

1. Country/Organization:

Dr. Gabor Guti, Danube Research Institute, Centre for Ecological Research, Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Hungary

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2. Title of the action committed to in 2011 (see the annex)

Management and utilization plan supporting ecological baseline studies along the River Danube in the Gemenc and Béda-Karapanca Region (2006-2011)

Exploratory researches in the Danubian floodplains (Gemenc and Béda-Karapanca) of the Danube-Drava National Park for management plan developments – German Federal Environmental Foundation, 2006-2011, (DBU 24050)

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3. Overview of progress made

(a) *Has the action been implemented?*

Yes / In progress / No

The Danube Research Institute of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences and the WWF Institute for Floodplain Ecology in Karlsruhe Institute of Technology (Germany) have explored aquatic and terrestrial environment of the Gemenc and Béda-Karapanca floodplains of the Danube in Hungary, which is one of the most important relatively undisturbed floodplain area (25,000 ha) in the European Union, with high nature conservation values. The study area belongs to the Danube-Drava National Park and it is a Ramsar and Natura 2000 site. More than 30 researchers, experts and technicians participated in the four years project (2006-2011) supported by the German Environmental Foundation. Outstanding natural value of the area has been clearly confirmed by results of scientific studies and current forms of land use and their impacts were evaluated. The final report of the project contains multilateral descriptions about the river-floodplain lateral connectivity, dynamics of floodplain ecosystem and its ecological importance, as well as a number of proposals for development of floodplain management plan with particular attention to landscape management, eco-tourism and development of environmental awareness.

(b) *What challenges were encountered during the implementation of the action?
What lessons were learned?*

Legal significance and importance of obligations of increasing number of international conservation qualifications (Natura 2000 site, Ramsar Convention site, UNESCO Biosphere Park) were evaluated. It has been shown, the study area in the Danube-Drava National Park does not correspond to legal rules of Hungary and the internationally required standards of areas classified as national park. Despite the recent conditions, natural values (flora, fauna, habitats, hydro-morphological variability, etc.) are still remarkable, but their status is considerably lower than the potentially possible ecological status, their survival is endangered and threatened by slow, less spectacular continuous degradation.

(c) *What future steps, if any, are planned in relation to the action implementation/follow up?*

Development of a new project proposal became necessary for utilization of findings of the completed project. This effort is supported by competent committee of the Hungarian Parliament and State Secretary for Environmental Affairs in Ministry of Rural Development. The main object of the new project is the development of the Gemenc and Béda-Karapanca

floodplain area to a special region with a focus on nature conservation and combining the nature reserve with relevant surrounding areas.
In order to achieve the objectives, a detailed development plan must be prepared for multipurpose utilization and maintenance of river-floodplain system with priority of nature conservation and involvement of forest management (eco-forestry), advanced eco-tourism, recreation, cultural and ethnic values, etc.

4. *Usefulness of the Astana Water Action*

Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements and provide an explanation, as appropriate.

(a) *The Astana Water Action was useful to strengthen political support related to sustainable water management issues:*

strongly agree / somewhat agree / somewhat disagree / strongly disagree

The Astana Water Action will hopefully strengthen further political support from competent committee of the Hungarian Parliament and Ministry of Rural Development and international organizations for successful realization of our efforts in developments of river and landscape management plans related to the Danube basin.

(b) *The Astana Water Action has helped my country to comply with its international obligations:*

strongly agree / somewhat agree / somewhat disagree / strongly disagree

Developments of the Danube basin management plans and determination of framework of the sustainable utilization of river systems need to comply to the EU directives and other international obligations. We hope, the AWA can help to realize these efforts.

(c) *Would your country be interested in continuing to submit and monitor new actions within the AWA framework in the future?*

Yes / No

We are absolutely interested in continuing to submit and monitor new actions within the AWA in the present and future stages of our work.