

**GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT FACILITY
PROPOSAL FOR PROJECT DEVELOPMENT FUNDS (PDF)
BLOCK B GRANT**

Country: Romania
Project Name: Integrated Protected Areas and Conservation Management
Requesting Agency: World Bank
Executing Agencies: Local forestry management authorities, and NGOs through ROMSILVA, the national forest management authority of the Ministry of Waters, Forests and Environment
Estimated Cost: US\$6.6 million
Financing Plan (tentative):
 GOR - US\$600,000
 GEF - US\$5 million
 Cofinancing - US\$1 million
Project Duration: Four years
PDF Block B Funds Requested: US\$300,000
PDF Co-Financing: US 50,000 Austrian Global Environmental Trust Fund
 US100,000 Canadian GEF Trust Fund
 US 50,000 UK Know-how Fund

Background

1. **Special features of Romanian Biodiversity:** Natural or semi-natural temperate ecosystems, notably forests, alpine meadows and grasslands, cover 43% of Romania's land area. Almost half of all forests (13% of the country) have been managed for watershed conservation rather than production. Consequently, Romania has the largest areas of undisturbed forest ecosystem in Europe. The natural integrity of Romanian forest ecosystems is indicated by the continued presence of the full range of European forest fauna, including 60% and 40% of all European brown bears and wolves respectively. The largest wetland in Europe, the Danube Delta, is also predominantly Romanian. Implementation of the Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve management plan is the focus of Romania's pilot phase GEF biodiversity project, which is being implemented under Bank supervision.

2. **Threats to Romanian Biodiversity:** Following land nationalization after World War II, production farmland in non hilly areas was developed for large scale intensive agriculture. Hedgerows and other ecological islands were destroyed. State owned forests and pasture land were, however, relatively well managed. Since transition and the breakdown of former regulatory systems, Romanian ecosystems have been exposed to new threats, including introduction of some unsustainable land use practices, such as overgrazing of alpine and hill forest meadows, ploughing under of contour bunds, and clear cutting of private forest land. In addition, there is pressure to exploit more forests in accessible areas on state land. Highly sensitive mountain ecosystems are also particularly threatened by uncontrolled and inappropriate forms of tourism and associated infrastructural developments. This trend is likely to greatly increase as economic conditions improve. In the absence of an established protected area network, priority biodiversity sites (which include some of Europe's largest remaining areas of pristine forest ecosystem), are also at risk from these threats.

3. These concerns, together with positive experience of the GEF pilot phase project (the Danube Delta Biodiversity Project), prompted the Government of Romania to request World Bank assistance in preparing and implementing the proposed second GEF biodiversity project, with the objective of strengthening the capacity for preparation and implementation of protected area and conservation

(1) broad forest (related to Transcarpathian Mts.)
 (2) small area but critical biodiversity (very few sites in Europe where there are large biodiv. remaining)

→ temperate ecosystem
 UNESCO money in Transcarpathian Mts.

management plans at both the field and central levels. This would be achieved within the context of preparing and implementing management plans for three priority conservation sites, all occurring in forested areas of the Carpathian mountain chain. The project would be primarily focused on field activities, including support for development initiatives that establish links between biodiversity conservation and economic benefits for local communities, applied research, capacity building and awareness raising.

4. Links with national biodiversity conservation priorities: With the support of GEF resources (two \$25,000 PDF Block A grants) and World Bank assistance, the Government of Romania in a highly participatory and consultative manner has prepared a National Biodiversity Conservation Strategy and Action Plan. The three top priorities of the National Biodiversity Strategy are: (i) development of the legal framework and strengthening the institutional capacity for conservation of biological diversity; (ii) organization of the national system of protected areas, and (iii) in-situ and ex-situ conservation of threatened, endemic and/or rare species, and those with a high economic value. PDF resources are requested to support preparation of a project that would address all three strategic national priorities, with particular emphasis on decentralized preparation and implementation of plans for protected area management and sustainable natural resource use at three high priority biodiversity sites.

5. During the Pilot Phase, GEF and the World Bank have been active in supporting biodiversity conservation in other areas of the Carpathian mountains and the forests of adjacent Eastern European countries (Belarus, Czech Republic, Poland, Slovak Republic, Ukraine, and the Transcarpathian Biodiversity Protection Project). More than half of the Carpathian Mountains occur in Romania, however, GEF has not yet supported conservation of forest biodiversity in the Romanian Carpathians. The proposed project would consolidate GEF support for biodiversity conservation throughout the Carpathian chain, and would develop supporting mechanisms for regional collaboration. Furthermore the project would build on the experience of the Danube Delta pilot phase GEF Project, through exchange of work programs and technology sharing.

Project Objectives

6. The primary objective of the project is the sustainable conservation of the biological diversity and ecological integrity of Romanian mountain, forest and meadow ecosystems that are of international importance. These include some of Europe's largest remaining stands of pristine and natural forest, Europe's greatest concentrations of large carnivores (brown bear, wolf and lynx), and locally endemic species. This would be achieved through: (a) site specific interventions - participatory preparation and implementation of integrated protected area management plans at several priority biodiversity conservation sites, each including representative examples of different and unique Romanian ecosystems, and different kinds of management strategy. Local communities would participate in planning and implementation of conservation plans, which will incorporate sustainable natural resource use (agriculture forestry, tourism, etc.) where appropriate, and (b) national level activities - review and rationalization of protected area coverage, and improvement of the biodiversity information base and monitoring systems needed for protected area and conservation management. Investments, training and institutional arrangements funded under the project would address priority conservation planning and management problems that are common to many important and threatened biodiversity sites throughout Romania and would, therefore, allow for replication of conservation management planning and implementation throughout the country.

Project Description

7. The main components of the project would be:

(A) Development and implementation of conservation and sustainable natural resource management plans - for three priority biodiversity conservation management demonstration sites. Sites selected are: (a) rich in locally endemic species, (b) include representative samples of pristine and/or natural forest ecosystems, and (c) provide for demonstration of several different options available for conservation management of the biological diversity of Eastern Europe. Development and implementation of plans would be undertaken with the participation of local communities and other key stakeholders, including authorities responsible for local and regional development. In addition, the project would identify and develop mechanisms to ensure financial sustainability. The three demonstration sites include:

(i) **Pristine mountain forest and alpine ecosystems** - Retezat National Park (54,400 ha), which includes a core area of approximately 13,000 ha of pristine mixed and coniferous forest and alpine meadows that are under increasing threat from the impacts of tourism and unsustainable use of natural resources in adjacent buffer zone areas.

(ii) **Natural/pristine mountain forest and alpine ecosystems and large carnivores** - The proposed Bucegi-Piatra Craiului Biosphere Reserve (150,000 ha), which includes approximately 3,391 ha of pristine mixed and coniferous forest. Application of the biosphere reserve and econet concepts would provide guidance for the sustainable development of ecotourism and agriculture, while controlling further fragmentation of natural forests that currently support Europe's greatest concentrations of brown bear, wolf and lynx.

(iii) **Mixed hill forest and meadows** - e.g., forest management for indigenous biodiversity in Vanatori-Neamt through ecological rehabilitation. The reintroduction of European bison in production/conservation mixed forest would provide an ecological mechanism and focus for popular support, for maintenance of the natural ecological diversity of 300,000 hectares of hill forest and meadows, which includes a 500 ha mixed natural forest that has been conserved as a hunting reserve since 1475.

(B) Establishment of management and monitoring arrangements for biodiversity conservation at the national level. This will entail:

(a) review and revision of: (i) the broader institutional and financing arrangements for protected area management, including rationalization of mission statements, and institutional needs assessment of key implementing agencies (Government and NGO), and the subsequent participatory development of prioritized work planning, management and monitoring mechanisms; (ii) protected areas and associated environmental legislation - legal framework and regulations; (iii) protected area coverage and classification, and

(b) development of a data base and information technology systems to support implementation of the national biodiversity conservation strategy and action plan, specifically including completion of the national protected areas and in-situ conservation networks, and field implementation of protected area management plans.

8. The scope and likely elements of the proposed project (which would be developed during preparation to build on experience in related existing and planned Government, NGO and international initiatives) could include training, investments and technical assistance to support component activities, such as:

- a. Site specific, baseline surveys (i.e., specifically focused on the three protected areas and buffer zones that are to be included within the project) to support conservation management and monitoring. Since detailed research data on the strictly protected areas is already available for some of the proposed sites, the surveys would follow review of all existing information, ongoing and pipeline Government and NGO studies. Baseline studies could possibly include:
 - i. **ecological assessments** (e.g., the status of flora and fauna of forest and grassland ecosystems; their ecological linkages, and any vulnerability to threat, etc.), and
 - ii. **socioeconomic review**, specifically including socioeconomic aspects of the threats to biodiversity (e.g., the impacts of tourism, local industry, the consumptive utilization of natural resources, such as forestry, grazing, wildlife and fisheries exploitation, mineral extraction and hydro-technical works, etc.).
- b. Protected area management - including provision of field equipment and facilities, and information technology that is specifically needed for implementation of the proposed project. Implementation of management plans, will include the further development and application of wildlife monitoring and management techniques, implementation of land use planning in buffer zones, and the establishment of sustainable use of demonstration site natural resources (grazing, forest products and tourism, etc.) involving the participation of local communities and NGOs;
- c. Appropriate economic initiatives - If necessary, these would be supported following review of all ongoing and pipeline Government and NGO initiatives. This could entail **demonstration site specific socioeconomic development initiatives** that provide a link between biodiversity conservation and economic benefits for local communities. Such activities could possibly include:
 - i. **rural tourism and related developments** (e.g., provision of accommodation, guiding/interpretation; establishment of associated cottage industries, such as handicrafts and the marketing of local produce, etc.), and
 - ii. **sustainable natural resources management** (e.g., grazing, non-timber forest products, apiculture, wildlife and fisheries, etc.). Mechanisms for provision of this assistance would be developed during project preparation.
- d. Capacity building - within key Government and Non Governmental agencies involved in project implementation. This could entail a preliminary institutional needs assessment followed, if appropriate, by reorganization, participatory planning by objective and implementation of long term staff development and training programs (mostly in-country, but with some short term overseas study tours). Capacity building

is likely to involve training of local staff at the selected sites. Training in ecological monitoring, land use planning, working with local communities, interpretive guiding, wardening, will probably be included in the project.

- e. **Public awareness and education** - including the establishment of mechanisms for the involvement of local community based organizations; links with local, national and international media, and provision of facilities for site interpretation for visitors.

Description of PDF Activities:

9. PDF grant funds are requested for **Protected Area Planning and Overall Coordination of Project Preparation**, which will entail development of costed operational conservation management plans for the three proposed demonstration sites. Plans will establish management objectives and priorities, and will identify and address threats to the ecological integrity of each the three demonstration sites. Preparation of protected area plans will involve the participation of key stakeholders, including local communities and authorities responsible for local and regional development, and will draw on the findings and recommendations of preparation activities undertaken under the GEF Block B Grant Agreement and cofinanced elements of project preparation. Where possible, protected area management plans will take advantage of opportunities to foster micro enterprise and rural development activities that would establish a link between local community benefits and sustainable conservation of demonstration site natural resources. Project preparation activities will include:

- a. **Legal and regulatory aspects:** Review of the institutional, legal and regulatory framework for conservation management of the three proposed protected area demonstration sites and, where appropriate, provision of guidance and assistance with elaboration of regulations as they relate to project implementation.
- b. **Protected area administrative and management structures:** For each of the three protected area sites, participatory development and consolidation of administrative and management structures, which will include the involvement of key stakeholders, and delegate cost center responsibility for key activities.
- c. **Social Assessment and Rural Development:** This would include identification of: (i) key stakeholders at all three proposed Carpathian Mountain protected area demonstration sites, (ii) their needs vis-a-vis likely impact on protected area ecosystems, (iii) mechanisms and rural development options to address these needs in a manner that would also support project objectives, and (iv) mechanisms for the involvement of key stakeholders in overall project preparation/implementation and management of the protected area. This will entail socioeconomic assessment of key stakeholder communities living in the vicinity of the three demonstration sites, and the participatory preparation of a rural development plan that would link local community benefits with sustainable conservation of demonstration site natural resources. The team undertaking this activity should include expertise in participatory social assessment, stakeholder analysis, micro-enterprise and rural development in Eastern Europe.

- d. **Training Needs Assessment and Capacity Building:** Assessment of the structure, staffing and training needs of Government and non Government institutions directly involved in project implementation, and preparation of a phased strategic plan and training program to address the needs of project implementation, and provide the skills that would allow for replication of project activities at other priority conservation sites. This could include exchange workplans and shared training programs with organizations involved with conservation of Carpathian ecosystems in adjacent countries, and elsewhere in Europe as appropriate.
- e. **Public Awareness and Education:** Identification of the conservation awareness and education needs and opportunities afforded by the projects three demonstration sites, and preparation of a plan for public awareness and educational activities that will support project implementation, and project objectives.
- f. **Information Technology and Biodiversity Database:** Building on the experience, facilities and expertise developed under the Danube Delta Project, (i) preparation of baseline GIS maps for each of the three sites; and (ii) development of a costed action plan for establishment and development of an information technology system that will entail training additional local staff to: (a) further develop maps and associated protected area management plan software to support management of the projects three protected area demonstration sites, and (b) in the longer term, undertake "gap analysis" to identify biodiversity conservation management priorities on a national scale.
- g. **Ecological Assessment and Monitoring:** Following field assessment, and drawing on all available information, preparation of a plan for ecological assessment and periodic monitoring, and priority research activities to support conservation of the three demonstration sites. This will: (a) include review and analysis of current forest and wildlife management practices in use at all demonstration sites and provision of detailed recommendations, as appropriate, to support project objectives, and (b) build upon the GIS databases and maps developed under the information technology consultancy.
- h. **Bison Reintroduction proposal:** (N.B. this element to be funded by the UK Know-how Fund). Development of a costed plan for captive breeding and reintroduction of European bison at the Vanatori-Neamt demonstration site with the objective of reestablishing wild breeding populations of this species in their natural habitat. The plan will detail the infrastructure, monitoring and management needs, sources of bloodstock, and will incorporate measures to address the animal health, genetic and ecological hazards associated with captive breeding and reintroduction of this species.
- i. **Investment Program and Economic Analysis:** Preparation of detailed cost estimates and procurement specifications for all project activities, together with a financing and investment plan needed to implement the project. The work will include a project economic analysis to identify eligible incremental costs that would be financed by GEF, and will identify alternative sources of cofinancing to support other portions and "non incremental" aspects of the project. Critical to the long-term sustainability of project investment, the economic assessment will review and analyze opportunities for financial sustainability of activities.

- j. **Regional Collaboration:** In addition, PDF resources will be used to explore opportunities to establish mechanisms for collaboration and information exchange among organizations involved with conservation of Carpathian ecosystems in adjacent countries, and with partner institutions in other European countries.

Eligibility:

10. Romania ratified the Biodiversity Convention in August 1994. In line with the strategic considerations for biodiversity conservation of the GEF Operational Strategy, the proposed project would specifically focus on implementation of article 8 of the Convention, and GEF biodiversity operational programs for forest ecosystems, and for "short term response measures", in that the project would take advantage of a window of opportunity to address urgent needs associated with transition, which, since 1989, has resulted in increasing threats to biodiversity (see paragraph 2) but has not yet allowed for the generation of sufficient capital to enable the Government of Romania to address them.

11. The project would support implementation of the three top priorities of the National Biodiversity Conservation Strategy and Action Plan (see paragraph 4), and by focusing on the south and eastern Carpathian mountains, the proposed project would support conservation of some of the last and largest pristine and natural mixed forest ecosystems in Europe, and the greatest concentrations of large carnivores (brown bear, wolf and lynx) in Europe.

National Level Support:

12. Commitment to the project among national and district level stakeholders is high. Major elements of the project were identified as top priorities in the National Biodiversity Conservation Strategy and Action Plan, which has been prepared, over the course of a ten month period (1995-1996), with GEF support and World Bank assistance and the involvement of all key institutions, including DEP and DoF of MWFEF; ROMSILVA; MoA; ICAS; the Commission for the Protection of National Monuments; the Institute of Biology; the Danube Delta Institute; the NGO Community, and the local representative of IUCN. The Project Concept document was finalized in collaboration with Government counterparts and NGOs in March 1996, who are continuing to actively pursue options for cofinancing and the establishment of links between the proposed project and national and international initiatives.

13. **Local support:** In two of the proposed demonstration sites (Retezat and Bucegi-Piatra Craiului), the local ROMSILVA forest service have recently (April 1996) collaborated with local authorities, communities, NGOs and relevant national institutions to prepare the way for establishment of local collaborative administrative structures for protected area management. A local NGO at Retezat is the recipient of a \$12,000 grant for a five year public awareness program in support of conservation of the site. At the third proposed demonstration site local community and land owner enthusiasm for the proposed bison reintroduction and management program is reported to be high.

Justification for PDF Support:

14. The proposed project is consistent with GEF Operational Strategy for Biodiversity, especially for support of in-situ conservation and protected areas under the Operational Program for Forest Ecosystems. The project would ensure the sustainable conservation of some of the last and largest

remaining stands of pristine and natural old growth temperate mixed forest ecosystems in Europe, which support a the full range of Central European forest fauna including Europe's greatest concentrations of large carnivores (wolf, bear and lynx).

15. The project is consistent with Article 8 (in-situ conservation) of the convention on biological diversity as it will support protection, management and extension of protected areas in a region of internationally important biodiversity; promote environmentally sound and sustainable development in areas adjacent to protected areas, with a view to assuring protection of these areas; promote recovery of threatened species through the development and implementation of plans and management strategies (notably European bison, brown bear, wolf, lynx, etc.); and will support maintenance of viable populations of indigenous and endangered species within and beyond protected area boundaries.

16 The project is consistent with Agenda 21 and guidance from the Conference of parties since it will promote conservation, management and sustainable use of forest and alpine ecosystems and endemic species; strengthen the involvement of local communities and build partnerships at the local, national and regional levels, and promote cost effective measures to conserve biodiversity, including economic incentives and alternative livelihood opportunities for local communities. In addition to it's eligibility under the Forests OP, the project will take advantage of a short term window of opportunity to address urgent and changing needs of biodiversity conservation that are associated with the process of transition.

Potential Sources of Cofinancing for Implementation

17. During project identification, a preliminary review of donor activities in related sectors and consultation with local representatives from potential cofinancing agencies was undertaken with the support of the Austrian Global Environmental Trust Fund. In general, donors have indicated interest in increasing the effectiveness of their relatively small grant funded activities through participation in the proposed larger GEF/World Bank project. Specifically Canada and Austria have indicated that grant funds would be available to support project preparation, and the UK Know-how Fund have expressed an interest in funding preparation and implementation of the bison reintroduction component and associated protected area management and public awareness programs at Vanatori-Neamt. The project would build on the experience and integrate with training in participatory development techniques that is being provided to a variety of sectors under the national EU PHARE programs. Arrangements for provision of cofinancing, the participation of other donors, and links with related Government, NGO and international initiatives will be further explored and detailed during project preparation.

Items to Be Financed and Preparation Costs:

18. The PDF grant would be used to finance the costs of national and international consultants, field surveys to allow for preparation of ecological assessment, research and monitoring plans, workshops, and consultations in the demonstration site areas, and reporting. Items to be financed are summarized below:

Activity	GEF Financing	Government	Co-Financing
Protected area planning and overall coordination	60,000	10,000	(tentative)
Legal and regulatory aspects	15,000	3,000	
Protected area management structures	20,000	3,000	
Training needs assessment and capacity building	50,000	5,000	
Public Awareness and Education	30,000		
Information technology mapping and bio-database		3,000	100,000 (Canada) ✓
Ecological assessment monitoring and research	35,000	3,000	50,000 (Austria) ✓
Bison Reintroduction proposal			50,000 (UK) ✓
Investment plan and economic analysis	30,000		
Social Assessment and rural development	60,000	3,000	
Total:	300,000	30,000	200,000

Expected date of Completion of Project Preparation - July 1997.

Outputs

19. The expected outputs of this PDF Block B Grant will be:

- a. Operational and investment plans for the three protected areas identified in paragraph 7, including establishment of administrative structures that include key stake holders;
- b. Specific studies and implementation plans in support of project objectives. These will include: bison reintroduction and large carnivore management undertaken within the context of the three demonstration sites, as well as studies with action plans for (i)

interagency collaboration and institutional strengthening, (ii) public awareness, and (iii) rural development.

- c. GIS biodiversity database hard and software, GIS baseline maps for the three demonstration sites, identification of management arrangements and a fully costed plan for development of GIS information technology systems to support protected area management at the three demonstration sites, and undertake biodiversity gap analysis at the national level.
- d. A full GEF Proposal for an investment package focusing on the three protected areas identified in paragraph 7, which details administrative arrangements for implementation at the central and field level, and includes economic analysis to identify baseline costs, and national and international incremental costs.
- e. Agreement with at least one other donor for cofinancing elements of the project.
- f. Mechanisms for regional coordination identified.

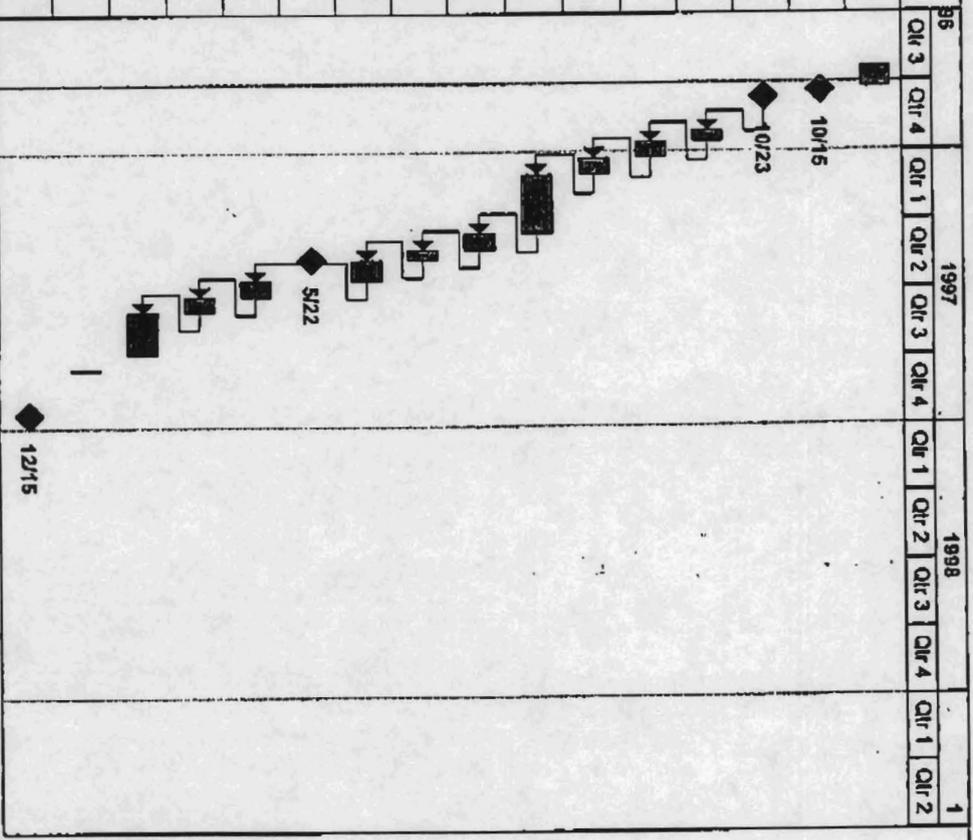
Preparation Implementation

20. Overall coordination for Project preparation and implementation, among Government and other stakeholders at the national level, will be assured by an interagency Biodiversity Steering Committee (BSC), which will provide guidance to the lead agency in preparing and executing the proposed project. Membership of the BSC includes representatives from: the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and the Department of Forestry (DoF) of the Ministry of Waters Forests and Environmental Protection (MWFEP); ROMSILVA; the Commission for the Protection of National Monuments; The Ministry of Agriculture (MoA); the Forest Research and Management Institute (ICAS); the NGO Community, and the Romanian Man and the Biosphere Program. Execution of Project preparation will be undertaken by ROMSILVA.

21. A schedule and timetable of preparation activities is attached.

Romania - Integrated Protected Areas and Conservation Management Project Preparation (Forced Schedule)

ID	Task Name	Duration	Start	Finish	1997				1998					
					Qtr 3	Qtr 4	Qtr 1	Qtr 2	Qtr 3	Qtr 4	Qtr 1	Qtr 2		
1	Prepare documents for tender invitation and agree on shortlist	20d	9/13/95	10/10/96										
2	PDF Block B Grant Approval	1d	10/15/96	10/15/96		10/15								
3	Invitation to tender sent to shortlisted companies/institutions	1d	10/23/96	10/23/96		10/23								
4	Evaluation of tenders and selection of consultant team	10d	12/5/96	12/18/96										
5	Award consulting contract for preparation	15d	12/19/96	1/8/97										
6	Planning period for selected consultant team	15d	1/9/97	1/29/97										
7	Field work of consultant team in Romania	55d	1/30/97	4/16/97										
8	Preparation of draft reports by the consultants	15d	4/17/97	5/7/97										
9	Comments provided by World Bank	10d	5/8/97	5/21/97										
10	Preparation of final reports by consultants	20d	5/22/97	6/18/97										
11	GEF Council meetings to decide on project financing	127d	5/22/97	11/14/97										
12	Review of FEPS	15d	6/19/97	7/9/97										
13	Appraisal	15d	7/10/97	7/30/97										
14	Yellow cover	40d	7/31/97	9/24/97										
15	Negotiations	2d	10/15/97	10/16/97										
16	Board Approval	1d	12/15/97	12/15/97										



Project:
Date: 10/2/96

Task Progress Milestone

Summary Rolled Up Task Rolled Up Milestone

Rollled Up Progress