report

Expected results:

- 1 000 or 500 copies of Layman’s report in paper form⁵
- 150 copies of CD with electronic version of the Layman’s report

² “Conservation, Restoration and Wise Use of Calcareous Fens” (the SNC is a “passive” beneficiary – do not receiving GEF funds)

³ “Integration of Ecosystem Management Principles and Practices into Land and Water Management of Slovakia” (the SNC acts as a project partner not directly benefiting from the GEF Grant).

⁴ Present LIFE project

⁵ In the project proposal, 1000 copies were stated as target within Action A2. That remained from the text before revision of project proposal, after revision new Action A 11 was included upon recommendation of EC, where target of 500 copies was stated.

- Electronic version of Layman's report to be downloaded from the project web page

Actual Achievements:

- 1 000 copies of Layman's report in paper form
- 500 copies of CD with electronic version of the Layman's report
- Electronic version of Layman's report to be downloaded from the project web page

Action status: completed

Modification of the activity against the plan: N/A

Planned completion date: 4Q/2010

Actual completion date: 2Q/2011

Reasons for delay: Formal extension of the Project closing date

Description:

Layman's Report was prepared in early spring 2011 and distributed. The copy of the Layman's Report can be downloaded from the project web page. Hard copies of Layman's Report are attached to the present Layman's Report.

E.12 – Promote Agro-environmental Scheme

Expected results:

- At least 1000 hectares of meadows and wetlands under the agri-environmental scheme at Senne SPA
- At least 800 hectares of meadows and wetlands under the agri-environmental scheme at Medzibodrozie SPA

Actual Achievements:

- 980 ha under the agri-environmental scheme at Senne SPA
- 800 ha under the agri-environmental scheme at Medzibodrozie SPA

Action status: completed

Modification of the activity against the plan: N/A

Planned completion date: 3Q/2009

Actual completion date: 2Q/2011

Reasons for delay: Formal extension of the Project ending date

Description:

The project team promoted availability of agroenvironmental schemes applicable at project areas and conditions for benefiting from them through personal conversations and through distribution of available information materials in the whole project span. Free advisory service was offered in respect of preparations of applications for entering into the agroenvironmental scheme. On 4 March 2009, training for land users on AES was held in Michalovce, with participation of 33 land users. Participants were also informed on preparation of management plan for Senne SPA. See Annex E _12_1 to the 2nd Progress Report for illustration photo from the workshop.

Farmers at project area participated mainly in agroenvironmental schemes available in Slovakia in shortened programming period 2004-2006. Last round of submitting of their applications for agri-environmental and other agricultural support within the span of previous programming period was in first half of year 2007.

In programming period 2007 – 2013, the eligibility conditions included designation of SPAs according to the national Nature Conservation Act. However, Medzibodrozie SPA was designated as late as in 02/2008 and Senne SPA even later, in 09/2009. From that reason the farmers, could not apply for participation in the schemes at the early years of current programming period.

Under circumstances, maximum of some 980 ha and 800 ha were managed under agro environmental schemes in Senne and Medzibodrozie SPAs. Annex F_12_1 to the 3rd Progress Report included map showing the land in project area managed under the schemes in 2009. By the end of the Project, the area under schemes was declining.

This development has occurred in spite of that after the official designation of the Senne SPA 2009, the letter encouraging to join agro-environmental schemes, explaining possibility to participate at the AES, describing available subsidies and application procedure was distributed to farmers in both project areas in January and February 2010. Press release on AES was issued in February 2010 as well and article on the Rural Development Programme was published on www.changenet.sk.

F.1 – Plan, manage, monitor and report project

Expected results:

- Reports from Steering Committee Meetings provided
- The smooth and effective proceeding of the project is ensured

Actual Achievements:

- Reports from Steering Committee Meetings provided
- The smooth and effective proceeding of the project is ensured

Action status: completed

Modification of the activity against the plan: N/A

Planned completion date: 11/2010

Actual completion date: 05/2011

Reasons for delay: Formal extension of the Project Ending Date

Description:

The planning, management and monitoring of the project implementation was done through regular working meetings of project team usually once per two weeks. Interim management was ensured jointly by SOS and SNC. The Project manager was appointed in 10/2006. Project Manager, Mr. Martin Rinik, resigned from his position for family reasons as at 31 July 2008. Since 09/2008 Project management was shared by Mr Miroslav Demko (technical issues) and Ms. Zuzana Guziova (administrative issues), later acting previously as a Project Director. The below table presents project positions and changes in personnel composition in the whole duration of the project.

Position	Name /institution	Period
Project director	Mrs. Zuzana Guziová Mrs. Katarina Kralikova	Since 01/11/2006 since 01/09/2009
Project manager	Mr. Martin Rinik/SOS/Birdlife Mr. Miroslav Demko Mrs. Zuzana Guziova	Since 01/11/2006 since 01/09/2008 since 01/09/2008
Senne SPA site manager	Mr. Ján Uhrin	Since 20/11/2006
Medzibodrozie SPA site manager	Mr. Peter Sabo Mr. Matej Repel	Since 01/01/2007 since 01/10/2009
Senne SPA ranger	Mr. Eubomir Hrinko	since 01/01/2007
Medzibodrozie SPA ranger	Mr. Miloš Balla	since 01/01/2007
Ranger	Mr. Peter Chrace	since 01/10/2009
Agricultural expert	Mr. Samuel Pačenovský	since 20/11/2006
Awareness and media manager	Mr. Ján Gúgh Mrs. Ivana Hukel'ová	since 01/09/2007 from 01/11/2006 to 31/08/2007

Procurement specialist	Mr. Vladimír Skovajsa	since 01/11/2006 till 30/04/2007
Senior specialist	Mr. P. Saboslai	since 15/11/2005
Senior specialist	Mrs. Z. Kenderešová Mr. G. Ivanko	since 15/11/2005 till 31/12/2006 from 01/01/2007
Senior specialist	Mr. M. Kontra	since 15/11/2005
Senior specialist	Mrs. M. Šimková	since 15/11/2005

The timesheets of Project personnel were signed regularly once a month by Project manager or legal representative of respective participant organization.

The Partners/Cooperation Agreements between the beneficiary and respective project partners were in force and implemented in the project span.

Five reports have been submitted prior to the present Final Report, namely:

- 1st Progress Report
- Midterm report with Midterm Payment Request
- 2nd Progress Report
- 3rd Progress report
- 4th Progress Report

F.2 – Manage and monitor finances

Expected results:

- Transparent recording of project finances

Actual Achievements:

- Transparent recording of project finances

Action status: completed

Modification of the activity against the plan: N/A

Planned completion date: 11/2010

Actual completion date: 05/2011

Reasons for delay: Formal extension of the Project Ending Date

Description:

The system for managing finances was developed and rules for recording, accounting and presenting costs were agreed by the Project Participants at the early stages of the project. The project participants were sending reports on the project eligible expenses and copies of the supporting communication to the project bookkeeper who kept the project financial reports and compile statements of the project expenditures, including those attached in the Financial Report.

F.3 – Prepare after LIFE Conservation Plan

Expected results:

- After-LIFE Conservation Plan delivered with the final report.

Actual Achievements:

- After-LIFE Conservation Plan delivered with the final report.

Action status: completed

Modification of the activity against the plan: N/A

Planned completion date: 11/2010
Actual completion date: 05/2011
Reasons for delay: Formal extension of the Project Ending Date
Description:

After-LIFE Conservation Plan was elaborated by the project participants in 2011. It is attached as Annex F_3_1. It contains actions that will be implemented by the project participants with the aim of sustaining the project results.

F.4 – Monitor restoration progress and development of habitats

Expected results:

- Restoration work and habitat development monitored
- Data gathered in the database

Actual Achievements:

- Restoration work and habitat development monitored
- Data gathered in the database

Action status: completed

Modification of the activity against the plan: N/A

Planned completion date: 4Q/2010

Actual completion date: 2Q/2011

Reasons for delay: Formal extension of the Project Ending Date

Description:

Monitoring under the present action F4 aimed at assessing effects of rewetting measures was focused on:

- 1/ Monitoring of underground a ground water levels
- 2/ Habitats monitoring

Monitoring of underground and ground water consisted of

1/a Monitoring of underground waters

For the purpose of monitoring of underground waters, 30 perforated sinking tubes were installed at the end of summer 2008 that allowed monitoring of underground water levels (for map of distribution of tubes in the project areas and for illustration photos pls. refer to Annex F_4_1 to the 2nd Progress Report). Of them 25 tubes were installed in Senne SPA and 5 tubes were installed in Medzibodrozie SPA. Levels of underground water were checked regularly in two weeks intervals and recorded.

1/b Monitoring of water table level in Senianske rybniky Nature Reserve

Water table level in Senne NR was monitored in 7-14 days intervals at outlet, which is the lowest part of the Nature Reserve, in order to assess effects of the dyke, outlet and inlet reparation on the status of habitats in the reserve. Monitoring proved that water table level was relatively stable and its minimums were at the level of maximums before reparation. Birds habitats have thus reach favorable status. Dyke reparation had positive effect also on a larger area of Senne Fishponds.

1/c Monitoring of water table at sluices

Water table levels were measured in channels, where small sluices Blata 1 and Blata 2 were planned. In the vicinity of the planned Blata 2 sluice, three additional dipwells were installed in April 2009 in order to get more precious data on the underground water level. Monitoring interval was 2 weeks. Experts from Slovak Technical University were consulted about the effectiveness of and operational regime for sluices. They provided water management study elaborated within a framework of GEF funded Laborec- Uh project.

Water table was monitored at two sluices Blata 1 and Blata 2, also after their construction in 2009, once a month, between February and July.

1/d Monitoring of impact of water gates on water regime of irrigation channels

On Ostrovik meadow (meadow influenced by water gate) and on Senne – South site (not influenced by water gates), annual cycle of water regime of drainage channels was monitored and compared. Water table levels were monitored since April 2009 in regular intervals along with monitoring of underground waters.

1/e Monitoring of water table level above closed water gates on channel O2 and K23 at Senne SPA

Water table level was monitored in 14 days intervals in the period March – July 2011.

Monitoring of underground and ground water table levels confirmed positive effects of rewetting measures on water regime in Senne SPA. In Medzibodrozie SPA, where construction of water gates was delayed, effects will be evaluated within a framework of after life conservation plan.

2/ Habitats monitoring

Habitat monitoring was aimed at monitoring of changes in plant communities as result of implementing rewetting/restoration measures. It was based on mapping of plant communities in polygons according to methodology widely used in Slovakia. Accordingly, no permanent plots were established for this purpose.

In Senne SPA, baseline monitoring followed with monitoring at plots where restoration/management measures were implemented under Actions C1, C2, C3, C4 and D1 was carried out in the period 2008 -2011. In Medzibodrozie SPA, only baseline monitoring was possible in the project span because of delay in construction of water gates to 2011.

Habitat monitoring was performed by Daphne and by local expert Mr. Bogoly (later in Medzibodrozie only).

Results of habitats monitoring performed so far indicates dynamic changes in newly created water and wetland habitats, as well as some indicative changes in wet meadows. Monitoring will be continuing in after life period, because only longer series of data will allow responsible evaluation of changes in habitats.

2009 and 2010 Habitats monitoring reports were provided as Annexes F_4_1 to the 3rd and 4th Progress Reports.

Details of monitoring are presented in summary Habitats Monitoring Report that is attached to the present Final report as Annex F_4_1 to the present report.

F.5 – Monitor bird populations and assess conservation status in project sites

Expected results:

- Data on populations of all qualifying and other migrating species stored in the database
- Annual monitoring reports

Actual Achievements:

- Data on populations of all qualifying and other migrating species stored in the database
- 2006 – 2010 Annual birds monitoring reports
- Summary monitoring report

Action status: completed

Modification of the activity against the plan: N/A

Planned completion date: 4Q/2010

Actual completion date: 4Q/2010

Reasons for delay: N/A

Description:

Monitoring was initiated in 2006. Standard ornithological methods were applied in monitoring. Main focus was on the breeding season (April – July), however, data were collected also in spring and autumn migrations and in winter.

The following quantitative methods were used in monitoring:

Coordinated counts in Senne SPA, performed mostly by 3-5 ornithologists. They divided the area into smaller sectors and counted birds in the sectors simultaneously in order to avoid double counting. Each year there were 3 counts in the breeding season (April, May, June) and one counting during spring migration in March.

Monitoring of night birds was performed on line transects, at night, between 9.00 p.m. – 3.00 a.m., based on sounds recognition. In Senne SPA, monitoring was performed on two transects referred as West and East. In Medzibodrozie SPA, transect counting was performed in 2010 on 17 km long transect.

Monitoring of common birds on point transects at Senne and Medzibodrozie SPAs

Counting was performed in May, 1x, from 5:00 to 10:30, on one transect of 20 points in Senne SPA and on two transects of 20 points each at Medzibodrozie SPA. Counting points were selected in consideration of representativeness of variability of birds habitats.

Detailed mapping of less known parts of Medzibodrozie SPA

Detailed mapping was carried out in 2009 and 2010.

Complementary data on birds were collected by the project team when visiting the project sites or by voluntary ornithologists.

All birds monitoring data are stored in publicly accessible on-line database Aves Symphony (<http://aves.vtaky.sk/>). Annually, results from birds monitoring were summarised in annual monitoring report attached to previous progress reports.

Methodology for monitoring and details on monitoring results and trends in targeted bird population are described in the attached Birds Monitoring Report in Annex F_5_1. Annexes F_5_2 and F_5_3 contain exports of data for respectively Senne and Medzibodrozie SPAs from Aves Symphony database.

To facilitate monitoring, in 12/2007 four digital cameras were purchased (one SLR camera Canon EOS 400D with 18-55 mm lens, Sigma APO telephoto lens 50-500 mm, two Canon Power Shot S5 cameras and one Panasonic Lumix DMC FZ8 camera). Photo equipment was also used for regular documentation of Project activities, Project progress, habitat restoration works, public meetings, promotion activities and other project activities. In 03/2008, the following binoculars were purchased: Nikon Action EX WP 12x50 4pcs, Nikon Action EX WP 16x50 2pcs and Bushnell Trophy 10x50 2 pcs. Binoculars were used for regular monitoring of bird populations in project sites. All the equipment will be further used in monitoring of birds in after life period.

F.6 – Schedule regular steering committee meetings

Expected results:

- Regular, timely scheduled meetings, held with good attendance
- Minutes from the meeting

Actual Achievements:

- Meetings of the Project Steering Committee scheduled on as needed basis

Action status: completed

Modification of the activity against the plan: N/A

Planned completion date: 4Q/2010

Actual completion date: 4Q/2010

Reasons for delay: N/A

Description:

Project Steering Committee was formed at the early stages of the project. It comprised the following representatives of the Project beneficiary and its partners:

- Mrs. Andrea Šimkova – Director of Administration Office for the Latorica Protected Landscape Area, SNC
- Mr. Miroslav Demko, Executive Director of SOS/BirdLife Slovakia from 01/05/2008 (before that date Mr. Rastislav Rybanic, at the same position).
- Mr. Štefan Danko – Zemplin Museum Michalovce
- Mr. Peter Saboslai – Senné Village, Mayor of Senné Village
- Mr. Gabriel Ivanko – Iňačovce Village, Mayor of Iňačovce Village
- Mr. Michal Kontra – Blatná Polianka Village, Mayor of Blatná Polianka Village
- Mrs. Marianna Šimková – Hažín Village, Mayor of Hažín Village

The Project proposal foreseen quarterly meetings of the Project Steering Committee. However, because the SC members had been in frequent working communication with the project team based in Michalovce, formal quarterly meetings were considered not necessary. Therefore, in total, only 7 formal meetings of the Project Steering Committee were held in the project span.

First meeting of Project Steering Committee was held on 19/10/2006 in Michalovce. MoE was also present at the Meeting. During the meeting, all the participants were informed about the project activities and the state of the project implementation. The selection procedure for the position of Project Manager has been agreed at that meeting. The meeting was combined with mission of the Monitoring Team and followed with the field trip to Senne SPA on the same day and to Medzibodrozie SPA on the next day.

The second Project Steering Committee meeting was held on 12/12/2007 in the village of Inacovce. The project partners were informed on the state of project implementation activities, on the project modification request, on the possible complementary co-financing of Project Actions from the UNDP/GEF project “Laborec - Uh“ and they were presented the video records of birds from the area of SPA Senne.

On 2 August 2008, the meeting of the SC was called on the occasion of the opening of the section of instructional trail in Inacovce. The Project Steering Committee members were briefed on the status of the Project activities, resignation of then Project Manager, Mr. Martin Rinik, and proposed solution for ensuring a smooth management of the Project.

On 16 November 2008 meeting, the members of the Steering Committee were update on the composition of the project team, discussed location of the watching towers and plans for further work on the instructional trail. Opportunities for promotion of the project site (Senne SPA) and further possibilities for placing the Mowing Exhibition were also discussed.

In 2009, the Project Steering Committee hold its meetings on 03/04/09 and 23/09/09. At the meetings, the participants reviewed general progress of the project and implementing of the actions of common concern.

In 2010, one meeting of the Project Steering Committee took place, on 29/10/2010 in Senne village. At the meeting, the participants reviewed general progress of the project and status of implementing the project actions.

Documentation on the Action was provided Annexes F.6.1 –F.6.3 to the Midterm Report, Annex F.6.1. to the 2nd Progress Report, Annex F_6_1_el to the 3rd Progress Report and Annex F_6_el to the 4th Progress Report.

F.7 – Independent Audit

Expected results:

- Verified financial statements provided to the Commission in the Final Report and certification that all cost incurred under the Project respect the Common Provisions

Actual Achievements:

- Verified financial statements provided to the Commission in the Final Financial Report and certification that all presented Project costs are eligible
- Audit Report

Action status: completed

Modification of the activity against the plan: N/A

Planned completion date: 11/2010

Actual completion date: 10/2011

Reasons for delay: Formal extension of the Project Ending Date

Description:

Independent audit was initiated in 11/2010 and closed in 10/2011. As announced in the Midterm Report, the company in charge of audit was the following:

INTERAUDIT Group, s. r. o.
Šancova 102/A, 831 04 Bratislava
Statutory representative:
Ing. Vladimír Kolenic

The action was completed in October 2011. The Auditor elaborated the Audit Report that is attached to the present Final Report.

8 Dissemination activities and deliverables

8.1 Dissemination activities

No specific dissemination plan was produced for the project. However, individual actions included also dissemination activities (see description of E Actions above).

The Project and the importance of birds conservation were extensively presented in the media in the project span. Numerous events with the public, key stakeholders and students were organised, mostly in villages in both project SPAs.

Information and presentation materials were distributed during the project to various stakeholders. Video film produced within a framework of the project was broadcasted in the Slovak TV one time in the project span. Additional 5 presentations of video film were organised.

The project web site www.life-senne.sk was launched in 2006 and regularly updated with new information. Even after completion of the Project, updating of the web site with news continues.

The Project was presented also at various technical events.

8.2 Status of the fulfillment of the deliverable products and milestones.

Status of the fulfillment of the deliverable products and milestones as at closing date is presented in bellow table.

Deliverable or Milestone	Action	Deadline in the proposal	Actual date of completion	Status	Description of deliverable/ evidence of reaching milestone	Deliverable sent to Commission – reference to Report/Annex
1st press conference	E.6	31/01/06	28/032007	Completed	-	MR/E_6_1
1st meeting with stakeholders	E.7	31/03/06	27/07/2006	Completed	Minutes	MR/E_7_1
Planning workshop for management plan	A.1	30/06/06	Various	Completed	Minutes	1PR/A_1_2 MR/A_1_1 – A_1_7
Pilot aqua-environmental scheme	A.3	30/06/06	09/2006	Completed	Pilot scheme	1PR/A_3_4 2PR/A_3_1
Proposal for aqua- environmental scheme submitted to the Ministry of Agriculture	D.2	30/06/06	09/2006	Completed	Pilot scheme	2PR/A_3_1
1st conservation camp	E.1	31/08/06	17-18/07/2006	Completed	Memo	1PR/E_1_1
2nd meeting with stakeholders	E.7	30/09/06	06/10/2006	Completed	Minutes	MR/E_7_2
Report on Pilot aqua-env. Scheme	E.8	30/09/06	-	N/A	-	N/A
Economical data on aqua-environmental scheme gathered	D.2	30/11/06	-	Action terminated	-	N/A
Project web site launched	E.5	30/11/06	30/11/2006	Completed	www.life-senne.sk	N/A
Project coordinator recruited	F.1	30/11/06	10/2006	Completed	Contract, time-sheets	N/A
1st Progress report	F.1	30/11/06	30/11/2006	Completed	1 st Progress Report	n/A
3rd meeting with stakeholders	E.7	31/12/06	07/10/2006	Completed	Minutes	MR/E_7_3
4th meeting with stakeholders	E.7	31/12/06	01/12/2006	Completed	Minutes	MR/E_7_4
1st report on monitoring prepared	F.5	31/01/07	31/03/2008	Completed	2006 Monitoring Report	MR/F_5_2
Management plan adopted	A.1	31/03/07	-	Management drafted not formally adopted	Draft management plan	FR/A_1_1
Machinery for habitat management	D.1	31/03/07	21/02/2008	Completed	Memo on	MR/D_1_2

purchased					delivery	
Exhibition about Senne and Medzibodrozie SPAs launched	E.3	01/04/07	11/2005	Completed	Invitation to Exhibition in Zemplinske museum. List of banners	MR/E_3_1, E_3_2
7 Signs with project logo erected	E.4	30/04/07	07/2007 – Senne 2008 – Medzibodrozie	Completed	Photos, map	MR/E_4_1 – E_4_4 2PR/E_4_1 FR/C_5_1, C_5_2
Technical projects for water regime restoration prepared	A.2	30/06/07	08/2007 – Senne 06/2008 – Medzibodrozie	Completed	Technical projects	N/A
5th meeting with stakeholders	E.7	30/06/07	14/02/2007	Completed	Minutes	MR/E_7_5
6th meeting with stakeholders	E.7	30/06/07	15/02/2007	Completed	Minutes	MR/E_7_6
2nd conservation camp	E.1	31/08/07	12-13/05/2007	Completed	Invitation, memo	MR/E_1_2, E_1_3
3rd conservation camp	E.1	31/08/07		Completed	Invitation, memo	MR/E_1_4, E_1_5
Site visit to N2000 site	E.7	30/09/07	2008	Completed	Report, photo	PR/2E_7_2, E_7_3 PR3/E_7_1 E_7_2
Interim report	F.1	30/11/07	31/03/2008	Completed	Interim Report	N/A
50 ha of land purchased in Senne	B.1	31/12/07	2010	Completed	Purchase contracts, ownership certificates	FR/B_1
Promotional and informational material prepared	E.2	31/12/07	2010	Completed	Promotional materials	MR/E_2_1 3PR/E_2_1
1 EIA study for technical project for water regime restoration in Senne SPA meadows	A.5	31/12/07	-	EIA not implemented	-	N/A
1 EIA study for technical project for water regime restoration for Senne National Nature Reserve	A.5	31/12/07	-	EIA not implemented	-	N/A
1 EIA study for technical project for water regime restoration for project site in SPA Medzibodrozie	A.5	31/12/07	-	EIA not implemented	-	N/A
15 SNC employees trained	E.10	31/01/08	05/2009	Completed	List of participants, CD, Report	3PR/ E_10_1 – E_10_4
2nd report on monitoring prepared	F.5	31/01/08	31/03/2008	Completed	2007 Monitoring report	MR/E_5_5

Videofilm prepared	E.9	28/02/08	2011	Completed	DVD	Attached to the FR
20 presentations for school	E.1	30/06/08	2011	Completed	List of events	FR/E_1_1
8th meeting with stakeholders	E.7	30/06/08		Completed		
Videofilm presented on TV	E.9	30/06/08	2011	Completed	Link on TV programme	http://www.tv-program-online.sk/20110423/
4th conservation camp	E.1	31/08/08	16-29/07/2007	Completed	Memo	MR/E_1_6
5th conservation camp	E.1	31/08/08	12/04/2008	Completed	List of events	FR/E_1_1
New breeding and feeding habitats created	C.4	30/09/08	2010	Completed	Photos, map	3PR/C_4_1 FR//C_4_1
Small infrastructure installed	C.5	30/09/08	2011	Completed	Map, photos	FR/C_5
4 water gates and 3 sluices in Senne SPA installed	C.1	30/11/08	2010	Completed	Map	FR/C_1_1
Dyke, water inlet and outlet repaired in Senne SPA	C.2	30/11/08	05/08/2008	Completed	Building Acceptance	2PR/C_2_1
2 water gates, 3 sluices and new channel in place in Medzibodrozie SPA	C.6	30/11/08	10/2011	Completed beyond the scope of the present Project	Map	FR/C_6_1
2nd Progress report	F.1	30/11/08	31/03/2009	Completed	Progress Report	N/A
3rd report on monitoring prepared	F.5	31/01/09	31/03/2009	Completed	2008 Monitoring report	2PR/F_5_1
"Tice River" system inundated	C.6	31/03/09	-	-	Refers to original location of the action	N/A
9th meeting with stakeholders	E.7	30/06/09	-	Completed	-	-
500 copies of Layman's report	E.11	31/08/09	2011	Completed	Layman's Report	Attached to the FR
1800 hectares of meadows under AES in both sites	E.12	31/08/09	14/05/2011	Completed	Map	3PR/E_12_1
6th conservation camp	E.1	31/08/09	11/05/2008	Completed	List of events	FR/E_1_1
7th conservation camp	E.1	31/08/09	05/06/2008	Completed	List of events	FR/E_1_1
10 hectares of wetlands restored in Senne SPA	C.3	31/10/09	14/05/2011	Completed	Map, photos	FR/C_3_1 2PR/C_3_1 3PR/C_3_1 4PR/C_3_1

3rd Progress report	F.1	30/11/09	29/04/2010	Completed	Progress Report	N/A
Aqua- environmental scheme implemented	D.2	31/12/09	-	Action terminated	-	N/A
2 scientific articles published	E.8	31/12/09	Various	Completed	Article	MR/E_8_5 www.life-senne.sk
4 articles printed in “Rolnicke Noviny”, “Polovnictvo a rybarstvo” and/or “Nase polovnictvo” magazines	E.8	31/12/09	Various	Completed partly – article published in different magazines	Article	www.life-senne-sk
200 hectares of meadows restored in Senne SPA	C.3	31/03/10	14/05/2011	Completed	Map, photos	FR/C_3_1 2PR/C_3_1 3PR/C_3_1 4PR/C_3_el
10th meeting with stakeholders	E.7	30/06/10		Completed	-	-
8th conservation camp	E.1	31/08/10	21/07-03/08/2008	Completed	List of events	FR/E_1_1
last press conference	E.6	31/10/10	02/2011	Completed	Invitation, photos	FR/E_6_1_-E_6_3
Tenders prepared, contractors and suppliers selected	A.4	15/11/10	14/05/2011	Completed	Applicable procurement documentation at beneficiaries	N/A
Final report	F.1	30/11/10	15/10/2011	Completed	Final report	N/A
After Life Conservation Plan delivered	F.3	30/11/10	15/10/2011	Completed	After Life Conservation Plan	FR/F_3_1
4th report on monitoring prepared	F.5	30/11/10	15/10/2011	Completed	2006 -2011 Monitoring Report	FR//F_5_1
Independent Audit	F.7	30/11/10	13/10/2011	Completed	Audit Report	Attached to FR

9 Evaluation and conclusions

9.1 The Process

Project was implemented in the two project sites, Senne SPA and Medzibodrozie SPA in Slovakia. By implementing activities of the present LIFE project, generally good co-operation and communication with local stakeholders was established in both project areas. Especially good relationship was maintained with local villages, who were the project partners as well as with farmers, local schools, etc. Most of farmers/lands users supported key project activities, such as restoration of flooding regime at meadows and establishment of tourist infrastructure that was overall pilot one within the region. Good co-operation was also maintained with state water management agency “SVP” that was contracted for all the construction works related to restoration of dyke, water inlet and outlet in Senne NNR.

Cooperation was not, however established with fish farming company “DONA”, that was expected to implement pilot aqua-environmental scheme. When refusing cooperation, they gave reason of general insufficiency of compensation and incentives system for nature protection in Slovakia and consequent repeating economic loss of their company caused by birds feeding on fish from commercial fishponds.

The process of implementation of the project was negatively influenced by several external factors including, *inter alia*, changes in land ownership in vicinity of project area within Medzibodrozie SPA in 2006 and severe weather conditions in 2010. All the major challenges were described in detail in chapter 5.4 above.

Project management

The project management was described in the above section 5.3 and in the Section 7 - Results under Actions F1, F2 and F6. It can be concluded, that, while in the first years of the Project, the project management was implemented as it was planned, since 09/2008 the project management was divided into technical management and administrative management and shared by the two persons. This solution was adopted in response to the rapid resignation of the former project manager in order to ensure immediate continuity of the project management and the project as a whole. Generally, serious problems with the project management were not observed.

Problems encountered

Following failures were caused by external factors; the Project team could not to prevent these unexpected circumstances.

(i) Pilot aqua-environmental scheme, that was prepared within a framework of Action A.3 and expected to be implemented as Action D.2 was repeatedly consulted with DONA – private fish-farming company farming at Senne fish-ponds. However, DONA did not agree with pilot implementation. Furthermore, the proposed aqua-environmental scheme was not included into the 2007 -2013 National Strategic Framework for Fisheries. Overall, however, this failure had no impact on meeting the Project objectives.

(ii) Due to external changes in land ownership in Medzibodrozie SPA, the originally planned project activities was not possible to implement in the originally planned area around village of Leles, because substantial part of the land planned to be influenced by restoration measures was sold to a new owner, who did not agree with restoration. For this reason, the project Action C.6 was modified. It was implemented in another part of Medzibodrozie SPA, around villages of Besa and Cicarovce with proper local acceptance of project goals by stakeholders. The modification (in combination with heavy floods in 2010) caused delay in implementing the Action C6, and it was finally completed after the project ending date, while financed by EEA/Norwegian Financial Mechanism. Thanks to complementary financing, however, the ultimate project objectives have been achieved also in Medzibodrozie SPA.

Changes in location of Action C.6 affected the original project co-financer, land owner Mr. Jozef Halász, in the area at Leles. He was unable further to keep his commitment in a newly located sites at Besa and Cicarovce and withdrew his co-financing commitment. The SNC raised complementary funds through EEA/ Norwegian Financial Mechanism.

(iii) Delayed designation of Senne SPA in accordance with the Slovak Nature Conservation Act hindered applications of farmers for participation in agri-environmental schemes. Overall, this had not substantial impact on reaching the project objectives.

(iv) Severe weather conditions in winter 2009/2010 and consequent heavy floods in May and June 2010 caused delay in building of water gates at both project SPAs. Restoration of water regime at both Project SPAs was finally completed, thus ultimate Project objectives were not affected

Partnership

The SNC created effective partnership with all the Project partners on the basis of the Partnership Agreements. The only problem occurred at the end of project when it became clear that Ostrovik HA was not be able to provide acceptable accounting documentation that would support eligible Project costs. Therefore, no costs of this particular project participant were included into the Final Financial Report. Partnership with local villages contributed to development of a strong commitment of local population not only to the Project results, but also generally to conserving natural values in the project SPAs.

The project benefited from complementary cooperation with the project supported from EEA /Norwegian Financial Mechanism “Conservation of Diversity of Waterbirds and their Habitats in Eastern Slovakian Lowland“that allowed increasing conservation and social impact of the present project in Medzibodrozie SPA.

Wetland management training was organised in cooperation with the two GEF funded projects: “Conservation, Restoration and Wise Use of Calcareous Fens” (the SNC was a “passive” beneficiary in the project, not receiving GEF funds) and “Integration of Ecosystem Management Principles and Practices into Land and Water Management of Slovakia” (the SNC has been the project partner not directly benefiting from the GEF Grant). This arrangement allowed to organise a comprehensive training focused on management of different types of wetlands. With the later project, study tours were organised as well.

9.2 Technical and commercial application (replicability, economic feasibility, limiting factors)

The project included numerous activities with replicability potential for the protection and management of other SPAs in Slovakia or for nature conservation approaches in general.

1/ Management plan for Senne SPA

The project provided for drafting pilot management plan for Senne SPA. Although in drafting, formal content established by the MoE Regulation applicable universally to all types of protected areas was followed, various specific issues had to be addressed in case of Senne area, which enjoys multiple designations – SPA, pSCI, Ramsar Site, NNR. For instance, consideration had to be given some times conflicting management requirements for the protection of birds and habitats/species of European importance. Drafting effort disclosed certain methodological issues that need to be clarified for the future. While, for instance, presentation of information and data in management plans for SPAs should be generally more simplified in area enjoying exclusive SPA designation, methodology for integrated management planning need to be further elaborated for areas with overlapping designations. Nevertheless, planning experiences gained in drafting of management plan for Senne SPA can be further replicated in conservation practice in Slovakia.

2/ Land purchase for conservation objectives

Land purchase – as a conservation practice - has a broad potential for replicability in other protected areas in Slovakia. The project confirmed that land purchase is particularly feasible in areas with lower commercial production potential, such as regularly flooded wet meadows.

3/ Establishment of pilot birdwatching infrastructure in Senne SPA

Birdwatching infrastructure in Senne SPA was a pilot infrastructure of this kind in Slovakia. It has huge replicability potential. Already in the Project span, the infrastructure was replicated in Medzibodrozie SPA within a framework of the project “Conservation of Diversity of Waterbirds and their Habitats in Eastern Slovakian Lowland “supported from EEA /Norwegian Financial Mechanism.

9.3 Effectiveness of dissemination activities

Public awareness and dissemination of results were ensured through a broad scope of various actions. As much as 35 presentations were presented in local schools and for the public. 24 guided tours and 14 conservation camps were organised in Senne SPA. 56 meetings and other events with various stakeholders, including 2 excursions to properly managed NATURA 2000 sites, took place. The attractive informational materials, including T-shirts, poster, brochure, stickers, the book “Birds of the “Senne” in the past and present”, were produced and distributed. Mowing exhibition “Natural values of SPAs Senne and Medzibodrozie” received a good response. From its opening in Zemplinske museum in Michalovce in 2006, it was seen by more than 9700 visitors at various locations. In total 7 information signs with project logo were installed at both Project sites. The project web site, available in Slovak, English and Hungarian, was visited by some 32 000 visitors. The intensive contact with media was established and maintained through the whole Project span.

No special monitoring of effectiveness of dissemination activities was established within a framework of the Project. Therefore, the assessment can only be based on quantity of implemented events, media outputs and participants at specific events or approached public. Even this is not completely accurate, since there was no information, for instance, on number of persons watching video film in Slovak TV, etc. Generally, the project dissemination activities were intensive, targeting particularly local population. Some actions/outputs, were, however, reaching public at the national level as well and even internationally.

Details of dissemination activities are described under above actions E and in E-Actions related Annexes.

9.4 Environmental benefits

Environmental benefits of the project are clearly visible and measurable after finalizing of all planned construction works (sluices, water gates, reparation of dyke). Areas of restored meadows and wetlands exceeded the original targets and status of breeding/feeding/migrating birds, especially Annex I species and species with priority value for conservation in Senne and Medzibodrozie SPAs in restored habitats have generally improved. Regular monitoring of the birds established under the project allows for informed management of the species in the long term. .

Senne NNR was suffering from lack of water many years as a consequence of leaking water through the dyke and malfunctioning inlet and outlet. Restoration of the dyke and both technical objects resulted in stabilising of water table in the pond. Consequently, reed and bulrush grows, that are important for breeding of numerous targeted species of birds were stabilised as well.

Improved water level in the NNR positively affected bird habitats and populations including qualifying species of European concern, like *Chlidonias hybridus*, *Nycticorax nycticorax*, *Egretta garzetta*, *Ardea purpurea*, *Circus aeruginosus*, *Ardea alba*, *Botaurus stellaris*, *Aythya nyroca*, *Phalacrocorax pygmaeus* and many other bird species, through suitable breeding and feeding habitats in NNR Two species of European importance, *Grus grus* and *Haliaeetus albicilla*, started to breed first time ever in the NNR, from many respects due to restoration of outlet, inlet and the dyke, because these species utilized new habitats appearing in consequence of improved water regime - *Grus* utilised for breeding emergent vegetation in northern part of NNR and *Haliaeetus* bread (3 consequent years already) at the tree on island surrounded by water from each side (increase of water level contributed to better isolation of this island, than it was before).

Generally, increased water table level contributed to increased share of open water table and has decreased overgrowing of the lake in the NNR with bulrush. Bulrush started to be declining, and their status become more favorable for nesting of the birds. Some birds, for instance *Podiceps nigricollis*, *Podiceps grisegena*, *Podiceps cristatus*, ducks, or even *Chlidonias hybridus* built their nests directly in declining bulrush. Consequently, no additional measures for eliminating of bulrush are needed. Share of reed beds in the reserve has been increased. No influence of increased water table level in the NNR on the status of self-seeded shrubs has been observed.

Degraded meadows and wetlands at Senne SPA (Blata and Ostrovik locations) were abandoned for more than 10 years and they suffered by lack of water, but also by spreading of invasive weed species as a consequence of long abandonment. After mulching most of bushes and weeds were removed, and after recovery of hydrological regime through building of water gates and sluices these habitats now support breeding of several threatened bird species. Furthermore, since habitats restoration started, thousands of birds stop here during the spring migration. Numerous bird species from various taxonomic groups (ducks, grebes, passerines, raptors, etc) have been recorded, including for instance *Grus grus* and *Aythya nyroca*.

On banks and bare bottoms of wetlands, flocks of *Philomachus pugnax*, *Tringa glareola*, *Tringa ochropus* and *Limosa limosa* were recorded. Enlarged water surface attracted such species as *Anas platyrhynchos*, *A. strepera*, *A. querquedula*, *A. clypeata*, *Larus ridibundus*, *Chlidonias hybrida*, *Ch. niger*, *Ch. leucopterus*. Immediately after restoration, 4 breeding pairs of *Recurvirostra avestina* and 1 breeding pair of *Larus cachinans* were observed. Regular breeding was observed of *A. platyrhynchos*, *Fulica atra*, *Tachybaptus ruficollis*, *Gallinula chloropus*, *Circus aeruginosus*, and even of 1-2 pairs of *Podiceps grisegena*. Restored habitats offers feeding opportunities to *Platalea leucorodia*, *Ardea purpurea*, *Egretta alba*, *E. garzetta*, which were breeding on Senne fish ponds.

For more details on positive impacts of the project on the targeted bird species pls. refer to Annex F_5_1 for the Birds Monitoring report.

9.5 Socio-economic effects

The project did not contain actions directly targeting employment opportunities or revenue generation mechanisms for local population. However, presence of SPAs in vicinity of villages in combination with extensive tourist infrastructure established within a framework of the project and outstanding opportunities for birdwatching within a framework of Slovakia, shall attract local and foreign visitors. Consequently, the local people can benefit indirectly through provision of services to tourist in villages. This is particularly important because the region where the project sites are located is less developed with high unemployment rate and local communities through the project activities gradually started appreciate natural values of their surrounding: wetlands and water-birds.

Some of project actions were specifically designed to support attitude of the public towards nature conservation: successful exhibition on natural values of Senne and Medzibodrozie SPAs with over 9 700 visitors, info-desks on “Birds Day” in centre of Michalovce visited by hundreds of citizens, presentations for schools in the region, media outputs on project achievements and, last but not least, distribution of promotion and information materials.

9.6 Innovation and demonstration value

Innovation and demonstration value of the project was in demonstrating approaches to nature conservation that are, so far, not common ones in Slovakia. They include, above all, (i) purchasing of large areas of meadows with an aim to use these areas for nature conservation and, (ii) active management of wet meadows and wetlands by stabilising groundwater and surface-water levels by building of sluices on canals designed previously for drainage of the area and for transport of precipitation waters. Ostrovik meadow thus became a rare demonstration example of active nature conservation with a long-term prospect.

Furthermore, bird watching infrastructure established at Senne SPA has been pilot infrastructure of this kind and extent in Slovakia. In modest extent, the infrastructure was already replicated in Medzibodrozie SPA through the project “Conservation of Diversity of Waterbirds and their Habitats in Eastern Slovakian Lowland supported from EEA /Norwegian Financial Mechanism and implemented by the SNC.

9.7 Sustainability

Sustainability of main activities of the project and the extent to which various project actions/results continues beyond the scope of the project are measured by project sustainability indicators. Sustainability indicators were formulated at the time of the Midterm Report and evaluated in the below table. The most critical indicator appears to be the adoption and due implementation of management plan for Senne SPA in the future. Continuous management of the project sites shall ensured by the SNC through its annual work plans until management plan is formally adopted. Favorable water regime on the restored meadows and wetlands was will be kept by operation of water gates and sluices built under Actions C1 and C6.

Project sustainability indicators:

PROJECT ACTION / RESULTS	VERIFIABLE INDICATOR (S)	SOURCE OF VERIFICATION	STATUS AT THE CLOSING DATE
Elaboration of Management plan for Senne SPA	Adoption of Management plan for SPA Senne	Instrument of adoption Annual reports of MoE, SNC	Not adopted yet
Implementation of Management plan for Senne SPA	Number of activities successfully implemented	Annual reports of the SNC	Assessment possible only after adoption of the mng. plan. Interim implementation possible through annual Works Plan of the SNC
Restoration of water regime in Senne and Medzibodrozie SPAs	Number of hectares of wet meadows and wetlands with restored water regime	Various project reports, annual reports of SNC, project documentation,	990 ha restored through building of water gates and sluices at Senne SPA 704 ha restored through reparation of dyke at Senne SPA 1098 ha restored in Medzibodrozie SPA
Restoration of habitats by non-recurring management	Number of hectares of meadows and wetlands restored	Project reports, project documentation	200 ha of restored meadows at Senne SPA 14,5 ha of restored wetlands at Senne SPA
Building of water gates/sluices to restore water regime in Senne and Medzibodrozie SPAs	Number of constructed water gates/sluices in both SPAs Area positively influenced by sluices	Project reports, annual reports of SNC, project documentation	2 waterg gates at Senne SPA 3 sluices at Senne SPA 2 water gates at Medzibodrozie SPA 990 ha at Senne SPA Positively influenecc by water gates

			1098 ha restored in Medzibodrozie SPA
Restoration of water regime in NNR Senne	Lengths of repaired dyke, number of repaired technical objects	Building diary, project documentation, project reports and annual reports of SNC	1,3 km of restored dyke 2 repaired technical objects
Land purchase	Area of purchased wet meadows	Property licences to individual parcels purchased by SOS/BirdLife Slovakia	54,3731 ha
Installation of small infrastructure to improve control of the sites and allow regulated access of public at SPA Senne	Length of educational trail installed, number of observation towers, small bridges, information boards and rests with shelters built in SPA Senne Number of visitors Number of cases of violation of regulated access	Project documentation and project reports Reports from visitors surveys Police/ Environment Offices records of violation	12,5 km of instructional trail- cycloroute 12 informational boards 5 birdwatching towers at Senne SPA 5 small bridges 5 rest places at Senne SPA 3 rest places at Medzibodrozie SPA ⁶ 5 birdwatching towers at Medzibodrozie SPA ⁷ Out of the scope of the present project Out of the scope of the present project

Long term indicators of the project success

Specific long term indicators might be used in future project success assessments and are presented in below table. They were formulated in consideration of the project main objective what was to restore favourable conservation status of breeding and migrating birds from Annex I of Birds Directive and regularly migrating bird species in Senne and Medzibodrozie SPAs through securing appropriate habitats in key locations.

Project long term indicators:

LONG TERM INDICATOR	VERIFIABLE INDICATOR	SOURCE OF VERIFICATION
Conservation status of targeted habitats	Nationally established Criteria and Indicators for assessing the conservation status of habitats and species of European importance (published by SNC in 2005)	Regular monitoring of habitats, project reports, monitoring reports by SNC to EC on the conservation status of habitats of European importance
Conservation status of targeted species	Nationally established Criteria and Indicators for assessing the conservation status of habitats and species of European importance (published by SNC in 2005)	Regular monitoring of habitats, project reports, monitoring reports by SNC to EC on the conservation status of habitats of European importance

⁶ Financed through EEA/Norwegian Financial mechanism

⁷ Financed through EEA/Norwegian Financial mechanism

Hydrology of water regime in Senne and Medzibodrozie SPAa	Average level of groundwater, number of flood days, area of flooded habitats	Monitoring reports, project report, annual reports produced by SNC
Public awareness support to Senne and Medzibodrozie SPAs	Number of press conferences, press releases, media releases, articles and various initiatives supporting conservation of SPAs Senne and Medzibodrozie	Various project documents, annual report of SNC- SCHKO Latorica, annual reports of SOS/BirdLife Slovakia
Conservation status of Senne SPA, Medzibodrozie SPA Medzibodrozie	Designation of project areas Senne and Medzibodrozie as SPAs under Birds Directive , and if appropriate , in accordance with national law	Legal instruments issued by competent authority in force

10 After- Life Communication Plan

Layman's report summarizing project results in popular form was printed and distributed. Distribution list is included in Annex E_2_1. Project web site remains updated on news on after life-activities web site was established as a part of the SNC website. It provides access to the project results, and allows downloading Layman's Report and brochure on the *Otis tarda* and few other deliverables.

11 Financial Issues

11.1 Comments on Financial Report

The beneficiary and six project partners contributed to the costs of the project and benefited from the LIFE grant as well. All the costs, incurred by these project participants have been registered at analytical accounting systems of respective participants and were properly supported with accounting documentation. Copies of this documentation are available at the SNC headquarters.

VAT

All the project participants could not recover the VAT from the national tax authorities. This is confirmed as follows :

- SNC - letter from the competent Tax Office and interpretation of the VAT law. **see Annex FIN.2.1**
- SOS/BirdLife Slovakia (letter from the competent Tax Office, **see Annex FIN.2.2**)
- Zemplin Museum Michalovce (letter from the competent Tax Office, **see Annex FIN.2.3**)
- Village Senné (letter from the competent Tax Office, **see Annex FIN.2.4**)
- Village Iňačovce (letter from the competent Tax Office, **see Annex FIN.2.5**)
- Village Blatná Polianka (letter from the competent Tax Office, **see Annex FIN.2.6**)
- Village Hažín (letter from the competent Tax Office, **see Annex FIN.2.7**)

Accordingly, the total eligible costs are equal to total costs with non recoverable VAT.

Project Costs and Income

As at 14/05/2011, 1 023 398,15 € has been spent, which represents 77,21 % of the original budget. This amount has been calculated on the basis of the monthly exchange rates of the European Central Bank between Slovak Krown and Euro for the period 15/11/2005 – 31/12/2008. Since 01/01/2009, national currency has been Euro.

The summary of the total project costs incurred as at the project closing date - 14/05/2011 and sources of income for each project participant and the project as a whole are presented in below Table 1 and Table 2.

Table 1/ Project costs incurred as at 14/05/2011

Cost category	Total budgeted costs	SNC	SOS	Muzeum	Senne	Hazin	Polianka	Inacovce	Total	Balance
Direct Personnel costs :	240 080,00	49 507,14	185 912,49	0,00	1 202,71	1 198,12	1 133,40	1 184,15	240 138,01	-58,01
Travel and subsistence costs :	35 701,00	1 440,57	9 691,98	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	11 132,55	24 568,45
External assistance costs :	215 165,00	25 838,07	110 966,92	1 140,11	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	137 945,10	77 219,90
Durable goods : Infrastructure costs :	437 300,00	247 014,04	40 030,60	0,00	1 000,00	1 001,15	1 000,00	1 000,00	291 045,79	146 254,21
Durable goods : Equipment costs :	87 630,00	2 736,89	44 691,69	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	47 428,58	40 201,42
Land purchase :	210 000,00	0,00	230 092,15	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	230 092,15	-20 092,15
Consumable materials :	16 700,00	0,00	2 336,96	317,80	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	2 654,76	14 045,24
Other costs :	10 000,00	12 057,55	0,00	41,93	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	12 099,48	-2 099,48
Overheads :	72 980,00	23 701,58	27 160,51	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	50 862,09	22 117,91
Total	1 325 556,00	362 295,84	650 883,30	1 499,84	2 202,71	2 199,27	2 133,40	2 184,15	1 023 398,51	302 157,49

Table 2/ Sources of income

Sources of income	SNC	SOS	Muzeum	Senne	Hazin	Polianka	Inacovce	Total
Grant	166 444,60	292 500,00	1 000,00	1 000,00	1 000,00	1 000,00	1 000,00	463 944,60
Own contribution	195 851,23	358 298,79	499,84	1 202,52	1 199,06	1 133,25	1 183,88	559 368,57
Interests	0,00	84,51	0,00	0,19	0,21	0,15	0,27	85,33
Total	362 295,83	650 883,30	1 499,84	2 202,71	2 199,27	2 133,40	2 184,15	1 023 398,50

Comments to expenditures for individual cost categories:

Personnel

Personnel costs were calculated on the basis of timesheets. Project staff prepared timesheets on monthly basis. Timesheets were regularly checked and approved by authorised person, which was different in respect to different positions. Review of the project staff was provided under description of the Action F1.

Above Table presents share of costs of personnel for the beneficiary and individual partners.

The personnel costs were incurred at 100,02 % compared to original budget. This means that 6 months project extension did not cause the increase in the personnel cost.

Travel

The reimbursement of travel costs was done according to the Slovak Regulation on Reimbursement of Travel Expenses, which has been legally binding for all the project participants. Only the travel costs that were necessary for and clearly linked to implemented project activities have been accounted under the project costs.

Travel costs in accordance with the above mentioned regulation include reimbursements for public transport costs, reimbursement of costs related to use of private and official cars for the project purposes, per diem and accommodation costs. Travel costs were incurred at 31,18 % compared to original budget.

External Assistance

External Assistance costs were incurred at 64,11 % compared to original budget. Share of costs of external assistance for beneficiary and partners is presented in above Table 1.

All the external assistance was procured in accordance with the Public Procurement Act.

Infrastructure

Infrastructure costs were incurred at 66,56 % compared to original budget. Discrepancy compared to original budget is caused by the fact that some infrastructure, notably water gates at Medzibodrozie project site (Action C6), was financed through Norwegian/EHP Financial Mechanism and accordingly, it was not accounted to the present budget. This happened due to financial constraints of the beneficiary and it was communicated to the Commission in the previous reports.

Share of costs of infrastructure for beneficiary and partners is presented in above Table 1.

Equipment

Equipment costs were incurred at 54,12 % compared to the original budget. Discrepancy is caused by financial constraints of the participants that caused that some equipment, notably the project car, was not possible to purchase. All the equipment was procured in accordance with the Public Procurement Act.

Share of costs of equipment for beneficiary and partners is presented in above Table 1.

Land purchase

Land purchase costs were incurred at 109,57 % compared to the original budget. The excess is still within limits set in Article 13 of the Common Provisions. The costs were incurred by the SOS.

Consumables

Costs of consumables were incurred at 15,90 % compared to the original budget.

Share of costs of consumables for beneficiary and partners is presented in above Table 1.

Other costs

Other costs were incurred at 120,99 % compared to the original budget, but not exceeded limit set in the Article 13. In absolute terms, the increase represents 2099,48 €.

Overheads

Share of costs of consumables for beneficiary and partners is presented in above Table 1. Overheads covered general indirect costs needed to support the personnel performing the work on the project.

Overheads were incurred at 77,21 % compared to the original budget. Discrepancy is caused by lower total eligible project costs.

12 List of Annexes

- Annex A_1_1 Draft management plan for Senne SPA - version 2010.
- Annex A_1_2 Minutes of the Meeting at MoE on 27/07/2011.
- Annex B_1_1 Map of the purchased land
- Annex B_1_2 Map of location of the purchased land within Senne SPA
- Annex B_1_3 Copies of land ownership certificates
- Annex B_1_4 Copies of purchased contracts (relevant to land where ownership certificate include conservation clause)
- Annex B_1_5 Copies of purchased contracts (relevant to land where ownership certificate does not include conservation clause)
- Annex B_1_6 Expert price certificate
- Annex C_1_1 Final map of all water gates and sluices built within a framework of the present project at Senne SPA
- Annex C_3_1 Map showing restoration measures implemented in 2010 – 2011.
- Annex C_4_1 Map showing location of newly created breeding and feeding habitats in Senne SPA
- Annex C_4_2 Map showing location of newly created breeding and feeding habitats in Medzibodrozie SPA
- Annex C_5_1 Map with small tourist infrastructure at Senne SPA
- Annex C_5_2 Map with small tourist infrastructure at Medzibodrozie SPA
- Annex C_5_3 Map with details of instructional trail and info boards at Senne SPA
- Annex C_5_4 Pictures of infrastructure at Senne SPA
- Annex C_5_5 Pictures of infrastructure at Medzibodrozie SPA
- Annex C_6_1 Map showing location of the water gates, including water gate No. 1 and their respective areas of influence in attached in.
- Annex D_1_1 Map showing managed area in 2010.
- Annex D_1_2 Map showing managed area in the period 2006 – 2010.
- Annex E_1_1 Review of events aimed at raising public awareness
- Annex E_2_1 Promotion Materials Distribution List
- Annex E_6_1 Invitation to the press Conference
- Annex E_6_3 Illustration photo from Press Conference
- Annex E_6_3 Illustration photo from Press Conference
- Annex E_6_4 Review of media outputs
- Annex F_3_1 After life Conservation Plan
- Annex F_4_1 Habitats Monitoring Report
- Annex F_5_1 Birds Monitoring Report
- Annex F_5_2 Exports of data for Senne SPA from Aves Symphony database
- Annex F_5_3 Export of data for Medzibodrozie SPA from Aves Symphony database

Annex FIN_2_1 SNC letter from the competent Tax Office and interpretation of VAT law
Annex FIN_2_2 SOS/BirdLife Slovakia - letter from the competent Tax Office
Annex FIN_2_3 Zemplin Museum Michalovce - letter from the competent Tax Office
Annex FIN_2_4 Village Senné - letter from the competent Tax Office
Annex FIN_2_5 Village Iňačovce - letter from the competent Tax Office
Annex FIN_2_6 Village Blatná Polianka - letter from the competent Tax Office
Annex FIN_2_7 Village Hažín - letter from the competent Tax Office

Annex EC_1_1_el Invoices Time Sheets 2007
Annex EC_1_2_el Travel_Blaskovic
Annex EC_1_3_el Travel Rybanič
Annex EC_1_4_el Transport Excursion
Annex EC_1_5_el Transport of Infopanel
Annex EC_1_6_el Dyke Reparation
Annex EC_1_7_el Requested proofs of payment

ATTACHMENTS TO THE FINAL REPORT:

FINAL FINANCIAL REPORT
TAX OFFICES CERTIFICATES
AUDIT REPORT
LAYMAN'S REPORTS
DVD with VIDEO MOVIE AND LAYMAN'S REPORT