



**WETLAND RESTORATION AND POLLUTION REDUCTION PROJECT
GEF TF 050706 BUL**

COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

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Table of Contents

Table of Contents	2
Abbreviations	4
Executive Summary	5
1. Background Information	7
1.1 Project Description.....	7
1.2 Situation Description.....	8
1.3 Strategy Development.....	9
2. Strategy Objectives	10
3. Situation Analysis	11
4. Target audiences and messages	12
4.1 Local stakeholders.....	12
4.2 Decision Makers on National Level.....	15
4.3 The Local and National Public.....	15
4.4 Donors.....	15
5. Strategic Approaches	16
1. Publicity and Media Outreach.....	16
2. Environmental Education.....	17
3. Visitors services	17
4. Training and Consulting of Local Partners	18
5. Project Promotion.....	18
6. Strategic Principles	19
6.1 Proactive, not reactive actions.....	19
6.2 Build teams involving project staff members and administrations staff members from the protected areas.....	19
6.3 Consistence between the messages promoting the successful implementation of the project and the messages promoting the objectives of the protected areas management	19
6.4 Partnership between PA and stakeholders at every step	19
6.5 Coordination of all communication strategy actions with MoAF and MoEW	20
6.6 On the job training for PA administrations and their partners in the process of implementation of actions	20
6.7 Clear definition of the audiences and objectives, and the distribution and promotional plans for each publication or other product.....	20
6.8 Use of the small grant program as a mechanism for implementation of the communication strategy	20
6.9 Search for multiple sources of funding	20
6.10 Involvement of already established organizations and institutions.....	20
7. Action Plan	21
7.1. Kalimok – Brushlen Protected Area.....	22
7.2. Persina Natural Park.....	24
7.3. Project Promotion.....	30
8. Implementation of the Communication Strategy	31
Appendixes	32
Appendix 1	33
Checklist	33
Implementing the Communication Strategy Principles	33
Appendix 2	35
Communication Strategy and Action Plan.....	36

Appendix 3	40
Project Progress Activities	40
PERSINA NATURE PARK – ACTIVITIES 2002-2003	40
1. Educational programs and competitions	40
2. Public awareness and public relations campaigns.....	41
3. Partnerships for the management of the protected area	42
4. Consulting in the area of agriculture	43
KALIMOK-BRUHLEN PROTECTED AREA – ACTIVITIES 2003.....	44
1. Educational programs and competitions	44
2. Public awareness and public relations campaigns.....	45
3. Partnerships for biodiversity conservation.....	46
4. Consulting in the area of eco-agriculture	46

Abbreviations

ADM – Administration
EU – European Union
GEF – Global Environmental Facility
IUCN – International Union for Nature Conservation
KBPS – Kalimok/ Brushlen Protected Sites
LC – Local Coordinators
MoAF – Ministry of Forestry and Agriculture
MoEd – Ministry of Education
MoEW – Ministry of Environment and Waters
NDP – Nature Park Directorate
NGO – Non-governmental Organization
NP – Nature Park
PA – Park Administration
PAL – Protected Areas Law
PCU – Project Coordination Unit
PMU – Project Management Unit
REC – Regional Environmental Center
REI – Regional Environmental Inspection
RIE – Regional Inspection of Education
TV – Television
UK – United Kingdom
UNDP – United Nations Development Program
USAID – United States Agency for International Development
WRPRP – Wetlands Restoration and Pollution Reduction Project
WWF – World Wild Fund

Executive Summary

The Wetlands Restoration and Pollution Reduction Project of the Global Environmental Facility/World Bank and the Ministry of Environment and Waters focuses on two protected areas – the wetlands of Persina Nature Park and the Kalimok/ Brushlen Protected Site. An integral part of the project are actions related to public outreach, building of environmental awareness on local and national level, and support for local business initiatives, predominantly related to nature-friendly agriculture and ecotourism.

That creates the need for a project communication strategy, which will later serve as foundation for the communication strategies of the two protected areas. The strategy is developed with the active involvement of the administrations of both protected areas and their key partners – local authorities, educational, cultural and religious institutions, non-governmental organizations, business, etc.

The key target audiences are also partners in the process of development and implementation of the strategy. The messages to them are specific and vary accordingly to the specific interests of each of the groups in each area.

The communication actions are divided in five groups according to the target audience and messages, and appropriate approaches:

- Public outreach and media relations
- Environmental education on national, regional and local level
- Visitor services
- Training and consulting for local agriculture workers and entrepreneurs
- Project promotion

There are ten strategic principles, which, if applied throughout the implementation of the communication strategy, will secure that the set of objectives are successfully met:

- Proactive, not reactive actions
- Build teams involving project staff members and administrations staff members from the protected areas.
- Consistence between the messages promoting the successful implementation of the project and the messages promoting the objectives of the protected areas management
- Partnership between PA and the stakeholders at every step
- Coordination of all communication strategy actions with MoAF and MoEW
- On-site training for PA administrations and their partners in the process of implementation of actions
- Clear definition of the audiences and objectives, and the distribution and promotional plans for each publication or other product
- Use of the small-grant-program as a mechanism for implementation of the communication strategy
- Search for multiple sources of funding
- Involvement of already established organizations and institutions.

The two-year action plan is based on the outcomes of workshops carried out in both protected areas with the participation of the administrations and their partners. The appendices contain materials from the workshops, descriptions of the activities carried out in both protected areas, and a checklist with indicators for application of the strategic principles.

1. Background Information

1.1 Project Description

The Wetlands Restoration and Pollution Reduction Project (WRPRP) is funded by the Global Environmental Facility (GEF) and international donors, and is implemented by the Bulgarian Ministry of Environment and Waters (MoEW). The key objective of WRPRP is to restore the wetlands along the Bulgarian coast of the Danube river and to study the possibilities to use of riparian wetlands as nutrient traps. Another objective of the project is to provide support for the management of protected areas and sustainable use of natural resources.

The WRPR Project will attain its objectives by: (i) improving the coordination between institutions on local, regional and national level, local communities and municipal authorities on issues like land use policies and development planning; (ii) increasing public awareness on the need to integrate environmental objectives in the process of socio-economic development; and (iii) establishing a processes of full public involvement in the decision making process related to the project, as well as to the sustainable management of the resources within the project areas.

A project Coordination Unit (PCU) has been established at MoEW. PCU is based in Sofia, and has two Local Coordinators (LC) at the project sites. PCU is responsible for the overall management and coordination, financial management, placement of orders and reimbursements within WRPRP. The local coordinators will work closely with the administrations of Persina NP and Kalimok/Brushlen Protected Site (KBPS), and will be responsible for the local coordination of WRPRP actions. They will report to the PCU.

Wetlands Restoration and Pollution Reduction project consists of three components:

- Component 1: Wetland restoration
- Component 2: Protected areas management
- Component 3: Project coordination, management and monitoring

Component 2: Protected areas management supports the sustainable development and preservation of resources at the two protected areas – Persina Nature Park (22000 ha) and Kalimok-Brushlen protected Area (6000 ha). The protected areas include different types of land, including agricultural lands. This allows for their utilization for different economic purposes. The pronunciation of the protected areas does not change the ownership of lands, forests and water basins within the areas, but requires that the owners observe the adopted regime of protection of habitats of endangered and rare animal species and communities. The Protected Areas Law (PAL) requires that owners and users of forests, lands and water basins within protected areas observe protected-area regimes described in PAL, in the pronunciation order of the protected area, and in its management plan. This project component will start with the development of the management plans for both territories, and will follow-up with support for the implementation of the priority actions within the management plans. The wetland restoration and protected areas management regimes integrate the needs of the local communities and the biodiversity conservation needs in both project areas. It is expected that the management plans of Persina NP and KBPS will support economic activities, which are in harmony with the biodiversity conservation objectives, and will restrict economic activities which contradict with them.

1.2 Situation Description

The overall agenda of the socio-economic development of the country includes a focus on nature conservation. The key political and economic priorities for Bulgaria are the memberships in the European Union and NATO. Both memberships are directly tied with the expectation that Bulgaria will preserve its nature and will contribute to the nature conservation on regional (for Southeastern Europe) and international level. There are two European directives in the area of nature conservation, with which Bulgaria has already harmonized its legislation. Bulgaria has also signed and fulfills its responsibilities on seven international conventions related to biodiversity conservation.

In 1994 Bulgaria was the first European country to develop a National Biodiversity Conservation Strategy. The process of implementation of this strategy led to a very successful development of the network of protected areas, adoption of contemporary protected areas management techniques, and implementation of a variety of sustainable development projects. The country has developed specialized legislation, including a Protected Areas Law. All this has led to a significant enhancement of the image of the country. What makes all these successes especially notorious is that they were achieved within less than ten years.

Bulgarian protected areas network covers almost 5% of the country's territory. The three national parks and most nature parks have Management plans, which are implemented using the already accumulated experience in the area.

The country has experience also in the area of public outreach, environmental education, raising environmental awareness among authorities and the general public. It would be correct to state that there are already traditions in that aspect, and that there is a professional capacity on national level, and specifically in some protected areas – the national parks in particular. What the country currently lacks, is an overall strategy, uniting the efforts of the many governmental, local, non-governmental and business organizations, and increasing the effectiveness of their efforts through better coordination.

Under these circumstances, the development of a communication strategy for two protected areas – Nature Park Persina and Kalimok/Brushlen Protected Site as part of the project supported by the Ministry of Environment and Waters, and the World Bank, is a relatively favorable task.

At the current stage of the project there is a need for development of the strategy, in order to use it in further project actions and components.

It is important to take into account an important factor, which will create the need to update the current strategy and action plan within the next two years. This is why the Action Plan covers a two-year period – 2004 and 2005. This factor is the delay of the start of the PHARE Project for development of the management plans of the two protected areas. The communication strategy and the action plan will need to be updated at least at two points in the next two – three years. The first update will be of key importance and will be made with the very start of the PHARE Project (Fall, 2004). The update will accompany the project working plan development in order to harmonize the public relations with the actions within the project, and specifically with the management plans development. There will be a need to update the strategy and the action plan for a second time when the management plans are ready and approved by the Council of Ministers, so that from being Project documents, they become documents of the protected areas.

1.3 Strategy Development

This strategy has been developed through a participatory process involving all stakeholders. The first step was the approval of the Terms of Reference, and development of an outline of the document with the participation of the international project consultant Emmanuela Montanari. A series of expert meetings were hosted by the Project in Sofia. The meetings involved the project team and representatives of the administrations of the two protected areas.

As a second step, the international consultant visited both protected areas, and gathered information on the available experience in public awareness activities, and the general vision for future actions.

The third step involved two workshops for the two protected areas involving the administrations and their partners. (*Appendix 2 – Agenda and participants lists for both workshops*)

The Strategy and the Action Plan are developed based on the information gathered during the three steps. They take into account the philosophy and plans of three key partners in the process – Ministry of Environment and Waters represented by the Project Coordination Unit, and the local coordinators, the protected areas administrations, and their partners in the protected areas.

2. Strategy Objectives

This strategy is developed to simultaneously serve the purposes of the Project, within which it is being developed and will be implemented, as well as the purposes of both protected areas. In other words, it is developed to serve as foundation in the planning of specific project actions in the area of public outreach, but will also serve as a first draft of the five-year Communication Strategy of each of the two protected areas. The specific objectives could be divided in two groups:

1. This Strategy aims at structuring and systematizing the visions of all stakeholders on the public outreach activities, that are needed to support the achieving of the Project objectives, and to support the preparation of Nature Park Persina and Kalimok/Brushlen Protected Site for the development of their Management plan and the carrying out of their functions as provided by the Protected Areas Law and the pronouncement orders. The Strategy has several specific objectives:
 - Put the specific actions into a broader context – the context of the entire network of protected areas in the country, the process and trends of development in the area of nature protection in Bulgaria and on international level. This requires coordination with other protected areas in the country.
 - All actions need to be well coordinated and should be consistent with the interests of all stakeholders. Coordination of actions will lead to higher effectiveness of the use of the project resources and higher effectiveness of the communication strategy products.
 - The key efforts should be directed at gaining support for the Project activities and the activities of the protected areas in future. This support could be gained by developing a key message for the potential benefits that the sustainable development of these natural areas could produce for the local communities.

The preliminary phase of the Project has included many steps on informing the local and national public about the Project objectives and the expected outcomes. The local stakeholders have been regularly informed and involved in discussions of possible Project activities. The Project action plan itself is consistent with the expectations and attitudes of the local population.

Since its start in May 2002 the Project has made many steps towards informing and involving the local public. This Strategy will build on the outcomes of these steps, and will further strengthen their efficiency in the future stages of the Project. (*Appendix 3 contains description of these activities*)

2. The second group of objectives relates to the capacity building of the protected areas administrations and their partners, which will enable them to successfully manage and implement the Strategy and the action plan. The strategy identifies the need to build such capacity and considers that as an integral element of its implementation. This objective will be integrated in the principles of development and implementation of the Strategy itself.

3. Situation Analysis

Based on the available information about the functioning of the two protected areas, and the achievements of the Project, it is possible to draw some analytical conclusions on the circumstances in which the strategy will be developed and implemented.

The Strengths of the two protected areas could be described as follows:

- Existence of administrations and staff members for both protected areas
- General awareness on the objectives of the protected areas among the key partners
- Identified local partners, which will be involved in the future implementation of the communication strategy
- Relative experience of both administrations in the area of public relations.

The Weaknesses:

- Limited number of administration staff
- Limited experience in implementing a public relations strategy among the administrations, as well as among the partners
- Limited resources of the administrations for the implementation of such strategy

The Opportunities offered by the external environment, which could facilitate the Strategy implementation and which should be used:

- Existence of a network of protected areas
- Available experience in the area of communications for environment protection among the institutions, which are directly involved
- Overall support for nature conservation
- Variety of sources of funding for communication activities
- The Project, and the two protected areas belong to an European network of projects and protected areas supported by the World Bank. This network is a source of experience and knowledge, and of opportunities for exchange of experience and other resources
- Availability of relatively successful mechanisms for coordination among international donors and participation of the two protected areas, for example with the National Strategy and Action Plan for Ecotourism Development

The Threats in the external environment, which need to be taken into account, and limited as much as possible:

- Potential possibility of overall decrease of the socio-economic stability in the country.
- Delay in the development of the management plans.

4. Target audiences and messages

The main focus of the Strategy are the two protected areas along the Bulgarian coast of Danube river Nature Park Persina and Kalimok/Brushlen Protected Site.

4.1 Local stakeholders

The most important characteristic of this group of local people and institutions is the direct impact that the local Project actions and the management of protected areas will have on them. This group includes all stakeholders identified at the preliminary phase, and at the start of the Project.

They could be described by several distinct characteristics, which will influence the used by the communication strategy approaches and the type and level of their involvement:

- Differences in the interests and level of dependence on the protected areas.

The interests of land owners, for example, are directly related to the economic benefits, which could increase or decrease as a result of the Project actions. The interests of educational institutions are related to the opportunities to use the protected areas for educational purposes and for enrichment of the educational materials. The interests of local authorities are related to securing socio-economic development, investment attraction, donor involvement, etc.

- These groups have different level of awareness, readiness and competence to be partners of the administrations of the protected areas and the Project in the communication strategy implementation.

Some of them are not aware of these opportunities and do not understand the benefits that such a partnership could bring. They do not have any experience in partnership and are not aware of the existence of other similar projects. Others have some experience, but it is not systematized.

- The messages to each of them are different.

Local Authorities

- Regional Governor's Administrations – Pleven, Rousse, Veliko Turnovo and Silistra.
- Municipalities – Tutrakan and Slivo pole.
- Municipalities Svishtov, Belene and Nikopol.
- Association of Danube Municipalities.
- Association of Bulgarian Municipalities „Danube-South“

Messages:

- The involved in the project municipalities belong to the local Danube and Black Sea communities, which are all responsible for protecting their common home;
- Similar projects are being implemented along the entire Danube basin; they have produced many success stories;

- The support and integration of the Project objectives in the local plans could contribute to the solution of socio-economic problems of the municipalities;
- The involvement of local authorities will contribute to the long-term sustainability of the project outcomes;
- Local authorities are an important channel for information and communication with the local public.

Local and regional professional and consumer associations, as well as individual consumers

- Regional Forestry Services in Tutrakan and Rousse
- Regional Forestry Services in Svishtov and Nikopol
- Regional Fishing Control Directorate, Tutrakan
- State Game Breeding Station “Danube” Rousse
- Belene Prison Directorate
- Regional Advisory Service on Agricultural Issues, Pleven
- Owners of land within the protected areas
- Associations of agricultural farmers
- Draining systems and Associations of water users
- Hunting and Fishing Associations
- Local small enterprises: tourism, local fishing associations, etc.
- Industrial entrepreneurs
- Civil organizations – local environmental, social, educational and other NGO’s.

Messages:

- Project actions will create significant support for owners and users, who are affected by the flooding; for current/potential users of related with protected areas products and services, and for potential participants in sustainable economic development activities.
- Wetlands fulfill vital ecological functions. If reasonably managed wetlands could provide opportunities for local development.
- The involved in the project municipalities belong to the local Danube and Black Sea communities, which are all responsible for protecting their common home;
- Similar projects are being implemented along the entire Danube basin; they have produced many success stories;
- Local benefits from wetlands include: biodiversity conservation, water purification, protection from overflows;
- The project aims at generating opportunities for alternative income for local communities. Project actions including the development of management plans and defining and enforcement of regimes and norms will lead to sustainable and effective use of wetlands resources like fish, biomass, herbs, game;
- Project actions will lead to attraction of nature-friendly tourists.

- Wetlands restoration will be carried out within the set by the stakeholders frames: conditions and compensations will be discussed and coordinated with affected stakeholders.
- The Project aims at attracting additional donor investments and working in synergy with other programs for local sustainable development. There is a need for special knowledge and skills for the attraction and use of existing sources for project funding – project and business-plan development skills.

Educational, cultural and religious institutions:

- Schools
- Other educational institutions
- Community centers (chitalishte)
- Museum of Fishing in Tutrakan
- Religious communities and institutions

Messages:

- Protected areas are an endless source of knowledge for the specific region.
- Knowledge and information about nature, and cultural and historical heritage could give new nature to the role of educational, cultural and religious institutions.
- These institutions are a key partner in environmental activities, because of their professional and public image, and capacity in the area of education and public awareness and attitude formation.

Media

- Local media
- National media
- International media

Message:

- The media is one of the key partners for the communication strategy
- The involved in the project municipalities belong to the local Danube and Black Sea communities, which are all responsible for protecting their common home;
- Similar projects are being implemented along the entire Danube basin; they have produced many success stories;

Potential partners in Romania

- Association of Romanian Municipalities „Danube-South“
- Romanian Institute for the Danube Delta
- ANTREC, National Agency for Rural, Cultural and Eco-Tourism¹
- Similar projects in Romania

Messages:

Joined actions and trans-border cooperation for the maximum increase of the efficiency of project outcomes.

¹ This is a national level tourism platform in Romania. Their website is at <http://www.antrec.ro>

4.2 Decision Makers on National Level

- Ministry of Environment and Waters
- Regional Inspectorate of Environment and Waters, Rousse
- Regional Inspectorate of Environment and Waters, Veliko Turnovo
- Regional Inspectorate of Environment and Waters, Pleven
- Ministry of Agriculture and Forests (National Forestry Management)
- Regional Forestry and Land Services in Pleven, Silistra and Rousse
- Regional Advisory Service on Agricultural Issues in Pleven, Silistra and Rousse
- Regional Forestry and Land Services in Tutrakan, Slivo pole; Belene, Nikopol, Svishtov
- National Forestry Management
- Regional Forestry Management, Lovech Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works
- Ministry of Justice
- Ministry of Economy
- Ministry of Labor
- Executive Agency of Environment and Sustainable Development
- Agency of Fishery and Aqua-cultures

4.3 The Local and National Public

Message:

The two protected areas belong to an entire system and to the general policy adopted by the country and throughout Europe. It is a matter of our choice to adopt these values.

4.4 Donors

EU, GEF, The World Bank, UNDP, USAID, British Know-How Fund, National programs (Netherlands, Dutch, Japan, Switzerland).

Messages:

- The Project will help Bulgaria meet its international obligations and requirements for EU membership.
- The Project objectives will bring global environmental benefits.
- The Project is important in the context of Black Sea restoration.
- The Project is a model for high productivity, including the immediate reproduction within the Danube river basin.
- Co-funding of actions is of key importance for the success of the Project.

5. Strategic Approaches

The Strategy objectives could be achieved through several strategic approaches, which could be operationalized through corresponding activities. They are in conformity with the relevant target audiences and the nature of the messages to these target audiences. The specific activities are provided for in the corresponding action plans and annual working plans.

The overall objective of the Project Communication Strategy is to contribute to the successful implementation of the Project objectives, and their follow-up activities in the future. Therefore, it is important that even though the Action plans will include a wide range of activities, the World Bank funded Project supports and funds those of them, which are directly related to the achievement of the concrete goals. The Wetlands Restoration and Pollution Reduction Project will sponsor the communication activities that support its three components – wetlands restoration, aspects of the protected areas management, which contribute to the economic growth in the region, and the management of the Project itself. The rest of the activities need to be funded through other sources.

1. Publicity and Media Outreach

This approach ensures broad public awareness on the existence of protected areas, the key values of nature protection, the forms of protection within protected areas, and the benefits, which they produce for the local communities.

It builds public attitudes and support for nature protection actions. It also ensures transparency of decision making and thus protects the interests of local communities and other stakeholders interested in nature conservation.

The specific methods applied provide general awareness on the objectives of law enforcement – inform the public on the legal provisions concerning use of protected areas and their resources. They inform the public about initiatives and events contributing to the successful enforcement of nature protection regimes.

This is a form of environmental education of social groups on local and national level – increase of conservation awareness.

The most popular actions that the use of this approach includes are:

- Developing corporate identify for the protected areas – logos, slogans, etc.
- Building partnerships with local media
- Issuing electronic/ paper newsletter
- Organizing visits to protected areas for journalists
- Regular press releases and meetings with journalists
- Establishment of video-libraries
- Publishing information materials on specific Project-related issues and on protected areas
- Awareness campaigns for decision makers – local, regional, national – presentations, and field trips

2. Environmental Education

Environmental education is one of the most powerful strategic approaches for public outreach in the area of nature conservation. It helps form sustainable attitudes and knowledge, and impact life strategies of young people. That is why intertwining knowledge about and experiencing of protected areas in the immediate living environment of children and young people through education is of strategic importance for the future of sustainable natural resources use around the two protected areas.

The country has enough experience in the use of interactive education methods for environmental education in all spheres and at all educational levels. There are many well prepared professionals in the area. It is just a matter of good understanding and partnership that these methods are efficiently applied at the two protected areas.

Their application includes the following elements:

- Establishing partnerships with the local schools and regional inspectorates
- Developing specific environmental elements of the school curricula
- Establishing partnerships with museums, community centers, religious institutions and organizations, etc.
- Publishing materials on environmental education.

3. Visitors services

One of the main objectives of the pronunciation of the protected areas is to manage them in a way that creates opportunities for development of tourism in the region. This would allow visitors to experience nature, while securing a sustainable source of income for the local people.

Along with the development of tourist services within the surrounding settlements mainly initiated by local entrepreneurs, the administrations of the protected areas should provide services to visitors on their territory. Such services include marking of the areas, providing of on-site or disseminated in the settlements information, interpretation of the value of wild nature and the methods for its conservation, providing conditions for a friendly for the ecosystems experience.

The overall style and quality of the visitor infrastructure is of key importance for the building of positive attitude and support towards protected areas among local people, as well as among visitors. These include administrative markings – PA borders, and utilization regimes, as well as information and interpretation tools, and recreation facilities – benches, camping sites, etc. The highest the style and quality of the infrastructure the more respect it builds among local residents and visitors. The experience from other protected areas reveals that the installation of a well planned and developed with common style infrastructure, suddenly puts end to destructive actions. Another important condition for the protection of the infrastructure is the involvement of local craftsmen in its development and installation.

Examples for such activities could include:

- Development of an overall unique design of the visitor infrastructure within the protected areas

- Development and placement of visitor infrastructure
- Development and publication of visitors guides for the protected areas
- Development of interpretation programs

4. Training and Consulting of Local Partners

In order to execute these steps and actions related to nature protection and creation of sustainable income for the local population, the administrations have to use their partnerships to secure opportunities to consult local entrepreneurs on main business issues – entrepreneurship, business planning, marketing, etc. There are several consulting mechanisms that could be used – training, bulletins, regular and occasional consulting services, contacts with other initiatives in the country and abroad for exchange of experience, etc.

The topics are:

- Ecotourism
- Alternative agricultural practices
- Project and business plan development

5. Project Promotion

The success of the project activities themselves is largely dependant on the public support in both sites, as well as on the support of public institutions at all levels, and the donor community in the country. It is important to promote the project and its outcomes on international level – along the Danube river basin, and within the World Bank group.

The Project Communication Plan has three main objectives:

- Ensure transparency and public accountability of the project management;
- Attract support for the achievement of the project goals;
- Attract the interest of other donors to invest in the region.

The main activity groups that need to be included in the action plan are:

- Publishing and public presentation of an annual report and the results of the project evaluation and monitoring system;
- Short project brochure
- Project identity – logo, stationary
- Media relations – through MoEW
- Web site
- Participation in international forums and active international contacts with projects and other protected areas along the Danube and Black Sea basins, as well as with different international organizations – WWF, IUCN, etc.
- Publicity and education accompanying small grant competitions
- Regular presentations of project successes for donors and decision makers – including through organized visits to the project sites.

6. Strategic Principles

6.1 Proactive, not reactive actions

The first principle of the communication strategy is to plan actions in a proactive instead of reactive manner. We are aware of the interests and the objectives, of who are the partners and what are the expected results. Messages should be disseminated at the times when they will serve as preparation for the success of management decisions. The success of the communication strategy may be put at risk if messages are disseminated as reactions instead of as initiatives of the protected areas and the Project. It is important to not wait for other institutions or stakeholders to create attitudes and knowledge among partners and the public, to which then to react or oppose. Instead, the first to take the initiative to define the issues and events will be the more successful player.

6.2 Build teams involving project staff members and administrations staff members from the protected areas.

Many of the Strategy activities will be carried out mainly by the partners of the protected areas, but their coordination, management and leadership should be a shared responsibility of the protected areas and the Project Management Unit. That is why it is important that decisions are made by a team involving at least two representatives of the protected area, the local coordinator and possibly a representative of the PMU.

6.3 Consistence between the messages promoting the successful implementation of the project and the messages promoting the objectives of the protected areas management

All messages in all publications and events should be consistent with the Project objectives. This means that all publications should include facts and information about the Project.

6.4 Partnership between PA and stakeholders at every step

Most of the activities will be carried out by PA partners. The benefit of that will be generation of the support of partners for the potential possibility to transform these activities into profitable economical activities (which the administrations cannot execute), and that the resources of the administrations could be used for other activities – coordination, development and implementation of policy, enforcement functions.

Another aspect of using partnership as a key principle of the communication strategy is involving partners in the management of protected area itself. This means involving and shared responsibility for activities like monitoring of ecosystems, development and maintenance of infrastructure, studying of ecosystems, etc. As vital the partnership itself is, its promotion is also of key importance.

6.5 Coordination of all communication strategy actions with MoAF and MoEW

The actions in the Strategy should be approved by and coordinated with the Ministry of Environment and Water as the “owner” of the Project and the Ministry of Agriculture and Forests as the responsible for the protected areas institution. This coordination will increase the efficiency of the use of the resources, as well as the effective integration of all messages related to the policies of both institutions.

6.6 On the job training for PA administrations and their partners in the process of implementation of actions

It is important to plan for the involvement of trainers/consultants who will participate as direct executors of the activities, and will thus increase the local capacity in the process. It is important to plan different forms of exchange of experience with other protected areas.

6.7 Clear definition of the audiences and objectives, and the distribution and promotional plans for each publication or other product

This principle ensures more targeted planning and design of concrete actions. This dissemination planning process practically serves as a “checklist” for the type, contents and design of the publication or event.

6.8 Use of the small grant program as a mechanism for implementation of the communication strategy

A good mechanism for attraction of partners will be the small grants scheme. It is necessary to plan participation of representatives of the administrations and involvement of consultants for the execution of the projects. This could be included as a condition in the competition or could be planned as a parallel activity of the PMU. It is important to apply the described in item 6.4. principle for at least the first two years of execution of the small grants.

6.9 Search for multiple sources of funding

Many of the described in the communication strategy actions are of benefit to other donors as well. Moreover, there are constant funding sources for such projects (For example: The Enterprise for Management of Environmental Activities, REC, etc.). Activities should plan for co-funding from multiple sources, including local resources, at the planning stage.

6.10 Involvement of already established organizations and institutions

The involvement of already established organizations and institutions could increase the social effectiveness of the planned activities. Investing in the development of new organizations and institutions should be done only under exclusive circumstances. It is more effective and socially responsible to plan and invest efforts in the development, alteration or improvement of already existing organizations, than to create new ones.

7. Action Plan

Action plans reflecting the main approaches and principles of the strategy were developed based on the workshops involving the administrations of protected areas and their partners. They are the basis for development of the annual plans for the Project and the protected areas. They could be useful also in the small grant program competitions. The ten strategic principles are applied in the planning and execution of activities (*Checklist in Appendix I*).

7.1. Kalimok – Brushlen Protected Area

Public and Media Outreach

Action	Expected outcome	Institutions/ Partners	Timing	<i>Budget in BGL</i>	Indicators
Presentation to the media	Informed at least 20 media	KBPS NGO, municipalities	May 2004	250	Number of publications
Training of journalists	Improved competence among journalists	KBPS NGO, municipalities, REI	September 2004	1 000	Number and quality of publications, film, reports
Visits to PA for journalists	Improved competence among journalists	KBPS NGO,		1 000	Number of publications
Publications of popular materials	Public awareness	KBPS NGO, NGO	Regularly	2 000	Number of publication, public attitude towards PA
Regular press releases	Public awareness	KBPS NGO,	Regularly		Number of publications
Production of souvenirs carrying the KBPS logo	Public awareness and positive public attitudes	KBPS NGO, other partners	Regularly	2 000	Number of materials
Publication of a leaflet “The richness of Danube wetlands”	Public awareness and positive attitude	KBPS NGO, other partners	July 2004	1 000	Number of materials
Monthly bulletin	Public awareness and positive attitude	KBPS NGO	2004 - 2005	2 000	Numbers of bulletin, public awareness
Brochure “KBPS’s Birds”	Public awareness and positive attitude	KBPS NGO, other partners	July 2004	1 000	Number of materials
KBPS Website	Public awareness and positive attitude	KBPS NGO	2004 - 2005	1 000	Number of website visits
Celebration of important dates in the environmental calendar	Public awareness and positive attitude	KBPS NGO, other partners	2004 - 2005	10 000	Events and number of participants
Presentation of the park	Public awareness and	KBPS NGO	April – September	500	Number of

for municipalities and the public	promotion, generating support of local communities		2004		presentations
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Environmental education

Action	Expected outcome	Institutions/ Partners	Timing	<i>Budget in BGL</i>	Indicators
Presentations to schools and students	Introduction of project to 150 teachers	KBPS NGO, media,	October 2004	300	Number of motivated trainees
Integration of the information for KBPA in school curricula	100 trained teachers, 3000 students	Teachers, schools	2004 – 2005	8 000	3000 trained students tested with quizzes and questionnaires
Publications, information and educational materials	Circulation of 2000 of each material	Experts, municipalities KBPS NGO, teachers, RIEd at MES	2005 – 2006	8 000	Number of publications, pictures, number of educational materials
School visitors center	Informed students and teachers	KBPS NGO teachers, municipalities entrepreneurs	2004 – 2005	2 000	Number of visitors to the center
Green schools	Informed students and teachers	Same plus NGO	Regularly	2 000	Number of visitors

Visitors Services

Action	Expected outcome	Institutions/ Partners	Timing	<i>Budget in BGL</i>	Indicators
Info-stands	Increase awareness of local public and visitors	KBPS NGO, other NGOs, municipalities	2004 - 2005	1 000	Number of stands
Visitor information centers ate community centers/ municipalities	Increase awareness of local public and visitors	KBPS NGO, other NGOs, municipalities	November 2004 – 2005	10 000	Number of visitors
Training of PA guides	Trained guides, creation of	KBPS NGO, other	February –	5 000	Number of trained

	jobs	NGOs, municipalities	November 2005		guides
Planning and development of administrative and visitors infrastructure	Biodiversity conservation and creation of opportunities for ecotourism	REI, Forestry Management, Municipalities, Business	2004 - 2005	50 000	Registered violations, number of eco-trails, signs, recreation sites

Consulting of Entrepreneurs

Action	Expected outcome	Institutions/ Partners	Timing	<i>Budget in BGL</i>	Indicators
Marketing of products and trade mark	Developed products and marketing structure	Administration KBPS NGO, tourist agencies, local authorities	2004 - 2005	10 000	Number of products, 1 trade mark
Information centers and education	Building a data base, trained guides	Administration of KBPS NGO, municipalities mayors, community centers, museums, NGOs	2005	5 000	Number of centers and trained guides
Establishing a consulting info-center	Development of a consulting services package	NGOs, municipalities Advisory Services on Agricultural Issues	2005	20 000	2 centers, facilities, package of services, number of trainees, services, consultations, attracted resources, newly established business, created and preserved jobs

7.2. Persina Natural Park

Public and Media Outreach

<i>Action</i>	<i>Expected outcome</i>	<i>Institutions/ Partners</i>	Timing	<i>Budget in BGL</i>	<i>Indicators</i>
Educational series on Persina NP on different carriers – for different media types.	Dissemination of more information. People will learn to protect what they have; to be proud that they live in Persina NP	Media - leaders Persina NPD WRPR Project	Ongoing	1 000	Increased number of viewers and readers; Change of attitude
Survey “What do you know and what would you like to learn about “Persina”NP	Increased interest in the project and Persina NP	Media - leaders Persina NPD WRPR Project, Local residents	November 2004 and May 2005	200	Gradual sophistication of questions
Media training	Media competence and adequate presentation of facts, issues, etc.	Media - leaders Persina NPD WRPR Project	September 2004	1 000	Increased media interest; Number of viewers and readers; Free publications
“With a camera at the park”	Changed attitude towards nature	Media - leaders Persina NPD WRPR Project	4 times/year with different age groups	800	Increased interest and readiness for participation
Monthly press releases	Transparency of actions of the Directorate and the Project, public involvement.	Media - leaders Persina NPD WRPR Project	Each month		Increased number of viewers and readers. Protection of infrastructure -signs, recreation sites, etc.
Information bulletin including events calendar	Transparency of actions of the Directorate and the Project, public involvement.	Persina NPD	Each month	1 200	Increased number of viewers and readers. Protection of infrastructure -signs, recreation sites, etc.
Brochure about Persina Nature Park	Public awareness and positive attitude	Persina NPD	May 2004	5 000	Number of presentations and distributed brochures
Brochure about the	Public awareness and	Persina NPD	June 2004	5 000	Number of

Danube archipelago Beline	positive attitude				presentations and distributed brochures
Production of souvenirs carrying the park logo – hats, T-shirts, pens, calendars, etc.	Park promotion	Persina NPD	June – December 2004	10 000	Numbers of produced and distributed souvenirs
Development of a park website	Public awareness and promotion	Persina NPD	June – December 2004	2 000	Number of website visits
Celebration of important dates in the environmental calendar	Generating the support of local communities	Persina NPD, partners – NGO, schools, companies	2004 - 2005	15 000	Number of participants in celebrations
Presentations of the park for municipalities and the public	Public awareness and promotion, Generating the support of local communities	Persina NPD	April – September 2004	500	Number of presentations

Environmental Educations

Action	Expected outcome	Institutions/ Partners	Timing	Budget in BGL	Indicators
Training: - for students - for teachers	-Trained teachers and published materials for teachers - Building responsible behavior towards nature -Improve qualification and product -Teambuilding skills development	- Persina NPD -WRPR Project -Schools, kinder-gardens, community centers -Department for teacher Qualification -Youth structures -NGO	Regular qualification activities All others- ongoing 2004 – 2006	16 000	-number of trainees. Forms; -number of applicants -survey for attitude change.
Application/production activities	-Increased qualification and developed product -Team-building skills	- Persina NPD -WRPR Project -Schools, kinder-	2004 for the development of sticker/poster	1 000	-Sticker with the logo on regional and national level, which

		gardens,community centers -NGO			demonstrates that people are joining the objectives of the Park and the Project. -Number of participants
Regional competition in sport orientation	- Increased interest - Involvement of young people	- Persina NPD -WRPR Project -Youth info-centers, scout organizations,	Twice/ year	1 000	- Number of participants -Number of applicants; -Increased interest in the project on national level;
Research competition “What do you know about Persina”	Changed attitude towards nature	Media Persina NPD WRPR Project -Schools, kinder gardens,community centers -NGO	Once/ year	1 000	-Increased interest -Number of participants
“Green designing” – the logo of the park	-Involvement of young people	Media Persina NPD WRPR Project -Schools, kinder gardens,community centers	2004 or 2005		Preservation of logos /without destruction

Visitor Services and Consulting of Entrepreneurs

<i>Action</i>	<i>Expected outcome</i>	<i>Institutions/ Partners</i>	<i>Timing</i>	<i>Budget in BGL</i>	<i>Indicators</i>
Training in product development	-New knowledge and skills	-NGO -ADM -Labor Bureaus Municipality -Training centers	September 2004 – April 2005	3 000	-Number of trainees -Number of projects applied -Number of approved projects
Information center	Directing local population towards alternative income– agriculture and ecotourism	- Persina NPD -WRPR Project -Donors -NGO -Municipalities	2004 – 2005	10 000	-New activities -Number of registered agricultural producers
Hospitality training for the public and the local business	-Knowledge and skills	-Municipalities -Labor bureaus -Tourism school in Pleven	2005	8 000	-Number of trainees
Exchange of experience with other parks-on-site visits	-Knowledge -Use of experience	- Persina NPD -Parks and PA -NGO	October 2004 и May 2005	3 000	-New activities -Number of participants
Tourism promotional materials (brochures, guides, maps) on nature, cultural and historical heritage.	-Enhancement of the image of the area -Increased interest among tour-operators -Attraction of tourists -Preservation of cultural and historical heritage -Opportunities for development of religious tourism-celebrations	- Persina NPD -The Project -NGO Community centers Experts on local culture and history -ADM	2004 – 2005	10 000	-Number of visits -Number of tourists -Generated profit -Number of published materials -Circulation

Publication of materials on visitors' safety	Securing safety of visitors	Persina NPD	2004 - 2005	2 000	Safety of visitors
Ornithological park trail – design, description, brochure, training of guides	Diversification of the tourist product	Persina NPD, partners	2004 – 2005	5 000	Developed trail and number of visitors
Tourist trail “Photo-safari”	Diversification of the tourist product	Persina NPD, partners	2004 – 2005	5 000	Developed trail and number of visitors
Visitor infrastructure: camping sites, fishing sites, etc.	-Opportunities for alternative forms of tourism	- Persina NPD -The Project -NGO FM, HFA	2004 – 2005	2 000	-Number of created sites -Number of visitors
Organized visits for tour operators	-Tourism development	Tourism companies	2004 – 2005	5 000	-Sold packages and services
Initiatives for amendment of regulations in order to alleviate business in the area of eco-tourism and sustainable use of natural resources	-Alternative income -Better business -Clean environment	Municipal councils	April 2005	5 000	-Amended regulations -better coordination among the three municipalities -Termination of unregulated pollution
European and world norms in natural resources management and environment protection	-Better business -Clean environment	-Municipalities -NGO	2004 - 2005	50 000	-Appropriate management of resources
Registration of trade mark Persina NP	-Better business	Persina NPD	2004 – 2005	3 000	-Generated profit -Increased market demand

7.3. Project Promotion

<i>Action</i>	<i>Expected outcome</i>	<i>Institutions/ Partners</i>	<i>Timing</i>	<i>Budget in BGL</i>	<i>Indicators</i>
Publication and public presentation of annual report	Transparency and publicity	PMU	2004 and 2005	3 000	Number of attendees at presentation
Publication of a brochure about the project	Stakeholder awareness	PMU	July 2004	3 000	Publication and distribution
Production of stationary carrying the project logo	Project identity and support	PMU	July 2004	2 000	Produced souvenirs
Website	Stakeholder awareness	PMU	May 2004	1 000	Number of visits of website
Regular briefings and press releases	Public awareness	PMU and MOEW	2004 - 2005		Number of publications
Participation in international meetings, etc.	International contacts	PMU	2004 - 2005		Number of participations
Training of potential participants in the small grant competitions and publication of results	Transparency and capacity building of partners	PMU and both PA	2004 - 2005	5 000	Number of trainees and successful projects

8. Implementation of the Communication Strategy

The implementation of the Communication strategy is coordinated and managed by the Project Coordination Unit in partnership with the administrations of the two protected areas. Based on the Communication strategy the Project annual plans include actions from the Action plan.

Every year as part of the annual review of the project progress the implementation progress of the Communication strategy will be reviewed. That requires the inclusion of assessment indicators for this Strategy in the assessment indicator system developed for the Project. The main responsibility for the implementation of the Communication strategy is shared by the Project Manager at the Project Management Unit and the local coordinators at the two protected sites.

The Strategy will be updated and annual Action plans will be developed based on the annual progress reviews.

Appendixes

Checklist
Implementing the Communication Strategy Principles

Principle	Application Indicator
1. Proactive, not reactive actions	Are we sure that we are the pioneers in introducing issues to the public
2. Build teams involving project staff members and administrations staff members from the protected areas.	Concrete people are assigned responsibilities on the coordination and execution of concrete actions
3. Consistence between the messages promoting the successful implementation of the project and the messages promoting the objectives of the protected areas management	Actions include messages about PA management and the Project objectives
4. Partnership between PA and the stakeholders at every step	The direct execution of activities and project is assigned to one or more partners, and this is popularized
5. Coordination of all communication strategy actions with MoAF and MoEW	The relevant departments or experts at both ministries are informed and involved to the needed extend in the execution of the activity or project
6. On-site training for PA administrations and their partners in the process of implementation of actions	An experienced expert or consultant is involved in the planning and design development of the publication, event or project
7. Clear definition of the audiences and objectives, and the distribution and promotional plans for each publication or other product	The final approval of the publication or any other product is based on a preliminary plan on the distribution, target audiences or participants in the event
8. Use of the small-grant-scheme as a mechanism for implementation of the communication strategy	The approved projects within both grant schemes comply with the objectives and principles of the communication strategy
9. Search for multiple sources of funding	When a decision on specific activity is made, it should be accompanied by ideas for future sources of funding or opportunities for expanding of the activity. Identification of concrete potential sources is necessary.

<p>10. Involvement of already established organizations and institutions</p>	<p>The organization or institution responsible for the development of or receiving the product of the activity is an existing organization. It is clearly stated how the specific activity contributes to its development or capacity building.</p>
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Wetland Restoration and Pollution Reduction Project

Communication Strategy and Action Plan

Workshop

The objective of the workshop is to use the Project action plan and the already accumulated experience in identifying the steps and actions that the Project team and the protected sites administrations need to take in order to build relationships with their partners and target audiences. Several partnership groups will be build to execute the action plan.

Participants: the Project team, protected area administration, representatives of key partners – local authorities, education, media, NGO, tourist associations, agricultural producers.

Agenda

24 February

14.00 – 14.30	Opening – workshop objectives, agenda, participants	Marieta Stoimenova
14.30 – 15.00	Presentation of the strategy framework and steps of the process of development of communication strategy and action plan. Comments. Questions and answers.	Strategy outline distributed
15.00 – 16.00	Project objectives and actions – target audiences – map of interests	Seminar with all participants
<i>16.00 – 16.30</i>	<i>Coffee break</i>	
16.30 – 17.30	Message development, and discussion of what has been achieved until now – in target groups	Small group session
18.30 – 18.00	Small group reports, end of Day 1	

25 February

9.00 – 9.30	Opening of Day 2. Communication strategy principles. Working groups.	
9.30 – 10.30	Action plan	Small group session
10.30 – 11.00	Coffee break	
11.00 – 12.00	Putting the plan and success indicators together	Seminar with all participants
12.00 - 12.30	Next steps. Closing	

**WETLANDS RESTORATION AND POLLUTION REDUCTION PROJECT
GEF TF 050706-BUL**

Communication Strategy and Action Plan

Workshop, 23 - 24 February 2004, Belene

Participants list

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Kalimok/ Brushlen Protected Site

List of Participants

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Project Progress Activities

PERSINA NATURE PARK – ACTIVITIES 2002-2003

In the **Persina Nature Park**, activities primarily focused on (i) educational programs and competitions; (ii) public relations and awareness campaigns; (iii) biodiversity and (iv) eco-agriculture.

1. Educational programs and competitions

These activities were mainly addressed to kindergarten and elementary school children. In the town of Belene there are three kindergartens and one elementary school. Children are usually engaged in open air games, drawing contests, as well as short lessons on the nature in the protected area, its birds, and the forest. The director and teachers of biology at the local elementary school have been collaborating successfully with the Park staff in designing lectures for the children.

Drawing competitions always attract interest and are welcomed with enthusiasm by both the students and the local community. Contests are used as a playful educational tool to inform the students about the existence and the value of the nature park. In 2002, for example, a lecture on the Persina Nature Park was organized together with the Bulgarian Society for Protection of Birds to celebrate the two year anniversary of the establishment of the nature park by the Ministry of Environment and Water. Children from elementary to high school were involved, along with the principals of the three schools in Belene, the Deputy Mayor of the town, and members of the Bulgarian Society for Protection of Birds. This event proved a big success, and included games, and a fashion contest that required using recycled materials. The event was broadcasted on the local news and reported in local newspapers.

Drawing contests and games, as well as field trips, are often planned around special environmental events such as the Week of Environmental Protection, the Forest Week, the World Fishery Day, the Earth Day, and Water Day. These events offer the opportunity to the two Park directorates to get together and coordinate their activities. For World Fishery Day, for example, an amateur fishing contest was organized with the intent of promoting this traditional economic activity while respecting the nature in the protected area. The event was well advertised on TV and on local newspapers and invitations were sent out to several official guests: the Mayor, the Prison Director, the Commander of the Military Brigade, the project preparation unit, the *chitalishte*, or local culture centers, the Regional Forestry Services in Nikopol and Svishtov, and the Director of the Regional Fishing Control Directorate in Pleven. About 20 people took part in the contest, while many more people watched the event. During the contest, Park brochures were distributed along with informational leaflets about the Fishery Day. In addition, a questionnaire was distributed to all participants to survey (i) local interest in future contests, (ii) level of knowledge about the

nature park and its functions, and (iii) feed back impressions about the creation of a picnic area on the Park premises. The event concluded with an award winning ceremony, a cook out and entertaining traditional songs. In September 2003, a similar event entitled “Young Fisherman” was held during the traditional Fair in the town of Belene. This time the competition took place on a private breeding pond and was presided by the Mayor of Belene. Park information brochures and the Park bulletin were distributed to all participants. This initiative represents a successful example of potential collaboration among the Park administration, the local authorities and the private sector.

Educational activities also include open-air lessons at the picnic area in the Persina Park with children from the biology circle at the local elementary school, and the ecology circle, a study group from the Municipal Children Complex. These groups have participated in bird watching activities and, recently, contributed to the cleaning of the Danube riverbanks and the picnic area, an initiative of the Park directorate.

In August 2003, the Persina Park Directorate met with the Regional Inspectorate for Education in Pleven to discuss the educational programs for the academic year 2003-04 in a sign of renewed collaboration between the two institutions.

2. Public awareness and public relations campaigns

In the last two years, a wide range of public awareness initiatives has taken place to promote the existence and functions of the Persina Nature Park. A Park logo is now available and is accompanying all sort of advertising materials, such as stickers, brochures, badges, key holders, pens and postcards. In addition, information signs have been made and placed at the picnic area with a list of forbidden activities on the picnic ground; wall clocks have been produced in the form of a heron; and a billboard with the sign “Welcome to Persina Nature Park,” and its logo was placed at the entrance of the town. A recent storm, though, broke it and it has not yet been repaired.

The Park administration has organized a series of meetings with, among others, representatives from the Kaizerslautern Municipality in Germany, the German Ambassador, the American Deputy Ambassador, as well as a representative from the EU. These meetings included boat tours of the Belene Danube Archipelago and an official presentation of the Persina Nature Park and the Wetland Restoration Project. These events have been amply publicized.

To celebrate the second anniversary of the park designation, a cocktail party was held in town and was broadcasted by EVROKOM National Network in the national news that same evening. In general, events and activities sponsored by the Park administration have been broadcasted on the local cable channel, Videostat and TVCom Belene. A database with the names and contacts of the local TVs and newspapers the park administration has developed a relationship with was created and is currently maintained and updated as necessary.

The Park administration has also made an effort to participate in all the special events organized by the municipality and the town of Belene in 2002 and 2003. The Park representatives, for example, took part in the celebration of the Bulgarian National holiday on March 3rd, as well as in the commemoration of Bulgarian heroes who died for the Independence on June 2nd. Last June, another interesting initiative has involved the

celebration of the 25th anniversary of one of the kindergartens in Belene. Together with the Board of Trustees, the Park administration organized a party for the children and offered a cake shaped as a heron, the symbol of the Persina Nature Park.

All the events the Park administration has participated in have been covered by the cable news and accompanied by articles published in municipal bulletins and regional newspapers. Promotional materials were also developed for distributions at all public events sponsored by the park administration.

Over the summer 2003, the Park administration was involved in the design of a tourist map and a brochure of the Persina Park; it also gathered offers for promotional materials such as T-shirts and hats; and met with representatives of the Bulgarian Society for the Protection of Birds to prepare a shared plan for future activities to be conducted on biodiversity conservation on the territory of the Park. The Park staff attended several workshops on ecotourism forests management and conservation issues. The Park administration also met with representatives from the Bulgarian Tourist Union to start planning the activities of the 48th edition of the international Danube Regatta.

The Danube Regatta that took place in August 2003 gathered approximately 200 participants from different nationalities and gave the opportunity to the Park staff to use the event not only as a promotional tool for the protection of nature on the Danube riverbanks, but also as a successful initiative in support of Bulgarian cultural heritage as a whole. Traditional Wallachian dishes were provided by the Park administration, while folk singers and dancers from the *Chitaliste* ensembles entertained people with Wallachian songs and dances. Last year and during the Eastern picnic in Persina Park Catholic traditions and culture were promoted instead. On the theme of cultural heritage and inter-faith dialogue, in September 2003, a brief publication entitled “Belene – The Language of the Catholics,” was published including some general information about the Park and the role played by the Catholic community in its preservation.² The book was positively welcomed by the Catholic population in Belene.

On the scientific side, the Park staff worked out a plan for the autumn migration of birds in collaboration with the Bulgarian Society for the Protection of Birds, and it also published the first edition of *Persina*, the information bulletin of Persina Nature Park Directorate.

3. Partnerships for the management of the protected area

Between 2002 and 2003, several activities were organized, often together with the Bulgarian Society for the Protection of Birds, which included winter water birds counting, as well as autumn migration and monitoring of a wide variety of birds: a mix colony of cormorans and herons, in particular of a new heron colony in Kaikusha, white-tailed eagle and their nests (numbered and loaded), and heron colonies in the Belene Danube Archipelago. In addition, observations were carried out on the water level of the marshes, the conditions of its vegetation, number and species of the nesting birds in the Persina marshes Supported Reserve and in the Protected Area of Persin-Iztok. Finally, observations were performed on the flora and fauna of Goliama Burzina Island in order to maintain the database updated. Monthly

² This information is based on a conversation held with Ms. Annie Peizanova, Public Relations Officer at Persina Nature Park Directorate, in September 2003. This information needs source confirmation.

monitoring of the ornitho – fauna were also conducted. Mapping of the summer snowflake (*Leucolum Aestivum*) habitat within the territory of the Persina Park took place in the first half of 2003.

A study about the flora and fauna conditions in “Kaikusha” Protected Area was conducted in June 2003 along with a study on the *Glycherruza glabra* condition in “Plavala” Protected Area. In July 2003, efforts were also undertaken for encircling the Protected Areas in the Municipality of Nikopol by marking their boundaries and putting signs.

4. Consulting in the area of agriculture

Several activities were conducted in order to promote sustainable agriculture on the protected area. Information was gathered, for example, to initiate a database for agricultural farmers in the Municipality of Nikopol. In order to familiarize themselves with the growing of alternative crops, a study tour was organized for the park staff to visit a rose plantation for saplings and a dog rose (*Rosa canina*) plantation.

Between July and August 2003, the database for the stock-breeders on the territory of Persina Nature Park was updated and information was gathered on the uses of herbs and ethereal – oily crops. At the same time, information was gathered on maize, wheat, barley, and oats yields from the Regional Advisory Service for Agriculture.

In September 2003, the Persina staff participated in a Seminar entitled “Production of Cereals Can’t Go Without Science.”

KALIMOK-BRUHLEN PROTECTED AREA – ACTIVITIES 2003

In the **Kalimok-Brushlen Protected Site**, activities for 2002 and 2003 primarily focused on (i) educational programs and competitions; (ii) public relations and awareness campaigns; (iii) biodiversity and (iv) eco-agriculture.

1. Educational programs and competitions

Approximately ten educational trips were organized with children from local schools in the Tutrakan area. Children were offered guided tours of the Danube protected site by boat followed by recreational activities, such as picnics and fish cook out in the marshes.

Open air lectures were offered throughout the summer at the KBPS. Children from the kindergarten, elementary and high schools in Tutrakan participated and learnt about the role and importance of wetlands and biodiversity in the protected site.

In addition, the Park administration in Tutrakan has actively participated in a series of local festivals and traditional events such as “Earth Day,” a “Day at the River,” and the “European Day of the Bird.” A brochure of the marshes was prepared and distributed among local people.

Nature camps, expeditions and field trips for school children have been regularly organized in 2003 and park brochures, as well as advertising materials for these events distributed to the children and their teachers.

It is also the intention of the Park administration to further develop “green groups” or “green schools” open to children who have a special interest for nature. These associations of students include children with an interest for biology and nature in general. The Park administration would provide educational materials to the schools participating in the project and the Park biodiversity expert would assist the local teachers in including conservation elements and biodiversity lessons in their school manuals.

A collaborative relationship between the Park administration and local schools has been successfully established and has been working for quite some time. During the summer 2003, for example, a few schools in the Tutrakan area worked in close contact with KBPS in preparing green projects that won the first prize at a local drawing competition. In addition, exchange projects with both local and foreign schools were organized involving an expedition, a green project, as well as lectures on the protection of local nature. For each project the park administration offered its full support and technical collaboration.

As in Belene, the Kalimok/Brushlen Park administration is lacking finances to successfully expand its activities. Recently, efforts have been undertaken to raise funds by applying to multiple grants from various international sources. The Ford Foundation, the British organization BirdLife UK, as well as the Bulgarian Society for the Protection of Birds were contacted for small grant program applications.

To face the lack of funds and personnel for the Park management, the Park director temporarily hired a few fishermen currently out of job to work on the Park premises. This

initiative of hiring unemployed fishermen was promoted by the Ministry of Social Affairs through the Municipality of Tutrakan and has proven successful.

Finally, *chitalishte*, or culture houses, are quite active in the Tutrakan area where the fishermen tradition is ancient and a local pride. A museum of fishery and a local history museum are open to the public in the center of the town. The Park administration has expressed some interest in collaborating with these well established institutions by combining the protection of the marshes with their ancient fishing activities.

2. Public awareness and public relations campaigns

The local press and broadcasting channel in Tutrakan has covered several KBPS sponsored initiatives throughout 2003. During the celebration of Wetlands Day and the Earth Day, the local TV channel aired a piece on the role and functions of KBPS. In addition, the Park administration provided information and consultancy services for the production of a Bulgarian movie called “The Price of Birds.”

In early 2003, an article appeared in the national business newspaper “Factor” which explained the positive relationship between wetlands, their conservation and the fishermen profession. Finally, two reportages were aired on radio Shumen, a local radio station for North East Bulgaria about the Wetlands Restoration and Pollution Reduction Project (WRPRP) and the potentials for eco-agriculture around the Kalimok-Brushlen protected site. The park administration also participated in a round table in Russe with representatives of the media for the launch of WRPRP.

During the summer 2003, two Park brochures were designed by the Director of KBPS. One provides general information about the values and functions of wetlands, the second deals with detailed information about the park’s biodiversity habitat. The latter is almost completed and can be printed soon. The Park administration also worked on the design of small and big signboards for KBPS. The project is still pending because of lack of financial resources to produce the signboards. Finally, technical support was provided to the Tutrakan municipality for the preparation of posters for the project “Beautiful Bulgaria.”

Several promotional initiatives involved fishermen. In August 2003, representatives from KBPS participated in the event “A Holiday at the River.” A brochure was prepared; a boat competition was held and a short video was made about the event. In addition, a few meetings with several groups of tourists were held during the summer 2003 within the program entitled “A Weekend with Danube Fishermen” and a brochure was designed for the program.

The Park administration spent time traveling to other regional visitors centers such as the ones in Poda and Ropotamo. The KBPS management also participated in the opening of the information center at the “Rusenski lom” Nature Park.

The park administration also participated in several ecotourism workshops where the national strategy and action plan for ecotourism in the country was presented and discussed. In addition, the Park Director attended a few WWF sponsored workshops presenting the WWF Danube project in Tutrakan. The Director of KBPS also participated in the preparation of a project on cultural tourism in the Tutrakan municipality.

3. Partnerships for biodiversity conservation

The major activities KBPS organized in this field were (i) workshop lectures; (ii) mid winter birds counting and monitoring of migrating birds in the Kalmok-Brushlen marshes; (iii) monitoring of birds nesting in collaboration with the Bulgarian Society of Protected Birds (BSPB) for the publication of an “Atlas of Nesting Birds in Bulgaria;” (iv) monitoring of birds in the Tutrakan municipality; and (v) monitoring of the nesting *Aegipeus monachus* together with BSPB. In addition, a study of the butterflies of KBPS was undertaken.

Another activity that attracted some interest was fishing boat tours accompanied by local professional fishermen who worked for the Park administration under the social program sponsored by the Ministry of Social Affairs through the Municipality of Tutrakan.

Finally, a field visit was paid to the Plovdiv area where the population of the marsh snowdrop was recently restored, and discussions were initiated to launch a database for biodiversity on the premises of KBPS.

4. Consulting in the area of eco-agriculture

In the first half of 2003, the Park administration participated in a workshop in Russe on “Biological Agriculture – Requirements and Certification of Products.” No additional activities have been planned or carried out in the field of sustainable agriculture.