

PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION REPORT

Project ID:	9766
Project Name:	Mainstreaming Conservation of Coastal Wetlands of Chile's South Center Biodiversity Hotspot through Adaptive Management of Coastal Area Ecosystems
Countr(ies):	Chile
Implementing Agency:	UNEP

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I. Overview

A. Description

Project name

Mainstreaming Conservation of Coastal Wetlands of Chile's South Center Biodiversity Hotspot through Adaptive Management of Coastal Area Ecosystems

Country

Chile

GEF ID

9766

Implementing Agency

UNEP

Executing Entity

Ministry of the Environment EM

Trust Fund

GET

Project Type

FSP

PIR Submission

8/28/2025

Fiscal Year , PIR Number

FY 2025 , Final PIR

Objective

Chile is one of only five places in the world with a Mediterranean climate, where the Project area is located, recognized as one of the 35 biodiversity Hotspots, not only for their high levels of wealth and endemism in plant and animal species, but also for being regions with high risk of species extinction. This is especially relevant regarding coastal landscapes and ecosystems, having in this area several types of coastal wetlands, such as salt marshes, brackish and salty coastal lagoons, tidal plains and estuaries and with the presence of different gradients, making for a high level of time-space heterogeneity and therefore the availability of habitats for a wide range of aquatic and shoreline species, in particular migratory birds. The threats and environmental degradation factors in the Chilean Mediterranean Eco-Region, are for the most part the result of human activities, which play a key role in the advancing deterioration of the coastal ecosystem functions and habitats. The main factors are habitat loss, fragmentation and degradation caused by agricultural activities, urban expansion and infrastructure, and the scarce legal protection given to these ecosystems. The objective of the Project is to improve the ecological condition and degree of conservation of ecologically valuable coastal ecosystems in South-Central Chile, including the wetlands and associated watersheds, incorporating them into local development efforts through sustainable management, improving coastal landscape management, reducing pressures on these habitats occupied by diverse migratory species with different conservation problems, and reducing threats to and pressures on the supporting watersheds that contribute to locally significant human activities. This Project contributes to fulfilling the GEF VI objectives BD-4 Program 9 and LD-3 Program 4, which will be undertaken through three components. The first seeks to mainstream the importance of BD conservation and LD problems in coastal landscapes to decision-makers and relevant stakeholders, the second to strengthen political and regulatory frameworks regarding coastal conservation among the diverse institutions with mandates in coastal and watershed areas, and the third, to implement and systematize an array of initiatives in five pilot landscapes to be replicated at the national level by the main institutions involved. The pilot ecosystems are located between Coquimbo

and Araucania, representing different socio-environmental conditions, and these will play a relevant role in generating the data and evidence necessary for demonstrating the need to apply a focus that considers the whole watershed, with strengthened inter-institutional coordination and with productive sectors applying environmentally sustainable practices for conserving and sustainably managing coastal landscapes when these are not protected areas. Each one of the pilots will contribute concrete evidence according to their individual realities regarding threats and present circumstances and will make it possible to have a wide range of options that can be replicated in similar situations. This project will bring together stakeholders from various national, regional and local institutions, committed for the duration of Project implementation, and led by a Steering Committee, which will be in charge of monitoring fulfilment of objectives, a process that will be supervised by the implementing agency, UN Environment. The Project includes a gender focus, where equal opportunity and development actions are proposed for both men and women, and also as a contribution to women's empowerment, for the purpose of increasing their participation and decision-making, as well as their access to the Project's socio-economic services and benefits. The aims and objectives of this project are consistent with the commitments made by Chile as signatory of the Ramsar Convention, the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), and the Convention on the Conservation of Wild Migratory Species (CMS). Chile has been making efforts to comply with these commitments, approving in the year 2003 its National Biodiversity Strategy (ENB), which led in 2005 to the National Strategy for the Conservation and Rational Use of Chile's Wetlands (ENH), with its respective Action Plan. Later, the National Wetlands Committee was created, formally in 2013, as well as the National Committee for Ecological Recovery (2017) by means of a framework document, for the purpose of achieving effective ecological recovery in degraded areas.

B. Ratings and Disbursements

Implementation Progress Highly Satisfactory	Development Objective Highly Satisfactory
Overall risk Low Risk	
Project Financing 5,635,750.00	Cumulative Disbursement 5,101,804.00

C. Key Dates

CEO Endorsement/Approval 8/29/2019	Agency Approval 8/29/2019
Implementation Start 11/15/2019	First Disbursement 1/17/2020
Expected MTR 2/27/2023	Actual MTR 2/28/2023

Expected Completion
3/31/2025

Actual Completion
3/31/2025

II. PROGRESS STATUS AND ISSUES

A. Progress: Information on progress and outcomes of project implementation activities

Component 1: Information management and distribution regarding knowledge of the importance of biodiversity and sustainable land use within a landscape/watershed focus Progress on this component relates to: During the period, the project management focused on the effectiveness of the exit strategy, achieving performance indicators in activities, outputs and results; fundamentally to complete and conclude the pilot experiences, with sustainability, scalability and replication of the results. In addition, the project's strategic communication was strengthened, focused on thematic ownership and advocacy on institutional decision-makers, together with spokespersons for local communities, beneficiaries of the project's actions, strategic allies in the protection of wetlands. The result of the actions of the implementation of the communication strategy was reflected in enhanced social networks: Instagram (14100 followers), Facebook (3147) and YouTube (1300); with an increase in appearances in the press (74), on local TV and radio; increased the number of news of the project (15), of videos made/published on YouTube (26); supported by powerful graphic lines for social networks (44) for the daily dissemination of the national, regional and local actions and achievements of the project. In addition, the proposal for a communication strategy that will accompany the Ministry's Wetlands Program was developed, strengthening the management of the Department of Aquatic Ecosystems to be implemented after the closure of the project; along with the achievement of the systematization of the project experience. The consideration of ecological assessment of wetlands is completed with the model of Plural Evaluation of SSEE in Huasco, carried out by an agreement with the University of Chile, with the Fondecyt Project; in addition, the project concludes the Guide for the Evaluation of Ecosystem Services, which proposes to strengthen institutional management. As a result of the hydrodynamics and monitoring studies, the Management Protocol of the terminal Sand Bar in the Cahuil Lagoon was achieved participatively; product with an impact on national public policy, institutional management and local governments with a mandate in the management of the coastal edge. As well as in Rocuant Andalien, based on the hydrodynamic study and disaster risk management, the Master Plan for ecological infrastructure was concluded, defined in a proposal for a network of urban green parks, with an implementation agreement between 4 municipalities and a complementary agreement for the development of the Santa Clara park, as a replication. In terms of computer platforms, strengthening monitoring, management of the MMA and the declaration of wetlands and public access to information, the Wetland Management System was achieved, connected to the SIMBIO-MMA Biodiversity Information System. In addition, the Aquatic Ecosystems Monitoring Network System platform and the Wetland Phenological Monitoring Platform were achieved. In the period, in addition to the communication strategy, it focused on knowledge management, continuing with the strengthening of capacities through a series of meetings, workshops and seminars held, registering the participation of 2208 partners of interest. The various materials, documents, videos and others generated by the project during the period are publicly accessible on the project website and on YouTube.

Component 2 Strengthening institutional and regulatory frameworks Sustaining institutional strengthening and regulatory frameworks, such as scalability, the Urban Parks Division of the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning will advance in a new line of investment for wetland parks, remaining under the management of the MMA for inter-institutional work in the mainstreaming of wetland conservation. In scaling, the Ministry of Public Works, as a result of the guide for cleaning canals and guide to minimum sustainability criteria, advanced in the creation of Standards for the protection and evaluation of environmental impact in urban wetlands for Public Infrastructure Works of the Ministry of Public Works. For

its part, the Directorate of Port Works of the MOP; the Environmental Assessment Service and other institutions with a mandate in the management of the coastal edge, together with municipalities, as a result of the management protocol of the bar, it is in their task to advance in the evaluation of the solution for the management of the sand bars on a national scale. On the other hand, the project provided strong support for the early implementation of the Protected Areas and Biodiversity Service (SBAP) in the implementation of the regulations, the legal, normative scope for the management of HR, RRFF, operational and administrative. As well as with direct contribution to the development of the regulation of the peatland law. The project strengthened the management of the Department of Aquatic Ecosystems and the Seremi del Biobío in the management of files for the achievement of wetland declaration; as well as the management of the MMA's Legal Department for the same purpose, favoring the achievement of goals related to the declaration of wetlands. In South-South cooperation, within the framework of the Chile, Peru and Ecuador Agreement, an international seminar for technical exchange and training was held, achieving a policy brief declaration focused on Partnerships, communication and governance for coastal wetlands in the South American Pacific for their institutional management between the countries involved and other partners of interest. Knowledge management at the international level was enhanced with the participation of the Project in the COP 16 on Biodiversity, holding 6 side events that facilitated the transfer of the project's experiences in the priority themes (Mainstreaming biodiversity conservation in institutional management; governance and strategic communication; ecosystem services and restoration; environmental education; monitoring; information management platforms; and ecological infrastructure as a structuring element of resilient cities). During the period, 3 Guides were achieved: A Teacher Support Guide focused on environmental education; another Guide for the Valorization of Ecosystem Services of Wetlands and a third, the Guide for Wetland Restoration; along with reports of the restoration actions carried out by the pilots. These Guides complement the series of materials for capacity building on wetland conservation that are nationally disseminated to the MMA. On the other hand, the Monitoring Guide was strengthened with an annex on equipment handling and calibration; along with a guide to benthic fish and macroinvertebrates, among others published documents available on the project website. Governance in the period focused on sustainability, scalability and replication of products and results. The local committees received the 5 integrated wetland management plans achieved; these governance instances will provide the future sustainability of the PGIH, led by the MMA Seremis, the Municipalities, the communities and other stakeholders. During the period, the project's experience in governance and preparation of the PGIH was transferred to projects of the Environmental Protection Fund of the MMA and municipalities with declared wetlands. The project developed ecological infrastructure (EI) experiences connected to the ecosystem benefits provided by wetlands, local sustainable development such as tourism. In Elqui, in Caleta San Pedro, together with the Association of Macheros, for the purpose of managing dunes and protecting nesting sites, a viewpoint and walkway were built; the Chile Mexico Project in Toltén /Araucanía with the support of the project built a structure with a cultural focus as part of the wetland for the use of the community, favoring local tourism; in Biobío, the Master Plan was achieved with sustainability of 4 municipalities, as a system of integrated parks and risk management approach with multiple benefits for the community; in Cauil the EI built are part of the tourist route of bird watching, connected to the route of the salt workers of Cauil, an achievement made together with SERNATUR and the Municipality of Pichilemu. During the period, the project sustained support for institutional frameworks, the strengthening of national and local institutional capacities, and the mainstreaming of wetland conservation in other sectors. Component 3 Pilot Ecosystems The pilots of Cauil and Elqui concluded their comprehensive management plans with sustainability by the Local Committees and Municipalities, achieving the 5 PGIH. The 5 pilots in the period advanced in the implementation of some line of action of the PGIH such as the implementation of good practices (silvoagro, tourism, debris removal, ecological infrastructure, development of local economies; restoration, etc.). The 5 pilots concluded the restoration actions with community participatory approaches and methodological adaptations depending on the restoration experience, such as: control of exotic species; restoration of riverbanks; incorporation of native species and hydrophilic flora; incorporation of infrastructure for the restoration of the biodiversity that inhabits the wetland; post-fire restoration, etc. The restoration actions and achievements carried out by the project contributed to the MMA's report on the level of compliance with the goals of the National Restoration Plan. The monitoring program concluded according to

the seasonality of the variables measured. The data generated by the monitoring program was systematized and analyzed, generating wetland health standards and indicators, accompanied by recommendations for institutional management and decision-makers that were scalable to national institutional management. The monitoring data was made available for management by the MMA in the Aquatic Ecosystems Monitoring Network System, wetland monitoring platform. The implementation of good practices was achieved according to the pilot and sector. Elqui strengthened the management of debris and restoration actions in the recovery of an asset for public use; Mantagua achieved the Clean Production Agreement in the tourism and gastronomy sector, achieving the mainstreaming of the conservation of biodiversity and wetlands associated with tourism; Cahuil the BBPP was linked to the establishment of a tourist route for cultural purposes and birdwatching; Rocuant Andalien the BBPP was associated with the design of ecological infrastructure in a participatory way with cultural relevance; and Queule, the application of silvo-agricultural BBPP in association with restoration actions and native flora. The application of BBPP allowed the project to incorporate wetlands into local economies, such as: the consolidation of the Manos de Tolten Cooperative; the Cahuil aviturismo route and the APL in Mantagua; In addition, the implementation of ecological infrastructure in the wetlands contributes to local tourism initiatives. The application of the KAP survey demonstrated that the project's capacity-building program had a positive impact on knowledge, skill, and practice indicators. The implementation of an exit strategy focused on outcome-based management, sustainability, scalability and replication, strengthened with central-level work plans and in each pilot favored the monitoring and evaluation of progress towards results. The implementation of a monitoring mechanism focused on closure planning guided actions, facilitated planning and early action, such as the request for project extension; the reduction of the withholding of the last consignment from 5 to 1%; as well as the achievement of quarterly financial reports; the closure planning and the financing mechanism for the closure of the project. In the period, the project closed the technical operation of the 5 pilots and the national closure activity with delivery of results. During the period, the package of final technical and financial reports of the project was concluded.

B. Challenges: Information on challenges of project implementation activities

The project requested an extension period in order to advance in concluding the pilot experiences, mainly the implementation of restoration, ecological infrastructure, monitoring and environmental education programs. As well as, the completion of the ecosystem services assessment experience in Huasco considering it to be a participatory process of multiple actors. The coordination of the international event of South-South cooperation required excessive time in its organization, taking into account the adoption of agreements given the considerable demands of the counterpart in aspects of methodological design. The development of restoration guides and the systematization work took more time than planned given the need to make changes in the team of consultants. For its part, the Evaluation Guide considered extending the development time due to being based on Huasco's pilot experiences, together with those of the project. The exit strategy, focused on management based on the achievement of results, with a focus on sustainability, scalability and replication, generated a great challenge in the technical team accustomed to management based on the performance of activities; This demand in management demanded a considerable effort in changing vision, method and management to achieve results. The sustainability and mainstreaming of wetland conservation in other institutions, given the mandates themselves and the institutional functioning, demanded more effort, despite the implementation of the Wetlands Law made this result easy to a certain extent, however, the challenge remains in its strengthening and implementation of the changes. Local government elections generated a great effort to ensure the achievement of products and results and sustainability. The inadequate performance of the administrative assistant in financial and operational management negatively affected trust, internal relations and project management. Faced with the report of the situation, the parties of the Steering Committee avoided making a decision consistent with strengthening the management of the project. The excessive intervention in the management of the project by the head of the MMA outside the Steering Committee disadvantaged the relations between the parties, increasing the challenges in the management of the project. The lack of

leadership by the Executing Agency and Project Management had an unfavorable impact on the making of appropriate decisions in a timely manner. Lowering the budget retention from 5% to 1% to be released in the final return was a challenge in the face of UNEP regulations in the management and operation of GEF projects. This achievement allowed a proper execution of the project focused on the achievement of products.

C. Stakeholder Engagement

The last two meetings of the steering committee (July 17, 2024 and March 25, 2025), respectively, were focused on the agreement regarding: the first, on the extension of the Project focused on the exit strategy, on the conclusion of activities and specifically on the pilots; relevant was the agreement on the management of the extension of the project and associated with this the requirement to reduce the percentage of final retention of the budget from 5 to 1% in order to achieve a proper execution of the Project considering the magnitude of the amount in question; in parallel, the agreement of the work plan for the closure of the project. The second and final meeting of the Steering Committee was focused on agreeing on the schedule for the delivery of final reports and the use of the budget surplus. During the period, the participation of strategic partners was aligned with their participation in the key product launch seminars and with the closing activities of the pilots and the national team, along with achieving sustainability, scalability and replication of the products and key results.

D. Gender Equality

The Project in its genesis did not have a gender plan. The mainstreaming of gender issues in the implementation of the project was achieved through capacity-building with equity in participation in the various courses, workshops and seminars, and developed local economies; as well as in the participation of Local Committees and in actions to strengthen local economies linked to wetlands (local tourism, bird watching, and crafts focused on biodiversity).

E. Knowledge Management

The activities, product launch seminars, international event and closing events were managed through the communication strategy. All the products generated in the period that were available on the Project's website (<https://gefhumedales.mma.gob.cl/documentos/>) and the activities and experiences were disseminated through Instagram (<https://www.instagram.com/gefhumedalescosteros/>) and videos generated through YouTube (https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=gef+humedales+costeros). During the period, the communication strategy accompanied the project's exit strategy, the dissemination of products and results, and knowledge management. In addition, it focused on technical political advocacy on decision-makers with the purpose of strengthening the sustainability, scalability and replication of the Project's achievements.

In addition, to focus on the thematic areas of results, advocacy communication minutes were prepared; disseminated nationally and uploaded to the MMA website: Contribution of Wetlands to the well-being of communities: <https://gefhumedales.mma.gob.cl/minuta-contribucion-de-los-humedales-al-bienestar-de-las-comunidades/>; Impact of the GEF Coastal Wetlands Project on the regulatory and institutional framework: <https://gefhumedales.mma.gob.cl/minuta-impacto-del-proyecto-gef-humedales-costeros-en-el-marco-normativo-e-institucional/>; and Ecological Restoration: Communities and Nature in Defense of Wetlands: <https://gefhumedales.mma.gob.cl/minuta-restauracion-ecologica-comunidades-y-naturaleza-en-defensa-de-los-humedales/>.

During the period, the dissemination and management of knowledge continued; the main events of results management were within the framework of the agreement between Chile Peru and Ecuador, in which an international seminar was held to exchange experiences on wetlands carried out by the Project and other countries; achieving a policy brief to continue the exchange and joint work; at the same event, the Restoration guide was presented along with the restoration experiences of the project. The other relevant event was the national presentation of the Environmental Education Guide and the launch event of the Ecosystem Services Assessment Guide along with the transfer of the Huasco ecosystem services assessment experience.

In addition, the Project held a 6 side event at COP 16 of Biodiversity in the priority areas, such as: Incorporation of biodiversity conservation and sustainable landscape management in coastal wetlands in the biodiversity hotspot of south-central Chile (GEF Wetlands /MMA-UNEP; Wetlands, structuring elements for cities that are more resilient to climate change and biodiversity conservation; Restoration Actions in Coastal Wetlands of Chile: A Comprehensive Approach to Biodiversity Conservation; Coastal Wetland Governance in Chile: five pilots in the south-central Chile biodiversity hotspot (GEF Wetlands/MMA-UNEP; The rescue of knowledge, ancestral stories and local biodiversity through environmental education: the elaboration and dissemination of the book *The Wetland Community*, Araucanía Region, Chile and The biodiversity present in the wetlands as an input for environmental education processes in the coastal territory of the Araucanía Region, Chile.

The closing events of the Project, both nationally and in each of the pilots, were instances in which the presentation of the priority products and results, as well as the experiences and learnings, was highlighted. The systematization of the Project is a publication with public access and national dissemination.

Main learning during the period

The execution of the GEF project in parallel with Law 21.202 – Wetlands, was a facilitating comparative advantage in the execution and achievement of the established goals of the project; in particular, it strengthened institutional participation, the governance framework; the mainstreaming of wetland conservation in the work of other institutions.

The flexibility in the management of the project favored the expansion of the results in the strengthening of national capacities within the framework of policies, laws and regulations, and which together favor the protection of wetlands and biodiversity. Among these are: Support for the progress of the discussion and early implementation of the Biodiversity and Protected Areas Service and the discussion of the Peatlands Law and contributions of inputs to the development of its regulations; contributions to the discussion of the Law that prohibits the transit of motor vehicles on beaches and with the experiences to the goals of the National Restoration Plan.

The institutional arrangement of participation and governance of the project, defined in a national committee and 5 local committees, strengthened the execution of the project, the involvement of the parties and the ownership of the actions, results and sustainability. It facilitated the mainstreaming of wetland conservation at both the national and local regional levels in the participating sectors. The experience of the local committees is scalable and replicable at the national level, considering the mandate by law for the creation of Regional and Communal Committees for the governance of wetlands.

The territorial location in different regions, with urban and rural scope, together with the incidence of culturality, the participation of civil society with representation of communities, NGOs and study centers, was a success when it came to evidencing the different factors of degradation and threats, together with the broad participation in the search for solutions, implementation of these, give sustainability to the results, and facilitate scaling and replication.

The communication strategy focused on technical and political advocacy; the use of social media and its focus on knowledge management, and dissemination of products and results was a tool in the strategy of the Project and in its exit stage.

The strengthening of the MMA's computer platforms (4 – wetland management; biological and physical-chemical monitoring; soil monitoring and project management system) are tools that facilitate national management for wetland declaration; monitoring the health of wetlands; project management and public access to information. This lesson is extended to the series of Technical Guides and Integrated Management Plans that contribute to institutional and private management in the protection and conservation of wetlands.

The participatory experiences carried out in some of the pilots who achieved the sandbar management protocol; the biological and physical-chemical monitoring of wetlands and restoration experiences are replicable with the appropriate technical and economic resources.

The pilot model based on experiences of conservation, restoration and environmental education and monitoring of health status, with territorial particularities, with a model of participation and multi-actor, sectoral governance, turns out to be a sustainable, replicable and scalable model considering the implementation of the Wetlands Law that mandates municipalities and the MMA to declare wetlands for their protection. Whether the economic and technical resources of local governments and the MMA should be considered for its implementation.

Implementation of experiences of good sectoral practices (debris removal, vegetation and hydrophilic restoration, tourism, sustainable infrastructure and agriculture), together with local economic experiences linked to wetlands, turn out to be small-scale initiatives, scalable and replicable by public institutions and private companies.

III: Minor Amendments

CONTEXT	
Result Framework	
Components and Cost	
Institutional And Implementation Arrangements	
Financial Management	
Implementation Schedule	Project extension agreement with the purpose of facilitating the conclusion of activities related to the pilot experiences, such as: economic, design and management initiatives for the execution of ecological infrastructure, vegetation and biodiversity restoration and environmental and biodiversity monitoring; conclusion of specific products (ecosystem services assessment guide; restoration guide; sand bar management protocol; monitoring data analysis); uploading data to

	management platforms; holding international events for the exchange of experiences and knowledge management; carrying out closing activities of each pilot and national; and preparation of final reports. Agreement with UNEP to reduce the final budget devolution from 5 per cent to 1 per cent in order to facilitate the implementation of the activities described above.
Executing Entity	
Executing Entity Category	
Minor Project Objective Change	
Safeguards	
Risk Analysis	
Increase of GEF Financing up to 5%	
Co-Financing	
Location of Project Activity	
others	

IV: Geographic Coordinates of Project Activities

Location Name	Latitude	Longitude	GeoName ID
Elqui pilot ecosystem	-29.8942	-71.2713	

Location Description:

Elqui watershed in the region of Coquimbo

Activity Description:

Integral management plan with restoration. monitoring. and threat control activities

Location Name	Latitude	Longitude	GeoName ID
Mantagua pilot ecosystem	-32.8840	-71.5078	

Location Description:

Mantagua watershed in the region of Valparaíso

Activity Description:

Integral management plan with restoration. monitoring. and threat control activities

Location Name	Latitude	Longitude	GeoName ID
Cahuil pilot ecosystem	-34.4807	-72.0200	

Location Description:

Cahuil watershed in the region of O'Higgins

Activity Description:

Integral management plan with restoration. monitoring. and threat control activities

Location Name	Latitude	Longitude	GeoName ID
Rocuant pilot ecosystem	-36.7439	-73.0606	

Location Description:

Rocuant watershed in the region of Biobio

Activity Description:

Integral management plan with restoration. monitoring. and threat control activities

Location Name	Latitude	Longitude	GeoName ID
Queule pilot ecosystem	-39.3954	-73.2156	

Location Description:

Queule watershed in the region of La Araucania

Activity Description:

Integral management plan with restoration. monitoring. and threat control activities

V. ANNEX

Uploaded Document

Document Category	Title
M and E Document	9766-PIR-UNEP-2025-Chile Coastal Landsdapes