

TERMS OF REFERENCE

FOR A RANGELAND MANAGEMENT SPECIALIST TO CONDUCT LEGAL ASSESSMENT AND PREPARE SUSTAINABLE PASTURE MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR THE SELECTED LOCATION IN GEORGIA

WWF-Caucasus Programme Office is implementing a project on *Increasing Biodiversity in a Priority Transboundary Protected Area in the Iori Mingeaur Region* ("the project"), supported by German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and WWF-Germany. Within the framework of this project, WWF-Caucasus will award a service contract for conducting legal assessment and preparing a sustainable management plan for about 5,000 ha of pasture land surrounding Chachuna Sanctuary (Dedoplistskaro Municipality, Georgia).

Background information

The overall objective of the project is to improve biodiversity in a transboundary Priority Conservation Area, Iori-Mingeauri, by enhancing management of protected areas and pastures, restoration of floodplain forests and re-introduction of the locally extinct Goitered Gazelle (*Gazella subgutturosa*).

The main part of the area is characterized by a mosaic of steppes and semi-deserts with drought-resistant tree species (such as Pistachio – *Pistacia mutica*), shrubs and grasses. Chachuna Sanctuary represents unique floodplain (tugai) forest in the lower Iori river valley, dominated by Floodplain oak (*Quercus pedunculiflora*). With 500 mm yearly precipitation, the region represents one of the driest areas in the south Caucasus.

The region is populated sparsely. The transport infrastructure is poorly developed. Only a few minor roads traverse the project area. The main economic activities are livestock keeping (mainly sheep) and agriculture.

Following the wave of liberalization in Georgia in the 1990s, livestock was transferred to private hands whilst the relevant legal provisions were changed or abolished. As a consequence, uncontrolled grazing and resulting overgrazing is a common practice exercised presently. The land owners have their own sheep or lease their land to other sheep owners. The sheep owners and shepherds are generally not aware of negative effects of over-grazing on the productivity of the pastures. Fires that are set by the shepherds in the autumn to fertilize the pastures bear additional pressure to the devastation of the natural grasslands.

Around Chachuna Sanctuary, there are estimated 30,000-40,000 sheep grazing. The degradation of the ecosystem is worsened by the fact that the buffer zone around the Sanctuary was canceled after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Also, near the Sanctuary, the supply of drinking water for sheep is totally inadequate. As a result, the shepherds lead the sheep herds to drink water from Iori River illegally - through the territory of the Sanctuary. The grazing of sheep causes damage by browsing of young trees in the natural regeneration area of floodplain forests.

Under the above-mentioned project, sustainable grazing management will be promoted through improved legislation, the development of management plan and implementation of model projects. The combination of improved legal framework, strengthened capacities of land-owners/users and clearly visible benefits to the latter will ensure long term sustainable pasture management in the target area.

Objectives, scope and methodology for the assignment

A legal framework for sustainable use of pasture land should be developed in close consultation with stakeholders, including the Ministry of Agriculture of Georgia, local landowners and shepherds. During this process, the relevant legal aspects should be analyzed and recommendations produced, aiming at closing existing gaps in legal framework and building solid foundation for sustainable pasturing.

Based on the legal assessment and recommendations, a management plan for about 5,000 ha of pasture land in the border zone of Chachuna Sanctuary should be developed in close consultation with shepherds, landowners and relevant governmental organizations. For this purpose, different field surveys should be conducted: (a) ecological condition of pastures and existing vegetation, rangeland degradation types, rates and levels, (b) actually implemented grazing system, (c) detailed inventory of sheep, (d) the sheep grazing pressure in Chachuna Sanctuary and surrounding areas and e) possible alternative ways to access Iori river.

Subsequently, management plan should be produced with norms of optimal and sustainable livestock grazing for the target area. Critical areas for restoration should be identified and mapped. Also, rapid socio-economic and marketing assessment for the identification of possible sustainable pasture use options should be conducted and relevant recommendations produced. The outcomes of this process should be integrated back into the recommended formulation of laws.

Subsequent actions (not within the scope of this assignment)

Cost-effective measures to implement the pasture management plan elaborated under this ToR will be developed in cooperation with selected stakeholders and subsequently conducted as a model project. These measures could include the setting-up of rehabilitation areas and erosion control plots. Furthermore, fenced corridors for access to Iori River should be constructed, and arrangements made for their mandatory use between land owners/shepherds and the Chachuna Sanctuary management.

Implementation of the new pasture management plan would reduce negative impacts on ecosystems and ensure sustainable productivity of pasture land. Further benefit could be increased attractiveness of the pasture land for leasing (due to easier and more ecologically acceptable access to drinking water).

Technical assistance and supervision

WWF-Caucasus has many years of experience in biodiversity conservation. The work planned under this ToR will be conducted under the supervision of the Project Country Coordinator for Georgia and with technical assistance and advice from the Project GIS Expert (electronic database, maps). The planning process has to be performed on the basis of participatory approach.

Format and time scope (duration) of the pasture management plan

The format (outline) and duration of the pasture management plan should be determined on the basis of the best available (including relevant international) technical guidelines and experience. These should be agreed at the very initial stages of contract implementation.

Deliverables

The deliverables should include the report containing a) management plan and b) the outcomes of legal assessment with concrete recommendations - electronic version (Microsoft Word and PDF and, if applicable, other relevant formats) and three hard copies of full version of descriptive pasture land management plan, GIS-based maps, legal assessment and minutes of meetings with local community, local authorities, Chachuna Sanctuary administration, Ministry of Agriculture staff and other stakeholders. The plan should encompass around 5,000 ha of pasture land adjacent to the Chachuna Sanctuary.

Duration of the assignment

Duration of the assignment is 55 working days in total. Legal assessment should be completed by end 2012. The draft rangeland management plan should be prepared, consulted with stakeholders (including relevant ministries and agencies) and completed by end 2013.

Qualification requirements

A suitable candidate should have diploma or equivalent in biological/agricultural sciences or related fields. The candidate should also have at least five years of experience in the field of pasture management and livestock keeping in general.