



Caucasus Ecoregion Newsletter

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Prime Minister visits WWF project site, Arpi Lake National Park in Armenia

March 16, 2010 - Prime Minister of Armenia, Tigran Sargsyan visited the project site in Shirak region to see the ongoing activities of 'Establishment of Protected Areas in Armenia's Javakhq (Ashotsk) Region' project implemented by WWF Armenia in close collaboration with the Ministry of



WWF Armenia Director shows the Prime Minister (on his right) the boundaries of the newly established Arpi Lake NP

Nature Protection, RA. He was accompanied by the Minister of Nature Protection, RA Mr. Aram Harutyunyan and the Governor of Shirak region administration, Mrs. Lida Nanyan.

In the school hall of Zorakert community in Shirak region, the prime minister held a meeting with heads of local communities and chaired a session of the meeting of Regional Advisory Council (RAC)

established within the frameworks of this project. During the 3rd RAC session WWF Armenia Director, Mr. Karen Manvelyan made a presentation on the implemented activities of the project so far and outlined the planned actions for 2010.

The prime minister attached great importance to successful implementation of this project as in his words: "the project has not only an ecological importance but also socio-economic as the establishment of Arpi Lake National Park in the long run, contribute to overall development of communities and harmonious cooperation among them."



Prime Minister, Tigran Sargsyan explores Arpi Lake NP

To note the project proposal was developed by WWF Germany, WWF Armenia and WWF Caucasus Programme Office. KfW and Ministry of Nature Protection, RA decided to grant WWF the task of implementing the project, and a contract was signed between KfW and WWF Germany. On April 16, 2009, Government of the Republic of Armenia made a decision to establish the Lake Arpi National Park as well as the "Lake Arpi National Park" state non-commercial organization (SNCO).

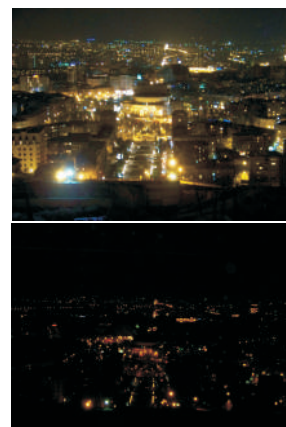
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In Brief

March 27, 2010 – This year in Armenia Earth Hour 2010 has so far mobilized some business companies and government agencies such as HSBC Bank Armenia CJSC, Congress Hotel Yerevan, National Geographic Traveler, SPYUR Business Directory of Armenia, Ministry of Nature Protection, and Yerevan Municipality in joint efforts to combat climate change.

A day before the lights of Yerevan streets, landmarks and monuments switched off, WWF Armenia convened a joint press conference with participation of all the joined partners to inform the public about the upcoming global event.

A number of landmarks joined Earth Hour 2010 in Georgia. The Tbilisi City Hall, TV broadcasting tower, Radisson Blu Iveria Hotel, Marriott Hotel, Courtyard by Marriott, Sheraton Metechi Palace Hotel, HSBC Bank, and Bank Republic switched off their external illumination on Saturday. The Radisson Hotel held a special "Candlelight Party" dedicated to Earth Hour 2010.



Yerevan City - before and after the EH 2010

Development of Ecotourism Infrastructure in Shirvan National Park in Azerbaijan

Azerbaijan's system of Protected Areas has a long history of development and takes beginning from the twenties of 20th century. National parks are relatively new category for Azerbaijan. The Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources has started establishment of National Parks since 2003 and during the last five years 8 national parks (with total area of 295 921 ha) have been established. Shirvan National Park (Shirvan NP) is one of the most attractive tourist destinations in Azerbaijan.



Shirvan National Park in Azerbaijan

Shirvan NP is famous with its largest gazelle population (5,000 – 6,000) in Europe. It covers 54 374 has of semi-desert area on the Caspian coastal plain. The adjacent territories are protected by Shirvan Reserve (6232 ha) and Bandovan Sanctuary (4930 ha). Totally 65580 hectares of gazelles habitats are under protection in this area. The park area is the range for several CEPF priority species:

Marmaronetta angustirostris, *Aquila heliaca*, *Falco naumanni*, *Testudo graeca*. Just by mentioning the number of bird species registered in the territory of Shirvan NP (230) it becomes obvious the park's biodiversity. Location on the flying ways of migratory birds along the Caspian coast makes SNP territory very important. Close location of SNP to Baku makes it easily available for tourists. Due to the fact, that the national parks have been established just recently their infrastructure is not yet developed to the full extent.

With support of CEPF and WWF Caucasus PO ecotourism infrastructure is being developed in Shirvan National Park. Presently, the tangible result is on the ground – completed guest-house as a main base for further development tourism. GTZ also plans to allocate additional funding to provide a renewable energy system based on photo voltaic and wind energy to this guest-house. Additionally, the tourism management plan is under development through the financial support of MAVA Foundation.



Guest House in Shirvan National Park in Azerbaijan

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Official ribbon-cutting: Consul of Norway and Minister of Nature Protection, RA

April 15, 2010 – Minister of Nature Protection of Armenia, Mr. Aram Harutunyan accompanied by the Governor of Syunik Region, Mr. Surik Khachatryan and Honorary Consul of Norway in Armenia, Mr. Timothy Straight attended the official opening ceremony of the administrative building of Shikahogh State Reserve. The administrative building of the reserve was renovated, furnished and equipped due to support provided by the Ministry of Nature Protection of Armenia, Zangezur Copper-Molybdenum Combine CJSC, Norwegian Government and WWF. The main activities associated with the reserve infrastructure development were implemented in the framework of the project “Biodiversity protection and community development: implementing ecoregional conservation plan targets in South Armenia.” The project has been carried out since the year 2007 by WWF Armenia and WWF Norway with the financial assistance provided by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.



Renovated administrative building of Shikahogh State Reserve in Armenia

Improving Forest Law Enforcement and Governance

The regional program “Improving Forest Law Enforcement and Governance in the European Neighborhood Policy East Countries and Russia” (the “Program”), supported by the European Commission and other donors, is aimed at putting in place improved forest governance arrangements through the effective implementation of the main priorities set out in the St. Petersburg Ministerial Declaration and Indicative Plan of Actions on the Europe and North Asia Forest Law Enforcement and Governance (ENA-FLEG). It covers seven countries of the ENA Region, including six members of the European Neighborhood Policy Initiative – Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Republic of Moldova, Ukraine – and the Russian Federation.

Implementation of the Program is led by the World Bank, working in partnership with the World Conservation Union (IUCN) and WWF. The Program will be carried out over a three-year period, from February 2008 through June 2011. The outputs of the program will be:

- Increased awareness and commitment of key stakeholders on FLEG
- Effective national and regional FLEG action processes in place
- National ownership and capacity increased
- Improved regional and sub-regional collaboration and knowledge sharing
- Effective engagement of key trading partners
- Continuation of the formal official ENA FLEG process
- Sustainable forest management practices implemented

Main expected benefits are improved policy, legal and institutional environment for the mitigation of the problem of illegal utilization of forest resources; promotion of sustainable and ecologically sound forest management and improved regional cooperation.

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Mitigating Impacts of Climate Change through the Restoration of Forest Landscapes in the Southern Caucasus

The project is funded by the German Ministry of Environment (BMU) via KfW within International Climate Initiative and implemented in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia. The implementation period of the project is September 2008 – April 2010, while the main objectives are:

- To restore forest landscapes and ecosystems in selected pilot floodplain and mountain areas for increased carbon storage and enhanced resilience against climate change;
- To adopt respective forest policies and strategies and apply them in future forest restoration projects;
- To promote regional and international cooperation.



Nursery where the seedlings are taken care of

The project has come to its conclusive stage and has already yielded considerable outcomes. Specifically, around 1,350 hectares of forests have been restored by various methods in all three countries. Restoration sites were selected by the following criteria:

- Former forest land;
- High representativeness for the region;
- Endangered forest ecosystems;
- Low risk of conflicts with other land uses.



Fenced site for forest restoration in Northern Armenia

The restoration activities included fencing (to protect the restoration area from livestock), planting, seeding and promoting natural regeneration. Only native tree species (from local provenances), such as oak, beech, ash, maple, chestnut and wild apple were used. In addition to forest restoration, activities such as building capacity of forestry nurseries, training and awareness-raising activities were implemented. Innovative planting and seeding methods as well as tools were used to increase the efficiency and effec-

tiveness of work. Only local villagers were employed which increased their interest in the project on one hand and contributed to rural employment on the other. Possibilities of generating additional income through carbon credits were also evaluated and future steps to improve climate regulation role of forests were identified.

Good cooperation with Ministries of Environment, Forestry Departments, local self-governing authorities and local communities were crucial in achieving the success. Other benefits produced by the project include:

- Increased biodiversity;
- Improved knowledge in ecological forestry;
- Raised awareness of local communities and other stakeholders;
- Regional and international cooperation.

This project has created favourable grounds for the implementation of similar projects in the future. Presently about 2,000,000 seedlings are already planted in Armenia, about 300,000 - in Azerbaijan and 500,000 - in Georgia.

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Children call on to save the leopard in Armenia

International Biodiversity Day brought together more than 200 schoolchildren from several schools of Yerevan as well as several dozens of adults to celebrate a 'Leopard Day' in the Yerevan Zoo. "Save the Caucasian Leopard in Armenia" campaign launched by WWF Armenia in 2007, was carried out jointly with "Armenian Women for Health and Healthy Environment" (AWHE) NGO.

The ceremony was opened by a welcome speech of the Minister of Nature Protection, RA, Mr. Aram Harutyunyan who attended the event together with Honorary Consul of Norway to Armenia, Mr. Timothy Straight, as well as the representatives of Yerevan Municipality, and Zoo administration. Official opening ceremony was followed by amazing performance 'Leopard - King of Animals' role-played by children themselves, different contest games, concert and award giving ceremony for children.



'Leopard - King of Animals' performed by children

Pupils from seven schools of Yerevan participated in handworks' contest-exhibition. Through the hand-made artifacts such as carpets, drawings, placards, puppets as well as poems children tried to convey their message to adults that 'leopard is in danger and poaching should be stopped.'



Participants of the event

During the event WWF volunteers helped to raise the funds by selling WWF-branded stuff in the Zoo as well as arrange voluntary donations by visitors to support the anti-poaching units for better patrolling the natural habitats of leopards in Armenia.

In words of WWF Armenia Director, Mr. Karen Manvelyan, "this campaign is uniquely important as those poachers who intend to kill this beautiful animal are under

severe control from now on not only by us, the Ministry of Nature Protection of Armenia, general public but also by the children who tried to convey their message with the help of their hand-works."



Honorary Consul of Norway to Armenia, Mr. Timothy Straight making a welcome speech



WWF volunteers helping to raise funds by selling WWF-branded stuff in the Zoo

To note “Save the Caucasian Leopard in Armenia” campaign is being implemented in the frames of “Biodiversity Protection and Community Development: Implementing Ecoregional Conservation Plan Targets in South Armenia” project funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Norway. The project focuses on biodiversity protection and community development in southern Armenia by following up Ecoregional Conservation Plan recommendations for enlargement of protected area coverage. Significant attention is being paid to the involvement of stakeholders and local communities in the operation of the existing protected areas in Armenia.

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Regional projects in Turkish and Russian parts of the Caucasus are coordinated and implemented accordingly by WWF-Turkey and WWF-Russia in close cooperation with WWF CauPO under one vision of Ecoregional Conservation Plan.

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