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FACTSHEET

euRONATUR FOUNDATION



Protecting “Europe’s Lifeline” - The creation of a Trans-Boundary UNESCO Biosphere Reserve along the Danube, Drava and Mura Rivers (TBR MDD)

Project characteristics

WWF Project: “Protecting Europe’s Lifeline - the creation of a Trans-Boundary UNESCO Biosphere Reserve along the Danube, Drava and Mura Rivers”

Time period: January 2011-
December 2013

Countries: Austria, Croatia, Hungary, Serbia and Slovenia

Project goals:

- 5-country biosphere reserve
- trans-boundary cooperation
- ecological river management

Project Lead: WWF Austria

Project Partners:

EuroNatur, WWF MedPO, WWF DCPO, WWF Hungary, Croatian Society for Protection of Birds and Nature

Project funders: MAVA Foundation, Asamer Holding

The project is and will be carried out in partnership and cooperation with a wide range of national and international partners, including responsible institutions, organisations and NGOs of the five countries.

On 25 March 2011, the Ministers responsible for environment and nature conservation of Austria, Croatia, Hungary, Serbia and Slovenia signed a joint declaration to establish a Trans-Boundary Biosphere Reserve along the Mura, Drava and Danube Rivers.

In the next three years WWF and EuroNatur will considerably support the implementation of a well protected and managed trans-boundary Danube, Drava and Mura river system.

The measures include:

1 – Support establishment of TBR MDD protection status in the five countries

Measures:

- UNESCO TBR nomination: a five country declaration for a joint TBR MDD nomination process was signed on March 25th 2011; now the necessary requirements and documents for UNESCO designation have to be prepared.
- “Gift to the Earth Event”: the TBR MDD, once finally achieved, WWF has the intention to honour the Governments with a ‘Gift to the Earth’, WWF’s highest accolade for applauding environmental leadership in a globally significant contribution to the protection of the living world.

2 - Facilitate trans-boundary cooperation and promotion of the MDD area

Measures:

- International working group: a forum of stakeholders from the region to share information, to define the fields of trans-boundary cooperation such as eco-tourism, water- or protected area management and to carry out common activities and projects.
- Excursion along the TBR MDD: with stakeholders of all five countries to demonstrate good practice inside the future TBR MDD.
- Know how transfer and learning from existing Biosphere Reserves: biosphere reserves also focus on regional development, beside conservation and research. Excursions to international best practice examples with decision makers from the countries.



Participants of a workshop in Donja Dubrava (HR) to strengthen the NGO network in the future TBR MDD.

Project contacts:

Overall project

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- International festival “Nature and Culture along the MDD” (working title): to bring people from all 5 countries together to present their traditions and typical music; culture is the “door opener” to establish the 5-country vision in the “heart” of the people.
- Website “TBR MDD” (working title): basic information in all 5 languages; news and events in English; photos; information platform
- Trans-boundary information platform, monitoring and GIS: common GIS and data basis for the whole TBR MDD as a basis for the promotion of the area
- Leaflet about the TBR MDD: multilingual; to highlight values and threats and bring the idea of a TBR MDD closer to the people
- Nature Guide about the TBR MDD

3 - Promote sustainable river management

Measures:

- Mura-Drava-Danube-Watch: a major key for successful campaigning against destructive projects is to monitor the situation on ground, to make deterioration visible and to act against destruction if necessary. This needs the involvement of the NGO network but also lobbying on EC and national level.
- Little tern campaign: Little tern (*Sterna albifrons*) as a flagship species to raise awareness for the needs of an intact river during a tour (campaign) along the rivers.
- Trans-boundary (HU/HR) river restoration study: a river restoration concept for a specific site on the Drava to demonstrate ecological sound river management. Excursion to international restoration sites (best practice examples) to exchange expertise. Working group for the restoration project and public awareness of restoration benefits.
- Study “Restoration potential in the future TBR MDD” (working title): to show the overall potential for river and floodplain restoration along the Mura, Drava and Danube and to prioritise future river restoration efforts in the MDD area.



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