

Blue Corridor: connectivity for the conservation, restoration and sustainable use of marine ecosystems of global importance in the Southern Caribbean of Costa Rica.

Review CEO Endorsement and Make a recommendation

Basic project information

GEF ID
11780
Countries
Costa Rica
Project Name
Blue Corridor: connectivity for the conservation, restoration and sustainable use of marine ecosystems of global importance in the Southern Caribbean of Costa Rica.
Agencies
IUCN
Date received by PM
9/12/2025
Review completed by PM
12/1/2025
Program Manager
Mark Zimsky

Focal Area
Biodiversity
Project Type
GBFF

PIF
CEO

1. General Project Information

a) Is the Project Information table correctly filled, including specifying adequate executing partners? b) Are the project tags properly selected, i.e. any tag on 'support to IPLCs' or KMGBF target is justified given the project description.

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

10/9/2025

a) Please clarify why OTS, a consortium of universities most of which are outside the country, is the lead executing agency as opposed to any of a number of capable government line agencies in Costa Rica that have the management responsibility for the area and the ecosystems that are the focus of this project. While it would seem appropriate that OTS would serve as an agency that could contribute technical expertise to the project, it seems inappropriate that in a country with the capacity of Costa Rica, a government line agency would NOT be the lead agency to execute this project. This is particularly glaring when the project design states that lack of institutional coordination is one of the problems the project will address. Please revise accordingly.

b) Please clarify why the IPLC tag is not selected, given that resources have been allocated for activities to support IPLCs and IPLCs are identified throughout the project as key stakeholders. Please clarify and/or revise accordingly.

10/20/2025

Cleared.

Agency Response

Agency response 28/10/25:

a) OTS as Executing Entity. OTS, although initially formed as a consortium of universities, has become an NGO that has implemented other GEF projects, which provides experience in project implementation at the local level in Costa Rica. Due to this experience, OET was selected by the Government of Costa Rica to execute the project. National government does not have the capacity to received funds directly from international cooperation. Local community institutions are part of the project governance and will receive funds from grants focused on the key objective of the project that will be develop a blue corridor

b) IPLC tag. IPLC tag included

c) Are the Rio Markers for CCM, CCA, BD and LD correctly selected with corresponding CCM, CCA, BD and LD benefits made explicit in the project objective, log-frame and/or theory of change?

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

10/9/2025

Yes. Cleared.

Agency Response/a

2. Project Summary

- a) Does the project summary concisely describe the problem to be addressed, the project objective and the strategies to deliver the GEBs and other key expected outcomes?**
- b) Does the summary capture the essence of the project?**

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

10/9/2025

a) the summary is comprehensive; however, the project will not address climate change as a driver of biodiversity loss, thus, I would delete that from the summary.

b) yes. Cleared.

10/30/2025

The summary states that the project will deal with climate change as a driver of BD loss: " The project addresses major drivers of biodiversity loss?climate change, land-based pollution, overfishing, weak governance, and limited sustainable financing". The project is not doing that and as stated in the response the project is responding to the impacts of CC. Delete that in your summary as previously requested or reword it so it is actually accurate.

Agency Response

Agency response 28/10/25:

a) Climate change in summary. The project, through coral restoration (Output 2.1.3), will address the impacts of climate change as a driver of biodiversity loss. We suggest leaving climate change as part of the project summary.

b) n/a

Agency response 17/11/25

The summary has been revised as requested, as follows: "*The project addresses major drivers of biodiversity loss?climate change **impacts**, land-based pollution, overfishing, weak governance, and limited sustainable financing*".

3. Project Description Overview

- a) Is the project objective statement concise, clear and measurable?**
- b) Are the components, outcomes, and outputs sound, appropriate and sufficiently clear to achieve the project objective and the core indicators per the stated Theory of Change?**
- c) Are gender dimensions, knowledge management, and M&E included within the project components and budgeted for?**
- d) For multi-Trust Fund projects with GEFTF financing, are the GEFTFT Project Financing and Co-Financing contributions to PMC proportional?**
- e) Is the PMC equal to or below 10% (for projects with GEF project financing less than or equal to \$2 million) or 5% (for projects above \$2 million)? If above, is the justification acceptable?**

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

10/9/2025

- a) This is the appropriate rephrased objective: "To restore and improve the connectivity of key ecosystems and diversify the livelihoods of local communities, afro-descendants and indigenous peoples in Costa Rica's southern Caribbean". Please delete all the text after that.
- b) Please clarify if the management plan adopted in Component One is to be implemented through the activities supported under Component Two. It is not clear how the two components relate to each other with regards to addressing drivers of biodiversity loss within the corridor.
- c) yes, in output 3.2.2. Cleared.
- d) NA
- e) Yes. Cleared.

10/30/2025

Cleared.

Agency Response

Agency response 28/10/25:

- a) Project objective phrasing.** The objective has been modified as suggested.
- b) Link between management plan and activities in Component 2:** We confirm that the implementation of activities under the management plan developed under Component 1 will be implemented under Component 2. We have modified the document to clarify this under the description of the theory of change and the description of Outcome 2.1 and 2.2.

Project Outline

4. CHANGES COMPARED to PPG REQUEST

4.1 Are changes to the project design, including to elements put forward in the PPG request to meet GBFF selection criteria, been described and justified. And are they acceptable?

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

10/9/2025

Yes, the changes were endorsed by the government and are appropriate and acceptable. Cleared.

Agency Response

n/a

5 B. Project Rationale

- a) Is the current situation (including global environmental problems, key drivers of environmental degradation, climate vulnerability) clearly and adequately described from a systems perspective and adequately addressed by the project design?**
- b) Have the role of stakeholders, incl. the private sector and local actors in the system been described and how they will contribute to GEBs and other project outcomes? Is the private sector seen mainly as a stakeholder or as financier?**

c) **If this is a blended finance project under GBFF Action Area 4, is there a description of how the project and its financial structure are addressing financial barriers?**

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

10/9/2025

- a) Current situation and baseline is comprehensively presented. Cleared.
- b) Yes, role of stakeholders is clearly described including role of private sector. The private sector is mainly seen as a stakeholder, particularly with regards to tourism, and the aim of the project to strengthen the region's profile for ecotourism. Cleared.
- c) NA.

Agency Response

n/a

6 B. Project Description

- 6.1 a) Is there a concise theory of change (a narrative and a diagram) that describes the project logic, including how the project design elements are contributing to the objective, the identified causal pathways, the focus and basis (including scientific) of the proposed solutions, how they provide a robust approach? Are underlying key assumptions listed?**
- b) Is there a description of how the GEF alternative will build on previous and ongoing investments (GEF and non-GEF), lessons and experiences in the country/region?**
- c) Are the project components (interventions and activities) described, proposed solutions, critical assumptions, and risks properly justified? Is there an indication of why the project approach has been selected over other options?**
- d) Incremental/additional cost reasoning: Is the incremental/additional cost reasoning properly described as per the Guidelines provided in GEF/C.31/12? Has the baseline scenario and/or associated baseline projects been described? Is the project incremental reasoning provisioned (including the role of the GEF)? Are the global environmental benefits identified?**
- e) Other Benefits: Are the socioeconomic benefits resulting from the project at the national and local levels sufficiently described?**
- f) Is the financing presented in the annexed financing table adequate and demonstrate a cost-effective approach to meet the project objectives? Are items charged to the PMC reasonable according to the GEF guidelines?**
- g) How does the project design ensure resilience to future changes in the drivers and adaptive management needs and options)?**
- h) Are the relevant stakeholders (including women, IPLCs, private sector, CSOs) and their roles adequately described within the components?**
- i) Gender: Does the gender analysis identify any gender differences, gaps or opportunities linked to project/program objectives and activities and have these been taken up in component design and descriptions?**
- j) Are the proposed elements to capture and disseminate knowledge and learning outputs and strategic communications adequately described?**
- k) Policy Coherence: Have any policies, regulations, or subsidies been identified that could counteract the intended project outcomes? How will that be addressed?**
- l) Transformation and/or innovation: Is the project going to be transformative or innovative? Are the specific levers of transformation identified and described? Does it explain scaling up opportunities?**
- m) For blended finance project only, is the financial structure adequately explained?**

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

10/9/2025

- a) Yes, theory of change is comprehensive and robust. All assumptions provided. Cleared.
- b) Yes, cleared.
- c) Yes, cleared. No indication why this approach was selected over others, but the rationale for this approach is justified and strongly supported.
- d) Please provide a section that addresses the incremental cost reasoning. Baseline information is provided as are the GEBs, but the incremental reasoning section appears to have been omitted.
- e) Yes, cleared.
- f) yes. Cleared.
- g) Embedded implicitly in the project approach to develop a governance framework and management plan for the marine corridor that is inclusive of all stakeholders and that takes into account conservation and management objectives of the target marine and land-based ecosystems is the assumption that this will allow the main actors to adapt and change management strategies and approaches going forward to all changes in currently defined drivers. Cleared.
- h) stakeholders adequately described and their expected roles as well, further bringing into question why OTS is the lead executing agency mentioned elsewhere in this review. Please address this issue.
- i) yes, this is described and project design seeks to address this issue. Cleared.
- j) yes, this is fully elaborated. Cleared.
- k) the challenge the project has identified to address is not related to policy coherence, given the mature and well-development environmental policy framework in Costa Rica, but rather, issues related to governance and management, and it will address these latter issues, particularly in component one, but it is a theme running throughout the project design. Cleared.
- l) the project design and its aspiration are not necessarily innovative; however, it is addressing key governance and management challenges inherent in all marine ecosystems where conservation and sustainable management overlap and at times run at cross-purposes. It does allow for sharing lessons, not necessarily scaling up as the challenge within this one area will be sufficient to require the PMU's entire focus. Cleared.
- m) NA

10/30/2025

Cleared.

Agency Response

Agency response 28/10/25

d) Incremental cost reasoning. Included at the end of the project description.

h) OTS as the lead executing agency. See previous response.

6.2 Institutional Arrangements and Coordination with Ongoing Initiatives and Project

a) Are the institutional arrangements, including potential executing partners, outlined on regional,

national/local levels and a rationale provided? Has an organogram and/or funds flow diagram been included?

b) Comment on proposed agency execution support (if agency expects to request exception). Is GEF in support of the request?

c) Is there a description of coordination and cooperation with ongoing GEF and non-GEF financed initiatives (e.g., government, other bilateral/multilateral).

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

10/9/2025

a) yes, arrangements and flow diagram are complete and informative.

b) NA

c) yes, coordination opportunities outlined.

Agency Response

6.3 GEF Core indicators and GBFF indicators

a) Are the identified GBFF and relevant GEF core indicators calculated using the methodology and adhering to the overarching principles included in the corresponding Guidelines (GEF/C.62/Inf.12/Rev.01)?

b) Are the project's targeted contributions to GEBs (measured through GBFF indicators, relevant GEF core indicators, and additional listed outcome indicators) reasonable and achievable?

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

10/9/2025

a) Yes, cleared.

b) Yes, fully reasonable targets have been established. Please clarify if the OECM "Blue Corridor" has been officially designated as an OECM.

10/30/2025

Cleared.

Agency Response

Agency response 28/10/25

a) n/a

b) OECM designation of ?Blue Corridor?. There is no legal framework in Costa Rica for OECMs. Due to that, we have removed the indicator 5.4 and included the area of the Blue Corridor at the Core Indicator 5 level.

6.4 Risks

a) Is there a well-articulated assessment of risk to outcomes and identification of mitigation measures under each relevant risk category? Are mitigation measures clearly identified and realistic? Is there any omission?

b) Is the rating provided reflecting the residual risk to the likely achievement of intended outcomes after accounting for the expected implementation of mitigation measures?

c) Are environmental and social risks, impacts and management measures adequately assessed and rated and consistent with requirements set out in SD/PL/03?

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

10/9/2025

a) elaborate risk analysis is provided that is reasonable and sober, with adequate mitigation measures. Cleared.

b) yes, cleared.

c) yes, cleared.

Agency Response

7 C. Alignment with Programming Strategies, Country/Regional Priorities

7.1 a) Is the project adequately aligned with the GBFF Action Areas and, for MTF projects, with Focal Area objectives?

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

10/9/2025

Yes, cleared.

Agency Response

7.2 Is the project aligned with the National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans, National Biodiversity Finance Plans, and/or similar instruments to identify national and/or regional priorities. For MTF projects, is the project aligned with other relevant country and regional priorities, policies, strategies and plans (including those related to the MEAs and relevant sectors)?

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

10/9/2025

a) Yes, project is fully aligned with the NBSAP.

Agency Response

7.3 Does the project clearly identify which of the 23 targets of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework the project contributes to and how it contributes to the identified target(s)?

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

10/9/2025

Yes, however, whenever possible, please also describe in quantitative terms (e.g. using targets on GEF core indicator or in the project's results framework) the contributions to the KMGBF targets. Please revise accordingly.

10/30/2025

Cleared.

Agency Response

Agency response 28/10/25:

Contributions to the KMGBF targets. Included quantitative terms using the GEF core indicators and the project's results framework linked to each of the KMGBF targets.

8 D. Policy Requirements

8.1 Are the Policy Requirement sections completed?

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

10/9/2025

Yes, cleared.

Agency ResponseN/a

8.2 Is the Gender Action Plan uploaded?

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

10/9/2025

Yes, cleared.

Agency ResponseN/a

8.3 Is the stakeholder engagement plan uploaded?

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

10/9/2025

Yes, cleared.

Agency ResponseN/a

8.4 IPLCs:

a) Has the amount of GBFF project financing to support actions by IPLCs been sufficiently justified and have changes compared to PPG request stage, if any, been adequately justified?

b) If applicable, does Section C 'Project Description' describe the IPLCs who will benefit from the project and detail their role in the project? Have appropriate project tags related to IPLCs been selected?

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

10/9/2025

a) Yes, cleared.

b) Yes, cleared. As noted above, please tag IPLCs in the project tags when resubmitting the project.

10/30/2025

Cleared.

Agency Response

Agency response 28/10/25:

b) please tag IPLCs in the project tags when resubmitting the project: Included IPLC tag.

9 Annexes

Annex A: Financing Tables

9.1 GEF Financing Table and Focal Area Elements: Is the proposed GEF financing (including the Agency fee) in line with GEF policies and guidelines? Are they within the resources available?

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

10/9/2025

The figures allocated to the different GBFF Action Areas in the GEF Financing Table don't match those in the Action Area Elements Table. Please revise accordingly.

10/30/2025

When we review Annex A vs the table of Action Area Elements, we don't find that this has been corrected. The GEF project financing is still different. Please revise accordingly.

11/18/2025

Cleared.

Agency Response

Agency response 28/10/25

Financing tables. Revised as suggested

Agency response 17/11/25

Comment addressed. Please see tables A and D adjusted accordingly.

9.2 Source of Funds

**If using GEFTF resources, does the sources of funds table match with the amounts in the OFP's LOE?
Note: the table only captures sources of funds from the country's STAR allocation**

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

10/9/2025

NA.

Agency Responses/a

9.3 Confirmed co-financing for the project, by name and type:

Noting GBFF does not require but encourages co-financing, are the amounts, sources, and types of co-financing adequately documented and consistent with the requirements of the Co-Financing Policy and Guidelines?

e.g. Have letters of co-finance been submitted, correctly classified as investment mobilized or in-kind/recurring expenditures? If investment mobilized: is there an explanation below the table to describe the nature of co-finance? If letters are not in English, is a translation provided?

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

10/9/2025

Please provide an English translation for this cofinancing letter: Fishermen's Associations of the Southern Caribbean (ASOPACS). Please also categorize their cofinancing.

Please complete the cofinancing with missing information under type of co-financing and investment mobilized for Talamanca Municipality and ASOPACS.

10/30/2025

Please include ?in-kind? under type of cofinancing for Talamanca Municipality.

11/18/2025

Cleared.

Agency Response

Agency response 28/10/25

English translation. Included as part of the submission the translated letters of cofinancing

Agency response 17/11/25

Comment addressed. Adjusted the type of cofinancing.

Annex C: Project Results Framework

9.4 a) Have the GBFF indicators and relevant GEF core indicators been included?

b) Have SMART indicators been used; are means of verification well thought out; are the targets appropriate for the total project financing (too high? Too low?)

c) Are all relevant indicators sex disaggregated?

d) Is the Project Results Framework included in the Project Document pasted in the Template?

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

10/9/2025

a) yes, but please add the targeted increase in METT scores at mid-term and closure for each MPA in the project results framework. Also, double check your hectare figures as they do not add up.

b) Yes, cleared.

c) Yes, cleared.

d) Yes, cleared.

10/30/2025

Cleared.

Agency Response

Agency response 28/10/25

a1) Please find the scores for MTR and FE. It is included it into the Core indicator part in the CEON endorsement as mentioned below. Nevertheless, please note that the GBFF portal does not allow to include information for MTR or FE targets. it only allows to show the target at CEOO endorsement stage.

METT scores. METT score have been included as part of Core Indicator 2.2, following the GEF-8 Results Measurement Framework Worksheet.

a2) **Area (hectares).** We have checked the areas, and they are as follows:

- CI 2.2: 28,650

- CI 4.1: 300

- CI 5: 26,000

These areas are not supposed to add up, as they cover mutually exclusive areas.

Annex D: Status of utilization of PPG

9.5 Is the use of PPG attached in Annex: Status of Utilization of Project Preparation Grant (PPG) properly itemized according to the guidelines?

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

10/9/2025

Please list the activities implemented during the PPG phase rather than listing broad categories so that we can better assess the validity of each.

10/30/2025

Please provide additional details on the type of consultants covered by the PPG. Please provide information on the type of workshops and trips funded with the PPG Funds.

11/18/2025

Cleared.

Agency Response

Agency response 28/10/25:

Please find here activities developed during PPG. Please note that the current template of the GBFF portal, does not allow to include specific information about PPG expenses. It is identified according to the Action areas. The list of activities has been included as requested into the CEO Endorsement and here. Agency response 17/11/25: Comment addressed. Please find the adjustments

here.

Agency response 17/11/25:

Comment addressed. Please find the adjustments in the chart below:

GBFF Costa Rica- PPG Use of funds			
<i>Project Preparation Activities Implemented</i>	<i>Budgeted Amount</i>	<i>Amount Spent To date</i>	<i>Amount Committed</i>
Consultant (CEO Endorsement, safeguards development tools, local consultations)	\$118,000.00	\$115,751.20	\$2,248.80
?Travel (participant transfers to workshops)	\$7,000.00	\$524.45	\$6,475.55
Workshops (inception workshop, final workshop, fishermen and municipal council presential meetings)	\$25,000.00	\$9,611.81	\$15,388.19
Total	\$150,000.00	\$125,887.46	\$24,112.54
GBFF Costa Rica- PPG Use of funds			
<i>Project Preparation Activities Implemented</i>	<i>Budgeted Amount</i>	<i>Amount Spent To date</i>	<i>Amount Committed</i>
Consultant (AAE company to develop the CEO Endorsement, technical consultants, safeguards consultants, pen holder, safeguards development tools, local consultations)	\$118,000.00	\$115,751.20	\$2,248.80
?Travel (participant transfers to workshops. National authorities to Cahuita, both workshops were in the project landscape)	\$3,000.00	\$524.45	\$2,475.55
Workshops (inception workshop, final workshop, fishermen and municipal council presential meetings)			
Committed funds: Follow up stakeholder consultation workshop to explain final version of the project to the local communities and national and local (2)			
Committed funds: Field visit with project executing partners to key stakeholders in the field to advance in project inception (1)	\$29,000.00	\$9,611.81	\$19,388.19
Total	\$150,000.00	\$125,887.46	\$24,112.54

Annex E: Project map and coordinates

9.6 Have geographic coordinates of project locations been entered in the dedicated table? Are relevant illustrative maps included?

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

10/9/2025

Yes, cleared.

Agency Response/a

Annex F: Environmental and Social Safeguards Documentation and Rating

9.7 Have the relevant safeguard documents been uploaded to the GEF Portal? Has the safeguards rating been provided and filled out in the ER field below the risk table?

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

10/9/2025

We note that IUCN attached ESMF, Indigenous and Afro-descendant Peoples Framework and stakeholder engagement plan, and an overall ESS risk is classified as Moderate. It is critical to ensure active engagement of Indigenous and Afro-descendant Peoples in this project implementation. Thus, at the CEO Endorsement stage, FPIC with Indigenous and Afro-descendant Peoples about the project proposal need to be ensured.

a. Please provide more elaborated information of how the project identified Indigenous and Afro-descendant Peoples in the project areas, and how the project ensures FPIC with Indigenous and Afro-descendant Peoples of the project proposal including collection, documentation, and dissemination of traditional knowledge and local practices.

b. Please ensure Indigenous and Afro-descendant Peoples' engagement of the project in project implementation partners not only as beneficiary.

10/30/2025

Cleared.

Agency Response

Agency response 28/10/25:

a) Active engagement of Indigenous and Afro-descendant Peoples in the project design and implementation and how to ensure FPIC

To provide greater clarity on how Indigenous and Afro-descendant Peoples are engaged in the project, the following explanation is included. This information has also been incorporated in Paragraph 51 of the CEO Endorsement document and in the SEF:

The Indigenous People directly reached by the project are the Bribri, Kekoldi Clan. The Afro-descendant groups reached by the project include the Afro-descendant Tribal Association and the South Caribbean Artisanal Fishers Association (ASOPAC).

Indigenous Peoples must be engaged under the principle of [Free, Prior and Informed Consent \(FPIC\)](#). A segment of the Afro-descendant community has expressed the desire to be granted equivalent treatment, although such a requirement is not currently established under national legislation. Executive [Decree No. 43532-MP-MINAE-MCJ-MEP](#), published in 2022, formally recognizes Afro-descendant Peoples in Costa Rica. The decree affirms the self-recognition of the Afro-Costa Rican population as an Afro-Costa Rican Tribal People. Grounded in ILO Convention 169, it acknowledges that they share key characteristics with Indigenous Peoples, including distinct social, cultural, and economic traditions; a strong identification with ancestral territories; and governance partially guided by their own norms and customs. The decree also establishes the Afro-Costa Rican Tribal People's Forum as a platform for consultation and dialogue with the government.

The Project Executing Entity will be the Organization for Tropical Studies (OET), which has previous experience implementing projects in the same area. IUCN, SINAC, and the consultancy responsible for the project design have held exchanges with OET regarding its experience in implementing FPIC processes, which require adequate budgetary [and time](#) allocation to ensure proper and effective execution. Based on these discussions, the FPIC process has been incorporated into the project design, with the aim of securing the necessary resources for its implementation.

Accordingly, the project design includes a budget allocation that will allow for an equivalent consultation process with both Indigenous Peoples and Afro-descendant communities.

Notwithstanding the above, these key stakeholders have been consulted from the early stages of project development. The Kekoldi were initially consulted during the field visit and have participated in both the inception and validation workshops. The Afro-descendant communities became more actively involved toward the end of the design phase, and all of their inputs have been duly considered. The project aims to build on this initial consultation phase (where the communities have expressed their desire/informal consent to participate) and seek consent through an FPIC process at the beginning of the implementation phase, using the budget allocated for this purpose.

In addition, Outcomes 2.1 and 2.2 of the Results Framework will include specific grants targeted at both groups. The distinction between them lies in the fact that the Bribri (Kekoldi) Indigenous People have legally recognized territories, which facilitates the expansion of project activities benefiting them under these outcomes.

In summary, these stakeholders have been engaged from the outset, throughout the project design process, and will continue to participate during implementation of the Kekoldi under the FPIC framework, and the Afro-descendant communities through a similar approach (and based on the requirements outlined by IUCN ESMS), even though such treatment is not yet formally recognized in national legislation.

b) IPs and afro-descendant as implementation partners. The text under Components 1 and 2 has been modified to include a description of how each group will be involved in the design and co-management of the Blue Corridor (Component 1), and on how each group will be involved in the selection criteria of the grant (Component 2).

Annex G: GEF Budget template

9.8 a) Is the GEF budget template attached and appropriately filled out incl. items such as the executing partner for each budget line?

b) Are the activities / expenditures reasonably and accurately charged to the three identified sources (Components, M&E and PMC)?

c) Are TORs for key project staff funded by GEF grant and/or co-finance attached?

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

10/9/2025

Please paste the budget table directly in the portal submission.

Consultants? and staff costs account for 42% of the project budget, which is costly compared with similar GBFF projects. Please revise.

A ?Project Manager? is being charged 100% to project components. The TORs provided reflect a list of managerial tasks, with no technical outputs. Please charge this position 100% to the PMC.

The use of GEF funds to purchase vehicles is discouraged. Any request to use GEF funding to purchase project vehicles must be justified by the exceptional specific circumstances of the project/program. Please justify the need for the two jet-skis, the boat and the truck for a total of \$204,000 to deliver on project objectives (e.g., what is the available baseline equipment and the consequence of not having the additional vehicles), why any of these can?t be covered by co-financing, and clarify what institutions are to benefit from these purchases.

Please present the workshops itemized instead of in one single budget line.

ASOPACS is being listed as a responsible entity in the budget table. However, only OTS have been identified as the project executing entity for this project. Please revise.

We will review the budget table again upon resubmission and provide comments as appropriate.

10/30/2025

The current format in the CEO Endorsement request portal view (PDF- which is the document to circulate for Council review) is off margins and we can only see half of the budget table. Please upload a table where the detailed description and expenditure category columns are narrower, so it allows the entire budget to be accessible and readable in the PDF.

We noted that the total cost for staff and consultants was reduced from 42% to 38% (Staff \$1,027,342 + Consultants \$343,625). However, we noticed that an M&E specialist is charged for 4 years (\$208,800) in addition to a national consultant for monitoring (\$41,125), 4 consultancies are to work on gender related issues (totaling \$22,500) while there is a full staff position for Project Safeguards and Gender (\$208,800), and there are multiple consultancies working on Marine management effectiveness, Payment for Ecosystem Services and others while there is also a Technical Marine Coastal specialist charged to the budget. Please reduce further the use of consultants by assigning some of these consultant tasks to the staff or justify the need for these consultancies.

11/18/2025

Justifications provided by agency are satisfactory. Cleared.

Agency Response

Agency response 28/10/25:

1. Consultants and staff cost. The staff costs (\$1,027,342) reflect the cost of living and salary and wage levels in Costa Rica, which also include 45% of social benefits mandated by local laws. For example, a project manager salary for these types of projects is around \$5,100/month, which when added 45% of social benefits, it equals to \$7,395/month, equivalent to an annual cost of \$88,740, \$354,960 for 4-years. The total staff cost for the 4 years was \$1,383,996. We reduced that cost to about 70% (\$1,027,342) which is a minimum threshold for getting qualified people to manage the project. Otherwise, the risk of potential delays and project mismanagement would increase, as lower salaries would not attract enough qualified people for the project.

On consultants, there are three international consultants (\$64,000), two of them hired for the MTR and TE (\$40,000) which are at par with other GEF project costs. For local consultants, we have reduced the amount allocated by \$64,875, and reallocated it for grants for IPLCs. The total amount of local consultants (\$343,625), is now less than 10% of total project costs.

2. Project manager. The TORs has been adjusted to reflect the dual technical and managerial role of the Project Technical Specialist (prior Project Manager). In this case, the PTS will support the implementation of Components 1 and 2. The TORs have been modified to reflect those tasks.

3. Vehicles justification. The justification of the purchase of the vehicles is as follows:

- Jetskis and boat. The vehicles will be provided to the management of the Cahuita NP and Gandoca-Manzanillo National WR for the achievement of Outcome 3.1 (Coordinated and regulated participatory monitoring, control and surveillance system). Without the purchase of the equipment, the monitoring, control and surveillance, the expected target of indicator 17 (Number of joint patrols conducted) will not be achieved. At the moment, there are no jet skis and two boats, one of them an inflatable boat with a 10 HP motor, unsuitable for marine areas and patrols. The other boat, which is not operational at the moment, is shared between the two protected areas to cover an area of more than 500 square kilometers between the two protected areas and the Blue Corridor, which is not enough.

In addition, SINAC has prioritized terrestrial vehicles over marine vehicles, which makes it difficult for these types of vehicles to be acquired. Budgetary constraints of the two protected areas, prevents that these vehicles can be covered by cofinancing.

- Closed box truck. The vehicle will be used by the Municipality of Talamanca for the achievement of Outcome 2.2 (Strengthened local economy through sustainable productive alternatives in land ecosystems). Without the provision of the boxed truck, indicator 17 (beach cleaning and recycling events for improved waste management in prioritized sites) will not be achieved. The truck is also tied to the partnership (and cofinancing) with the Municipality of Talamanca recycling program. As described in the letter of cofinancing from the Municipality, the \$220,000 in-kind cofinancing is related to the "beach cleaning and recyclable material disposal program". Currently, the Municipality of Talamanca has one recyclable waste collection truck. This single truck must collect solid recyclable waste using established routes in the canton's four districts. It is the only truck for the entire canton, traveling distances of more than 200 kilometers per day. It is a 2015 truck, already more than 10 years old. The district that produces the most recyclable waste is the Cahuita district, which is the main focus Project area, where, in addition to its weekly routes, the truck must collect the proceeds of beach cleanup campaigns and collection campaigns for recyclable products, such as tires, unused electronic equipment, plastic, paper, and cardboard, among others.

Given the increase in tourist visits to the coastal area, weekly routes are not enough to cover the coastal district demand, as it covers only one day a week for the entire coastline. Another truck is needed to cover the routes only in the coastal districts and to assist with recycling campaigns in the Cahuita district.

With the additional truck, the recycling collection schedule on the coast would increase to four days per week, thus providing better service. Currently, the service is only available once a week, so residents choose to throw recyclable materials on the shoreline. This creates pollution in marine waters, as some of this material, whether due to human activity or rain, ends up on the beaches.

The collection of recoverable waste is part of the local government's responsibility and commitment to the environment. The sale of the recycled product, once it has been selected, packaged, and delivered to companies certified by the Ministry of Health for final disposal, does not represent sufficient income to purchase a truck. It is only enough to cover operating costs, but not enough to purchase a second truck, which is necessary to increase the collection of this waste and the increase in the tonnage to be sold. This would be used to cover the operating costs of the new equipment and thus achieve a positive balance that would allow an increase in the number of travel days. Local governments set their rates based on operating costs, and only when there is a surplus can new equipment be purchased for the different programs, which must generate their own resources. In the case of recycling, due to low sales prices, this is not enough to purchase new equipment, which is solely for the operation of the environmental program.

With the additional truck, the Municipality will be able to implement the beach cleaning and recycling program, which due to the limited income stream, cannot be covered by cofinancing.

4. Itemized Workshops. The workshops related to the implementation of the Gender Action Plan and ESMF have been itemized.

5. ASOPACS as responsible entity. ASOPACS has been changed with OTS.

Agency Response 17/11/25

The budget has been revised to reduce staffing and consultancy costs. We have clarified the field person for monitoring of fisherfolks activities, who is assigned directly to support M&E of fisherfolk activities in coordination with ASOPACS. We have removed the development of a participatory monitoring system, which will be done by the M&E Officer along with the field person for fisherfolk activities. Upon consultations with ASOPACS, we have also removed the support person for fisherfolk and tour operators to facilitate license processing. We have also reviewed other expenses to reflect more accurately the needs of the local fisherfolks, including an increase in the number of fishing traps and slight revisions in other expenses..

With respect to the 4 consultancies on gender-related issues (totaling USD 22,500): the full-time Project Safeguards and Gender Officer will have a broad and continuous set of responsibilities: implementation of the Stakeholder Engagement Framework (SEF), the Environmental and Social Management Framework (ESMF) ? including the Grievance Redress Mechanism, the Indigenous People Framework and conducting the FPIC process - and the GAP. Given this extensive workload, the short-term consultancies budgeted as part of the GAP will provide targeted technical support for specific outputs such as identifying and assessing gender-responsive and inclusive finance mechanisms or conducting a gender assessment on land tenure in project areas. These consultancies are therefore complementary rather than duplicative, and are designed to strengthen the quality and effectiveness of gender integration across components, while maintaining efficiency in the use of project resources.

Annex H: Blended Finance Relevant Annexes

9.9 a) Does the project provide sufficient detail (indicative term sheet) to assess the following criteria: co-financing ratios, financial terms and conditions, and financial additionality? If not, please provide comments.

b) Is the Agency eligible to administer concessional finance? If not, please provide comments.

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

10/9/2025

NA

Agency Response

Additional Annexes

10. GEFSEC DECISION

10.1 GEFSEC Recommendation

Is the project recommended for approval?

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

10/9/2025

No. Please make all the requested revisions listed above and resubmit.

10/30/2025

No. Please make revisions per comments above and resubmit. Also, please remove the yellow shadow from the CEO Endorsement Request Portal view and this document has to be clean.

11/18/2025

Project is recommended for CEO endorsement.

1/9/2026

Please address STAP and council comments and resubmit. Please include a response matrix in the portal entry.

2/2/2026

The response to the STAP question on IPLCs is not adequate. Please include the cost estimates for support to IPLC actions per the descriptive text provided in response to the STAP comment. In addition, please include as STAP requested: "describe the IPLCs who will benefit from the project and details their role in the project". Please revise the STAP response Annex accordingly and upload into the portal again.

2/12/2026

Project is recommended for CEO endorsement.

10.2 Additional Comments to be considered by the Agency during the inception and implementation phase

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

10.3 Review Dates

First Review

CEO Approval	Response to Secretariat comments
10/9/2025	10/28/2025

	CEO Approval	Response to Secretariat comments
Additional Review (as necessary)	10/16/2025	11/17/2025
Additional Review (as necessary)	10/30/2025	1/22/2026
Additional Review (as necessary)	11/18/2025	2/4/2026
Additional Review (as necessary)	2/12/2026	