

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Identifying, delineating and mapping forests with High Conservation Values in Ajara Autonomous Republic, Georgia

Background

German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), jointly with WWF Germany, supports the project *“Improving the resilience of forest ecosystems through adaptive forest management in Georgia”* (the “Project”). The project is implemented in Autonomous Republic of Ajara, Georgia. It aims to incorporate climate adaptation issues in forest management, in order to ensure the resilience of forest ecosystems.

The project is carried out over a three-year period (January 2015 – December 2017). It is implemented by WWF-Caucasus Programme Office (WWF-CauPO) in close coordination with WWF Germany and with the assistance of local project staff in Ajara. The key objectives of the project are:

- 1) *Decreasing the levels of forest degradation through adaptive forest management and more efficient use of wood.*
- 2) *Contribution to the conservation of forest ecosystems and their services*
- 3) *Identification and mapping forests with High-Conservation Values.*
- 4) *Improvement of the livelihoods of local population.*
- 5) *Conducting awareness-raising activities for the general public, including schoolchildren.*
- 6) *Capacity building of relevant forestry authorities in Ajara.*

Identification and mapping forests with High Conservation Values (HCVs) is one of the very important components of the project, aiming to support sustainable forestry in Ajara. Due to the unique biodiversity and essential social, ecological and economic functions of forests of Ajara, HCVs are present in many locations across the region. These values are threatened by unsustainable logging, over-grazing and other related problems. Consequently, they need improved protection, maintenance and enhancement. It is therefore necessary to identify the specific HCV values of forests in Ajara and prepare recommendations for their sustainable management and protection.

In order to implement this task, WWF-CauPO will hire either: a) a consulting firm, or b) group of individual consultants or c) a group of consulting firms (e.g. Joint Venture or equivalent). In cases b) or c), a Senior Consultant or a leading firm (respectively), assuming the main responsibility and accountability (i.e. provision of reports to WWF-CauPO), shall be clearly indicated. The service provider is hereafter referred to as “the consultant”.

Objectives of the assignment

The main objectives of this assignment are to identify HCV categories of forests in Ajara, delineate their boundaries, map them, and prepare relevant management recommendations, specific for each HCV Category and sub-category. The respective HCV forest guidelines will be produced for Ajara.

These guidelines will be used subsequently by the Agency of Forestry of Ajara to protect and enhance the forests with HCVs in Ajara.

Scope of services

Internationally agreed six categories of HCVs constitute the basis for this work. Further details are provided at the website of HCV Resource Network: <https://www.hcvnetwork.org/about-hcvf/the-six-high-conservation-values>). Based on these six internationally agreed categories, specific HCV categories and sub-categories will be determined for Ajara. The study area includes entire forest land of Ajara (about 190,000 ha in total, including forests located within Protected Areas; the terrain is predominantly mountainous with steep slopes). The work will be conducted in several steps:

- *Collect background information about forests, their biodiversity and essential ecosystem functions in Ajara*
- *Collect specific information about the outputs of previous work on national HCV categories and sub-categories for Georgia (and in particular, Ajara)*
- *Based on this information, prepare the initial draft of local interpretation of HCV categories for Ajara - respective toolkit/guidelines including categories, sub-categories and thresholds; this stage involves a common expert meeting in Ajara (around 20 persons including project staff, the consultant and experts) to discuss this initial draft*
- *Using the HCV categories, sub-categories and thresholds determined specifically for Ajara (and agreed with local experts), identify the HCVs, delineate their boundaries/polygons within the forest cover/land of Ajara and record these boundaries/polygons in a GIS database (including maps and attribute information); this implies the production of maps for each individual HCV category and subcategory and for all HCVs taken together*
- *Prepare management and policy recommendations for each HCV forest category and sub-category adjusted for Ajara, including protection, maintenance, enhancement, sustainable use and logging restrictions*
- *Present the preliminary results to key stakeholders, including the Agency of Forestry of Ajara (around 30 persons including project staff, consultants and stakeholders) with the aim to take into consideration their views and prepare the final version of the agreed document*
- *Produce a final report (see below for further details).*

The fulfilment of tasks listed above will require several field visits to the forests of Ajara, in order to verify the presence of specific HCVs “on the ground”. Individual meetings with key stakeholders in Ajara will be necessary. Periodic common meetings of the expert team directly responsible for these tasks shall also be held. These meetings will aim to review the progress and plan the remaining tasks. Apart from the Senior Consultant (or a leading consulting firm) the team of experts involved in this work will preferably include a forester, a botanist, a zoologist, a hydrologist, a GIS expert (s), and a geologist/soil scientist. An interpreter will also be required (with both simultaneous and consecutive interpretation as possible tasks). The following key outputs are expected from this work:

- (i) *A local interpretation of the six global HCVs with respective thresholds and management recommendations, agreed upon by stakeholders; this document shall be in a form of guidelines, toolkit or equivalent, and shall be in a format which would allow their relatively easy adjustment for subsequent formal approval as a regulation or standard (the approval is beyond the scope of these ToRs).*

- (ii) Maps of georeferenced HCV polygons in a GIS database*
- (iii) Stakeholder meeting reports*
- (iv) A final report containing: (a) a description of the process by which the HCV categories were defined, delineated and mapped, b) the rationale for deciding on those categories and (c) methods used in the fulfilment of all these tasks.*

The work will be conducted in the period April-September 2017. The consultant shall closely cooperate with local forestry and environmental authorities of Ajara, alongside with WWF-CauPO.

Reporting and Approval Procedures

The consultant will prepare and submit to WWF-CauPO a detailed work plan for the fulfilment of the above-mentioned tasks within about two calendar weeks from the signature of the contract agreement. The plan should include time schedule of work, responsibilities of tasks and methods. The first interim report will be provided within about two calendar months from the beginning of the assignment, upon the completion of the identification of all HCVs specifically for Ajara (i.e. local interpretation). Relevant stakeholder meeting reports shall also be included. The report will be in MS Word format and include the outputs as well as the description of conducted work and used methods.

The second interim report will include GIS maps of identified HCVs for Ajara and will be submitted within about three months from the beginning of the assignment. The files in respective GIS format and attribute information will also be provided. The description of conducted work and used methods will be included in the report. Relevant stakeholder meeting reports shall also be included.

The final report will include all outputs required by these ToRs and will be submitted within about five calendar months from the beginning of the assignment. The final report will be submitted in MS Word and pdf formats. Respective GIS coverages (maps) and attribute information should also be provided by the consultant.

All reports should be sent to Zurab Manvelidze, project coordinator of WWF-CauPO in Ajara (zmanvelidze@wwfcaucasus.org). The project coordinator will provide feedback to the consultant within ten working days after receiving the reports. 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 provided by the coordinator to allow for more time for the revision. The comments and requests for further information/corrections should be addressed by the consultant in a timely manner. Only after the formal acceptance of the final report by the coordinator (by signing the acceptance form by both parties - the Senior Consultant and the coordinator) can the contract be considered as completed.

Roles and responsibilities

WWF-CauPO will provide all information available at their office, which will be useful for the completion of this assignment, free of charge. The WWF will also assist the consultant in respective logistical issues (e.g. arranging stakeholder meetings) within the frames of their responsibilities. The WWF will sign contracts directly with individual experts, if a team of experts is selected for the fulfilment of this task. The WWF will cover some of the supplementary costs, namely – translation of the written documents, supplying/catering for the common meetings and covering the travel and accommodation costs of the external (i.e. non-consultant) meeting participants from Tbilisi to Batumi. Other meeting costs (including travel, accommodation and renting simultaneous interpretation facilities, if needed) will be covered by the consultants themselves.

Qualification requirements for the consultant

The cumulative experiences of the candidates (whether a consulting firm(s) or the team of individual experts) shall be as follows:

- At least three years of experience in identification of HCVs for forests at national or sub-national level and preparation of respective management recommendations
- Involvement of consultants possessing sufficient knowledge on biodiversity as well socio-economic functions of forest ecosystems, preferably in Ajara
- Knowledge of GIS and demonstrated ability to prepare high-quality maps and attribute information
- Excellent communication skills and ability to travel to the project sites and cooperate closely with local population in Ajara
- Ability to produce high-quality reports in English.

Special notes for the applicants

Applicants shall provide clear description of their experiences in accordance with the qualification requirements outlined above, proposed methods of work and the service price. The service price shall be all inclusive – i.e. remunerations, travel, accommodation, taxes, etc. If application is made by a consulting firm, it shall include the list of all experts who will be involved in this work, alongside with their CVs. An application in the form of a team of individual consultants (experts), should specify who will be the Senior Consultant responsible for all above-mentioned reports. In addition, names and CVs of all team members, alongside with description of their responsibilities for the fulfilment of these tasks, shall be provided.