

WetMainAreas NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 1

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Interreg 
Balkan-Mediterranean
WetMainAreas

The WetMainAreas Project

Improving the Conservation Effectiveness of Wetlands

Wetlands are amongst the most threatened and fragile ecosystems worldwide. At the same time they are recognized as important landscape features for the [NATURA 2000 network](#), as natural water retention systems in the [Water Framework Directive](#) and the [Floods Directive](#), as auspices of climate change. On the top of that they are recognized for their services to human well-being including provision of materials, mediation of extreme events, and cultural and aesthetic values.

Balkan-Mediterranean territory shares natural environment of lake complexes, riverine systems and inland and coastal wetlands. These ecosystems are of high biodiversity value. The territory contains [Ramsar sites](#) and NATURA 2000 sites. Also many of the territories represent important archaeological heritage.

The complex of lakes at the transnational zone is a priority corridor for biodiversity conservation across the Mediterranean Basin Hotspot, including 42 key biodiversity areas with a total of 29 globally threatened species. The project WetMainAreas develops a common knowledge basis including mapping and creation of harmonized geospatial datasets and indicators, a database and pilot studies on conservation techniques. It conducts activities to support the uptake of the common knowledge including development of guidance documents, training workshops, continuous interaction with users and stakeholders following the living lab approach for a joint strategy

development and publications for translating project findings into policy and priority actions available to everybody.

WetMainAreas' overall objective is protection, conservation and development of wetlands as a shared asset of the Balkan Mediterranean territory.

Four Balkan Mediterranean (BalkanMed) countries with ten partners are involved in the project WetMainAreas. Half of them are Research Institutions: University of Forestry – Faculty of Ecology and Landscape Architecture, Goulandris Natural History Museum/ Greek Biotope – Wetland Centre, Faculty of Economics – South-West University “Neofit Rilski”, National Observatory of Athens, Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality, “St. Kliment Ohridski” University, Ohrid. Other three are User Partners: National Environmental Agency of Albania, Region of Thessaly and Municipality of Gotse Delchev and two are Observer Partners with representatives of the Greek and North Macedonian Ministries of environment.



What has been done so far

Project management is smooth with active collaboration among all involved partners.

Several meetings were held:

- ✓ Kick-off meeting in Tirana (30-31/10/2017);
- ✓ Progress meeting in Ohrid (9-11/10/2018);
- ✓ Technical Workshop/Training: “Territorial connectivity“ in Athens (6-7/02/2019).



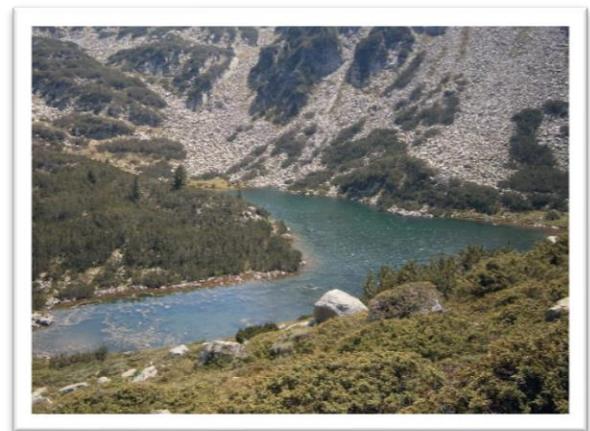
Representatives of the project team participated in Seminar on Management and Information Systems (MIS) in Thessaloniki (27/11/2018).

The main goal of Communication & Dissemination work package refers to the active exchange of the project progress with the target groups especially stakeholders. Variety of approaches serves to public participation and all stakeholders involvement:

- ✓ The development of the geoportal was contracted;
- ✓ [Project website](#) is ready and updated with news and materials;
- ✓ Project posters and stickers were disseminated at partners' institutions;
- ✓ Promotional materials were produced.

In the context of BalkanMed Wetland Identification & Connectivity work package was completed Intermediate Remote sensing layer for all participating countries. Database was created. Development of the national wetland lists through remote sensing and field work started as well as completing the database. Wetlands territorial connectivity assessment started.

The Joint Pilot BalkanMed Wetland Assessments started with The Guideline, that includes conservation techniques for wetlands ecosystems.



The methodology for the Cultural assessment Study and the Tourist Guide on the four pilot areas (Mesta/Nestos River Basin, Aoos/Vjosa River Basin, Vardar/Axios River Basin and Region of Thessaly) and some of the texts were composed. The publishing of the Tourist guidebook was contracted. Started development of the tourist/cultural heritage list. Preparatory work started for the Support in policy and Action Plan work package.



What's next

Next Steps on Implementation of the Project are:

- 1) The Geoportal to be put into operation during the spring of 2019.
- 2) Producing landcover maps of the pilot sites.
- 3) National public dissemination events to be held.
- 4) Completion of [WP3](#) (BalkanMed Wetland Identification & Connectivity) and [WP4](#) (Joint Pilot BalkanMed Wetland Assessments).
- 5) Delivering results from [WP5](#) (Support In Policy & Action Plan).
- 6) Production of project leaflets in national languages as well as leaflets on the pilot sites.

Upcoming Events:

- Technical Workshop/ Training, April 2019, Sofia, Bulgaria;
- Living Lab workshop on transnational wetland ecosystem integration, June, 2019, Thessaloniki, Greece.



For further information
visit our website:
<https://wetmainareas.com/>



THE GOULANDRIS NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM
GREEK BIOTOPE/WETLAND CENTRE

