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CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF EUROPEAN WILDLIFE  
AND NATURAL HABITATS

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**Standing Committee**

44<sup>th</sup> meeting  
Strasbourg, 2-6 December 2024

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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  
Ministry of Ecology, Sustainable Development and Northern Region Development, Montenegro*

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## Progress Report on the Implementation of Recommendation No. 201 (2018) November 2024

### 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“, Poseljanski 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.

**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.<sup>1</sup>

**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*).**

**Birds:** During the winter IWC census, which was carried out on the water surface of the lake, species on the appendix I and II from Bern Convention were monitored, including: *Fulica atra* (3893 individuals), *Podiceps nigricollis* (177), *Pelecanus crispus* (49), *Egretta garzetta* (26), *Ardea alba* (27), *Ardea cinerea* (66), *Microcarbo pygmeus* (1294), *Phalacrocorax carbo* (3974) and *Aythya ferina* (342). The

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<sup>1</sup> (The Reference List of Skadar Lake Habitats, as well as a GIS Habitat Layer covering the entire national park area were provided to the Bern Convention in Report sent in July 2024)

census showed, a slightly lower number of individuals, compared to the previous period, which may indicate changes in the habitat condition and the need for further monitoring.

The expert service of the JPNP of Montenegro in the NP Skadarsko jezero conducts monitoring of indicator and colonial species of birds, in the spring and summer. The greatest focus was on the curly pelican (*Pelecanus crispus*), whose population is in increase. After a two-year period in which pelicans did not nest due to constant disturbance and abandonment of the platforms in the "Pančeva oka" reserve, at the beginning of 2023, the formation of a new colony was recorded on the island of Mali Moračnik. There were recorded by monitoring 210 adults and 40 young individuals. The nesting began at the end of December 2023, while the first baby-birds were recorded at the beginning of March 2024. The largest number of birds was recorded during the May census, with 172 recorded individuals, of which 59 were adults, 52 young, while the age of 61 individuals could not be determined.

In order to protect the colony, buoys were placed during the nesting season - a measure to enclose the island 200 meters from the colony, thereby limiting access to tourist visits and reducing the risk of disturbance.

The monitoring of the white-bearded tern (*Chilidonias hybrida*), which was carried out in the period June-July 2024, showed the stability of the population, although in some colonies a lower number of nests was recorded compared to 2023, which can be connected to the breaking of waterways through the vegetation that these birds use for nesting.

The populations of the little cormorant (*Microcarbo pygmeus*) and the great cormorant (*Phalacrocorax carbo*) also show stability in numbers.

On Omerova gorica there is a colony of gray heron (*Ardea cinarea*) which shows the same number of population for decades, also on Omerova gorica nests also little white heron (*Ergetta garzetta*). The colony of little yellow heron (*Ardeola ralloides*) at the mouth of the Gostiljska river numbers more than 40 pairs.

On the list of the Habitat Directive, based on Annex II, IV and Annex V, there are 10 plant species from the Skadar Lake NP area. The expert service of JPNPCG conducts monitoring for the species *Marsilea quadrifolia* and *Caldesia parnassifolia*. For most of the other *Natura species*, we have data based on earlier field research. We believe that the populations and habitats of *Ramonda serbica* and *Utricularia vulgaris* species are not threatened. The populations of *Gladiolus palustris* and *Anacamptis pyramidalis* are few, but without observed negative factors in their habitats, while the species *Ruscus aculeatus* is part of the numerous thickets along the rocky shores of Lake Skadar and is not an endangered species in this area. 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 provided a georeferenced and digitalized border, to the Bern Convention in last Report, sent in July 2024.<sup>2</sup>

#### **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 started drafting the Amendments to the Law on National Parks, and on the basis of the prepared Revision Protection Study for Skadar Lake. The adoption of Law is expected by the end of 2024.

After the public hearings for the Study, will follow the adoption of the Study, which will change the existing boundaries of the National Park. The existing borders of the National Park will be changed and included into Spatial Plan of Montenegro.

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<sup>2</sup> [Strasbourg 5 February 2002 \(coe.int\)](https://www.coe.int/en/web/strasbourg)

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. After the adoption of the new Spatial Plan of Montenegro, which is expected to be adopted by the end of the year, the development of a Special Purpose Spatial Plan for Lake Skadar will follow.

**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.**

The previous average age of employees in the Protection Service was around 50 years old. In the previous period, active efforts were made to reduce the average age of employees, through the employment of younger people. This approach contributes to increasing the mobility and efficiency of the service in the field, and enables a faster and more efficient response to challenges in lake protection. Currently, 22 supervisors are employed in the 40,000ha park, who hold licenses in accordance with the Law on the Protection of Persons and Property. Since that number is not adequate and sufficient for the management of this area, if necessary, colleagues from other Services are hired in accordance with the Law on Freshwater Fisheries (as fish keepers), so the number of people engaged in this service has increased by 5.

**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%.

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. (You can find it on Annex II – Figure 3 in last Report)<sup>3</sup>

**2. All further considerations made by the Bern and/or Ramsar Convention as well as the Delegation of the European Union to Montenegro shall includes 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 additon, 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 amandments 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 sepearate 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**

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<sup>3</sup> [Strasbourg 5 February 2002 \(coe.int\)](https://www.coe.int/en/web/strasbourg)

**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;**

Water lilies (*Nymphaea lutea* and *Nymphaea alba*) and water chestnuts (*Trapa natans*) are widely distributed on the waters of Lake Skadar. Regardless of the fact that they are listed as endangered species on the EU lists, these species build dense and extensive populations in the swampy part of Lake Skadar and no threatening pressures have been detected, but on the contrary, habitat conditions favor their growth and spread. General management measures resulting from the Law on Nature Protection and the Law on National Parks, as well as zoning, i.e. defined protection regimes, waterways on the Lake, application of instructions from the Rulebook on Internal Order in the National Park, as well as area control through the work of the Physical Protection Service, represent a sufficiently effective set of measures for the protection of water lily and water chestnut populations in Skadar lake NP.

**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.**

In Montenegro, the issue of establishing non-governmental organizations is regulated by the Law on Non-Governmental Organizations. This law regulates the method of establishment, registration and deletion from the register, status, bodies, financing and other issues of importance for the work and activities of non-governmental organizations.

Also, Government of Montenegro adopts a Decision on determining priority areas of public interest and the amount of funds for financing projects and programs of non-governmental organizations, which determines priority areas of public interest in which projects and programs implemented by non-governmental organizations will be financed from the Budget of Montenegro. and the amount of funds for financing those projects and programs.

In 2023, the Ministry supported 28 projects/programs of non-governmental organizations in the field of the environment, namely: 21 projects/programs of NGOs in the field of waste management in the total amount of €150,000.00, and 7 projects/programs of non-governmental organizations in the field of chemicals, in the total amount of €50,000.00.

The NGO Center for the Protection and Study of Birds - CZIP organized the International Conference on the Protection of Skadar Lake on December 13, 2023 in Podgorica. The aim of the conference was to discuss the issue of protecting Lake Skadar at the national and international level. The conference was held within the project "SOS Skadar Lake-Keeping the Montenegrin Wilderness Wild" which was financially supported by the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF);

Within the project "Integrating biodiversity into sectoral policies and practices and strengthening the protection of key points of biodiversity in Montenegro" (GEF 7), which is being implemented by the Ministry in Podgorica, from 18-20. September 2024, in cooperation with the NGO Program for the Environment (EnvPro), organized a three-day knowledge exchange seminar on the topic of biosphere reserves. The special focus of the seminar was on the establishment of a cross-border biosphere reserve Skadar Lake Basin, as well as improving the management of the Tara Basin Biosphere Reserve. Through this project, a website (<https://biodiversitymontenegro.me/>) was created, on which there is an interactive map that shows the most significant conservation areas characterized by the presence of a large number

of species and habitats of excellent and good representativeness; as well as maps and information about areas with international protection status in Montenegro. This interactive map is available to the public. The Ministry, in cooperation with the Ministry of Public Administration, will continue cooperation with non-governmental organizations in the coming period, with the aim of strengthening environmental awareness.

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

During 2023, the EPA of Montenegro downloaded the software (SDF format with proposed candidates for the Emerald network) in order to update the list and started working on entering new data. It started with the update of the Emerald site "Durmitor" and certain data was entered. By the beginning of 2024, about 60% of the land part of Montenegro has been mapped. In 2024, the mapping of habitats and species continued with the support of the state budget, the GEF 7 project "Integrating biodiversity into sectoral policies and practices and strengthening the protection of key points of biodiversity in Montenegro" and the IPA III project "Support for the establishment of the Nature 2000 network in Montenegro". The implementation of the IPA III project officially began on May 29, 2024, and in the period July - September 2024, it was carried out on the implementation of the planned activities. A major contribution in defining the Nature 2000 network is expected through the mentioned IPA III project, which foresees the finalization of the mapping of the terrestrial part of Montenegro as well as other key activities such as the preparation and implementation of the communication strategy by the end of 2027. Also, through these project will be updated the Emerald network in Montenegro, the finalization of which is scheduled for 2027, when we receive the final list of proposals with new data on the lists of habitats and species under the Bern Convention.

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;**

Bearing in mind the specificity of the Skadar Lake NP area, where the water surface absolutely dominates, as well as the fact that the waters of the Lake territorially belong to Montenegro and Albania, it can be said that the biggest threats and pressures on the overall ecosystem are pollution and eutrophication. And while eutrophication is a predominantly natural process, lake water pollution is a consequence of the introduction of pollutants from areas that do not belong to the national park (rivers that flow into the lake, as well as groundwater). Therefore, global measures to mitigate negative impacts on Lake Skadar must be comprehensive, complex, in cooperation with all competent institutions, as well as with good cross-border cooperation. Certainly, there are other threats and pressures that are generated in the area of the National Park, and the mitigation of their negative impacts is carried out through national legislation, the Rulebook on Internal Order and control by the Physical Protection Service.

In addition to the aforementioned threatening factors, the extremely high pressure on the ecosystems of Lake Skadar is also the spread of invasive species. Particularly aggressive species are *Amorpha fruticosa* (for flood ecosystems) and *Egeria densa* (for aquatic ecosystems) and cover large areas of the Park. The JPNPCG professional service conducts regular research and monitors the spread of these and other invasive species.

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.

#### **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.**

The Ministry of Ecology, Sustainable Development and Northern Region Development formed a coordinating body for improving the management of protected areas of Montenegro - 01.07.2024.

Through the GEF 7 project "Integrating biodiversity into sectoral policies and practices and strengthening the protection of key points of biodiversity in Montenegro", a set of activities related to the preparation of manuals, regulations (Preparation of the Harvesting Plan, Programs, Reports, Protection Studies and Audits) was implemented, and other documents that will contribute to a more adequate management of protected areas. In addition to the above, in 2021 the Ministry initiated the audit process at the Agency for 37 protected areas that were placed under protection in 1968.

Also, with the aim of revising the existing protection, drafts of protection revision studies have been prepared for 2 national parks (Durmitor and Lake Skadar), which partly propose changing the border, the drafting of amendments to the Law on National Parks has begun, which will be used for improvement existing legal solutions, especially in accordance with the comments of the Public Enterprise for National Parks of Montenegro. The Ministry, as the initiator of the revision study for the Skadar Lake and Durmitor National Parks, will conduct public hearings (to be published by the end of the current year) that include several round tables. Amendments to the Law on National Parks as well as the Draft Law on Nature Protection foresee the transformation of the existing management structures of protected areas

### **Nature Park "Ulcinj Salina"**

Implementation of a set of activities is underway on the concerning this protected area, which are defined by the Action Plan for meeting the final benchmarks in Chapter 27. Regarding the formation of a management structure, negotiations are ongoing between the Ministry of Finance and the Municipality of Ulcinj in order to find financial resources for the needs of the founding capital and the formation of a company as a management structure. As part of the NatureReturns project, intensive work is being done on the development of a management plan, and from September 2, 2024, with the support of GEF 7, a local consultant was engaged to support the development of a management plan for Nature Park Ulcinj Salina, and on this topic in the reporting period, meetings were held on the 19th and 20th and the 21st regular meeting of the Working group. Project documentation for the reconstruction of the Đerane 31 pumping stations is also being developed, and with the support of the IPA's Project Preparation Facility (PPF) mechanism, a project proposal is being prepared for the rehabilitation of the infrastructure of the salt pan (channels, basins, berms, embankment and pumping stations) as well as basic the infrastructure of the visiting system, and studies of the statics of the hangar and the old administrative building.

### **Man and Biosphere - Tara River Basin**

Efforts were made to reestablish the Coordinating Body to implement and oversee measures outlined in the "Man and Biosphere - Tara River Basin" Action Plan. The Coordinating Body 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.

As part of this process, the workshop was organized for the local population on August 3 as part of the GMIFF, as well as the 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 on the September 20.

### **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.

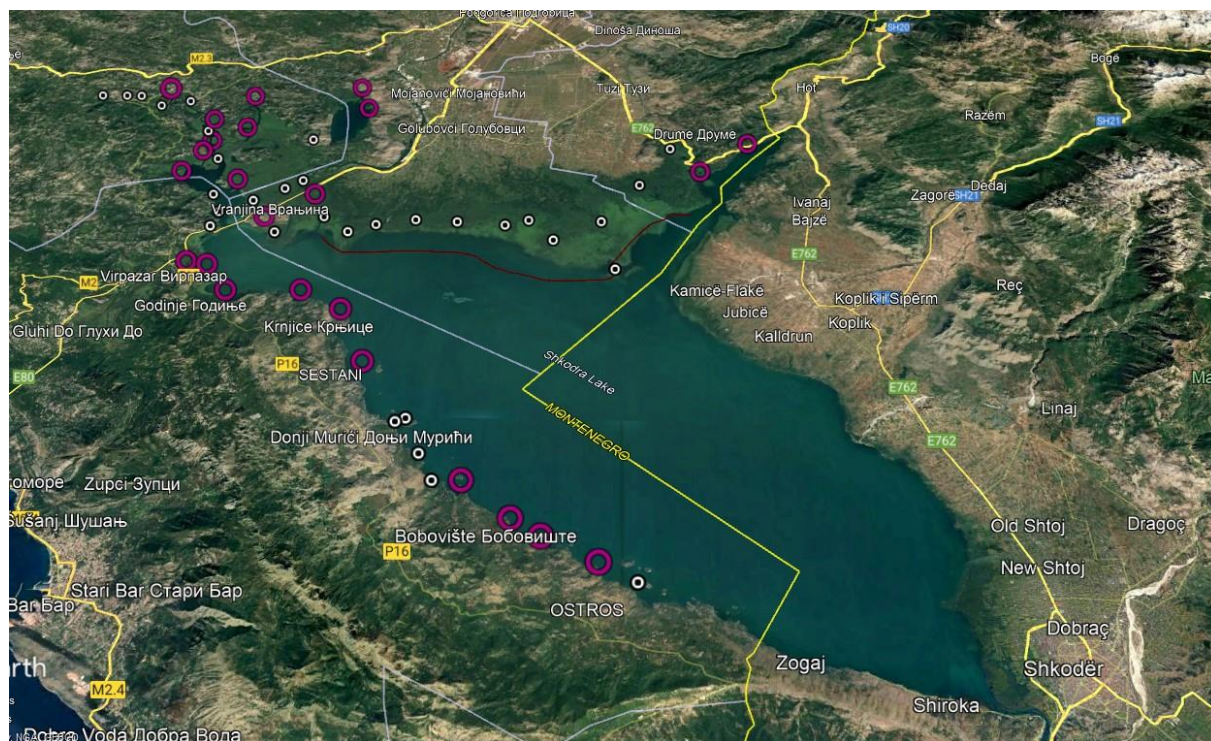


## Annex 1

### OTTER MONITORING IN SKADAR LAKE NP

#### Method

Otter research on Skadar Lake, but also in other parks (Biogradska gora and Durmitor) is recognized in planning and program documents. Otter research is being carried out on Lake Skadar continuously, every year with certain challenges. In JPNPCG, 2 positions are planned for the research of mammal fauna at the level of all 5 NPs. In the past period, there were difficulties in the form of reduced ones capacity because one professional associate has been in training for several years. This year otter research was conducted through a scientific research camp in cooperation with NP Skadarsko jezero and the Dutch mammal society. The camp was organized on Lake Skadar and was attended by 28 experts from various European countries with a focus on researching the diversity of mammals in NP Skadar. One of the goals was to determine the presence of otters. It was used as the chosen method the one created through the GIZ Monitoring Manual for lake species and habitats of the Prespa, Ohrid and Skadar lakes from 2019.



**Figure 1. Otter presence (purple circles represent positive findings, white circles negative)**

According to the methodology from 2019, an inspection of the terrain was carried out with a stop at 2 km and an inspection of the wider areas in a zone of 300m on both sides. Research was conducted in order to register traces of presence (excrement).

This year, the presence of otters was registered in 24 locations out of a total of 51 investigated locations. The reasons for such results can be numerous - in the autumn period there are water oscillations, as well as pronounced poaching of fish tools like electrical converters where the north side is especially affected. Registered risk factors:

- Illegal construction on the shore of Lake Skadar (in the immediate vicinity where dens of this type are expected);
- Illegal killings with various illegal poisons (according to the locals) and poaching of fish using electric converters;

- Entangling the otter in various nets for catching fish.

Conclusion - The general activity is stable and it is possible to exclude certain points for monitoring due to unfavorable terrain - high density of vegetation that makes it difficult to register in those areas.

This year, funds for research were provided by EURONATUR in cooperation with the NGO Green Home and the NGO Wildlife Montenegro. The goal of the project is to determine the effectiveness of the monitoring protocol and improve it. Research will continue next year in spring and autumn.



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**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“, Poseljanski 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

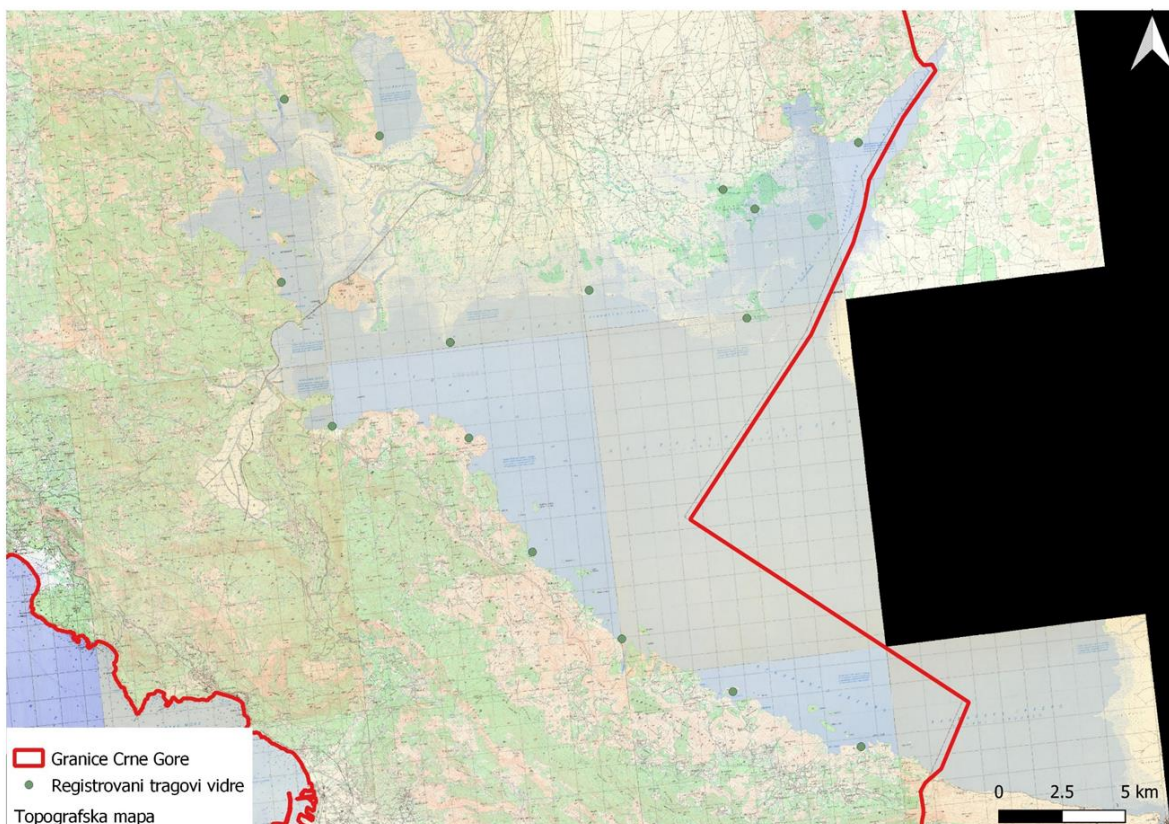
Monitoring otter (*Lutra lutra*), a species from Appendix II of the Berne Convention, started in 2011 in Skadar Lake National Park and has since been implemented through program activities of the National Park. GIZ funded monitoring otters on Skadar Lake through the project “Conservation and Sustainable 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

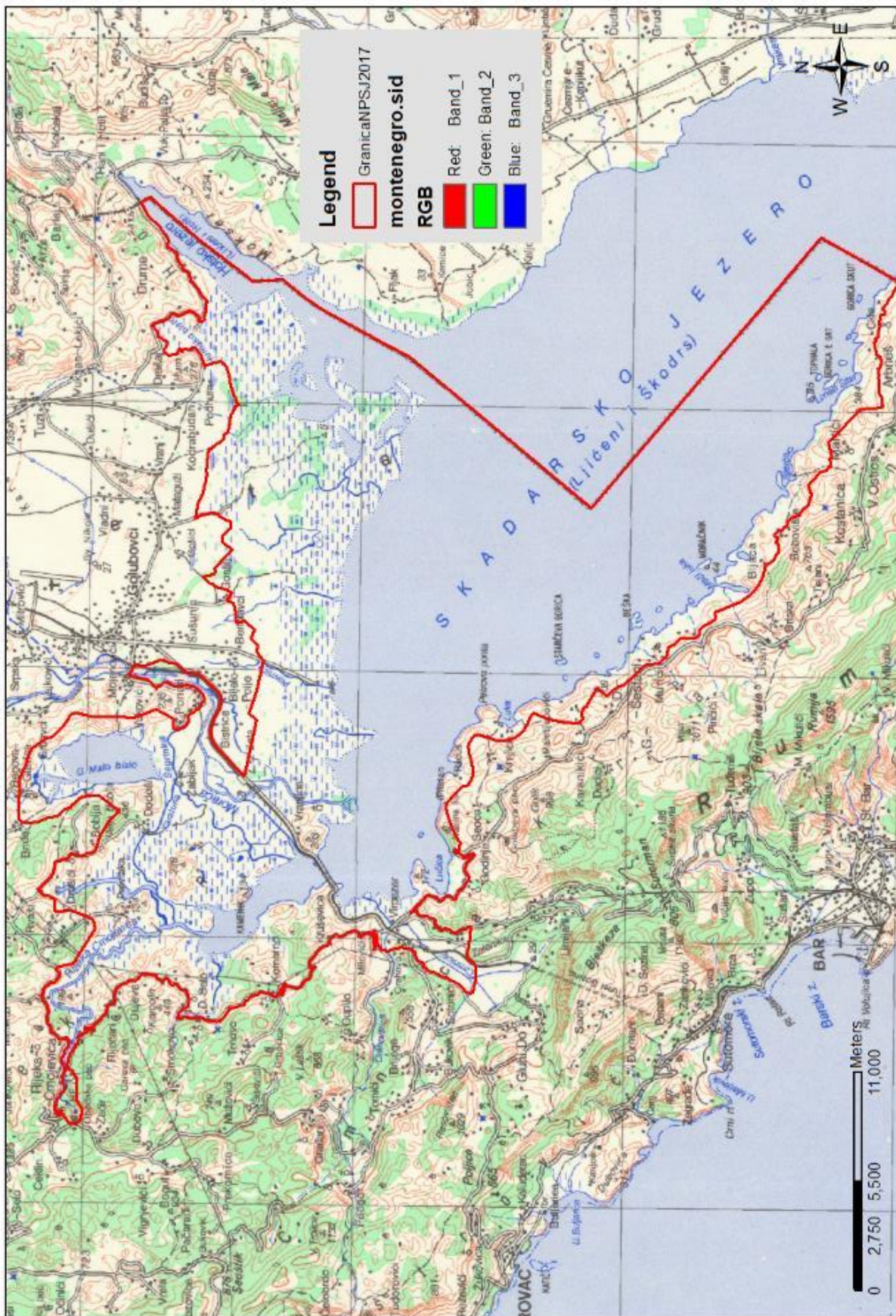


Figure 1.

Nacionalni park Skadarsko jezero



Figure 2.

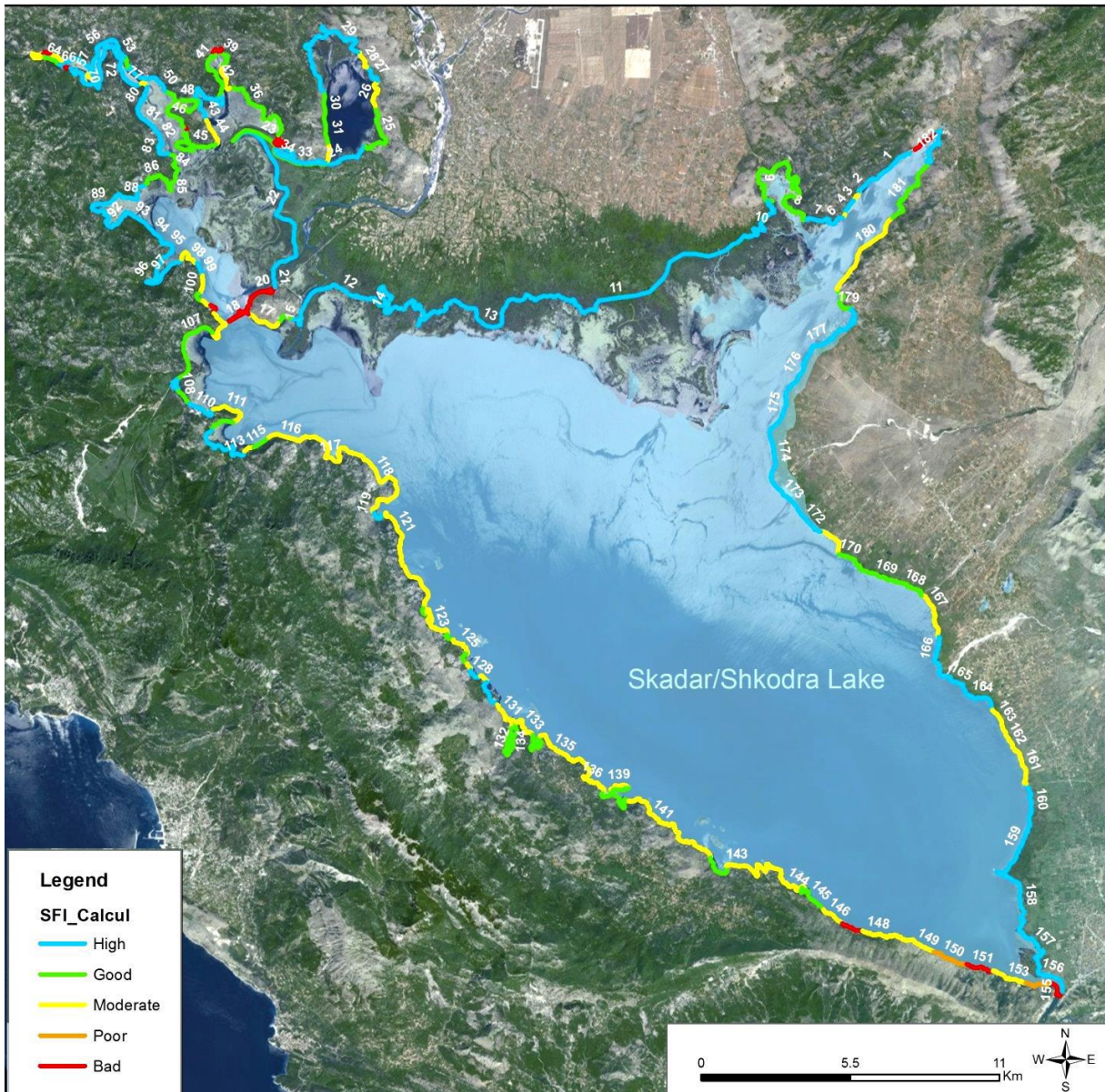


Figure 3.