The Living Water Exchange: A GEF/UNDP Project Promoting Nutrient Reduction Best Practices in Central and Eastern Europe

Demonstration Grants – Concept Round

Call for Nutrient Reduction Best Practices Projects

The Global Environment & Technology Foundation (GETF (http://www.getf.org)), in partnership with the Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe (REC) and on behalf of the GEF/UNDP project officially know as **Promoting Replication of Good Practices for Nutrient Reduction and Joint Collaboration in Central and Eastern Europe** (later referred to as the Living Water Exchange Project) hereby announces this call for concept proposals to support pilot demonstration projects focused on nutrient reduction practices in the Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) and Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia (EECCA) regions:

1. A total of USD 150,000 is available for grants addressing primarily (but not limited to) wetlands restoration and agricultural issues.
2. Co-finance is required.
3. Applicants must be from project beneficiary country[1] governments, designated agencies, and/or non-governmental organisations (NGOs). Partnerships among all or some eligible applicants and linking to broader, ongoing GEF, World Bank and/or other national nutrient reduction projects are strongly encouraged.

The deadline for submitting concept papers is June 5, 2009.

BACKGROUND

Nutrient Reduction Challenges

De-oxygenated "dead zones" in our waterways and oceans, where life is almost non-existent, are estimated at more than 200 worldwide. There is widespread scientific agreement that changes in the global nitrogen cycle and increased nutrient loading, primarily caused by non-point-source pollution (i.e. agricultural activities and storm water runoff) are directly linked to these "dead zones" and other significant impacts on our water resources, including[2]:

- Nuisance levels of algae and aquatic vegetation (eutrophication, which is the primary consequence of nutrient inputs)
- Increased turbidity — sight-feeding fish, aesthetics, water safety, limits growth of submerged aquatic vegetation, impairment of fisheries and habitat degradation
- Low levels of dissolved oxygen, high levels of ammonia; results of organic decomposition
- Increased drinking water treatment costs — formation of disinfection by-products (e.g. THMs (trihalomethanes)) in drinking water, taste and odour effects of algae
- Imbalance of aquatic species
- Shifts in the structure of the food chain

There have been numerous studies and projects in CEE to directly address the reduction of point and non-point sources of nutrient pollution, and to confront the transboundary or national challenges present in the identified nutrient hotspots. Despite regulatory and legal enforcement of point sources across the region, such nutrient pollution remains high. Therefore, more must be done to address nutrient pollution from non-point or diffuse source discharges.

[1] Beneficiary countries: Albania, Azerbaijan, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Croatia, Georgia, Iran, Kazakhstan, Moldova, Montenegro, Russian Federation, Serbia, Slovakia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Ukraine.

[2] USEPA and Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 2007.

The Living Water Exchange Project

The Living Water Exchange: Promoting Nutrient Reduction Best Practices was launched on December 4, 2008 as the next phase of the long-term commitment of the Global Environment Facility (GEF)/United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to achieving environmental health and significant nutrient reduction in water resources across the CEE and EECCA regions.

The GEF International Waters (IW) programme — a global partnership among 178 countries, international institutions, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and the private sector investing in transboundary water issues — has been promoting solutions to address increased nutrient releases and other "non-point-source" issues in CEE for more than 15 years. There is a wealth of experience in nutrient reduction best practices and lessons learned in the region that needs to be replicated within the region and worldwide. However, these experiences have not been collected, analysed, summarised or replicated in a systematic way.

Project Objectives
The Living Water Exchange Project will:

- Limit the resurgence of agricultural and non-agricultural diffuse nutrient releases
- Identify, capture, analyse and summarise best practices, lessons learned and technologies to reduce the impacts of nutrient loading in the region
- Demonstrate successful replication strategies by facilitating pilot projects (e.g. agricultural improvements, wetlands restoration, other low-cost solutions to nutrient reduction etc.) and transferring knowledge to policy makers and practitioners in the region
- Disseminate and promote nutrient reduction best practices and successful replication strategies in the region, among key decision makers, farmers, industries, other stakeholders and the general public

Beneficiary Countries
The following are the beneficiary countries of the project:

- Albania
- Azerbaijan
- Bosnia & Herzegovina
- Croatia
- Georgia
- Iran
- Kazakhstan
- Moldova
- Montenegro
- Russian Federation
- Serbia
- Slovakia
- Turkey
- Turkmenistan
- Ukraine

The project will work with a wide range of local, national and international stakeholders in the region to identify and evaluate the "best", most appropriate practices and demonstrate that such practices can be cost-effectively and appropriately replicated in a very short demonstration project window of 10 months.

Nutrient Reduction Best Practices

The best, most appropriate practices can be defined as any management systems, processes and technologies that have a positive and/or beneficial impact on the environment, and a quantifiable reduction in nutrients. These practices are not based on static standards but continuous improvements.

A best, most appropriate practice can be changes in management actions to reduce nutrient emissions, for example:

- Minimising nutrient loading in local water resources coming from agglomerations, agriculture and industry
- Implementing procedures to reduce waste and/or loss of fertiliser from agricultural land (this could cover soil analysis, application of fertiliser at the appropriate time and in the appropriate amount, use of buffer strips etc.)
- Improving the storage and application of manure (e.g. manure platforms, equipment for application of manure)
- Enhancing awareness and training for farmers
- More proactive actions by farm extension (advisory) services and assistance to farmers
- Developing farm nutrient budgets
- Accomplishing the reduction or elimination of nutrient loading in a "practical", cost-effective manner

APPLICANT ELIGIBILITY

Applicants must be beneficiary country governments, designated agencies, local authorities, NGOs or partnerships of these organisations. Partnerships are strongly encouraged.

In addition, organisations applying for regional grants are expected to meet the following criteria:

a. Readiness to develop a regional/transboundary, national or local project of up to 10 months in duration

b. A proven track record in project management

c. Proven experience with water, agriculture or nutrient issues

d. English-language capability

POTENTIAL ENVIRONMENTAL TOPICS

The deterioration of groundwater and the eutrophication of surface water both stem from point and non-point sources of pollution caused by agriculture, industry and municipal discharges. The necessary nutrient reduction can be facilitated by improving our knowledge about pollution; improving the management tools used to prevent, reduce and treat pollution; and establishing or facilitating processes that lead us closer to solutions to pollution challenges. Pilot demonstrations will help determine whether, how and what scope or scale of specific nutrient reduction best practices are suited for replication throughout the CEE and EECCA regions.

Grants will be awarded to projects addressing the following issues related to nutrient pollution:

Agricultural Discharges

- Introduce and apply best agricultural practices to avoid, minimise and/or control non-point sources of pollution in the groundwater and/or surface waters
- Promote eco-farming methods and alternative rural development
- Provide technical assistance to agricultural advisory services through a pilot project

Land-Use and Wetlands

- Address flood management, irrigation and drainage with attention to the associated pollution effects
- Save and protect the natural flood plains (buffer strips)
- Support the conservation and restoration of floodplains and wetland habitat
- Use constructed wetlands as a means of treating rural wastewater

Other Possible Nutrient Reduction Approaches

- Promote P-free detergents
- Assist in the restoration of wastewater facilities
- Provide education/training to local people on nutrient reduction

APPLICATION PROCESS

The application process has two stages. In the first stage, organisations should submit a short concept paper briefly describing the proposed project concept and how nutrient loadings will be reduced, and providing an overall budget estimate. Only successful organisations from the first application phase will enter the second stage. The best proposals will be selected by September 2009. The stages of the application process for obtaining a grant from the Living Water Exchange: A GEF/UNDP Project Promoting Nutrient Reduction Best Practices are described below.

STAGE 1: CONCEPT PAPERS

1. SUBMISSION OF CONCEPT PAPERS (Deadline: June 5, 2009)

The concept paper must be submitted in English. The lead organisation is responsible for submitting the complete original concept paper to GETF via email to GEFNRpractices@getf.org by the given deadline.

Questions should be submitted to the same email address by May 8, 2009 and will be answered via email by May 8, 2009.

2. EVALUATION OF CONCEPT PAPERS (June 22, 2009)

The concept papers will be evaluated by a panel comprising subject matter and regional environmental experts from the project team, using the criteria identified in Appendix A. Organisations that are selected to submit the full proposal will be informed via email by June 22, 2009.

Concept Submission Format

The following are the elements of the concept proposal (maximum of five single-spaced pages):

Section I Cover Sheet

- Project title
- Beneficiary country or countries involved
- Organisation name
- Registration or tax number
- Address
- Phone number
- Key contact name and title (project coordinator)
- Key contact email
- Project duration
- Total project budget (amount requested) in USD
- Cooperative partners

Section II Narrative

- A summary of the proposed project concept, including:
    - The specific nutrient challenges that the project seeks to address
    - The specific means by which the project will address that challenge, by the implementation of which best practice or practices (and focusing on either agricultural or wetlands restoration practices)
    - The specific outcomes that are anticipated from this project (including potential transboundary benefits)
    - The means by which those outcomes will be measured and monitored
    - Project objectives, target groups, timeline of activities to be undertaken in planning, implementing, evaluating and reporting on the project
    - Local conditions including hydrology, soils and weather

Section III Budget

- A general budget summarising the breakdown of labour, travel and other direct costs presented in a simple table
- The budget table should include:

1. A general listing of anticipated expenses for this pilot project
2. The total amount requested for this pilot project
3. The total amount of co-finance for the project, and from which sources
4. Additional revenues in direct funding or indirect costs to be supplied by additional funders, with the funding sources indicated

After the concept paper evaluation meeting, conditions, preconditions, recommendations and suggestions for improving the quality of the proposals will be given to the selected organisations.

STAGE 2: FULL PROPOSAL

3. SUBMISSION OF FULL PROPOSALS (Deadline July 15, 2009)

The organisations whose concept papers are approved in Stage 1 will be invited to prepare full proposals taking into consideration the comments and recommendations from the concept paper evaluation. Information on requirements for the full project proposal will be communicated to the selected applicants.

The full proposal should be submitted to GEFNRpractices@getf.org. Information on requirements for full project proposals will be communicated in due time to the selected applicants.

4. CONTACT INFORMATION

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APPENDIX A: PROJECT SCOPE AND PILOT ELIGIBILITY

The scope of the nutrient reduction best practices pilot demonstration grants is to facilitate the replication of the most appropriate practices or system of practices needed to reduce nutrient loading and meet minimum water quality standards in nutrient hotspots in CEE.

Scoring guidelines

This evaluation grid is divided into **subsections**. Subsections 1 and 2 have a total of 50 points and must be given a score between 1 and 5 in accordance with the following guidelines

Score	Meaning
1	Very poor
2	Poor
3	Adequate
4	Good
5	Excellent & complete

Subsection 3 has a total of 50 points and must be given a score between 1 and 10 in accordance with the following guidelines:

Score	Meaning
1	Very poor
2	
3	Poor
4	
5	Adequate
6	
7	Good
8	Very good
9	
10	Excellent & complete

These scores are added to provide the total score for the section concerned. The totals for each section are then added together to give the total score for the proposal.

Each section contains a box for comments. These comments should address the issues covered by that section. Comments must be made on each **section**. If an evaluator gives a score of 1 (Very poor), 2 (Poor) or 5 (Very good) to a subsection, the reasons for giving such a score must be explained in the comments box. Extra space may be used for comments if required.

1. Issues	**Score**
1.1 Existing nutrient reduction project underway or in advanced stage of planning, which could be supplemented by UNDP/GEF project (focusing on agricultural or wetlands restoration best practices)	/ 5
1.2 Availability of national or international resources (cash or in-kind) to co-finance UNDP/GEF budget	/ 5
1.3 Local and national community involvement, interest and support (from a wide range of stakeholders)	/5
1.4 Approach can be replicated elsewhere in the region and more widely	/5
1.5 Sustainability post-project	/5
Total score for issues:	**/ 25**
Comments for issues:	
2. Challenges	**Score**
2.1 Relevance to priority concerns in the CEE and EECCA regions: a) Nutrient and other pollution from farm practices, local small constructed wetlands b) Loss of floodplains c) Other issues such as pollution from P detergents, untreated wastewater etc.	/5
2.2 Lack of planning approval challenges	/ 5
2.3 Socioeconomic costs (cost-effectiveness of the project and potential impact on the local society and economy)	

	/ 5
2.4 Sufficient project management capacity	/5
2.5 Project duration of 10 months	/5
Total score for challenges:	**/25**
Comments for challenges:	

3. Benefits	**Score**
3.1 Quantifiable reduced nutrient loading	/ 10
3.2 Quantifiable improved water quality benefits	/ 10
3.3 Transboundary involvement & benefits	/ 10
3.4 Local benefits of implementing projects (e.g. tourism, minimising damage from floods etc.)	/ 10
3.5 High benefits for agricultural lands	/10
Total score for benefits:	**/50**
Comments for benefits:	

Innovative ideas for other practices and tools that could prove useful in addressing the reduction of nutrient pollution are encouraged and will be awarded 5 bonus points.