

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Preparation of a Sustainable Forest Management Plan for Ismailly Forest Management Unit in Azerbaijan (hiring two consultants)

a) Initial project information

The European Union (EU) funded “*European Neighborhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI) East Countries Forest Law Enforcement and Governance (FLEG) II Program*” (the “Program”) is aimed to support the participating countries strengthen forest governance through enhancing their forest policy, legislation and institutions, and implementing sustainable forest management models on a pilot basis. The Program will be implemented in seven countries: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine, and the Russian Federation.

The Program builds on initiatives undertaken under the first EU funded FLEG Program. It will be carried out over a four-year period, with end disbursement date of June 30, 2017. The Program is supported by the European Commission contributing to a single-donor trust fund administered by the World Bank (WB). Implementation of the Program is led by the WB, working in partnership with the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF). The Program has three Development Objectives:

- 1) To make progress implementing the 2005 St. Petersburg FLEG Ministerial Declaration in the participating countries and support the participating countries commit to a time-bound action plan to ensure its implementation and follow-up activities (regional level).
- 2) To review or revise (or establish a time-bound action plan to review or revise) forest sector policies and legal and administrative structures; improve knowledge of and support for sustainable forest management and good forest governance (including the impact of related EU regulations) in the participating countries (national level).
- 3) To test and demonstrate best practices for sustainable forest management and the feasibility of improved forest governance practices at the field-level on a pilot basis in all participating countries (sub-national level).

Main Program activities to be conducted by WWF in Azerbaijan will involve the evaluation of the forest biodiversity and ecosystem functions (scoping study level), exploration of the forest certification potential in the country, promoting sustainable forest management planning and awareness raising of the stakeholders about the importance of sustainable forest management and the roles of the FLEG2 program in this respect.

Sustainable forest management planning is one of the important components of the Program. It is essential to prepare and implement sustainable and innovative forest management plans for the forest management units operating in Azerbaijan. These plans should be multipurpose, covering social, economic and ecological aspects. They should also be based on optimal functional zoning of the forest management unit, safeguarding maximum socio-economic benefits without jeopardizing biodiversity and ecological functions of natural ecosystems.

This assignment involves preparation of a sustainable forest management plan for Ismailly forest management unit (FMU) in Azerbaijan on a pilot basis. This FMU has been selected because local management regime, socio-economic conditions and natural forest types are characteristic of much of the country. These circumstances create favorable conditions for implementing similar activities in other FMUs in Azerbaijan.

Two consultants will be hired for the implementation of this assignment – one Senior Consultant and the other - Assistant to the Senior Consultant. The Senior Consultant will be responsible for planning, organizing and conducting the work and submitting the reports, as outlined below. The Assistant will be responsible for collecting relevant information and helping implement the activities designed by the Senior Consultant.

b) Objectives of the assignment

The aim of this assignment is to prepare a sustainable and multipurpose forest management plan (FMP) for Ismailly FMU in Azerbaijan. The specific objectives are to:

- Get a clear understanding of the current management planning system implemented at Ismailly FMU
- Identify and map optimal functional zones of the forest area and, based on this,
- Prepare the sustainable and multipurpose forest management plan, based on integrated approaches and taking into consideration the relevant principles of Forest Stewardship Council (FSC).

Implementation of this assignment would contribute to the fulfilment of the FLEG2 Program Development Objective *“To test and demonstrate best practices for sustainable forest management and the feasibility of improved forest governance practices at the field-level on a pilot basis in all participating countries (sub-national level)”*.

c) Scope of services

The territory represents Ismailly FMU – a state enterprise managing the total forest cover of 64,000 ha. This enterprise is located in Ismailly District in Azerbaijan. The proposed forest management plan (FMP) should consider not only local forestry and ecological factors, but also socio-economic needs of the local population. The outputs should contain text and maps. The total duration of the assignment is approximately 100 working days within the period of five calendar months. Work will start at the beginning of the calendar year 2015. Several visits to Ismailly FMU should be made. The following stages are recommended:

1. Collection of very general information about forestry sector of Azerbaijan, with the focus on management planning at the local (forestry unit) level.
2. Getting acquainted with the current forest management regime at Ismailly FMU.
3. Collection of information about forest use by local population – conducting surveys for this purpose; documenting the results of the survey; in parallel, studying the overall condition of forests near population centres.
4. Preparation of GIS maps, demonstrating optimal functional zones of forests (with forest compartments as smallest units).
5. Preparation of the first draft of the forest management plan, taking into consideration advanced international experiences (above all, FSC Principles and Criteria) and requirements of relevant international conventions and other agreements.
6. Meeting local population and other key stakeholder representatives in Ismailly District to discuss initial findings (one or two-days).
7. Meeting with key stakeholder representatives in Baku for the same purpose (one-day).
8. Preparation of the final version of the FMP, including the text and maps.

These activities do not require the conducting of forest inventory – existing inventory data can be used in combination with stakeholder views and proper socio-economic and ecological considerations. The Senior Consultant will be responsible for identifying the information needs and relevant stakeholders, designing the surveys and conducting major parts of the analysis. The Assistant could mainly be involved in collecting the information and conducting the surveys. The meetings with the stakeholders in Ismailly and Baku should be conducted at least one calendar month before the expected completion date of the assignment. The costs of the meetings with stakeholders in Ismailly and Baku will be fully covered by WWF Azerbaijan. These include: Meeting facilities, stationery, translation and interpretation, meals and local transportation.

Recommended components of the FMP

The proposed FMP could cover the period of 10 years. Among others, the management plan could contain the following components:

1. Background information (physical-geographic and climatic conditions of the study area; wood and non-wood resources; current management regime, including Red List species and biodiversity conservation in general; socio-economic conditions and cultural-historical aspects).
2. Brief description of key stakeholder groups.
3. Local demand for wood and other forest resources; balance of supply and demand for these resources.
4. Brief description of agricultural use of surrounding lands (including grazing) and their impacts on forest cover.
5. Overall dynamics of forest cover in the last 10 years.
6. Existing road network (with implications to logging and transportation of forest products).
7. Information about the last forest inventory.
8. Currently conducted types of wood cutting and forest regeneration measures.
9. *Management planning*:
 - a. Identified optimal functional zones of forests, including forests with High Conservation Values (HCV), based on the six internationally recognized values (<http://www.hcvnetwork.org/about-hcvf/the-six-high-conservation-values>), adapted to the local conditions – maps and attributed text
 - b. Allowable volumes of wood cutting (all major types – fuelwood, maintenance cuttings etc.) for each forest sub-unit or compartment – annual volumes as well as cumulative figures for the entire period of the management plan
 - c. Potential use of various forest resources (including adding value of these products) by local population, within sustainable limits
 - d. Measures of biodiversity conservation (including the protection of Red List species); forest protection from poaching, fires and pests and diseases; forest restoration measures, taking into consideration climate change aspects
 - e. Plans to cooperate with local stakeholders and actively involve them in forest management
 - f. All applicable components of Principle 7 of FSC standard STD-01-001-V5 on forest management planning.
10. Provisions for monitoring of the implementation of the FMP.

The above-mentioned information should be structured in the form of an FMP. The consultants should collect relevant data at Ismailly FMU and, if necessary, Forest Development Department of the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources of Azerbaijan. Personal communication with representatives of the state forestry sector, NGOs and local communities are envisaged. Advanced international experience should be taken into account, considering local specific circumstances of Azerbaijan.

d) Reporting and approval procedures

The Senior Consultant should send the First Interim Report to the Project Coordinator after the completion of stages 1-3 outlined in Section c) *Scope of services* (or equivalent, if the structure of the study will be different) within approximately two calendar months from the beginning of the assignment. This report should briefly describe initial findings and include the relevant text in MS Word and (if applicable) maps. The maps could be sent in pdf format for the purpose of reporting. The Second Interim Report should cover the stages 4-7 outlined in the previous section, including one-day stakeholder meetings conducted in Ismailly and Baku, within about four calendar months after the beginning of the assignment. The Final Report (which is essentially the final draft of the study, prepared after the consideration of all relevant stakeholder views) should be sent in English in MS Word as well as pdf formats with incorporated tables, figures and GIS maps, within approximately five calendar months from the beginning of the assignment. All of these reports should be sent to Konul Ahmadova, Project Coordinator, WWF Azerbaijan (kahmadova@wwfcaucasus.org).

The coordinator will provide feedback to the Senior Consultant within five working days after receiving each report. If no response is received by the consultant after the expiration of this period, the report will be deemed

as accepted, unless a written request is sent by the coordinator to the consultant to allow for a few more days for the revision. The comments and requests for further information/corrections should be addressed by the consultant in a timely manner. After the satisfaction of the coordinator with the quality of the reports (clearly expressed in a written form), the consultant may complete the remaining parts of the study. Only after the formal acceptance of the Final Report by the coordinator (by signing the acceptance form by both parties - the consultant and the coordinator) can the contract be considered as completed.

e) WWF's input

WWF Azerbaijan will provide all information available at their office, which might be useful for the completion of this assignment, free of charge. WWF will assist the consultants in organizing their meetings with relevant stakeholders. In addition, WWF Azerbaijan will cover the costs of the common stakeholder meetings (at least two meetings – one in Ismailly and the other in Baku) aiming to discuss the draft of the study. The consultants will be assisted by a GIS expert and a translator(s), who will be hired by WWF Azerbaijan on the basis of a competitive selection.

f) Institutional arrangements

The assignment should be implemented in close cooperation with the staff of Ismailly FMU. WWF Azerbaijan Project Coordinator will be responsible for supervising the consultants' work. The Senior Consultant will be directly accountable to the coordinator and should send all applicable reports to the latter. The coordinator is authorized to evaluate the consultant's reports and either accept them or require further updates. A separate contract will be signed with each consultant. The distribution of responsibilities between these consultants will be outlined more clearly in these contracts.

g) Qualification requirements for the Senior Consultant

- University degree or equivalent in forestry or a related field
- Extent of working experience in the field of forestry, particularly in post-socialist countries
- Extent of experience in preparation of sustainable and multipurpose forest management plans
- Good knowledge of the current situation of the Azerbaijani forestry sector would be an asset
- Experience in working with local communities in the Southern Caucasus would be an asset
- Working knowledge of English; ability to communicate in Russian would be an asset.

h) Qualification requirements for the Assisting Consultant

- University degree or equivalent in forestry or a related field
- Extent of working experience in the field of forestry of Azerbaijan
- Experience in collection of environmental data and stakeholder surveys would be an asset
- Experience in working with local communities in Azerbaijan would be an asset
- Working knowledge of Azerbaijani, and limited knowledge of English and Russian.

i) Additional information

Applicants can either apply for one position (i.e. Senior Consultant, or the Assistant), or both. In the case of applying for both positions, the priority should be clearly indicated (i.e. priority number one for the Senior Consultant's position, and priority number two for the Assistant's position, or vice versa), in order to facilitate the selection process.