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AND NATURAL HABITATS

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**Development of a commercial project in Skadar
Lake National Park and candidate Emerald site
(Montenegro)**

- REPORT BY THE GOVERNMENT -

*Document prepared by the
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Progress Report on the Implementation of Recommendation No. 201 (2018)

I Implementation of Recommendation No. 201 (2018) of the Standing Committee of the Bern Convention

1.) The Government of Montenegro should immediately implement the following conservation and management measures in the next 12 months:

1.1. Halt any development on the mainland as well as the shore zone and water body of the Mihailovići location unless a detailed habitat map on a 1:10,000 scale for “Mihailovići“, Poseljski Zaliv Bay, Biški Rep, the mouth of Crnojevića river, the mouth of Bazagurska matica and the islands Liponjak and Galići has been provided. The habitat map, ideally based on earth observation images, shall clearly classify any habitat type pursuant to the EUNIS habitat classification and EU Habitat Directive. The detailed habitat map provides the basis for a realistic environmental impact assessment.

Mapping of Skadar Lake and preparation of a habitat map with the scale 1:10,000 for the above mentioned locations were carried out with the assistance of GIZ, as part of the transboundary project “Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biodiversity at Lakes Prespa, Ohrid and Shkodra/Skadar (CSBL)”, the beneficiaries of which are Montenegro, Northern Macedonia and Albania.

All habitat types of interest to the community from Annex II of the EU Habitats Directive, i.e. Natura 2000 Habitats, as well as all other habitat types (natural and artificial) as “non-Natura 2000 habitat” have been mapped. Final results were submitted in December 2019, to the Ministry of Ecology, Sustainable Development and Northern Region Development as well as Environmental Protection Agency, so the Reference List of Skadar Lake Habitats, as well as a GIS Habitat Layer covering the entire national park area will be provide to you in the attachment.

In accordance with Article 108 of the Law on Nature Protection (“Official Gazette of Montenegro”, No. 56/16), the environmental inspection performs regular inspection supervision of the location in question. During the inspection supervision procedure, which was carried out in the period from February to July this year, by accessing the location that consists of urban parcel number 1 - UP1, it has been found that on the very location there are no constructed structures of any purpose. Only road cutting works that had been previously carried out have been registered on the location.

By accessing the location that consists of urban plots UP2 and UP3, it has been stated that no change in the state of construction has occurred on the location in question. Namely, the roads that had been cut through in the previous period are overgrown with vegetation and no other activities are being carried out.

1.2. Elaborate immediately a reference list of all present EUNIS and NATURA 2000 habitats with a focus on wetlands habitats, define their favourable conservation status and the necessary conservation measures to maintain or restore the favourable conservation status and include those measures in any planning document related to the conservation of Skadar Lake National Park, Skadarsko jezero Ramsar Site and Candidate Emerald Sites Skadar Lake.

The draft Natura 2000 habitat reference list was developed through the IPA project “Establishment of the Natura 2000 Network” and it was also used during the above mentioned habitat mapping that was planned by GIZ for 2019 through the project “Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biodiversity at Lakes Prespa, Ohrid and Shkodra/Skadar (CSBL)”. All habitat types of interest to the community from Annex II of the EU Habitats Directive, i.e. Natura 2000 Habitats, as well as all other habitat types (natural and

artificial) as “non-Natura 2000 habitat” have been mapped. Field research data were combined with desktop surveys, especially in the case of wetland surfaces and wetland areas.

Habitat mapping activities is completed at December 2019. In addition, within the CSBL Project, a “Monitoring Manual for Lake-bound Species and Habitats” was prepared in cooperation with EURONATUR, local experts and non-governmental organisations from the three countries, and with the support of the relevant state authorities. This publication will assist all interested parties in effective and systematic coordinated monitoring of species and habitats on Ohrid, Prespa and Skadar lakes in accordance with the EU Birds Directive and the Habitats Directive.

1.3. Establish and run a monitoring system on species strictly protected according to Appendices I and II of the Bern Convention resp. NATURA 2000 species and habitats by the National Environmental Protection Agency at first at least in the area mentioned under (1). The monitoring system must include the otter (*Lutra lutra*).

Skadar Lake National Park is part of the Public Enterprise National Parks of Montenegro (Javno preduzeće Nacionalni parkovi Crne Gore - JPNP). The National Parks of Montenegro is responsible for the management of the entire Montenegrin territory side of Skadar Lake. This also includes monitoring of flora and fauna.

In the area of Skadar Lake National Park, regular biodiversity condition monitoring is carried out. The Skadar Lake National Park Management Plan for 2023-2025, as well as the Annual Management Program, defines activities for monitoring species on the territory of the National Park.

The Skadar Lake National Park Management Program, within this strategic area, enables monitoring of plant and animal species listed in Appendix I and II of the Berne Convention, as well as potential habitats of Natura 2000. Planned monitoring of species and habitats is carried out in accordance with previously planned monitoring dynamics and defined time-periods during the year, depending on the biology or phenology of the given species, i.e., the dynamics of vegetation development.

More detailed description of the species for which monitoring is done, as well as a graphic representation of the locations where the otter (*Lutra lutra*) is registered, can be found in **Annex I**.

1.4. Provide and submit to the Secretariat of Convention georeferenced and digitalized borders, as well as appropriate updated data forms on the corresponding Candidate Emerald Site and Ramsar Site.

The Ministry of Ecology, Sustainable Development and Northern Region Development currently only has a version of the digitized boundary of the Skadar Lake National Park, which was prepared for the needs of developing the Spatial Plan for Special Purpose for the Skadar Lake National Park from 2001. It can be found in Annex II (Figure 1. and 2.). Also, georeferenced and digitalized borders, we are sending in attachment of mail.

1.5. The new Special Purpose Spatial Plan for Skadar Lake National Park needs to follow the approach of the 2001 Special Purpose Spatial Plan for Skadar Lake National Park and reconfirm the designation of the boarder area of the mouth of Crnojevića river and the Liponjak and Galići islands a Zone I of strict protection.

The Ministry of Ecology, Sustainable Development and Northern Region Development prepared a Revision Study for the Skadar Lake National Park, and at the beginning of September the Ministry will hold a Public hearing that will include several round tables. After the adoption of the Study, the existing borders of the National Park will be changed and included into Spatial Plan of Montenegro. Also, the change of the borders of the National Park entails the Amendment of the Law on National Parks, and the Ministry also initiated amendments to the Law on National Parks, the adoption of which is expected by the end of 2024.

The public hearing on the Draft Spatial Plan of Montenegro and the Report on the Strategic Environmental Impact Assessment was organized by the Ministry of Spatial Planning, Urbanism and State Property, in the period from January 29, 2024 to April 29, 2024. Ministry of Spatial Planning, Urbanism and State Property is currently preparing the Report from the public hearing.

The Spatial Plan for Special Purpose for Skadar Lake National Park Lake from 2001 is currently used until the adoption of the Spatial Plan of Montenegro.

1.6. In addition, the Zone I area needs to include a 300 m wide belt on the lake around the islands and the sublacustrine springs.

The areas of Zone I as well as the protection belt, will be considered after the adoption of the Revision Study of the Protected Area.

1.7. The new Special Purpose Spatial Plan for Skadar Lake National Park needs to apply the designation of Zone I of strict protection to the Poseljanski zaliv Bay and Biški Rep shore zone. Namely, pursuant to the definition of the new Plan, strict protection is to be applied to natural conservation sites of ecological importance for the functioning of natural biological processes and the integrity of the ecosystem. The proposed area clearly fits in this definition, but not in the definition of Zone III of sustainable use to be applied to modified or changed natural habitats.

The areas of Zone I as well as the protection belt, will be considered after the adoption of the Revision Study of the Protected Area.

1.8. The use of speedboats has to be limited to police, border police, ranger service and other authorities with competences on the lake. Those have to follow speed restrictions except in case of emergency.

On Lake Skadar, it is prohibited to sail water jet-powered vessels and the use of vessels with engines over 7.35 kW, without the approval of the responsible administrative body, except in cases of worsening weather conditions or endangering the safety of navigation. In such situations, it is necessary to contact the Directorate of Maritime Safety and Port Management - Maritime Operations Center by phone and ask for approval to increase the speed.

Regular traffic lines on the lake water surface used to run between Rijeka Crnojevića, Ploča, Podkomorno, Virpazar, Plavnica, Krnjic, Murić, Ostros, Ckla and Skadar. There has been no regular passenger traffic on the lake since 1981. so waterways and docks are abandoned. The only organized type of boating is occasional tourist-excursion tours around the lake in order to see the natural and cultural beauties of Lake Skadar. The largest number of sailings is carried out for the purpose of fishing, by the boats of the residents of the lakeside settlement.

The condition of the waterways is unsatisfactory, primarily due to unreliable depths, while the canals are completely or partially neglected. The waterways are partially marked without lighthouses.

The Hydrometeorological Institute of Montenegro took pictures of the bottom of the lake, which is the basis for creating navigation maps of Lake Skadar. When navigation maps were done, they will represent the basis for creating waterway routes.

1.9. The use of personal water crafts (water scooters) and any other water activities which can harm the floating vegetation must be prohibited.

Physical protection of NP Skadar lake is of particular importance to enable the preservation of its ecosystems. The physical protection service focuses its main activities on preventing illegal use of the natural assets of the National Park (illegal fishing, illegal construction, illegal hunting, illegal transportation of visitors by boat, etc.). The work of the Physical Protection Service in the past year was carried out by 18 supervisors and the head of the Physical Protection Service, who perform their activities 24 hours a day in shift work.

In its work on the territory of the Park and good control of the space, this Service has the help of the Service for Control and Monitoring, as well as cooperation with other relevant institutions (border police, inspection services, Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management, Environmental Protection Agency and NGO sector). Cooperation with the aforementioned actors contributed to good results in the control of the Park area, especially in the segment of preventing illegal fishing.

The control and monitoring service carry out 24-hour surveillance using thermal cameras, as well as trap cameras. The Service also has a contact phone number for all the necessary information about the Parks.

Control of movement and fuel consumption is also carried out at the level of all Parks through the GPS system.

Also, continuous efforts are being made to establish communication with the local population, as well as raising awareness of the importance and values of national parks in order to comply with legal restrictions, as well as to protect the aquatic vegetation in the lake.

1.10. Regulations on boating, such as speed limit (a 4 knot speed restriction on the lake area in question), and distance from Zone I of strict protection and from the shore have to be stipulated.

By the Law on the safety of maritime navigation (Official Gazette CG 077/20 of 29/07/2020), Article 10, paragraphs 2 and 3, the navigation speed is limited to 4 knots in the subject area of the lake, i.e. at the locations: Rijeka Crnojevića channel, Karatuna river channel, both branches of the river Morače belonging to the Skadra Lake National Park, the area of Mihailovići, Poseljanski Bay, Biška Rep, the mouth of Rijeka Crnojevića, the mouth of Bazagurska Matica, the area around the island of Liponjak in areas where fishing is prohibited. On Lake Skadar, it is prohibited to sail water jet-powered vessels and the use of vessels with engines over 7.35 kW, without the approval of the administrative body responsible for nature protection, except in cases of worsening weather conditions or endangering the safety of navigation.

1.11. No installation or constructions shall be allowed in the shore zone stretches classified with shore zone Functionality Index Under Category I (high) and II (good).

The document "Shorezone Functionality Index - Skadar Lake" was published through the CSBL Project in May 2017. This document highlights the key aspect of the WFD - hydromorphological status assessment. It consists of a combination of hydrological and morphological assessments.

According to morphological, structural and biotic parameters, the results show that 46% of the total perimeter of the lake falls into the high category, followed by the good category with 23.4%, then the moderate category with 24.8%, the weak category with 0.92% and the bad category with 4.9%. (Annex II - Figure 3).

The areas of Zone I (high) and II (good) as well as the protection belt, will be considered after the adoption of the Revision Study of the Protected Area.

2. All further considerations made by the Bern and/or Ramsar Convention as well as the Delegation of the European Union to Montenegro shall include the Porto Skadar Lake development on the urban planning plot UP1 and, in addition the development known as White Village on urban planning plots UP2 and UP3 of Mihailovići location as well as any other development on this location.

For all further steps made in relation to the projects Porto Skadar Lake and White Village, as well as during preparation of any planning document, the opinions and recommendations of the Berne and Ramsar Convention, as well as of the Delegation of the European Union to Montenegro will be considered.

3. Examines whether any building permit related to the location issued after October 2017 were valid as according to article 4 of the Decision on the adoption of SSL Mihailovići, the latter is valid until 2020, but respective building permits shall be issued within a three-year period only. In addition, the validity of SSL Mihailovići should not be renewed and the provisions of article 4 of the above mentioned Decision should be applied in a way that through amendments the remaining facilities such as the landing place in front of UP1 shall be deleted.

SLS "Mihailovići" is valid until 2020, and its extension is not planned. The Directorate for Construction in the Ministry of Spatial Planning, Urbanism and State Property, after October 2017, has not issued any building permits in the area within the scope of the State Location Study "Mihailovići".

4. Carefully examines the procedure which led to the issuing of a landing place in the case of the White Village development and if necessary revise or revoke the respective building permit.

Pursuant to the provisions of SSL Mihailovići such a landing place must be subject to a separate environmental impact assessment.

According to the Urban and Technical Requirements (UTR) building permits for moorings are issued separately, independently of the UTRs for construction of other parts of the tourist resorts. The issuance of a building permit for a mooring is envisaged in a separate procedure and an environmental impact assessment procedure needs to be carried out for it.

Building permits for UP1, UP2 and UP3 have been issued on the basis of a Conceptual Design. Also, a building permit for the construction of a mooring has not been issued for location UP1.

5. Provides and determines clear basic technical specifications and requirements in the appropriate planning documents which are related to the construction of any landing place or waste water treatment inside the protected area. Those specifications and requirements must fully consider the integrity and dynamics of the sensitive ecosystem of Skadar Lake National Park, Ramsar Site and Candidate Emerald Site.

The Law on Strategic Environmental Impact Assessment ("Official Gazette of Montenegro" No. 59/11 and 52/16) stipulates the conditions, manner and procedure for carrying out an assessment of the impact of certain plans and programmes on the environment through the integration of environmental protection principles in the process of preparation, adoption and implementation of plans and programmes that have a significant impact on the environment. This Law is 100% harmonized with the SEA Directive.

Regarding technical specifications and requirements during the construction of a mooring, building permits are issued in a separate procedure and independently from the Urban and Technical Requirements (UTU) for construction of other parts of tourist resorts. An environmental impact assessment procedure needs to be carried out in order to obtain a building permit.

EIA procedure is conducted in accordance to the Law on Environmental Impact Assessment which is 100% harmonized with the EIA Directive from 2014.

6. The floating vegetation with large carpets of white water-lily and water chestnut is a special habitat on Skadar Lake. It is the very sheer size of theses habitat complexes that makes them representative on European level. Any reduction of those habitats shall be prohibited;

Pursuant to Article 56 of the Law on Nature Protection ("Official Gazette of Montenegro", No. 54/16) and Article 29 of the Law on National Parks ("Official Gazette of Montenegro", No.39/16), the responsibilities of the Manager (in this case of the Lake Skadar National Park) to conduct control of activities on the lake related to preventing endangerment of floating vegetation by controlling waterways and fishing organised with nets have been defined.

Protection of floating vegetation will also be considered during preparation of the all relevant spatial planning documents after adoption of Revision Study of protection for National Park Skadar lake.

Within the project "Skadar Lake Basin - Transboundary Biosphere Reserve", in which the Ministry is an associated partner, it is planned to ensure the process of nomination and registration of the Skadar Lake Basin on the world list of the Man and the Biosphere Program within the UNESCO system of biosphere reserves.

7. Establishes an effective dialogue mechanism with and participatory approach to all stakeholders in order to ensure information exchange as well as to consider any biodiversity data gathered by NGOs and the scientific community.

Ministry Ministry of Ecology, Sustainable Development and Northern Region Development is strongly devoted to the collaboration with professional ecological NGOs since this kind of cooperation should be of great use in terms of providing guidelines and recommendations which would assist in implementation of proper environmental policies. In addition to that, open dialogue and cooperation with all relevant stakeholders are necessary since Montenegro builds its future on the principles of sustainable development along with promotion of responsible attitude towards environment.

The dialogue additionally gains importance through the communication that has been achieved through the work of four Aarhus Centres (two at the state level and two at the NGO level).

Pursuant to the Decree on the election of NGO representatives in the working bodies of the state administration and organising public discussion within the preparation of laws and strategies, the NGO sector is continuously invited to participate in the work of the working bodies in drafting of environmental laws and strategies. From 2022 until 2024, NGOs took part in the drafting of two laws, one strategy, appointed his representative to work in 2 working groups, one commission and one coordination body. Also, the Ministry informed and invited institutions, NGOs and other organizations, associations and individuals (interested public) to participate and give their opinion and present all relevant information of importance, for 6 public hearings held from 2022 to 2024. Within the workshops organised for strengthening of capacities for implementation of strategic and environmental impact assessments, special emphasis has been placed on strengthening cooperation with the civil society. In addition, this type of cooperation also refers to the partnership relationship in the sector of cross-border projects, that is, cooperation of the NGO sector with the Ministry of Sustainable Development and Tourism in the implementation of international agreements in this field. NGOs also had a member in the Commission for Evaluation of the Environmental Impact Assessment of the White Village and they had no comments.

8. Considers hosting the upcoming biogeographical seminar on Emerald sites in SEE.

Regarding database development for the Emerald Network, Areas of Special Importance, we would like to inform you that, based on information published in the book "CONSERVING WILD BIRDS IN MONTENEGRO - a first inventory of potential Special Protection Areas", 32 potential SPA areas have been identified so far. Namely the criteria that are applied in the Birds Directive are in line with the criteria for the Berne Convention, since the Natura 2000 Network in the EU countries also qualifies as the Emerald Network. Most potential Emerald areas overlap with SPA areas.

Within the framework of "IPA III Support for the establishment of the Nature 2000 network in Montenegro", the implementation of activities has begun, which will result in the complete mapping of the land territory of Montenegro (the remaining 40%) by 2027 and the proposal of the Nature 2000 network, i.e. the ecological network. The Ministry is one of the main beneficiaries.

Ministry of Ecology, Sustainable Development and Northern Region Development with great enthusiasm is ready to be the host of the biogeographical seminar. Also, the Ministry will host the next meeting of the Group of Experts on Protected Areas and Ecological Networks.

9. Identifies and defines appropriate mitigation measures;

The definition of mitigation measures will be possible at a time when Revision Study of protection for the Skadar lake is adopted and the concept of lake zoning becomes clear, since the optimum zoning is a prerequisite for the future development and preservation of Skadar Lake on the principles of ecological sustainability. Attention will also be paid to reducing the process of eutrophication through the reduction of pollution, not only of the aquatic environment, but also of the surrounding area in the entire basin of Skadar Lake. The monitoring system should be strengthened and improved through the selection and regular monitoring of indicator parameters. As far as birds are concerned, this system is already operative through regular monitoring of nesting and wintering populations within several European schemes.

Through drafting of the planning documents, rules for the construction of structures in national parks will be obeyed. Also, a plan of management, administration, hunting and protection of the fishing stock (through the development of the Fishery Base) will be developed.

10. Takes measures to preserve and improve the ecological value of protected areas and potential Natura 2000 and Emerald Network sites such as Ulcinj Salina, Lake Skadar and river courses, as stated in the recommendations of the latest EC Montenegro 2018 Report of April 2018. Better coordination is needed with the 'appropriate assessment' procedure under the Habitats Directive. Implementation of EIA and public consultations need to improve, especially at the local level. Potential investments in hydropower and touristic developments need to comply with nature protection requirements.

Montenegro is working dedicatedly to protect the environment, and is increasingly focusing on prevention, reduction to the fullest extent possible, total elimination of pollution and provision of sound management of natural resources, especially regarding the increasing level of ecosystem pollution due

to uncontrolled discharge of ballast water, invasive species expansion, emissions from land-based sources of pollution, and disruption to natural balance due to increasing urbanisation.

Pursuant to Article 8 of the Law on Environmental Impact Assessment ("Official Gazette of Montenegro" 075/18), the obligation to obtain the environmental impact assessment (EIA) approval has been established. The developer of the project the EIA is requested for or of the project for which a decision has been adopted on the necessity to prepare a Study may not commence execution of the project or obtain approval to carry out the activities without the approval of the Study or the decision that no Study is required.

It also stipulates that when for the impact assessment process it is necessary to conduct an acceptability assessment procedure, such procedure shall be carried out within the environmental impact assessment process in accordance with the Law on Nature Protection. When the environmental impact assessment process is conducted as part of other procedures in accordance with specific regulations, those procedures shall be conducted in a coherent manner. The acceptability assessment procedure in accordance with Article 46 of the Law of Nature Protection consists of a preliminary and main assessment of acceptability.

Acceptability assessment is conducted when it is possible to plan, program, design, especially in combination with other plans, programs and projects that may have adverse effects on the target species and habitats and on the conservation objectives and ecological integrity of the ecological network.

In accordance with the National Strategy with Action Plan for implementation, transposition and enforcement of the EU Acquis on Environment and Climate Change, additional training on this topic is planned at national and local level.

Nature Park "Ulcinj Salina"

Concerning the establishment of a management body for the Nature Park "Ulcinj Salina" - a limited liability company co-owned by the Government of Montenegro and the Municipality of Ulcinj, following the election of the new mayor of the Municipality of Ulcinj, Mr. Genci Nimanbegu, the MERT has been in constant communication with the new municipal management in an attempt to finalize the process of establishing a management structure. MERT will continue working on the implementation of this activity.

The Public Enterprise National Parks of Montenegro, which is currently the temporary manager of the "Ulcinj Salina" Nature Park, has extended the contract for the lease of the entire property of the bankrupt AD Solana company "Bajo Sekulić" for six months starting in August.

The members of the Working Group have prepared and submitted a quarterly report to the EC on the implementation of measures for the protection of the Ulcinj Salina for the period of April-June. The next report will be submitted at the beginning of October.

As part of the NatureReturns project, MERT organized two workshops on creating a management plan for the "Ulcinj Salina" Nature Park. The first workshop was held from 25.IV until 26. IV 2024, in Podgorica. The second workshop was held in Ulcinj, from 18. VI. until 20.VI 2024.

As part of the operational program IPA, at the end of June, MERT contracted the development of PPF NAT.03 Rehabilitation of Ulcinj Salina Nature Park—Conceptual Design through the tool Project Preparation Facility PPF. The main task is preparing the conceptual solution, which will include reconstructing and revitalizing the infrastructure. The contracted task is expected to be completed at the end of 2024.

Man and Biosphere - Tara River Basin

The Coordinating Body for improving the management of protected areas in Montenegro has been established. It brings together managers of all protected areas in Montenegro and representatives of key institutions and non-governmental organizations. The main task of this body is to encourage cooperation between managers of protected areas, share information important for improving their management, and provide professional support in the planning and carrying out of activities of Montenegro's protected area managers based on the Law on Nature Protection and the Law on National Parks. The first meeting of the Coordination Body was held on 10.VI 2024.

Efforts were made to reestablish the Coordinating Body to implement and oversee measures outlined in the "Man and Biosphere - Tara River Basin" Action Plan. This includes enhancing the capabilities of all relevant stakeholders involved in this process.

In parallel, as part of this process, the organization of a workshop intended for the local population on August 3 as part of the GMIFF is planned, as well as the organization of a three-day seminar on the exchange of experiences on biosphere reserves as part of the celebration of the Ecological State Day in the period 18-20. September with a high-level event planned for September 20.

The contract between MERT and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) was signed on 01. VII 2024. The contract pertains to the provision of funds for conducting research, specifically mapping habitats, species, and birds in the following areas: Orjen, Sinjajevina, Đalovića Pećina, and Nikšić Municipality. The goal of this activity is to provide data in areas with important and/or sensitive biodiversity, defined by the National Biodiversity Strategy 2016-2020 and the previous Spatial Plan of Montenegro for protection, but are currently not included in the inventory of species and habitats within Natura 2000. It will help improve the essential inputs for protection studies required for the declaration of protected areas.

A Public Call has been prepared to support agricultural practices aimed at the preservation and protection of biodiversity, which through the piloting of three measures will contribute to the implementation of sustainable agricultural practices, with a particular emphasis on protected areas.

Within the chapter for the component, a Public Call was prepared on improving the effectiveness of protected area management, which also includes developing a Business Plan for the "Ulcinj Salina" Nature Park.

Within Component 2, which focuses on the integration of practices that are adapted to biodiversity and the adaptation of sectoral development scenarios for tourism, forestry and agriculture, the current focus is on the finalization of the Public Call for support for agricultural practices aimed at preserving and protecting biodiversity, which will pilot three measures (Preservation of endangered breeds/varieties of domestic animals and plants (175,000 EUR); Preservation of biodiversity and the environment on permanent grass and arable land (100,000 EUR) and Preservation of landscape features (stone terraces-drywalls and hedges) (175,000 EUR)) contribute to the implementation sustainable agricultural practices, with special emphasis on protected areas. It is planned that the public call will be announced from August 1, 2024 to September 15, 2024, and the call will be accompanied by a series of promotional activities.

11. Regularly reports on progress in the implementation of the Recommendation, as requested by the Bureau to the Standing Committee to the Convention and the Committee itself.

Montenegro will regularly report to the Bureau of the Bern Convention on the progress of implementation of the recommendations in accordance with the request of the Standing Committee.

Annex I

Monitoring of species listed in Annex I of Bern Convention

Of the Skadar Lake NP species listed in Appendix I of the Berne Convention and/or in Annex II of the Habitat Directive, monitoring of *Marsilea quadrifolia* has been carried out, as envisaged by the Skadar Lake NP Management Program. For other species included in the aforementioned lists, previously collected field data are available for the following:

- *Trapa natans* (water chestnut) – which occupies large areas of the Skadar Lake water. It is not endangered and therefore is not monitored.
- *Caldesia parnassifolia*, at the location of Pančeva Oka and Crni Žar - further monitoring is anticipated as only individual specimens have been recorded. It is assumed to be more numerous and present in this area, but due to the densely overgrown peat habitat, this area is inaccessible and difficult to explore. The threat to this species is loss of its habitat due to the overgrowing process.
- *Quercus robur* subsp. *scutariensis* - the habitat has been anthropogenically altered before proclamation of the national park (by creating agricultural land that is located on privately owned estates). Specimens of this species are in good condition. From an ecological point of view, it is possible to revitalize the habitats and the communities it builds, but the species is present on agricultural land.
- *Gladiolus felicis* (accepted name *Gladiolus palustris*) - is present along the northern shore of Lake Skadar, in rocky vegetation. No threat factors have been recorded.
- *Orchis provincialis* - numerous individual specimens are present along the northern shore of the Lake. It is not threatened.
- *Ramonda serbica* - The habitat of this species is found in the gorge of Murička River on the southern slopes of Mount Rumija. The population is numerous and protected by the terrain morphology. Negative anthropogenic impacts have not been observed. It is necessary to monitor the habitat periodically.

Lutra lutra – Euroasian Otter

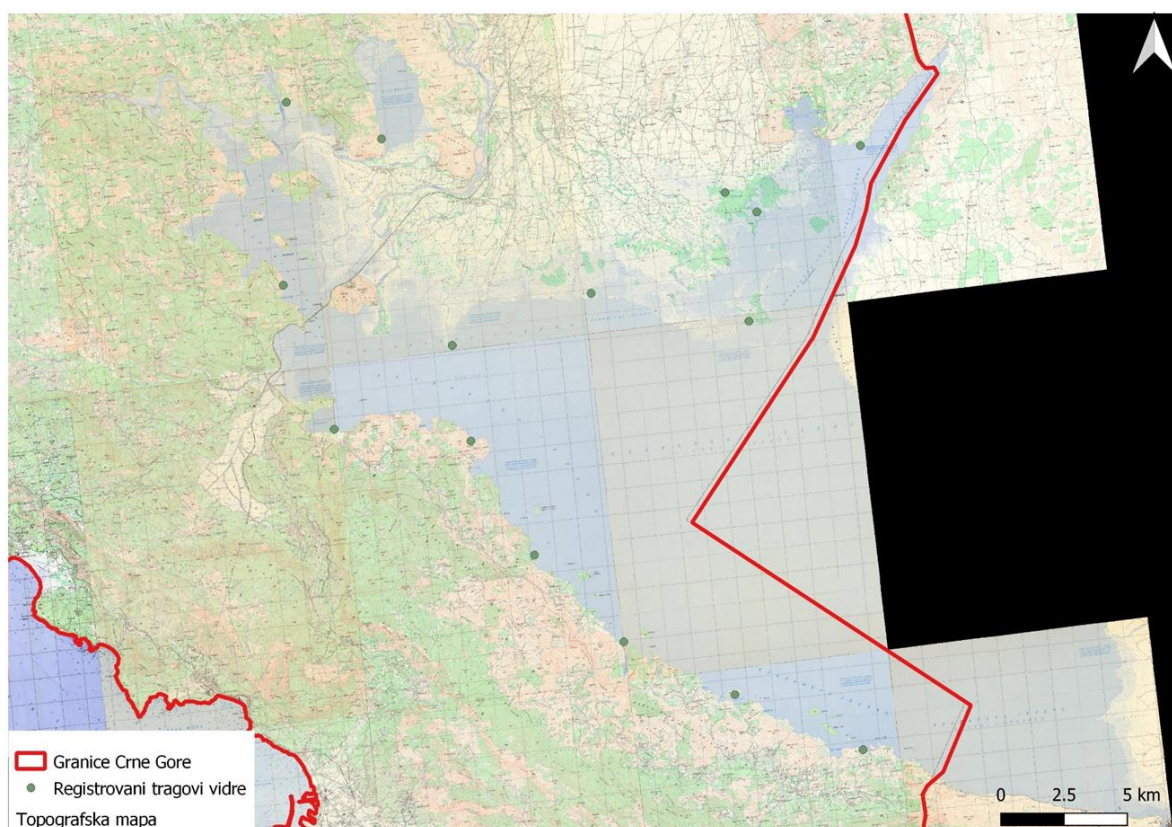
Monitoring otter (*Lutra lutra*), a species from Appendix II of the Berne Convention, started in 2011 in Skadar Lake National Park and has since been implemented through program activities of the National Park. GIZ funded monitoring otters on Skadar Lake through the project “Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biodiversity at Lakes Prespa, Ohrid and Shkoder/Skadar (CSBL)” in 2013 and 2017, and in 2017 the NGO Centre for Conservation and Bird Study (Centar za zaštitu i proučavanje ptica - CZIP) was the implementer of this project. The Environmental Protection Agency (Agencija za zaštitu prirode i životne sredine - AZPŽS) was also involved in the first and second phase of the project and has data on the results of monitoring otter.

Furthermore, a Protocol for monitoring otter on Lake Skadar has been developed in accordance with which monitoring has been carried out. Through the aforementioned project in 2017, this protocol was aligned with the protocol in accordance with which Albania and Northern Macedonia worked.

Monitoring of otter presence has been continuously carried out based on traces of presence (most often excrement). The applied method is the registration of tracks in 5x5km quadrants, that is, every 5 km search for an adequate place for potential marking. The otter was registered along the entire coast of NP Skadarsko jezero and a map was created. Monitoring will continue in the coming years and after the

collected data in the final year of the Plan, with the assistance of colleagues from the IUCN Otter Specialist Group, the average population density will be calculated.

In 2023, for the first time, a young otter (female) was rescued, which was injured on a section of the main road Vranjina - Virpazar. The otter was found by employees of the Environmental Hygiene and Infrastructure Maintenance Service. The otter was given first aid on the field by his colleague Bogdan Maraš and was adequately transported to the MontVet veterinary clinic, where he was treated for a month and a half. The young otter was named Tidra and the individual was microchipped and issued a passport before being released. The only available chip that could be used at that moment was a veterinary chip for domestic cats. After a successful recovery, with the assistance of a veterinary technician, the otter was successfully returned to its natural habitat. This otter represents the first rescued otter and successfully returned to its habitat, both for national parks and for Montenegro.



Registered otter tracks

Nacionalni park Skadarsko jezero

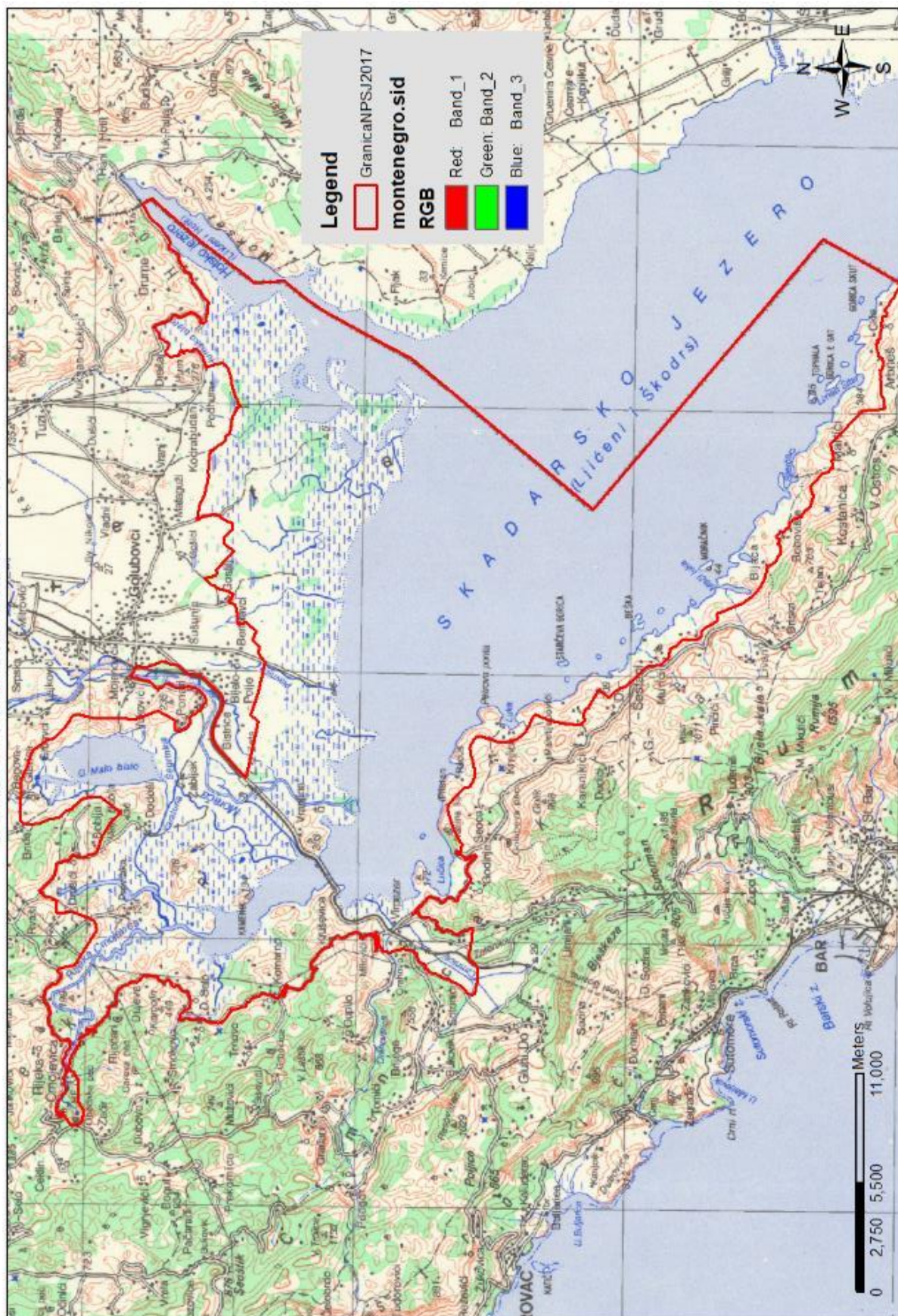


Figure 1.

Nacionalni park Skadarsko jezero



Figure 2.

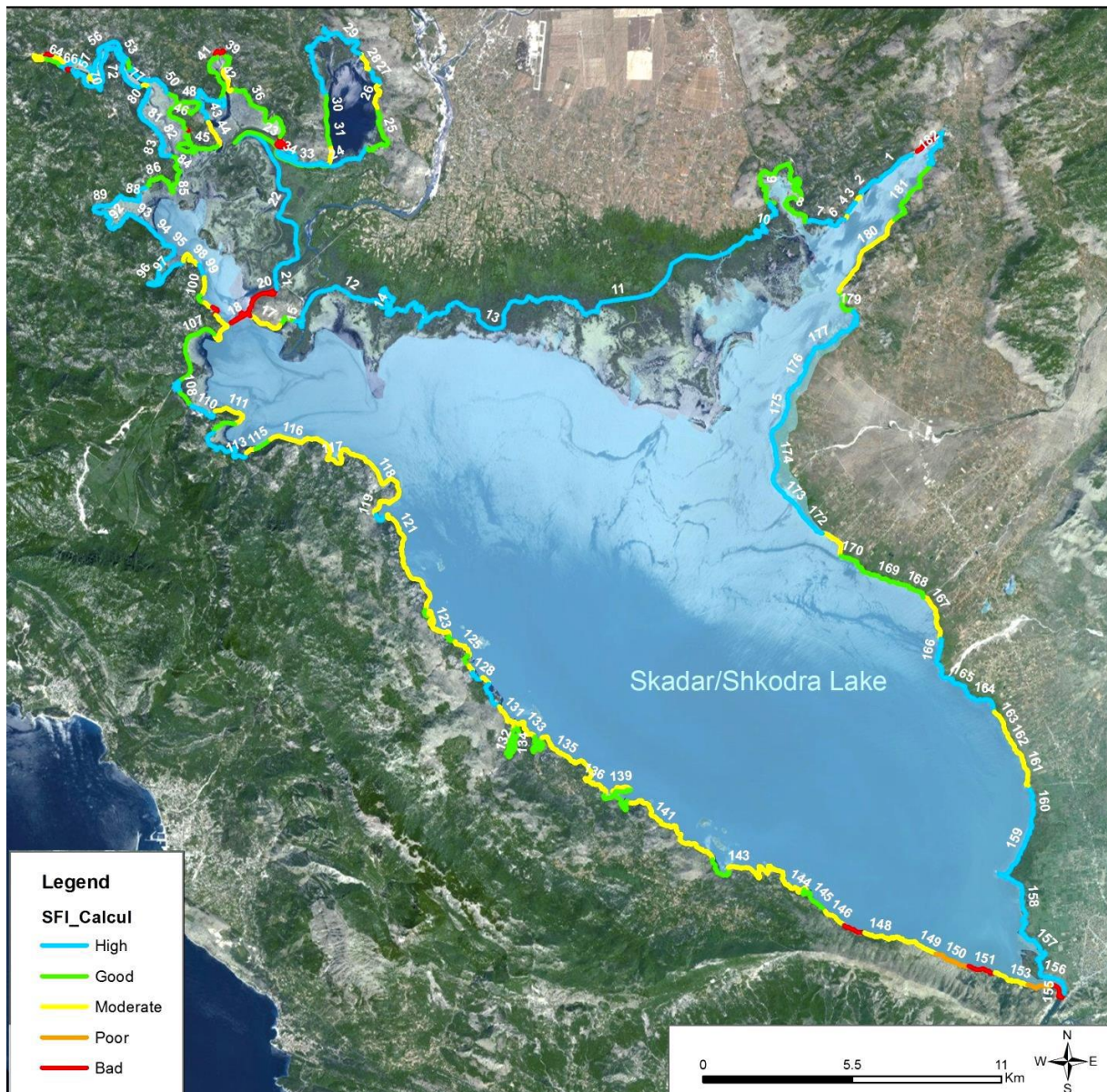


Figure 3.