

Darwin Initiative for the Survival of Species

Half Year Report Form

Project Title	Implementing urgent conservation actions in mesotrophic fen mires in Belarus
Country	Belarus
Organisation	RSPB
Project Ref. No.	162/12/031
Report date	Period from April 2003 to September 2003

1. Outline progress over the last 6 months against the agreed baseline timetable for the project (if your project has started less than 6 months ago, please report on the period since start up).

Milestone

Progress

PROJECT MANAGEMENT

0.1 Project planning, monitoring, management and administration. Agreements between partners, terms of reference for Project staff, steering group and management committee.

Staff recruited as planned and in compliance with labour and tax guideline law of the Republic of Belarus; details on names, duration of contracts, job-descriptions, etc. are available from the Project Manager on request.

UK Project Manager, Aidan Lonergan, has been promoted to Project Supervisor, with Lars Lachmann taking over.

0.2 Hold steering committee meetings annually

The first project steering committee meeting was held on February 6, 2003.

0.3 Hold management group meetings twice a year

The first official project management group meeting was held on September 29, 2003. As agreed, the PMG is composed of the following project officials: Mr. Dmitry Goloubovsky - Belarus Project Manager, Dr. Alexander Kozulin, Belarus Project Scientific Advisor, Mr. Lars Lachmann – UK Project Manager.

0.4 Technical Report Production

Technical reporting produced as planned.

0.5 Financial Reporting

Financial reporting done as planned.

0.6 Run management plan implementation training workshops

Between 29th Sep and 3rd Oct two UK experts from the RSPB (Norman Sills and Jim Glover) inspected the work done to date and ran a workshop on UK experiences with similar projects.

HYDROLOGICAL MANAGEMENT WORK

1.1 Adjustment of the operating regulations and building of water-regulating structures at the Radostovo site

In accordance with the national procedures and in line with UNDP subcontractor selection guidelines, PolesieGiprovodkhoz has been contracted to prepare a single engineering project for all hydrological management activities at Zvanets. The document provides detailed description of the proposed construction activities in terms of workload, materials used, costs, etc. Another subcontract has been issued to BrestMeliovodkhoz to carry out the actual construction on site. Construction works at all sites across Zvanets have been proceeding as planned.

1.2 Adjustment of the operating regulations and building of water-regulating structures at the Travy site

See 1.1

1.3 Adjustment of the operating regulations and building of water-regulating structures at the Orekhovo site

See 1.1

1.4 Building of water-regulating structures at the Kirov collective farm site

See 1.1

1.5 Withdrawal of a part of the amelioration system from intensive agricultural use and construction of necessary water-retention constructions at the Novoselki site

See 1.1

1.6 Closing of the unnamed amelioration system, located on the territory of Zvanets

See 1.1

1.7 Relieving the negative effect of the Novoselki fish-farm operation on the mire

See 1.1

1.8 Diminishing the drainage effect of the Yamnik system on the mire

See 1.1

1.9 Building of water-retention structures on all of the mire drainage canals located within Zvanets

See 1.1

1.10 Close the unsanctioned drainage system construction by the Krasny Partizan collective farm

In accordance with the national procedures and in line with UNDP subcontractor selection guidelines, Belgiprovodkhoz has been contracted to prepare a single engineering project for all hydrological management activities at Dikoe. The document will enable subsequent construction works and is expected to be completed toward the end of 2003.

1.11 Alleviate the draining effect on the Dikoie Mire of the Upper Yaselda drainage system by construction of dams at the VP-2 canal and the Yaselda canal

See 1.10

1.12 Maintenance of an optimal water level in the part of the Dikoie mire adjacent to the Upper Yaselda drainage system by means of pumping water from pond #8

See 1.10

1.13 Alleviation of the draining effect of the "Dikoie" peat extraction site drainage network

See 1.10

1.14 Closing of the Viunovka drainage system

See 1.10

1.15 Repairs of sluice at Selets complex

Repairs of Selets sluice are being undertaken by the Ministry of Environment, as part of its cofunding toward the project.

Also, see 1.16

1.16 Modification of Selets operating rules & regulations

In accordance with the national procedure and in line with UNDP subcontractor selection guidelines, Belgiprovodkhoz has been contracted to amend Selets operational rules and guidelines, with a view to balance out the water level in the Sporovo mire. The new rules, agreed with all stakeholders, now prescribe that water be accumulated in fish-farm reservoir throughout spring, to provide sufficient discharge downstream Yaselda in order to ensure optimal water level in the Sporovo mire during the breeding season. In dry years, however, increased discharge into the mire could compromise fish production by the fish-farm.

Thus, the following new solution was agreed with all stakeholders to balance out the needs of the mire and the fish-farm:

- *in high-water years:*

fish-farm accumulates excess water in the reservoir and fish-ponds, limiting discharge in Yaselda to avoid flooding of the mire. For the reservoir to be able to accumulate water to its maximum level, the emergency discharge sluice has to be repaired (under implementation by the Ministry of Environment).

- *in low-water years:*

discharge from the reservoir is completely stopped, allowing only seepage water to flow into the river. In this conditions, the water level in the mire could drop as low as 30 cm below the surface. In order to ensure optimal water regime in the dry years, two overflow dams are going to be constructed at the Yaselda riverbed.

1.17 Monitoring of the implementation of operating guidelines for Selets

Monitoring of implementation of new operating rules was undertaken by BelGiprovodkhoz hydrology experts.

HYDROLOGICAL MONITORING PROGRAMME

2.1 Monitoring of water levels at the three sites

Hydrological monitoring has been conducted as planned.

SPECIES MONITORING PROGRAMME

3.1 Monitoring of Aquatic Warbler Population density and breeding success at three sites

As planned, the AW monitoring was undertaken as part of a series of field trips by project experts to the sites. Monitoring data have been collected and are being analysed.

SITE PROTECTION THROUGH ENHANCED DESIGNATION

4.1 Elaboration of a Proposal on changing the boundaries of the Belavezhskaya Pushcha National Park to include the whole area of the Dikoe Mire IBA in the boundaries of the National Park

A proposal on changing the boundaries of the Belavezhskaya Pushcha National Park was prepared and a respective decision by the Pruzhany District Executive Committee taken.

4.2 Changing the boundaries of buffer zone of the Belavezhskaya Pushcha National Park

to take account of the newly included Dikoe Mire IBA

See 4.1

5.1 Set up Zakaznik Management Office

N/A (work started in early October).

2. Give details of any notable problems or unexpected developments that the project has encountered over the last 6 months. Explain what impact these could have on the project and whether the changes will effect the budget and timetable of project activities. Have any of these issues been discussed with the Department and if so, have changes been made to the original agreement?

The project performed well throughout the last 6 months. No major difficulties have been encountered so far.

The project has opted for a single-subcontractor mode of implementation of hydrological construction works at Zvanets, thus ensuring timely delivery of the objectives, i.e. all works were completed earlier than planned. Similar strategy is going to be implemented at Dikoe, where work on the ground is due to start early 2004. No implications for the budget are expected.

The project is expected to achieve all of its original objectives.

3. Are there any other issues you wish to raise relating to the project or to Darwin's management, monitoring, or financial procedures?

Please note the change in UK staff: Initial UK Project Manager Aidan Lonergan has now taken over the role of the Project Supervisor from Norbert Schäffer. Primary contact for the Darwin Initiative and new UK Project Manager is now Lars Lachmann (Lars.Lachmann@rspb.org.uk), RSPB Country Programmes Officer for Poland and Belarus. The postal address doesn't change. Please see the attached CV of Lars Lachmann.

Please send your **completed form by 31 October each year per email** to Stefanie Halfmann, Darwin Initiative M&E Project Manager, Email: stefanie.halfmann@ed.ac.uk