



**LIFE04NAT/LV/000198**

**TECHNICAL INTERIM REPORT**

*Covering the project activities from 01/10/2004 to 30/06/2006*

Report date: 21/08/2006

**Restoration of Latvian Floodplains for EU priority species  
and habitats**

Data Project

<b>Project location</b>	16 Natura 2000 sites in Latvia
<b>Project start date:</b>	01/10/2004
<b>Project end date:</b>	30/06/2008
<b>Total Project duration (in months)</b>	45 months
<b>Total budget</b>	€ 1 600 366
<b>EC contribution:</b>	€ 1 144 184
<b>(%) of total costs</b>	71.5
<b>(%) of eligible costs</b>	71.5

Data Beneficiary

<b>Name Beneficiary</b>	Latvian Fund for Nature
<b>Contact person</b>	Ms Inga Racinska
<b>Postal address</b>	Raina blvd. 31-6, Riga, LV-1050, LATVIA
<b>Visit address</b>	Raina blvd. 31-6, Riga, LV-1050, LATVIA
<b>Telephone</b>	+371 7 830998
<b>Fax:</b>	+371 7 830291
<b>E-mail</b>	inga@lanet.lv
<b>Project Website</b>	www.lnf.lv

## LIST OF CONTENTS AND ANNEXES

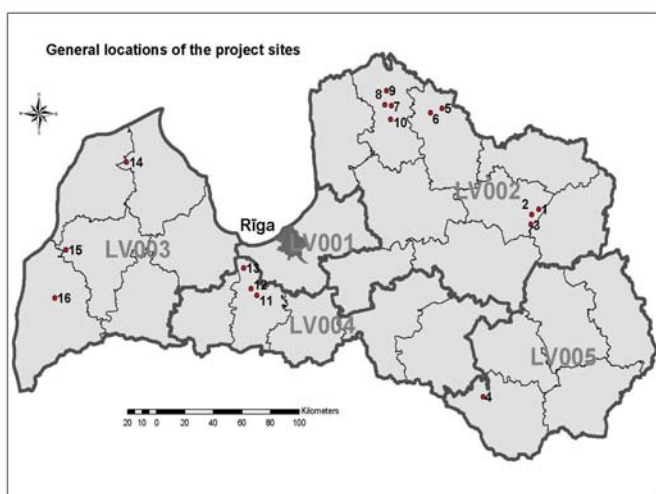
<i>List of Contents and Annexes</i>	2
<i>Executive summary</i>	5
<b>1. Introduction</b>	7
1.1. Rationale and project territories	7
1.2. Objectives of the project	7
1.3. The main conservation issues being addressed	7
1.4. Expected results	7
<b>2. LIFE-Project framework</b>	8
2.1. Steering Group	8
2.2. Roles of project partners	8
2.3. Project implementation	9
2.4. Modifications according to initial proposal	9
<b>3. Progress</b>	10
<b>3.1. Summary table of activities</b>	10
<b>3.2. Summary of project milestones</b>	12
<b>3.3. Summary of deliverable products</b>	13
<b>3.4. Detailed report on actions</b>	14
A. Preparatory actions, elaboration of management plans and/or of action plan	14
C. Non-recurring management	24
E. Public awareness and dissemination of results	30
F. Overall project operation	41
<b>4. Evaluation and Conclusions</b>	45
<b>4.1. Process</b>	45
<b>4.2. Project management</b>	45
<b>4.3. Success and failures</b>	46
<b>4.4. Comparison against the project-objectives</b>	46
<b>4.5. Environmental benefits, policy and legislation implications</b>	46
<b>4.6. Innovation, demonstration value</b>	47
<b>4.7. Socio-economic effects</b>	48
<b>4.8. Future: sustainability</b>	48
<b>5. Planned project progress</b>	49
<b>LIST OF ANNEXES</b>	50
Annex 1 – Pictures of project activities and project sites	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
Annex 2 – CD with 7 management plans prepared in 2005 (in Latvian)	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
Annex 3 – English summaries of management plans prepared in 2005	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
3A –Burtnieki meadows	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>

3B – Dviete floodplains \_\_\_\_\_ **Error! Bookmark not defined.**  
3C – Kalnciems meadows \_\_\_\_\_ **Error! Bookmark not defined.**  
3D – Mugurve meadows \_\_\_\_\_ **Error! Bookmark not defined.**  
3E – Sita and Pedežze floodplains \_\_\_\_\_ **Error! Bookmark not defined.**  
3F – Uzava floodplains \_\_\_\_\_ **Error! Bookmark not defined.**  
3G – Vidusburtnieks meadows \_\_\_\_\_ **Error! Bookmark not defined.**  
Annex 4 – Summary of analysis of legislation in English \_\_\_\_\_ **Error! Bookmark not defined.**  
Annex 5 – Full report on analysis of legislation in Latvian \_\_\_\_\_ **Error! Bookmark not defined.**  
Annex 6 – Examples of second and third landowner letters \_\_\_\_\_ **Error! Bookmark not defined.**  
Annex 7 - Printouts of latest news \_\_\_\_\_ **Error! Bookmark not defined.**  
(time period 01/10/2005 – 30/06/2006) posted on website \_\_\_\_\_ **Error! Bookmark not defined.**  
Annex 8 – Belarus Study tour report \_\_\_\_\_ **Error! Bookmark not defined.**  
Annex 9 – Denmark conference report \_\_\_\_\_ **Error! Bookmark not defined.**  
Annex 10 – Green Week conference report \_\_\_\_\_ **Error! Bookmark not defined.**  
Annex 11- Summary management plans, printed, in Latvian \_\_\_\_\_ **Error! Bookmark not defined.**  
Annex 12 – Project site booklets \_\_\_\_\_ **Error! Bookmark not defined.**  
Annex 13 – Presentation to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Steering Group meeting \_\_\_\_\_ **Error! Bookmark not defined.**  
Annex 14 – Monitoring report 2006 \_\_\_\_\_ **Error! Bookmark not defined.**  
Annex 15 – Partner agreements of new partners – Jeri, Vilpulka and Ance municipalities \_\_\_\_\_ **Error! Bookmark not defined.**  
Annex 16 – List of project articles \_\_\_\_\_ **Error! Bookmark not defined.**  
Annex 17 – TV broadcasts \_\_\_\_\_ **Error! Bookmark not defined.**  
Annex 18 - Maps of Natura 2000 sites and initial project site borders (maps with site borders as in Project proposal + existing Natura 2000 site borders) \_\_\_\_\_ **Error! Bookmark not defined.**  
Annex 19 – Project envelopes \_\_\_\_\_ **Error! Bookmark not defined.**  
Annex 20 – Report of seminar “Maintenance of biodiversity in rural areas – possibilities of Rural Development Plan” (in Latvian) \_\_\_\_\_ **Error! Bookmark not defined.**  
Annex 21 – Maps of project activities \_\_\_\_\_ **Error! Bookmark not defined.**  
Annex 22 – List of project partners \_\_\_\_\_ **Error! Bookmark not defined.**



Floodplains are recognized as very important element of biological diversity, their existence crucial for numerous endangered and priority species, such as Corncrake *Crex crex*\*, Great Snipe *Gallinago media*, Lesser Spotted Eagle *Aquila pomarina*\*. All these species require open floodplain areas that are not overgrown with shrubs or trees and are therefore endangered by current processes of land abandonment and overgrowing in Latvia.

LIFE-Nature project “Restoration of Latvian Floodplains for EU priority species and habitats” started in October 2004 and will last until June 2008. It is dealing with 15 protected areas and Natura 2000 sites in Latvia that represent typical floodplain meadow areas threatened by overgrowing and modifications of hydrological regime.



#### Site numbers

- |                                 |                         |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. Sita and Pededze floodplains | 9. Ruja floodplains     |
| 2. Mugurve meadows              | 10. Burtnieki meadows   |
| 3. Pededzes lejtece             | 11. Lielupe floodplains |
| 4. Dviete floodplains           | 12. Svetes lejtece      |
| 5. Burga meadows                | 13. Kalnciems meadows   |
| 6. Meadows of Seda river        | 14. Rakupe meadows      |
| 7. Vidusburtnieks meadows 1     | 15. Lake Durbe meadows  |
| 8. Vidusburtnieks meadows 2     | 16. Uzava floodplains   |

managed floodplain areas, including habitats of EU importance, in particular *Northern Boreal alluvial meadows* 6450, *Fennoscandian wooded meadows* 6530\*, *Fennoscandian lowland species rich grasslands* 6270\* and others.

Site management plans are prepared/elaborated for 15 Natura 2000 sites, covering more than 15000 ha.

Due to the low level of awareness on Natura 2000 and nature conservation issues among stakeholders in Latvia, especially on local level, project is putting much emphasis on education and public awareness activities. 120 different articles have been published in

Objectives of LIFE Floodplain project are aiming at restoration of floodplain areas as habitat of EU importance itself (e.g. habitats 6450, 6530\*, 6270\*, 6510) and for benefit of rare and endangered species that depend on these habitats, in particular *Crex crex*\*, *Gallinago media*, *Aquila pomarina*\* and *Osmoderma eremita*\*.

Project is implemented by Latvian Fund for Nature, in cooperation with 25 partners – Nature Protection board, Latvian Ornithological society, North Vidzeme Biosphere reserve and 22 municipalities. It is co-financed by UNDP/GEF and Ministry of Environment.

Project will deliver 2400 ha of restored and further

national and local media since the beginning of the project, with stories about floodplain restoration activities, nature values of the floodplains, Natura 2000, farmers living in protected areas etc. Several TV and radio broadcasts have been prepared during the project. Other communication tools include:

- Site booklets for all project sites, to be used by visitors and tourists
- Summaries of the management plans, to be used by local landowners and municipalities
- Information stands, to be used by visitors and tourists
- Education seminars for municipalities and local farmers
- Grassland management handbook, to be used by management planners and practitioners

Study tours and participation in international conferences is a valuable tool for exchange of information and experience. Study tour to Matsalu (Estonia) in 2005 was very much appreciated by local municipalities and project partners. Estonian experience with management of coastal and floodplain meadows is very relevant and interesting for Latvia. Project staff and partners participated also in Study tours to Norway and Belarus, with aim to study different habitats for project target species and share experience with scientists and practitioners in other countries.

To date, 138 habitat restoration contracts have been signed already, for restoration of 2359 ha of overgrown habitats. Restoration work is done by landowners and managers of the lands, thus ensuring the ownership of the project results and further management of restored floodplains. Farmers are encouraged and supported in applying for EU Agri-environmental support to ensure further maintenance of restored areas.

More information about project activities is available on home pages of Latvian Fund for Nature [www.ldf.lv](http://www.ldf.lv) and Latvian Ornithological society [www.lob.lv](http://www.lob.lv).

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

### ***1.1. Rationale and project territories***

All the 16 project territories represent typical floodplain meadow areas, which are more or less regularly flooded. Because of this, these lands have never been used for intensive agricultural production. Most areas during 20<sup>th</sup> century have been partly improved (drained) to expand areas for hay production. However, starting with 80-ties a need for hay as cattle food during winter decreased and eventually became insignificant with collapse of collective farms operating under socialism system. This was because the number of cattle decreased more than 2 fold. As a result, a majority of 'less perspective lands for agriculture' (floodplain meadows) were abandoned and overgrowing process begun.

Since 1990-ies several countrywide inventory projects assessed biological values of the floodplain meadows using both site-based and species-based approaches. Floodplains were recognized as very important element of biological diversity, their existence crucial for numerous endangered and priority species, such as Corncrake *Crex crex*\*, Great Snipe *Gallinago media*, Lesser Spotted Eagle *Aquila pomarina*\*. All these species require open floodplain areas that are not overgrown with shrubs or trees.

### ***1.2. Objectives of the project***

Objectives of LIFE Floodplain project are aiming at restoration of floodplain areas as habitat of EU importance itself (e.g. habitats 6450, 6530\*, 6510) and for benefit of rare and endangered species that depend on these habitats, in particular *Crex crex*\*, *Gallinago media*, *Aquila pomarina*\* and *Osmoderma eremita*\*.

### ***1.3. The main conservation issues being addressed***

*Decrease and fragmentation of open grassland areas, degradation of meadow quality, overgrowing of oak stands*

These problems are taking place due to increasing abandonment of extensive farming methods in rural areas and changes in the hydrological regime in the floodplains. They are addressed by several project activities, in particular habitat restoration actions and information/education measures, as well as support to farmers in applying for EU Agri-environmental funds.

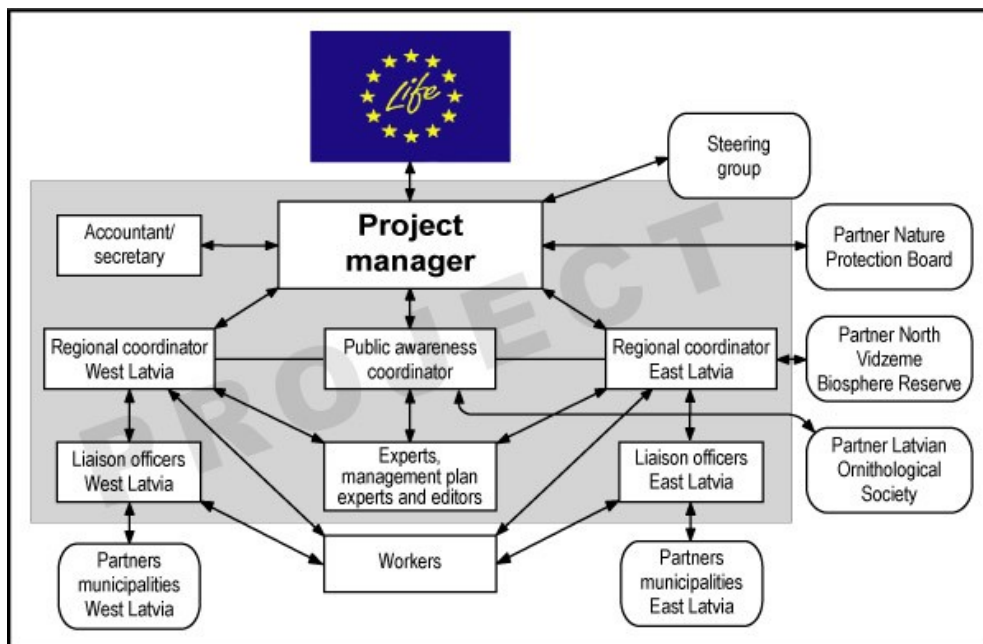
*Early grass mowing*

Early grass mowing issue is addressed by educational activities, such as seminars and study tours. Requirements for receiving the financial support under Rural Development Plan Measure "Agri-environment", sub measure "Preservation of Biodiversity in Grasslands" are supporting the late grass mowing and thus providing incentive to cease early grass mowing practice in biologically valuable areas.

### ***1.4. Expected results***

Expected results are: management plans prepared/elaborated for 15 Natura 2000 sites, 2400 ha habitats restored, improved knowledge on Agri-Environmental Schemes and management of biologically valuable grasslands, all restored areas further managed with Agri-Environmental support.

## 2. LIFE-PROJECT FRAMEWORK



### 2.1. Steering Group

Steering Group consists of representatives of all project partners (22 municipalities, Nature Protection Board, Latvian Ornithological society, North Vidzeme biosphere reserve) and Ministry of Environment.

### 2.2. Roles of project partners

Partner Nature protection Board is implementing part of project actions A.5, A.6 and C.

Partner North Vidzeme biosphere reserve is advising on implementation of project actions in their territory and partly implementing project action A.7.

Partner Latvian Ornithological Society is partly implementing project actions E.1, E.2, E.3, E.7, E.8 and providing data on bird distribution in project territories.

Municipality partners are assisting with restoration and public awareness activities (C and E), liaison officers are assisting in daily communication with landowners and compilation of landowner database (A.2).

Please see list of partner's data included in Annex 22 to the Report.



### 2.3. Project implementation

Project implementation is depending on successful cooperation of all project staff. To ensure that, regular planning meetings are held, apart from daily communication. Project manager is supervising implementation of all project activities and reporting to Steering group.

**A group activities** are mainly the responsibility of project manager and public awareness coordinator. Regular meetings are held with editors of management plans and other experts, to monitor the project performance.

**C group activities** are mainly the responsibility of regional coordinators. Regional coordinator for East Latvia is responsible for project sites “Sita and Pededze floodplains”, “Mugurve meadows”, “Pededzes lejtece”, “Dviete floodplains”, “Burga meadows”, “Meadows of Seda river”, “Vidusburtnieks meadows”, “Ruja floodplain” and “Burtnieki meadows”.

Regional coordinator for West Latvia is responsible for project sites “Lielupe floodplains”, “Svetes lejtece”, “Kalnciems meadows”, “Rakupe meadows”, “Lake Durbe meadows” and “Uzava floodplains”.

Regional coordinators are in charge of daily negotiations with landowners, preparing and supervising implementation of restoration contracts. They report to project manager that is supervising project restoration activities by regular visits to sites and project meetings.

**E group activities** are mainly the responsibility of public awareness coordinator. He is responsible for hiring experts and contracting for publications, checking publication texts and ensuring their conformity to LIFE SAP. Project manager is supervising and advising on the implementation of the activities.

### 2.4. Modifications according to initial proposal

One Additional Clause have been accepted by the Commission (24/05/2006) when 3 new municipality partners were joining the project, there were also modifications in status of one of the existing partners and new co-financer (UNDP Latvia) contributing to the project.

Formatted: Bullets and Numbering



### 3. PROGRESS

#### 3.1. Summary table of activities

Action No	Action	Time plan	Status
A.1.	Meetings with stakeholders on the sites, introduction of the project	IV 2004	Accomplished, 19 meetings took place in 2005
A.2.	Development and maintenance of landowner database	IV 2004 – I 2008	In progress, frame created, data input taking place
A.3	Collection and analysis of existing information	IV 2004 – III 2005 (to be extended to 2007)	In progress, continuing update with bird data from LOS
A.4	Preparation of digital maps for project sites, mapping of habitats	II 2005 – II 2007	In progress, maps prepared for 7 sites Digital Elevation model purchased to be able to model flood scenarios for management planning
A.5	Preparation of 13 site management plans, update of 2 management plans	I 2005 – I 2007	In progress – 7 plans prepared in 2005, others in process in 2006
A.6	Supervising preparation of the management plans, organising public hearings and printing plans	IV 2005 – I 2007	In progress, finalised for 7 sites, others in progress in 2006
A.7	Training of farmers on applying for EU support for grassland management	II 2005, II 2006 (to be extended to 2008)	In progress, 1 <sup>st</sup> training took place in Riga, 7 March 2006. Proposal for wider scope of trainings sent to EC and EMT on 28.06.
A.8	Analysis and recommendations of improvement of existing legislation regarding management planning in Latvia	III, IV 2005 IV 2007-I 2008	Accomplished, study done. Recommendations for amendments in legislation sent to respective institutions (MOE, MOA etc.)
A.9	Agreements and contracts for habitat restoration and management works	I 2005, I 2006, I 2007	In progress, 138 restoration contracts signed to date
C.1.	Removal of shrub	I 2005 – I 2008	In progress 796 ha contracted, 313 ha completed
C.2.	Destruction of shrub root system along melioration ditches	III 2005 – I 2008	In progress, first contracts to be signed in 2006
C.3.	Removal of shrub around individual oak trees	I 2005 – I 2008	In progress, 57 ha contracted, 21 ha completed
C.4.	Fence installation	I-II 2006	Fence constructed, final payment due
C.5	Controlled burning of grassland	IV 2005 – I 2008	In progress. 155 ha contracted, 106 ha completed
C.6	Initial moving of grassland	III 2005 – III 2007	In progress. 1351 ha contracted, 761 ha completed
E.1.	Informal letters and stakeholder meetings	I 2005 – II 2008	In progress, 3 letters sent to each landowner, next planned in July, with distribution of MP summaries

Action No	Action	Time plan	Status
E.2.	Design and update of project homepage	IV 2004 – II 2008	In progress
E.3.	Information signs	I 2006 – I 2008	In progress, first 9 stands set up in Sita & Pededze, Mugurve, Burtnieki meadows and Dviete
E.4.	Seminar for capacity building of meadow management planners	IV 2007	Planned
E.5.	Study tours to other grassland management areas in Latvia and EU, participation in international seminars	I 2005 – II 2007	In progress Short ST: Lubans, Engure, Norway, Belarus; Larger ST: Matsalu, International seminars: Denmark, Austria, EU Green week, Finland
E.6.	Production of grassland management handbook	II 2007 – I 2008	Planned
E.7.	Production of summary management plans	I 2006, I 2007	In progress. 7 summary management plans printed
E.8.	Informal booklets about project sites and management of habitats for <i>Crex crex</i> and other target species	I-II 2006, IV 2007- I 2008	In progress. Booklet "Birds in Floodplains". 3 site booklets printed (for 4 sites). 1 site booklet in print (for 2 sites).
E.9.	Publication of layman's report	II 2008	Planned
E.10.	Closing event of the project	II 2008	Planned
F.1.	Establishment and meetings of the Project Steering group, monitoring of project performance	IV 2004 – I 2008	In progress, 3 meetings took place
F.2.	Initiation of the monitoring system on effects achieved by management measures	I 2005 – II 2008	In progress, monitoring taking place every spring
F.3.	Administration of the project	IV 2004 – II 2008	In progress
F.4.	Audit of the project	I-II 2008	Planned

Explanations to different colours used in the table

	Actions that are fully implemented
	Actions that are in implementation, according the time plan
	Actions that are delayed
	Actions that have not yet begun, according to the time plan

### 3.2. Summary of project milestones

Milestone	No of reference action	Date planned	Date achieved
First meetings with landowners conducted	A.1	31.12.2004	14.01.2005
First Steering group meeting conducted	F.1	31.12.2004	27.04.2005
Homepage set up	E.2	31.12.2004	07.10.2004
First management plan elaboration meetings conducted	A.5, A.6	31.03.2005	14.01.2005
First management contracts signed	A.9	31.03.2005	23.12.2004
10% of planned shrub removed	C.1	31.03.2005	23.02.2005
20% of parkland meadows restored	C.3	31.03.2005	29.08.2005
First farmer training conducted	A.7	30.06.2005	07.03.2006
40% of planned area mown	C.6	31.08.2005	57% contracted 32% complete
50% of planned shrub removed	C.1	31.03.2006	82% contracted 32 % complete
50% of planned shrub root destructed	C.2	31.03.2006	Contracts pending, will be signed in 2006
60% of parkland meadows restored	C.3	31.03.2006	51% contracted 19% complete
50% of planned area burned	C.5	31.03.2006	28% contracted 20% complete
First km of fence made	C.4	30.06.2006	Fence constructed, final payment due
Second farmer training conducted	A.7	30.06.2006	Delayed, reconsideration of topics, letter to EC
80% of planned area mown	C.6	31.08.2006	
90% of planned shrub removed	C.1	31.03.2007	
90% of planned shrub root destructed	C.2		
90% of parkland meadows restored	C.3		
100% of planned area burned	C.5		
100% (2395 ha) of meadows mown	C.6	31.08.2007	
Meadow management training conducted	E.4	31.12.2007	
100% (112 ha) of parkland meadows restored	C.3	31.03.2008	
100% of planned shrub root destructed	C.2	31.03.2008	
100% (980 ha) of shrub removed	C.1	31.03.2008	
Notice boards set up	E.3	31.03.2008	First 8 stands already set up in project sites Sita & Pededze, Mugurve, Dviete and Burtnieks meadows

	Milestone achieved
	Milestone not yet achieved
	Milestone not applicable to current report

### 3.3. Summary of deliverable products

Product	Name or n° of reference action	Deadline	ACCOMPLISHED	SUBMITTED TO EC
8 management plans completed	A.5 and A.6	31 March 2006	31 March 2006	CD with full text of management plans submitted with Interim Report (Annex 2) Summaries of MP in English in Annex 3 to Interim Report
8 summary management plans ready	E.7	31 March 2006	30 June 2006 7 plans printed	Submitted with Interim Report, Annex 11.
First 10 booklets printed	E.8	30 June 2006	30 June 2006 4 booklets printed	Booklet "Birds in Floodplains" submitted with 1 <sup>st</sup> Progress Report, 3 site booklets submitted with Interim Report, Annex 12.
7 management plans completed	A.5 and A.6	31 March 2007		
7 summary management plans ready	E.7	31 March 2007		
Digital maps ready	A.4	30 June 2007	Maps ready for 7 sites	Submitted with Interim Report, included in management plans (Annex 2)
All booklets printed	E.8	31 March 2008		
Legislation analysis complete	A.8	31 March 2008	Accomplished 25 May 2006	Submitted with Interim Report (Annexes 4, 5)
Management handbook complete	E.6	31 March 2008		
Layman's report ready	E.9	30 June 2008		

	Deliverable delivered
	Deliverable delayed
	Deliverable not applicable to current report

Formatted: Bullets and Numbering

### 3.4. Detailed report on actions

#### *A. Preparatory actions, elaboration of management plans and/or of action plan*

Project preparatory actions are focused on two main issues: 1) establishing good relationship with local stakeholders and introducing the project, combined with raising of public awareness on Natura 2000 issues in project sites and 2) setting the information basis for further management actions, by preparing management plans and analysing scientific information.

During the introduction meetings, it was recognized by project staff that level of awareness of local stakeholders on Natura 2000 issues is very low and much more work than initially planned should be done on information of local level stakeholders about nature conservation and Natura 2000 – responsibilities and benefits, as local support to the project directly depends on local acceptance of the project. More individual meetings with farmers, combined with active work with local media have been taking place, to raise the awareness of local stakeholders on nature conservation issues, with special focus on Natura 2000 and floodplains.

7 site management plans were finalised in 2005, adopted by Minister of Environment at the beginning of 2006. 7 remaining site management plans are in preparation in 2006.

Analysis of legislation was important step to take before Rural Development plan for period 2007 – 2013 is finalised. Recommendations from this analysis are communicated with responsible state institutions. Please see more information in description to Action A.8.

During EC and monitoring team mission to Latvia (5-6/07/2006) it was discussed that Natura 2000 site borders have been changing with their official approval. Changes have been insignificant in most cases and do not differ much from borders, initially planned in the project. We are ensuring that no project actions take place outside Natura 2000 borders. In Annex 18 we are submitting the maps with initially planned project site borders and finally approved Natura 2000 site borders.



<b>ACTION A.1</b>	<b>Meetings with stakeholders on the sites, introduction of the project</b>	
<b>Time plan:</b> II-IV 2002	<b>Variations/complications/delays:</b> No	<b>Additional information:</b> List of introduction meetings submitted with 1 <sup>st</sup> Progress report

**Progress:** Stakeholder meetings were organised in all 16 project areas, to meet local stakeholders, especially the owners of the land in project sites and introduce planned actions. Before the meeting, information and invitation letters were sent to all stakeholders (Action E.1), providing them with insight into project goals, meeting agenda. Announcements about meetings were also placed in project home page and in local municipalities. In total, 563 participants attended the meetings, it is very good rate (usually ca half of landowners of respective site attended the meeting personally) and we believe that this rate is so high largely due to individual invitation letters we sent to each landowner.

General structure of each of the meetings was following:

1. Introduction to the LIFE Floodplain project (by project manager Inga Racinska)
2. Introduction about Natura 2000 sites and management rules of protected areas (by Inga Racinska or representative of the ministry of Environment)
3. Introduction about North Vidzeme biosphere reserve and GEF/UNDP project (for those project sites (6) that are part of Biosphere reserve, presented by representative of the Biosphere reserve)
4. Summary about Natura 2000 values of the project site (by public awareness coordinator Andris Klepers)
5. Introduction about official procedure for management plan preparation (for those project sites where management plans are prepared in 2005, presented by representative of Nature Protection Board)
6. Summary about foreseen management planning process in the site (for those project sites where management plans are prepared in 2005, presented by editor of the respective management plan)
7. Summary about project activities that are planned in the site, with discussion (by project regional coordinators, either Ainars Aunins or Janis Reihmanis, depending on the site)
8. Introduction about financing mechanisms under Rural Development Plan and Structural funds (by representatives from the Latvian Rural Advisory and Training Centre).

All the interested landowners were invited to discussions after the meetings; first contracts were drafted already during these discussions that proved to be very fruitful in most of the sites. The questionnaire about socio-economic interests of landowners was distributed to stakeholders during the meetings, in territories where nature management plans are being elaborated this year. Data gathered is added to database and incorporated into management plans.

These meetings proved to be essential and very important, as level of awareness about Natura 2000 is very low among local stakeholders. Individual and small-scale meetings are continuing throughout the project, to build the trust and awareness of landowners.

<b>ACTION A.2</b>	<b>Development and maintenance of landowner database</b>	
<b>Time plan:</b> IV 2004 – I 2008	<b>Variations/complications/delays:</b> No	<b>Additional information:</b> No

**Progress:** The framework for the database has been set up; it is now in process of input of information.

The questionnaire about socio-economic interests of landowners was distributed to stakeholders during the introduction meetings (action A.1), in territories where nature management plans are being elaborated this year. Data gathered are added to database and incorporated into management plans.

The inaccuracy of landowner information that is available for any sources is creating problems for preparation of the database and implementation of habitat restoration activities. In many cases even municipalities (that are believed to have most recent and updated information about land properties in their territory) have outdated and incomplete ownership information, or no contact information for landowners at all. Many landowners are living abroad, some have not finalised formal procedures of including their land in Land Cadastre etc. All this creates problems with contacting landowners for information, management planning and habitat restoration purposes. Therefore, more effort and time than initially planned are invested to prepare contracts for habitat restoration.

<b>ACTION A.3</b>	<b>Collection and analysis of existing information</b>	
<b>Time plan:</b> IV 2004 – III 2005	<b>Variations/complications/delays:</b> Time plan should be extended to 2007 (need for this communicated during EC mission in Latvia, 5-6/07/2006)	<b>Additional information:</b> No

**Progress:** All available information is collected from Latvian Natura 2000 database, from EMERALD/Natura 2000 project. Latvian Ornithological society is collecting data on bird species in project sites, from Latvian IBA database and Breeding Bird Atlas, in addition inventories are taking place in 2005 and 2006. Additional bird inventories will have take place also in 2007, to gather data series for longer time period. Experience of Lubans LIFE project was gathered during the study tour to Lubans (please see description in action E.5), experience on North-Gauja LIFE project is used also, e.g. calculation methods for habitat restoration works and experience with involvement of local stakeholders.

All this information is used when planning monitoring for the sites, used for preparation of the management plans and is used by regional coordinators for decision-making on daily basis.

**Variations/complications/delays:** Time plan should be extended to 2007, to ensure that more bird data is collected by Latvian Ornithological society to provide data series for longer time period (need for this communicated during EC mission in Latvia, 5-6/07/2006).



<b>ACTION A.4</b>	<b>Preparation of digital maps for project sites, mapping of habitats of EU importance</b>	
<b>Time plan:</b> II 2005 – II 2007	<b>Variations/complications/delays:</b> No	<b>Additional information:</b> Maps of Natura 2000 sites and initial project site borders in Annex 18 Habitat maps and other maps included in management plans (CD in Annex 2)

**Progress:** Digital mapping is done by project regional coordinators and project experts on daily basis – for mapping areas for restoration, preparing contracts, undertaking monitoring. GPS devices are used by regional coordinators and experts, to digitise all the site information on daily basis. The process of preparation of integrated and coherent digital maps begun in 2005 when first field season data from management plan experts and regional coordinators were gathered in Latvian Fund for Nature. Maps (habitat and species, management measures, site zoning, tourism infrastructure, hydrological, etc.) were prepared for first management plans (project action A.5) at the end of 2005 and are now in process for second set of management plans.

Digital vector layers of full information topographic maps of scale 1:10000 are not yet available in Latvia, thus we have postponed planned purchase of these maps and wait for new information from State Land service. At the moment, it is not likely that above mentioned maps will become available during project period, as only maps for Latvian border areas and larger cities have been prepared to date. We are using digital orthophotos and Landsat satellite images for digital mapping and assessing other options to obtain the necessary data. Digital Elevation Model, described below is solution that we have found to existing problem of lack of full information topographic maps.

The need for Digital Elevation Model (DEM) was recognised already in 2005, when management planning for first sites took place. This Model is necessary in order to model different flood scenarios for project sites, to plan the hydrological regime necessary for maintenance of biological values dependent on it. Contract has been signed with Latvian Geospatial Information Agency, about purchase of DEM for project sites, within the planned budget of action A.4.

During EC and monitoring team mission to Latvia (5-6/07/2006) it was discussed that Natura 2000 site borders have been changing with their official approval. As project was submitted before official approval of the Natura 2000 network in Latvia, slight changes have occurred in borders of project sites. Changes have been insignificant in most cases, with exception of project site Vidusburtnieks. Initially, when project was planned, there were 2 sites proposed for Natura 2000 network – Vidusburtnieks 1 and Vidusburtnieks 2. During the official procedure of Natura 2000 site establishment, it was decided to unite both sites in one. Thus, now we have one project site Vidusburtnieks, with total area 1333 ha that is much larger than previously recommended 2 sites (with 279 ha in total). Please see more information in Annex 18 to the Report where we are submitting the maps with initially planned project site borders and finally approved Natura 2000 site borders. We are ensuring that no project activities are taking place outside Natura 2000 site borders.

<b>ACTION A.5</b>	<b>Preparation of 13 site management plans, update of 2 management plans</b>	
<b>Time plan:</b> I 2005 – I 2007	<b>Variations/complications/delays:</b> 14 <sup>1</sup> site management plans prepared/updated, see explanation below and in Action A.4.	<b>Additional information:</b> Annex 1 - Pictures of project activities Annex 2 – CD with 7 management plans prepared in 2005 (in Latvian) Annex 3 – English summaries of MP prepared in 2005

**Progress:** 7 site management plans have been finalised and adopted by the Ministry of Environment, 7 plans are in process in 2006. Management plan for Seda is prepared outside the project - by Latvian State forests (as planned before).

Management plan editors have been selected for all plans prepared with LIFE funding in 2005 and 2006. They are following:

2005

Sita and Pededze floodplains – Liene Salmina, Latvian Fund for Nature  
Mugurve meadows – Liene Salmina, Latvian Fund for Nature  
Uzava floodplains – Elmars Peterhofs, REMM Ltd - subcontracted  
Dviete floodplains – Edmunds Racinskis, Latvian Ornithological society  
Burtnieki meadows – Liene Salmina, Latvian Fund for Nature  
Vidusburtnieks meadows 1 and 2 – Janis Gailis, Latvian Fund for Nature  
Kalnciems meadows – Viesturs Vintulis, Latvian Fund for Nature

2006

Pededzes lejtece – Ieva Rove, Latvian Fund for Nature  
Burga meadows – Liene Salmina, Latvian Fund for Nature  
Ruja floodplains – Liene Salmina, Latvian Fund for Nature  
Lielupe floodplains – Ieva Rove, Latvian Fund for Nature  
Svetes lejtece – Rolands Lebuss, Latvian Ornithological society  
Rakupe meadows – Jolanta Bara, Baltic Environmental Forum – subcontracted  
Lake Durbe meadows – Rolands Lebuss, Latvian Ornithological society

First management plan preparation meetings usually took place together with stakeholder introduction meetings (described in action A.1), management plan editors introduced the general procedure of preparation of the management plans and actions planned to the stakeholders.

Following management plan introduction meetings took place in 2005 and 2006:

1. Sita and Pededze floodplains – 14.02.2005 in Litene
2. Mugurve meadows – 14.02.2005 in Litene and 18.02.2005 in Stradi
3. Uzava floodplains – 02.03.2005 in Alsunga
4. Dviete floodplains – 20.03.2005 in Bebrene and 30.03.2005 in Dviete
5. Burtnieki meadows – 28.01.2005 in Burtnieki
6. Vidusburtnieks meadows 1 and 2 – 11.02.2005 in Seli, 25.02.2005 in Vecate and 08.04.2005 in Jeri

<sup>1</sup> Number of project sites has decreased from 16 to 15 as 2 sites proposed for Natura 2000 network – Vidusburtnieks 1 and Vidusburtnieks 2 were joined in 1 during the official procedure of Natura 2000 site establishment. Total area of Vidusburtnieks has increased from 279 ha (previously planned 2 sites) to 1333 ha (finally established 1 site).

7. Kalnciems meadows – 07.03.2005 in Kalnciems
8. Meadows of Seda river - 14.01.2005 in Ergeme and 03.03.2005 in Seda
9. Ruja floodplains – 23.03.2006 in Seli and 24.03.2006 in Jeri.
10. Pededzes lejtece – 30.03.2006 in Stradi and 31.03.2006 in Rugaji.
11. Rakupe meadows – 04.04.2006 in Dundaga.
12. Svetes lejtece – 06.04.2006 in Livberze and Valgunde.
13. Lielupe floodplains – 12.04.2006 in Jelgava.
14. Burga meadows – 13.04.2006 in Valka.
15. Lake Durbe meadows – 24.04.2006 in Durbe.

Management Plan Supervisory Groups have been established for all management plans, please see more information in description to action A.6.

7 management plans have been already finalised and adopted by the Minister of Environment:

Uzava floodplains, Order of the Ministry of Environment No.2, 04.01.2006.  
 Mugurve meadows, Order of the Ministry of Environment No. 48, 03.02.2006.  
 Kalnciema meadows, Order of the Ministry of Environment No. 87, 01.03.2006.  
 Sita and Pededze floodplain, Order of the Ministry of Environment No. 104, 10.03.2006.  
 Dviete floodplain, Order of the Ministry of Environment No. 118, 21.03.2006.  
 Vidusburtnieks meadows, Order of the Ministry of Environment No. 30, 26.01.2006.  
 Burtnieki meadows, Order of the Ministry of Environment No. 138, 31.03.2006.

Please see copies of all finalised management plans (in Latvian) attached in CD in Annex 2 and English summaries of all finalised management plans attached in Annex 3. Management plans have been distributed to Nature Protection Board, Ministry of Environment, State Forest service, Regional Environmental Boards, local municipalities and State Stock Company “Latvian Forests”. Management plans in Latvian are also available on project website [www.ldf.lv](http://www.ldf.lv), under sections of individual project sites and on home page of Nature Protection Board [www.dap.gov.lv](http://www.dap.gov.lv). English summaries of the management plans are also available on project home page. Printed summaries of management plans (in Latvian) prepared in 2005 (except “Dviete floodplains”, in preparation) have been sent to all landowners (please see more information in description of action E.7).

Concerning management plans prepared in 2005, experts have been subcontracted to prepare drafts of “Individual Protection and Management Rules” for project sites Sita and Pededze floodplains, Mugurve meadows, Uzava floodplains, Dviete floodplains and Burtnieki meadows. Work includes final discussions with experts, preparing the recommendations according to the requirements of State Chancellery. We expect to submit the draft Rules to Ministry of Environment at the end of 2006, for official approval process (by Cabinet of Ministers) in 2007.

All site information has been gathered for management plans prepared in 2006 (field work finalised) and evaluation of site values done, editors and experts are currently working on setting the site objectives and determining the management measures to be taken. Afterwards, draft management plans will be presented to the Management Plan Supervisory Groups (first meetings taking place in August); to discuss the plans before public hearing processes of the management plans are taking place. Public hearing meetings are foreseen in December 2006 for most of the sites, also recommendations for site zoning for each site will be prepared by then.

**Variations/complications/delays:** Initially it was planned that 15 management plans will be prepared/updated. Due to changes in project site Vidusburtnieks<sup>2</sup> number of management plans is reduced by 1, although the area covered by the plan have increased. See more information in description to Action A.4.

<b>ACTION A.6</b>	<b>Supervising preparation of the management plans, organising public hearings and printing plans</b>	
<b>Time plan:</b> IV 2005 – I 2007	<b>Variations/complications/delays:</b> Additional training on public speaking planned	<b>Additional information:</b> Annex 1 – Pictures of the project activities

**Progress:** Management planning procedure foresees that Management Plan Supervisory Group that include all stakeholders of the site and management plan editor reports to this group about preparation process of the Plan. Such Groups have been established for all management plans, they consist mainly of representatives of local municipalities, landowner representatives, Nature Protection Board, project regional coordinator, Latvian State forests, Regional Environmental Boards, Rural Consultants and others, if applicable.

Public hearing meetings for management plans prepared in 2005 took place in December 2005 for most of the sites. They were announced in local newspapers, project web site [www.ldf.lv](http://www.ldf.lv) and local municipalities. Public hearing meetings for management plans prepared in 2006 will take place at the end of 2006, when management plans are discussed in Supervisory Groups.

**Variations/complications/delays:** After first year, dealing with public hearings of management plans, it was recognised that there is a need for additional training for project staff and management plan experts on public speaking. Therefore, we are planning to organise public speaking training for project staff and experts in October 2006. We have selected company Educatio ([www.educatio.lv](http://www.educatio.lv)) for this, as they have good record of trainings and proposed very interesting program. We will report about this training in next Progress Report.

<b>ACTION A.7</b>	<b>Training of farmers on applying for EU support for grassland management</b>	
<b>Time plan:</b> II 2005, II 2006	<b>Variations/complications/delays:</b> Delayed. Time plan should be extended to 2008 (need for this communicated during EC mission in Latvia, 5-6/07/2006)	<b>Additional information:</b> Annex 1 – Pictures of the project activities Annex 20 – Report of seminar “Maintenance of biodiversity in rural areas – possibilities of Rural Development Plan” (in Latvian)

**Progress:** To date, we have organised one training seminar “Maintenance of biodiversity in rural areas – possibilities of Rural Development Plan” within this activity, on 7/03/2006. 31

<sup>2</sup> Number of project sites has decreased from 16 to 15 as 2 sites proposed for Natura 2000 network – Vidusburtnieks 1 and Vidusburtnieks 2 were joined in 1 during the official procedure of Natura 2000 site establishment. Total area of Vidusburtnieks has increased from 279 ha (previously planned 2 sites) to 1333 ha (finally established 1 site).

participants from all Latvian regions were present at the seminar – municipality representatives, rural consultants and farmers. Presentations from representatives of the project, Rural Training and Advisory Center, Latvian Fund for Nature and Ministry of Agriculture were given during the seminar. Please see report of the seminar (in Latvian) and presentations in Annex 20 to the Report and on project home page [http://www.ldf.lv/pub/?doc\\_id=28489](http://www.ldf.lv/pub/?doc_id=28489) (you can also download all presentations of the seminar from the home page).

We have not proceeded with more training on this issue due to the fact that actually there are similar courses organised by Rural Training and Advisory Center on regular basis. During our seminar on 07.03.2006 we put emphasis on biologically valuable grasslands and their management and we are also addressing this issue in our publication “Birds in Floodplains” (Action E.8). Also project staff does consultations to farmers on applying for EU support for grassland management on regular basis, during individual meetings with farmers in regions.

Several smaller scale trainings were organised parallel to the project introduction meetings. Lecturers from Latvian Rural Advisory and Training Centre were introducing topics of financing mechanisms under Rural Development Plan and Structural funds in following meetings:

1. 14.01.2005 in Ergeme municipality
2. 25.01.2005 in Valgunde municipality
3. 01.02.2005 in Dundaga municipality
4. 02.02.2005 in Rugaji municipality
5. 18.02.2005 in Stradu municipality (by project manager Inga Racinska)
6. 28.02.2005 in Durbe municipality
7. 09.03.2005 in Jelgava, Cena and Jaunsvirlauka municipalities

**Variations/complications/delays:** Action is delayed; first training took place in 7/03/2006. At the moment, it is not cost effective, to organise further trainings, as there are similar courses organised by Rural Training and Advisory Center on regular basis. Need for further trainings will be assessed when new Rural Development Plan will be adopted (beginning of 2007) and communicated to Commission. Time plan should be extended to 2008 (need for this communicated during EC mission in Latvia, 5-6/07/2006).

<b>ACTION A.8</b>	<b>Analysis and recommendations of improvement of existing legislation regarding management planning in Latvia</b>	
<b>Time plan:</b> III, IV 2005, IV 2007-I 2008	<b>Variations/complications/delays:</b> Accomplished.	<b>Additional information:</b> Annex 4 – Summary of analysis of legislation in English Annex 5 – Full report on analysis of legislation in Latvian

**Progress:** The process of redrafting of the Order of the Minister of Environment “Recommendations for preparation of the management plans” (No 120, 04.07.2002) took place in 2005/2006, it was transformed into Regulation of Cabinet of Ministers with amendments to the structure and procedure of elaboration of the management plans. Project manager was involved in this process, providing recommendations to the Ministry of

Environment, in order to ensure that project initial experience is integrated in the Regulation (No. 234, adopted 28.03.2006).

In addition, we are working on policy level in Latvia, participating in preparation of new Rural Development Plan for Latvia (2007-2013), to ensure that floodplain management issues are taken up in this plan. We are working on recommendations in order to change requirements for receiving support under Agri-environmental measure, for example – to exclude general requirement to maintain melioration systems in all types of biologically valuable grasslands. This requirement is not necessary for floodplains, although existing Plan implies that it is applied to all agricultural lands, including floodplain areas.

First problems related to the legislation deficiencies have already occurred when implementing project activities – for example problems with registration of agricultural lands that are overgrown as forestlands, etc. Therefore, we have prepared detailed evaluation of legislation concerning limitations and difficulties for management and restoration of floodplain grasslands and addressed these deficiencies by proposed changes to legislation (see full report in Latvian in Annex 5 and English summary in Annex 4). Recommendations from the Report have been sorted and sent to responsible state institutions. We will inform Commission about responses and further development of proposed changes.

**Variations/complications/delays:** Action was accomplished earlier than planned, due to urgency of the topic and need for recommendations to include in Rural Development Plan 2007-2013. With recommendations prepared already in 2006, we also allow more time to follow up on integration of the recommendations in legislation. We are considering to do the additional screening of legislative acts in 2007 (within the planned budget), to see how and if our proposed recommendations for changes have been implemented.

<b>ACTION A.9</b>	<b>Agreements and contracts for habitat restoration and management works</b>	
<b>Time plan:</b> I 2005, I 2006, I 2007	<b>Variations/complications/delays:</b> Yes, see below	<b>Additional information:</b> Examples of contracts for habitat restoration with private person (PP/I) and entity (PP/II), with translation of main parts of contracts – submitted with 1 <sup>st</sup> Progress Report

**Progress:** This action is taking place continuously, with average 8 contracts signed per month. In total 138 contracts have been signed until 30/06/2006.

Each of the contracts requires lot of preparatory work, even several visits per one property before the contract is signed – there are lots of negotiations with landowners.

Problems with contracting occur due to incorrect and outdated land ownership information available in municipalities. This problem is described more in detail in description to action A.2.

Some of the areas (e.g. Dviete floodplains) have high number of landowners and most of them own just few hectares. Therefore, preparation of agreements for restoration of floodplain areas is very time-consuming process as it is hard to get landowners interested in

restoration. They own very small land pieces and income from restoration of such small plots is insignificant.

Contract templates have been prepared. There are 2 types of contracts signed for habitat restoration – with private persons (PP/I contract example sent in 1<sup>st</sup> Progress Report) and with entities, e.g. companies or farms owned by local stakeholders (PP/II contract example sent with 1<sup>st</sup> Progress Report). In 1<sup>st</sup> Progress report we have provided also summary translation of main parts of these contracts.

***Variations/complications/delays:*** Signing of contracts is taking place on regular basis, not only in 1st quarters of every year as planned before.

### *C. Non-recurring management*

Actions in this section are dealing with habitat restoration. To date, 138 habitat restoration contracts have been signed already, for restoration of 2359 ha of overgrown habitats.

**Summary table on progress with implementation of habitat restoration activities**

Habitat restoration method	Ha contracted	% contracted, from total planned in project	Ha completed	% completed, from total planned in project
C.1 – shrub cutting	796	82	313	32
C.3 – shrub cutting around oak trees	57	51	21	19
C.5 – controlled burning	155	28	106	20
C.6 – initial mowing	1351	57	761	32
<b>TOTAL/AVERAGE:</b>	<b>2359</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>1201</b>	<b>26</b>

As seen from the table, habitat restoration works are proceeding in different speed. Initial mowing (C.6) is a bit behind the planned schedule, but in contrary – shrub cutting (C.1) is proceeding more quickly. This can be explained by the situation – in many areas shrub cutting have to be done before any mowing activities can take place, therefore mowing is delayed while shrub cutting is proceeding well.

Controlled burning (C.5) is behind the planned schedule, due to the fact that it can be only permitted when included in management plans of the project sites, therefore applicable only in 7 project sites to date (management plans for other sites are in process, see more in Action A.5). Restoration of Fennoscandian wooded meadows (C.3) is also behind the schedule, mainly due to the difficulties with finding landowners in sites where most of this habitat is located – especially Vidusburtnieks.

If to measure already completed contracts, percentages are lower. Restoration works are taking more time than initially planned in the project. It was expected that works would be completed within max one year from the date of contract signing. As we see now, in reality it takes more time, especially in the final phase of restoration - removal of bushes and hay. Also there are many contracts where most of the work is done, but final payment is due to the fact that bushes are not totally removed, or some other minor remarks received from regional coordinators. Additionally, there are extensions to the contracts due to difficult weather conditions and other practical considerations. All these obstacles were not foreseen in the planning phase due to the fact that to date actually no projects have been undertaking restoration works on such scale and arrangements as in our project.

Fence installation (C.4) have been contracted earlier than planned, as there was high interest from local municipality and Burtnieki horse farm to begin grazing activities as soon as possible.



Another important factor impacting the location and area of restored floodplains is activities that landowners have undertaken in the period between project planning phase and beginning of the project. Project begun in late 2004, and by that time most active landowners already restored the floodplains and applied for Rural Development Plan support payments. Therefore, project payments are not eligible there and total area of floodplains to be restored with the project funds is decreased. In such cases, we are investing project resources in other priority locations – either within the same or in another project site, if alternative areas are available. For example, in project site Svete floodplains it was initially planned to restore 350 ha by initial mowing. During 2004, before project started, landowners have restored ca 230 ha of floodplains and applied for Agri-environmental payments for these areas. Project has contracted additional 100 ha for initial mowing in Svete. Therefore, the optimal goal (350 ha floodplains restored) of the project for Svete is achieved, but some of it is not done by project and does not sum up in percentages of reported restoration works. Such situation is rather common in several project areas. In the final report of the project we will provide more information not only about areas restored by project, but also about those restored with other funds, nevertheless contributing to achievement of site conservation/restoration targets.

*Link between the project actions as regards agri-environmental schemes.* All habitat restoration contracts are including obligation for landowner or land user to apply for agri-environmental support after restoration - to ensure further maintenance of restored habitats (usually chapter 2.12 of the contract). Contractor also confirms that he/she is not receiving any double funding for restoration of the habitats mentioned in the contract (usually chapter 2.11 in the contract). Thus we ensure that funds invested in restoration of habitats are not wasted, as they are further managed and serve the purpose of maintenance of EU importance habitats and species.

Please see the location of all restoration actions that are contracted to date on map in Annex 21.



<b>ACTION C.1</b>		
<b>Removal of shrub</b>		
<b>Time plan:</b> I 2005 – I 2008	<b>Variations/complications/delays:</b> No	<b>Additional information:</b> Annex 1 – Pictures of the project activities Annex 21 – Maps of project activities

**Progress:** This action has been successfully begun and is proceeding faster than initially planned in the project. 796 ha (82% of areas planned for shrub cutting in project) have been already contracted for cutting; works have already finished in 313 ha (32%).

Implementation of the restoration actions (especially shrub cutting) is very much dependent on weather conditions (layer of snow, flooding periods etc) thus some of the contracts are not implemented in terms agreed. We have included chapter dealing with this situation in contracts and are flexible with prolonging the terms of implementation if weather conditions are limiting.

Level of overgrowing is assessed by regional coordinator, prior to contracting, amount of funds paid for restoration is depending on level of overgrowing. Removal of shrub is usually done manually, using motor saws. Cut bushes are piled and burned on the site. Activity is limited to periods outside bird breeding season, no restoration activities can take place between 30 March and 15 July. In areas where overgrowth was dense, access was possible and machinery available, woodchip making was recommended. Experience in Uzava floodplain and Rakupe meadows show that this is environmentally friendly (no burning) and less time consuming method, therefore also more interesting for contractors. Unfortunately, this method can only be used in sites with good access and necessary machinery (wood choppers) available and in municipalities where is a demand for chopped wood.

Problems with restoration occur due to incorrect and outdated land ownership information available in municipalities. Some landowners are not possible to locate and discuss habitat restoration options with them. This problem is described more in detail in description to action A.2.

In some areas where shrubs are very dense it is not possible to begin mowing after first shrub cutting. In these areas we plan that initial mowing by hand is done on following year. Nevertheless, such cases are not numerous and will not significantly increase the cost of restoration activities.

Shrub cutting has been started in all project sites, except Vidusburtnieks where negotiations with landowners are taking place. Please see project actions on maps in Annex 21. In several areas where overgrowing level is high shrub cutting is combined with initial mowing in following years.

<b>ACTION C.2 Destruction of shrub root system along melioration ditches</b>		
<b>Time plan:</b> III 2005 – I 2008	<b>Variations/complications/delays:</b> No	<b>Additional information:</b> No

**Progress:** As this action requires special machinery, we have begun the survey of available technical means in municipalities and in farms. The most appropriate methods and similar measures that have taken place to date in other areas were discussed with representatives of municipalities during first project Steering Group meeting. It is most likely that first contract will be signed in Sita and Pededze floodplain, where special machinery is available to one of the landowners. Vegetation inventory of the plots where action will take place have been undertaken in Sita and Pededze already – to record the situation before the restoration activity takes place. Please see more information in description to action F.2.

<b>ACTION C.3 Removal of shrub around individual oak trees</b>		
<b>Time plan:</b> I 2005 – I 2008	<b>Variations/complications/delays:</b> Delayed, due to problems with landowners	<b>Additional information:</b> Annex 1 – Pictures of the project activities Annex 21 – Maps of project activities

**Progress:** This action has been successfully begun; contracts for restoration of 57 ha of Fennoscandian wooded meadows have been signed to date (51% of total area planned in project). Completed contracts are in 21 ha (19%). Shrubs are being removed from surroundings of oak trees. It is mainly done manually; cut wood is removed from the area. To date, this activity is taking place in project sites Mugurve meadows, Pededzes lejtece, Sita and Pededze floodplains. Please see Annex 21 for maps of project activities.

**Variations/complications/delays:** Actions in Vidusburtnieks are pending, mainly due to the difficulties with finding landowners. We are continuing the work in other areas and using all available means to contact the landowners in Vidusburtnieks.

<b>ACTION C.4 Fence installation</b>		
<b>Time plan:</b> I-II 2006	<b>Variations/complications/delays:</b> Yes, see below	<b>Additional information:</b> Annex 1 – Pictures of the project activities

**Progress:** Contract was signed about construction of 2 km long fence with horse breeding farm “Burtnieki” in 27.07.2005. Fence has been constructed, final payment due. Please see pictures of the fence attached in Annex 1. Restored and fenced area is forming a larger complex of managed nature that is popular tourist attraction. Nature path starts there and bird watching tower is constructed (by North Vidzeme UNDP/GEF project) by the fenced and grazed area.

**Variations/complications/delays:** Local horse breeding farm “Burtnieki” expressed their will to get involved in project actions as soon as possible, thus contract about fence installation was signed already in 2005.

<b>ACTION C.5</b>		
<b>Controlled burning of grassland</b>		
<b>Time plan:</b> IV 2005 – I 2008	<b>Variations/complications/delays:</b> Yes, see below	<b>Additional information:</b> Annex 1 – Pictures of the project activities Annex 21 – Maps of project activities

**Progress:** To date, 155 ha have been contracted for controlled burning (28% of planned in project), 106 ha have been completed (20%). Please see maps in Annex 21 for locations of restoration activities.

According to Regulation of the Cabinet of Ministers “On the General Protection and Use of Specially Protected Nature Territories”, No 415, adopted 22.07.2003, in nature reserves and nature parks (all project sites are either nature reserves or nature parks) it is prohibited to “burn grass and reed, except in cases if it is necessary for undertaking the management measures foreseen in management plan of the site and approved by the administration of protected area or regional environmental board” (chapters 16.8 and 18.4 of the Regulation).

Therefore, this action was possible to begin only in 2006 when first management plans were adopted and included management measure “controlled burning”.

**Variations/complications/delays:** Action is delayed, due to the legislation restrictions (Regulation of the Cabinet of Ministers No 415, 22.07.2003).

Nevertheless, difficulties with implementation of this action may occur, due to recently started governmental and NGO campaign against burning of old grass in Latvia that is very traditional management method, unfortunately causing many casualties in recent years. Due to this campaign and changes in legislation (see above) people are aware that burning of old grass is illegal and not good for nature. They do not see the difference between illegal burning of old grass and burning for purpose of habitat restoration. Our experience gained during introduction meetings of the project show that they are very reluctant to accept the idea of burning (whatever cost effective that would be). Therefore, we are doing additional education work to get the local accept for burning and in some areas (e.g. Lielupe floodplain – in the Jelgava city) we probably will not use this method at all.

<b>ACTION C.6</b>		
<b>Initial moving of grassland</b>		
<b>Time plan:</b> III 2005 – III 2007	<b>Variations/complications/delays:</b> Yes, see below	<b>Additional information:</b> Annex 1 – Pictures of the project activities Annex 21 – Maps of project activities

**Progress:** This action has been successfully begun in all project sites except Vidusburtnieks. Actions in Vidusburtnieks are pending, mainly due to the difficulties with finding landowners. We are continuing the work in other areas and using all available means to contact the landowners in Vidusburtnieks.

In total, 1351 ha have been contracted for initial mowing (57% of planned in project), 761 ha (32%) of them complete. It is a good result, although is lower than planned in the project

at this period. The difference can be explained by the fact that in many areas bush cutting should be done prior to any other restoration activities. Thus, mowing is postponed until shrubs are removed. Please see maps in Annex 21 for location of restoration activities.

3 different methods are accepted for initial mowing:

- Manual mowing, with removal of hay – the most expensive and labour costly method, exercised in areas not accessible by any machinery or too complicated to be mechanically mown (e.g. due to tussocks, old riverbeds etc.)
- Mechanical mowing with removal of hay – commonly used method in cases when site is accessible, machinery is available and there are possibilities to use the hay collected (e.g. selling (very rare) or using in farmstead)
- Mechanical mowing with chopping of hay – most commonly used method in cases when site is accessible, but there is no market for hay. We accept leaving the chopped grass on the floodplain, as this method is acceptable in low and traditionally nutrient rich meadow types, such as floodplains. This restoration method is the least expensive.

**Variations/complications/delays:** Planned areas are not mown to date, but mowing is continuing also in September and October, thus percentages will reach the planned or will be very close to planned by the end of mowing season of 2006.

Problems with restoration occur due to incorrect and outdated land ownership information available in municipalities. Some landowners are not possible to locate and discuss habitat restoration options with them. This problem is described more in detail in description to action A.2.

### *E. Public awareness and dissemination of results*

As already mentioned in introduction to A actions, already during project introduction meetings it was recognized that level of awareness of local stakeholders on Natura 2000 issues is very low and much more work than initially planned should be done on information of local level stakeholders about nature conservation and Natura 2000. Therefore, much emphasis is put on individual contacts with landowners, different publications, campaigns and other information and education activities.

Individual letters to landowners have proven to be very useful, although rather time-consuming activity. We have sent 3 rounds of individual letters and each of them have raised the interest of landowners on floodplain restoration activities; many of landowners are stimulated to apply for Agri-environmental payments to Rural Support Service. Please see more information in description to action E.1.

Among most significant actions on top of those planned in the project we should mention our participation in the World Environment Day with campaign "Looking for Corncrake" on 4-5 June 2005. The campaign took place countrywide with final event in project sites – floodplain meadows in North Vidzeme biosphere reserve. Minister of Environment and local stakeholders participated in the event, it was widely published by different media. More information about the event was reported in Annex 3 of 1<sup>st</sup> Progress Report.

More than 120 different articles have been issued on different levels (from regional to national newspapers) during project implementation, prepared by public awareness coordinator. Please see the list of articles published since Progress Report (51 article) attached in Annex 16 to this report. Several TV broadcasts has also been shown on National Television, with story about floodplain restoration in project sites Burtnieki meadows, Ruja floodplains, Meadows of Seda River and Uzava floodplain. Video with 1<sup>st</sup> TV broadcast was attached in Annex 13 to 1<sup>st</sup> Progress Report. Please find the 2<sup>nd</sup> (Meadows of Seda River) and 3<sup>d</sup> (Uzava floodplains) TV broadcasts attached in Annex 17 to this report. Public awareness coordinator was interviewed on National Radio on 14/07/2006 and presented nature values project site Burtnieki meadows, Natura 2000 and possibilities for nature friendly tourism there.

Based on our experience and high need for more activities dealing with awareness building on Natura 2000, Latvian Fund for Nature have initiated the project to inform general public on Natura 2000, funded by Latvian Environmental Protection Fund. Within the frame of Natura 2000 project, open-air photo exhibition is traveling to all Latvian regions in 2006, educating general public about nature values in Natura 2000 sites. Many pictures (14 out of 40) in this exhibition are provided by our project, showing project sites and their values. Farms, participating in LIFE Floodplain project have been selected as demonstration farms in Natura 2000 project (3 farms – from Uzava, Sita & Pededze and Dviete floodplains). Please see more information about this project on our home page [www.ldf.lv](http://www.ldf.lv).

Project staff has attended different meetings with presentations about LIFE-Floodplain project, more information in description to action E.1. Home page of Latvian Fund for Nature and Latvian Ornithological society has been serving as good tool to disseminate information about floodplain nature values and project activities, more information in description to action E.2.

Another important tool for exchange of information and dissemination of experience is Study tours and international seminars. Project staff has participated in 4 study tours and 4 seminars to date, they have been very different (ranging from 2 project staff visiting Norwegian experts to discuss about conservation requirements of Great Snipe, to 39 people participating in study tour to Estonia to accumulate neighbor's experience of grassland management). Please see more information in description to action E.5.

Given the high demand for information about Natura 2000 and main nature values in project sites, we have printed the first project booklet earlier than initially planned in the project. It was printed already in July 2005, although initially planned only in 2006. Please see more information about project booklets in description to action E.8.

First information stands are being set up in project sites. Please see more information in description to action E.3.



<b>ACTION E.1 Informal letters and stakeholder meetings</b>		
<b>Time plan:</b> I 2005 – II 2008	<b>Variations/complications/delays:</b> Yes, new seminar proposed, see below	<b>Additional information:</b> Annex 1 – Pictures of the project activities Annex 6 – Examples of second and third landowner letters Annex 19 – Project envelopes Example of 1 <sup>st</sup> landowner letter attached to 1 <sup>st</sup> Progress Report

**Progress:** First informal letter was sent to all landowners in project sites prior to the project introduction meetings (described in detail in description to action A.1) providing them with insight into project goals, meeting agenda. In total, ca 800 letters were sent, and more than 50% of stakeholders attended the introduction meetings. It is very good rate and we believe that this rate is so high mainly due to these individual invitation letters we sent to each landowner. The example of the first letter to the landowners was attached in Annex 6 to 1<sup>st</sup> Progress Report.

Second letter was sent in 31/01/2006 to 843 landowners, with information about project progress, planned activities, Natura 2000 and new Law on Compensations. Many people called us after this letter, with particular interest on restoration and Agri-environmental payments. It has been also confirmed by local Rural Support Services in regions, that interest of landowners is higher after project communication activities.

Third letter to landowners was sent in March/April 2006 to 341 landowners in project sites where management planning is taking place in 2006. Please see examples of letters attached in Annex 6. Some problems have occurred during sending these letters – letters are sent back by post, due to lack of correct information about land ownership in municipalities (already described in description to action A.2).

Project staff is participating in various small-scale individual meetings and stakeholder negotiations on daily basis. Project regional coordinators are discussing with local stakeholders about management and restoration measures before contracts are signed, project manager is discussing with local majors (and liaison officers) about their participation in the project and further activities to be taken, financial assistant is having regular communication with project liaison officers on regular reports about municipality participation in the project. All these meetings are small scale and taking place when necessary, according to project activities.

In addition, we are addressing also other audiences that are interacting with local landowners and decision-makers on daily basis, such as rural consultants, media and tourism operators. Most important meetings with presentation of our project have been following:

- Regional training seminar for rural consultants from Latvian Rural advisory and training centre (Latgale region), 29.07.2005 – presentation of LIFE Floodplain project and distribution of booklet “Birds in Floodplains”. 130 participants, rural consultants from each municipality in Latgale region.
- Regional training seminar for rural consultants from Latvian Rural advisory and training centre (Kurzeme region), 10.08.2005 – presentation of LIFE Floodplain



- project and distribution of booklet “Birds in Floodplains”. 137 participants, rural consultants from each municipality in Kurzeme region.
- Baltic Ecotourism forum, 24.08.2005 – participation in discussion with examples from LIFE Floodplain project, distribution of booklet “Birds in Floodplains”. 70 participants, ecotourism organisers from Baltic states;
  - Regional training seminar for rural consultants from Latvian Rural advisory and training centre (Zemgale region), 29.08.2005 – presentation of LIFE Floodplain project and distribution of booklet “Birds in Floodplains”. 120 participants, rural consultants from each municipality in Zemgale region.
  - Seminar for young environmental journalists, 23.09.2005, presentation of the LIFE Floodplain project.
  - Meeting of Jelgava city council, 09.02.2006, presentation of the LIFE Floodplain project.
  - Project pictures presentation to Latvian nature photographers, 12.02.2006.
  - Training tour for nature guides (43 persons) to Burtnieki meadows – to enhance inclusion of project sites and farms in tourism routes, 26.03.2006.
  - Presentation on biological diversity in floodplains to farmers in Valka, 14 participants, 03.05.2006.
  - Public awareness coordinator participating as guide in excursion to Matsalu NP, Estonia. 48 participants, 6-7.05.2006.
  - Practical training for farmers as nature guides in Valka region (18 participants), 23.05.2006.
  - Natura 2000 forum in Natural History museum of Latvia, 30 participants, 24.05.2006.
  - Seminar “Financing Natura 2000”, presentation of project experience, 80 participants, 09.06.2006.

To facilitate distribution of the letters and raise public awareness on Natura 2000 and project, we have printed project envelopes, with Natura 2000 logo and symbolised floodplain meadow. Please find the examples of envelopes attached in Annex 10 to the Report.

**Variations/complications/delays:** During 2<sup>nd</sup> project Steering group meeting, we invited project municipality partners to submit their proposals on municipality needs for trainings on Natura 2000 related subjects. The need for training seminar on tourism in Natura 2000 sites was expressed. During the implementation of the project we see that issue of restoration of floodplains is not only the question of funds available, but also the question of rural traditions and farmer activity. We have come to conclusion that in order to ensure further maintenance of floodplains (located mostly in rural areas) we have to support the rural lifestyle and enhance local economy. We evaluated this proposal and would like to follow up on it, as it is very important to support nature friendly economic activities in our project sites and to support better understanding of these activities among local stakeholders.

Although LIFE project is designed for restoration of floodplains, we hope that it is also possible to trigger additional activities having direct impact on further management of restored areas. Therefore, we would like to organise 2 regional trainings/seminars “Economic alternatives for Natura 2000 sites - tourism”, for local municipalities and farmers, within the frame of project action A.1.

We plan to invite the following presentations:

1. Andris Klepers – Tourism product development and promotion in Natura 2000 sites
2. Daniel Green – The Black River Valley of central Sweden – an example of international birdwatching tourism
3. Juris Smalinskis - Environment as tourism resource, good and bad examples of sustainable use of this resource
4. Aiga Petkevica - Tourism development plan for Lake Engure Nature park Natura 2000 site - pilot project in Latvia
5. Andris Klepers - Bird watching codex
6. Presentation from North Vidzeme Biosphere reserve - Visual identity for protected areas and Natura 2000 sites
7. Environmental Guides presentation
8. Rural Tourism association - Rural goods

Seminars will be organised in October 2006.

ACTION E.2		
Design and update of project homepage		
<b>Time plan:</b> IV 2004 – II 2008	<b>Variations/complications/delays:</b> No	<b>Additional information:</b> Annex 7 - printouts of latest project news posted Printouts of project news posted on 1.10.2004-30.09.2005 included in 1 <sup>st</sup> Progress Report

**Progress:** First project news were posted on project homepage on 07.10.2005, since then 30 news items have been posted on project home page within homepage of Latvian Fund for Nature. Please see printouts of latest news (time period 01/10/2005 – 30/06/2006) attached in Annex 7.

Project home page has been established within homepage of Latvian Fund for Nature [www.ldf.lv](http://www.ldf.lv). It contains general information about project (with information about project goals, nature values, Natura 2000, general publications, socio-economic context of the project, news archive and photos), and sub-sections for each of the project sites. Site sub-sections can be accessed by clicking on site names in the introduction of the project. We include all site-specific information into respective sub-sections, e.g. general information about site, management plans (draft working versions and final approved ones, English summaries), announcements, project publications (booklets, MP summaries, information stands), maps with habitats and management activities and pictures of the sites. Example of sub-section for Sita and Pededze floodplain please see on [http://www.ldf.lv/pub/?doc\\_id=28429](http://www.ldf.lv/pub/?doc_id=28429)

Project homepage have been also set up within homepage of Latvian Ornithological Society [www.lob.lv](http://www.lob.lv), this home page is focusing more on floodplain protection from the bird perspective.

Printouts of both homepages (in Latvian and English) were attached to 1<sup>st</sup> Progress Report.

<b>ACTION E.3</b>	<b>Information signs</b>	
<b>Time plan:</b> I 2006 – I 2008	<b>Variations/complications/delays:</b> Yes, see below	<b>Additional information:</b> Annex 1 – Pictures of the project activities

**Progress:** Although activities within this action were only planned to begin in 2006, we already started to work on designs and standards for information boards and other informative materials in 2005. Visual identity guidelines, funded by GEF/UNDP, have been prepared for North Vidzeme Biosphere reserve (6 of our project sites are situated in NVBR); we contributed information about nature values and local municipality information to this process. Nature Protection Board has also prepared visual identity guide, to be used for all protected areas in Latvia. All project publications are following these guidelines, as well as LIFE requirements for publicity of Community support.

Designs for information signs have been prepared and discussed among project participants. Stands contain information about Natura 2000, LIFE Floodplain project, local municipalities, site protection rules, nature values, habitat restoration activities, and tourism attractions in the region. They are placed on wooden poles, with wooden roof. The size of each stand is 1100x1600 cm.

First information signs have been printed and set up – in project sites Sita and Pededze floodplains and Mugurve meadows (in total 3 stands), with participation of EC representative Ms Sylvie Ludain. 2 stands have been set up in project site Burtnieki meadows and 4 stands – in Dviete floodplain. The number and location of information stands is planned in management plans and discussed with municipalities. Please see pictures of the information signs attached in Annex 1.

Pictures and designs of the information stands are also available on project home page [www.ldf.lv](http://www.ldf.lv), under sub-sections of respective sites.

**Variations/complications/delays:** Activity has started earlier than planned, with participation in elaboration of visual identity guidelines for project sites in North Vidzeme Biosphere reserve. We plan to set up information stands in 7 project sites in 2006.

<b>ACTION E.4</b>	<b>Seminar for capacity building of meadow management planners</b>	
<b>Time plan:</b> IV 2007	<b>Variations/complications/delays:</b> No	<b>Additional information:</b> No

**Progress:** Action has not begun yet, according to the time plan.

<b>ACTION E.5</b>	<b>Study Tours to other grassland management areas in Latvia and EU, participation in international seminars on grassland management</b>	
<b>Time plan:</b> I 2005 – II 2007	<b>Variations/complication s/ delays:</b> No	<b>Additional information:</b> 1 <sup>st</sup> Progress report, Annexes 7-11, Study tour reports from Norway, Lubans, Matsalu, Finland and Austria. Annex 1 – Pictures of the project activities Annex 8 – Belarus Study tour report Annex 9 – Denmark conference report Annex 10 – Green Week conference report

**Progress:** To date, 2 **short study tours for project staff** have taken place in Latvia and 2 outside Latvia.

One of them was study tour of project staff to LIFE project “Management of Lubans wetland” in 15-16 February 2005. The report of this study tour was attached to 1<sup>st</sup> Progress Report.

The second short study tour was organised for Livberze municipality; they visited Lake Engure Nature Park and learned about experience of already finished LIFE project “Implementation of the management plan for Lake Engure Nature Park”. This study tour took place in 19.07.2005 with 20 participants.

Third short study tour for project staff took place in 29.06 – 04.07.2005. It was organised to visit Norwegian experts on management of Great Snipe and to share information about conservation requirements of this species. Special accept to organise this study tour was received from European Commission DG ENV (letter DG ENV/D1/SL/nb D(2005) 7458, dated 18.04.2005). Report of this study tour was attached to 1<sup>st</sup> Progress Report.

Fourth short study tour for project staff outside Latvia took place in 30.05.2006. It was organised to visit Belarusian experts and natural floodplains in River Pripjat, discuss flood management experiences and share habitat restoration experiences. Special accept to organise this study tour was received from European Commission DG ENV (letter DG ENV/D1/SL/nb D(2006) 4373, dated 03.03.2006). Report of this study tour please find attached in Annex 8 to this Report.

Project staff (project manager and public awareness coordinator) visited LIFE Razna project on 01.03.2006, to discuss project implementation, in particular public information aspects.

1<sup>st</sup> **Study tour for project partners** was organised in 4-5 August 2005 and targeted at grassland management experience in Matsalu National Park, Estonia. It was attended by project staff and project partners, with 39 participants (including representatives from municipalities, nature protection governmental institutions, most active landowners, media and project staff). Report of this study tour was attached to 1<sup>st</sup> Progress Report.

Information about the study tour was also published on project home page [www.ldf.lv](http://www.ldf.lv).

The high interest raised by study tour to Matsalu (articles in newspapers please see in the list of articles in Annex 16 and attached to the 1<sup>st</sup> Progress Report) resulted in repeated excursion to Matsalu NP, Estonia for general public, organised and paid by Impro Travels tours operator, where public awareness coordinator participated as guide. 48 participants, 6-7.05.2006.

2<sup>nd</sup> Study tour for project partners is in preparation, it will take place in Finland, 15-17 August 2006.

Please see pictures from all study tours attached in Annex 1 to this report.

In addition to participation in study tours, project staff has participated in 4 **international seminars** targeted at issues related to floodplain management and public involvement.

On 13-17 June 2005 project public awareness coordinator participated in conference „Sustainable Development through Education” in Finland. Participation in conference was combined with visit to Finnish LIFE-Nature project 2003-2007 *”Management of wetlands along the Gulf of Finland migratory flyway”*, to exchange information and assess the possibility to organise study tour for Latvian municipalities to this project. The Report of the conference and project visit was attached to 1<sup>st</sup> Progress Report.

On 26-29 September 2005 project regional coordinator Ainars Aunins participated in international LIFE-Symposium “Riverine Landscapes - Restoration, Flood Protection, Conservation” in Austria. The Report of the conference was attached to 1<sup>st</sup> Progress Report.

On 19-21.04.2006 project regional coordinators and project manager participated in conference “Wetland Restoration and Management”, organised by LIFE projects implemented by Fyn County, Denmark. Project manager did presentation “Restoration of Floodplains” in seminar session 1. Please see seminar report and program attached in Annex 9.

On 31.05-02.06.2006 project manager and public awareness coordinator participated in EU Green Week in Brussels. Please find the seminar report attached in Annex 10 to this Report.

To summarize different events where project staff has participated and compare them to planned, please see the table below:

Planned:	6 short study tours for project staff	3 study tours for project partners	5 international seminars
Already taken place:	4 study tours (Lubans, Engure, Norway and Belarus)	1 study tour to Matsalu Planned study tour to Finland	4 seminars (Finland, Austria, Denmark, EU Green Week)

A group of 19 persons from Helsinki Environment Centre visited project sites on 19-22 April 2006. They visited project site Lake Burtnieki meadows and used opportunity to spend some time in bird watching tower, whilst others were interested in discussions with local municipality about environment policy and practice. They also visited project site Lielupe floodplains in Jelgava and discussed the aspects of Natura 2000 sites in urban areas. There were representatives from LIFE-Nature project (Management of wetlands along the Gulf of Finland migratory flyway) in the group and experience was exchanged on best practices of making tourism infrastructure in specially protected nature areas. Based on

established contacts the program for planned study tour to Finland (see more information above) was prepared.

<b>ACTION E.6</b>		
<b>Production of grassland management handbook</b>		
<b>Time plan:</b> II 2007 – I 2008	<b>Variations/complications/delays:</b> No	<b>Additional information:</b> No

**Progress:** Action has not begun yet, according to the time plan. We will assess the experience of other LIFE projects dealing with grassland management and restoration, as part of the handbook (recommendation from EC mission 5-6/07/2006).

<b>ACTION E.7</b>		
<b>Production of summary management plans</b>		
<b>Time plan:</b> I 2006, I 2007	<b>Variations/complications/delays:</b> Yes, see below	<b>Additional information:</b> Annex 11 - Printed summary management plans

**Progress:** Summary management plans have been produced for 7 project sites. They have been prepared by hired experts, edited and supervised by project public awareness coordinator. Please find the publications attached in Annex 11 to this Report. Summary management plans have been sent to all landowners in project sites Uzava floodplains, Mugurve meadows, Kalnciema meadows, Sita and Pededze floodplain, Dviete floodplain, Vidusburtnieks meadows and Burtnieki meadows. Content of the summary management plans:

Introduction

Description of territory

What is Natura 2000?

Species and habitats in the area

Site protection goals

Protection rules in the site

Management measures in the site

Information for visitors

Information about LIFE project is included on back cover of each publication

Summaries of the management plans are also published on project website [www.ldf.lv](http://www.ldf.lv).

**Variations/complications/delays:** Each of the summary plans have been printed in 200 copies, instead of 500 planned. There is no need for printing this publication in more copies, as it is targeted specifically on land managers and municipalities. We have assessed the average number of landowners per site and decided that there is no need to print excess copies that would not be necessary. Given the lower number of copies printed and resources saved, we have included more information than initially planned (in average, publications consist of 16 pages, A.4 format, full colour).

<b>ACTION E.8</b>	<b>Informal booklets about project sites and management of habitats for <i>Crex crex</i>* and other target species</b>	
<b>Time plan:</b> I-II 2006, IV 2007- I 2008	<b>Variations/complications/delays:</b> Yes	<b>Additional information:</b> Booklet “Birds in Floodplains” attached to 1 <sup>st</sup> Progress report Annex 12 –Project site booklets

**Progress:** First project booklet “Birds in Floodplains” (called *Crex crex*\* booklet in project proposal) was printed already in July 2005, although initially planned only in 2006. It was printed in full color, in 15000 copies in Latvian. The booklet contains information about grasslands in Latvia, bird species breeding and feeding in floodplains, their habitat requirements and recommendations for habitat management, main threats to floodplains in Latvia and measures to avoid them, about LIFE Floodplain project. Ca 10 000 copies of the booklet has been distributed to date, mainly to municipality partners, rural consultants, protected areas administrations, environmental NGOs, nature guides, participants of study tours, farmers and landowners.

3 project site booklets have been printed for 5 project sites, in full color, Latvian and English, please find them attached in Annex 12.

1. Sita and Pededze floodplains and Mugurve meadows – printed in 5000 copies
2. Dviete floodplain- printed in 7000 copies
3. Uzava floodplain – printed in 5000 copies

Booklet for project sites Burtnieki and Vidusburtnieks meadows is in print (7000 copies).

Site booklets contain information about Natura 2000, nature and historical values of the territory, management measures, LIFE Floodplain project, tourism information and a map. They are prepared, according visual identity guidelines elaborated by Nature Protection Board and North Vidzeme biosphere reserve.

Booklets are distributed via local municipalities and tourism information centres. Booklet is available also on project home page [www.ldf.lv](http://www.ldf.lv).

**Variations/complications/delays:** Given the high demand for information about floodplain management and main nature values in project sites, we have printed the first project booklet earlier than initially planned in the project.

We have assessed the situation with booklets and decided that it will be more cost effective to group some of the project sites per booklets. We have done so with sites Sita&Pededze and Mugurve (one booklet) and also with Burtnieks and Vidusburtnieks (one booklet). Those sites are located close to each other and thus can be seen as unified tourism product. Therefore, we save resources and are able to print more booklets. We are assessing the possibility to print additional booklets about flood management and effects, management of biologically valuable grasslands and management of floodplains in particular. Final decision on content of extra booklets will be taken during 2006.

<b>ACTION E.9</b>	<b>Publication of layman's report</b>	
<b>Time plan:</b> II 2008	<b>Variations/complications/delays:</b> No	<b>Additional information:</b> No

**Progress:** Action has not begun yet, according to the time plan.

<b>ACTION E.10</b>	<b>Closing event of the project</b>	
<b>Time plan:</b> II 2008	<b>Variations/complications/delays:</b> No	<b>Additional information:</b> No

**Progress:** Action has not begun yet, according to the time plan.



## ***F. Overall project operation***

Overall project operation involves staff management, organisation of the Steering Group meetings and monitoring of the project performance. All these activities are proceeding well, described in detail in sections below.

1<sup>st</sup> Progress Report was delivered in October 2005; this is second project Report (Interim Report with payment request).

Project organigram is included in Chapter 2 of this Report.

<b>ACTION F.1</b>	<b>Establishment and meetings of the Project Steering Group, monitoring of project performance</b>	
<b>Time plan:</b> IV 2004 – I 2008	<b>Variations/complications/delays:</b> Yes, see below	<b>Additional information:</b> 1 <sup>st</sup> and 2 <sup>nd</sup> SG presentations – attached to the 1 <sup>st</sup> Progress Report Annex 1 – Pictures of the project activities Annex 13 – Presentation about project performance to the 3 <sup>rd</sup> Steering Group meeting

***Progress:*** Project Steering Group consists of representatives from all project partner municipalities (usually majors or project liaison officers), Ministry of Environment, North Vidzeme Biosphere reserve, Nature Protection board, Latvian Ornithological society, Latvian Environmental Protection fund and UNDP/GEF project “Conservation of Biological Diversity in North Vidzeme Biosphere reserve”, in total 29 persons, excluding project staff.

The first Steering Group (SG) meeting was first called together in 27.04.2005. It took place in the premises of the Ministry of Environment, in Riga. Second Steering Group meeting was called in 23-24 August 2005; it took place in farm “Kempeni” next to the project site “Meadows of Seda River”. The third Steering Group meeting was first called together in January 2006, but postponed due to weather conditions (low temperatures), as many municipality representatives were not able to attend. 3<sup>rd</sup> Steering Group meeting finally took place on 30.05.2006, in Sigulda. Printouts of presentations of 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> SG meetings have been attached to the 1<sup>st</sup> Progress Report. Please see presentation to the 3<sup>rd</sup> SG meeting attached in Annex 13. Next Steering Group meeting is planned to take place in October 2006.

***Variations/complications/delays:*** Establishment of the Steering Group was delayed for ca 6 months, due to municipal elections that took place in March 2005. We decided to wait for new majors to be elected – to set up the Steering group with new majors from the very beginning, not to change the content of the Steering group already after the first meeting.

<b>ACTION F.2</b>	<b>Initiation of the monitoring system on the effects achieved by management measures</b>	
<b>Time plan:</b> I 2005 – II 2008	<b>Variations/complications/delays:</b> No	<b>Additional information:</b> Monitoring Report 2005 – attached to the 1 <sup>st</sup> Progress Report Annex 14 – Monitoring report 2006

**Progress:** Project staff decided on general monitoring system in project meeting on 11.04.2005. The project regional coordinators and hired experts are undertaking monitoring (2 night counts of project target species per season, monitoring of vegetation cover and monitoring of effect of management measures) according to established scheme. This monitoring data is very useful also for preparation of management plans for project sites, action A.5. Monitoring report for first project season (2005) was included in 1<sup>st</sup> Progress Report. Please see monitoring report for second project season attached in Annex 14 to this report.

As the main objective of the project is to prevent further decline of *Crex crex* and *Gallinago media* populations by restoring or improving conditions of their breeding habitats, we chose additional bird species as indicators changes, in whose density or presence/absence would characterise processes going on in the Project areas due to project activities. To keep the programme cost effective, monitoring plots were established in the areas where restoration activities have been planned. As the main species targeted by the project are active at night, the other indicator species were also chosen among species that are active during the night. Presence of *Aquila pomarina* in Project areas was recorded on daily activities – mapping areas for restoration, mapping of baseline vegetation cover *etc.* Presence of Hermit beetle was detected using pellet items, which were collected in suitable broadleaf trees and identified by entomologists in close investigations that were done as part of management plan preparation. Location of trees with *Osmoderma eremita* was digitized using GPS device.

In 2005, special field surveys were performed for mapping of the baseline vegetation cover. The mapping was done on hardcopy printouts at scale 1:10000 marking meadow parts with different pattern of overgrowing or structure as separate polygons. Management activities are being mapped digitally as a polygon layer in an ArcView geodatabase using aerial orthophotos as a reference. They are used as a part of the contracts with farmers. If the contract has not been fully accomplished, the necessary adjustments are done to the data layer accordingly. This activity is still in the process.

In 2006 bird mapping was performed twice in each of the Project Areas. To completely cover a representative area where management activities were initially planned, 34 routes for indicator bird species mapping were set up in the beginning of the first breeding season. Date, starting and ending time as well as weather conditions were registered for each route surveyed. The first mapping took place between May 11 and May 31 while the second mapping – between June 5 and July 7. Mapping data are digitally stored as a point layer in an ArcView geodatabase.

In 2006 mapping of the indicator bird species was performed twice in each of the Project Areas. When doing the counts on 2006, the bird counting routes were kept the same as in 2005, to obtain comparable data. In the few cases where additional areas were surveyed and mapped in 2006, these records were kept separately from those matching the 2005 counts.

Mapping data were added to the ArcGIS geodatabase and digitally stored as a point layer together with the mapping data of the previous year. The first mapping count in 2006 took place between May 13 and May 30 while the second mapping count – between June 5 and June 18. Mapping data are digitally stored as a point layer in an ArcView geodatabase.

We have also established monitoring plots in areas where project action C.2 (Shrub root destruction) will be taking place in project site “Sita and Pededze floodplains” – to record the situation before this experimental restoration method will be applied. 60 small-scale vegetation monitoring plots have been set up. Before starting C.2 in Mugurve meadows and Vidusburtnieks, similar works will be done in those territories.

<b>ACTION F.3 Administration of the project</b>		
<b>Time plan:</b> IV 2004 – II 2008	<b>Variations/complications/delays:</b> No	<b>Additional information:</b> Partner agreements included in 1 <sup>st</sup> Progress Report Annex 15 – Partner agreements of new partners

**Progress:** Action is proceeding as planned. All planned project staff has been hired. Please see the list of permanent staff:

Inga Racinska – project manager

Ainars Aunins – project regional coordinator (Eastern Latvia sites)

Janis Reihmanis – project regional coordinator (Western Latvia sites)

Andris Klepers – project public awareness coordinator

Ieva Spage – project accountant/secretary

Already at the beginning of the project we have increased the workload of secretary/financial assistant. This decision was taken based on evaluation of actual work to be done when processing the monthly reports of municipalities – project partners. They need a lot of assistance, to ensure that their reports are prepared according LIFE SAP requirements.

All municipalities have hired project liaison officers, their workload ranges depending on local situation (number of landowners, number of project sites in municipality etc.). They are preparing monthly financial reports to the Latvian Fund for Nature and assisting to project staff in communication with local landowners, and providing all necessary local information.

Internal project meetings are taking place on regular basis; they took place on 11.01.2005, 11.04.2005, 29.06.2005, 08.11.2005, 03.01.2006, 03.07.2006, and 18.07.2006.

Partner agreements have been signed with all project partners, summary of contracts and copies of all contracts were attached in Annex 16 to 1<sup>st</sup> Progress Report. Regional reform of municipalities is taking place in Latvia, so some of the partners might change their status. The final date of the reform is political decision and it has not been set yet. First Additional Clause to the Project (24.05.2006) was introduced as project partner Pilskalne municipality was replaced by Ilukste Regional Council (including also Pilskalne municipality). Nevertheless, these changes do not have significant impact on project implementation as administrations of local municipalities are in place and will be maintained. If more of our

partner municipalities will join sub-regional structures, we will re-sign the partner agreements with sub-regional administrations. We will communicate all the changes as soon as they occur.

3 additional partners have joined the project – Jeri, Vilpulka and Ance municipalities (First Additional Clause, 24.05.2006). Please find their Partner Agreements included in Annex 15. We are very much welcoming new municipality partners to the project, as they rise the project profile on local level, that is crucially important for successful implementation of the project.

2 winches have been purchased for use on rented all terrain vehicles. The necessity for winches was explained in our letter to EC in 25.07.2005, accept for purchase of winches received on 10.08.2005. By the end of the project the value of winches is foreseen to be less then 1/5 of their purchase value. We plan that further utilisation of the winches after the project end would be depending on their condition, if in good condition – they will be installed on vehicles of Latvian Fund for Nature (involved in projects dealing with project sites) or entrusted to project partners. You have requested detailed account of all expenditures in Durable costs category (your letter DG ENV/D1/SL/nb D (2005) 26972, 21.12.2005); please find it in Chapter 6 *Comments on Financial Report*.

If comparing the planned and actual costs of the action, we foresee that problems might occur with higher costs than planned in travel cost position, as fuel costs have increased since the project was planned. We are discussing this problem more in detail in Chapter 4 of this report.

As already communicated during EC mission to Latvia (5-6.07.2006) we are planning to organise public speaking training for project staff. Please see more information in description of action A.6.

<b>ACTION F.4</b>	<b>Audit of the project</b>	
<b>Time plan:</b> I-II 2008	<b>Variations/complications/delays:</b> No	<b>Additional information:</b> No

**Progress:** Action has not begun yet, according to the time plan.

← Formatted: Bullets and Numbering

## 4. EVALUATION AND CONCLUSIONS

### 4.1. Process

Project has been running for almost 2 years now, it started in October 2004 and will last until June 2008. 1<sup>st</sup> Progress Report was submitted in October 2005. Project is rather complicated, with 22 municipality partners and 3 institutional partners. Nevertheless, the complexity of the project is inevitable, as it includes 15 Natura 2000 sites all over Latvia. Therefore, project staff is traveling a lot to ensure successful implementation of the project. The main challenge to the project is to ensure successful integration of municipality partners and farmers in the project and their ownership of the project. To stimulate that, project staff, in particular project manager and public awareness coordinator are putting much effort in communication with municipalities – via liaison officers and directly with municipality leaders. Project regional coordinators are ensuring daily communication with landowners and site managers.

We are paying attention to the cost-efficiency of project activities and modifying them, if necessary. To achieve higher cost efficiency, we have decided to group booklets printed and thus save resources (please see more information in description to action E.8). We have also decided to evaluate the need for farmer training seminars (Agri-environment), as currently similar trainings are offered by other institutions (please see more information in description to action A.7).

The division of the roles of project participants has been described in Chapter 2.

Formatted: Bullets and Numbering

### 4.2. Project management

There are no major difficulties with implementation of the project activities recognized at this stage of the project. Few of the actions, namely A.7 and some of C activities have been slightly delayed, for different reasons, described below and in Progress sections of respective activities.

Restoration works are taking more time than initially planned in the project. It was expected that works would be completed within max one year from the date of contract signing. As we see now, in reality it takes more time, especially in the final phase of restoration - removal of bushes and hay. Also there are many contracts where most of the work is done, but final payment is due to the fact that bushes are not totally removed, or some other minor remarks received from regional coordinators. Additionally, there are extensions to the contracts due to difficult weather conditions and other practical considerations. All these obstacles were not foreseen in the planning phase due to the fact that to date actually no projects have been undertaking restoration works on such scale and arrangements as in our project. We are carefully planning restoration activities for the last 2 years of the project to ensure that final targets of the project will be achieved in time.

As it was stressed by major of Alsunga during the EC mission to LIFE-Floodplains project in 2005, the main difficulties for implementation of project actions on local level are following: access problems to some of the sites and problems with removal of hay. For some sites, the access problem really will be limiting factor and restoration actions will have to be transferred to nearby areas with same conservation value. There will be no use of

involving extra machinery and efforts for cutting the shrub in such areas, as further maintenance of these areas is anyway impossible due to the access problems. To address the problem of removal of hay and encourage local people to participate in project activities, we have restoration measure “mechanised moving with chopping of hay” without removal of hay. So, for the areas where it is not possible to remove hay, we are applying this measure. In case of floodplains this measure is very appropriate, as they actually do not suffer from leaving the hay after moving.

Smaller scale problems, such as outdated and incorrect land ownership information, need for repeated restoration actions in most dense overgrown areas, delay with implementation of restoration actions due to weather restrictions, implementation of burning action are discussed in description to respective activities (A.2, C.1, introduction to C actions, C.5).

3 new municipality partners have joined the project– Jeri, Vilpulka and Ance municipalities (First Additional Clause, 24.05.2006). We are very much welcoming new municipality partners to the project, as they prove the importance of the project to the local communities and rise the project profile on local level, that is crucially important for successful implementation of the project.

### **4.3. Success and failures**

Project activities are implemented according the planned schedule, we are adjusting it if necessary for better project implementation, and communicated it accordingly. Project is proceeding well with cooperation with municipality partners and local stakeholders as much effort is put into this aspect. More than 120 different articles and other media products have been issued since the beginning of the project, with information about nature friendly management of floodplains, nature values and Natura 2000. This is a significant input into public awareness building in Latvia, towards acceptance and understanding of Natura 2000. We believe that we will change (and actually are changing already) the attitude of the general public, in particular on local level, towards farming and other economic activities in Natura 2000. Please see more information in introduction to Actions E.

### **4.4. Comparison against the project-objectives**

Restoration of biologically most important floodplain areas is in process, large areas have been contracted for restoration and more are planned. The success of restoration processes is measured by benefit to species and habitats that is currently in process - assessed in project action F.2.

### **4.5. Environmental benefits, policy and legislation implications**

← Formatted: Bullets and Numbering

Project has triggered several activities on national level that are closely related to management and restoration of floodplains. Analysis of legislation, performed under project action A.8 have provided useful recommendations for improvements of legislative basis, dealing with habitat management and restoration.

In addition, we are working on policy level in Latvia, participating in preparation of new Rural Development Plan for Latvia (2007-2013), to ensure that floodplain management issues are taken up in this plan.

Site management plans, prepared for 7 project sites (and in preparation for 7 more) are setting the means to ensure favourable conservation status for habitats and species of EU and national importance. Necessary management actions are recommended and planned, thus further management and restoration of natural values of the sites is enhanced. Management plans serve as road maps for municipalities, landowners and NGOs willing to manage and maintain the natural values in the Natura 2000 sites. They offer solutions, based on scientific studies and work of many experts. In addition to management plans (that are adopted by the Ministry of Environment and have a recommendation status) we are preparing drafts of "Individual Protection and Management Rules" for project sites Sita and Pededze floodplains, Mugurve meadows, Uzava floodplains, Dviete floodplains and Burtnieki meadows. These Rules are adopted by the Cabinet of Ministers and will regulate the management and protection of the sites for longer time period.

#### **4.6. Innovation, demonstration value**

Project has important role in demonstration of floodplain restoration and management value in Latvia. We are changing the attitude of the general public from looking at protected floodplain as useless piece of land with lots of restrictions towards seeing floodplain as rich natural area and seeing its economical value as well. We are talking about floodplain meadows in Latvia as Natura 2000 sites and disseminating information about Natura 2000 in general. Our project is one of the first projects that demonstrate that protected areas might bring also income, not only restrictions. Given the low level of awareness on Natura 2000 in Latvia, we are planning many activities to educate general public, especially on local level. Please see the list of articles of the project attached in Annex 16.

Project activities have established good cooperation with municipalities and initiated also other organisations to become active in management and maintenance of floodplains. For example, 2 of project sites (Sita&Pededze floodplains and Dviete floodplain) have received support from Ark Foundation (Highland cattle, ca 50 000 EUR), to begin grazing in floodplain meadows. Cattle started grazing on those areas on 13.05.2006 and Konik horses are expected to arrive there on 26.08.2006.

Our project activities have stimulated local farmers to get more involved in networking and exchange of experiences. One of the farmers of the project (in Dviete) has applied for prestige "Sejejs" prize for nature farms that is awarded every year by Ministries of Agriculture and Environment. The results will be announced in September 2006.

We are planning to organize networking seminars where landowners will be visiting each other and participating in study tours. First seminars are planned to take place in project site "Sita and Pededze floodplains" and "Uzava floodplains" at the end of July 2006.

#### **4.7. Socio-economic effects**

Project is complicated from the social point of view, as it is dealing with very different areas – starting with areas around Jelgava city where building pressure is affecting the protected areas and ending with areas in Eastern Latvia where local communities are very poor and thus not able to invest in restoration of floodplains. We have to adapt to different situations and very different attitudes, use different tools for communication and different arguments for each case.

Project is playing important role in socio-economy of local municipalities. We expect that increase of awareness on floodplains and natural territories in general will yield improved rural situation, with more people deciding to stay in countryside and establish small-scale farms, dealing with tourism and nature management.

#### **4.8. Future: sustainability**

Sustainability of the project is ensured by the way project is set up. Farmers are receiving one-time payment for restoration works from project, while future maintenance of the restored areas is ensured by EU Agri-environmental payments.

Site management plans prepared within project activities A.5 and A.6 have set the management goals and measures for project sites for next 10 years, they are a tool to be used by local municipalities, farmers and NGOs to ensure sustainable management of the project sites - Natura 2000 sites.

← - - - Formatted: Bullets and Numbering



## 5. PLANNED PROJECT PROGRESS

Project will continue implementation of habitat restoration activities, contracting farmers and supervising restoration works. Landowner database will continue to be updated; we will do our best to minimize the problems related to lack of correct land ownership information.

Management plans will be finalized in 2006, with public hearings at the end of 2006 or beginning of 2007. Based on management plans, drafts of “Individual Protection and Management Rules” for 7 more project sites will be prepared and submitted to Ministry of Environment. Following publications will be prepared for those project sites where management plans are in the process currently – summary management plans, site booklets and information stands. For those of sites, that had management plans prepared in 2005 these publications are already prepared or in process now.

Project will continue work with local stakeholders, sending individual letters, conducting meetings and preparing publications for local and national media. Trainings for local stakeholders will be continued, the scope of trainings depending on project goals, decisions of Steering group and overall situation.

Study tours have proven to be a very good and attractive tool for education of local project players, we will continue with Study tour to Finland in 15-17 August 2006. All municipalities and most active landowners have been invited to join the Study Tour.

Among actions that have not been started yet, we can list preparation of grassland management handbook, seminar on meadow management. We begin to plan these activities as well.



## LIST OF ANNEXES

- Annex 1 – Pictures of project activities and project sites
- Annex 2 – CD with 7 management plans prepared in 2005 (in Latvian)
- Annex 3 – English summaries of management plans prepared in 2005
  - 3A –Burtnieki meadows
  - 3B – Dviete floodplains
  - 3C – Kalnciems meadows
  - 3D – Mugurve meadows
  - 3E – Sita and Pededze floodplains
  - 3F – Uzava floodplains
  - 3G – Vidusburtnieks meadows
- Annex 4 – Summary of analysis of legislation in English
- Annex 5 – Full report on analysis of legislation in Latvian
- Annex 6 – Examples of second and third landowner letters
- Annex 7 - Printouts of latest news (time period 01/10/2005 – 30/06/2006) posted on website
- Annex 8 – Belarus Study tour report
- Annex 9 – Denmark conference report
- Annex 10 – Green Week conference report
- Annex 11- Summary management plans, printed, in Latvian
- Annex 12 – 3 project site booklets
- Annex 13 – Presentation to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Steering Group meeting
- Annex 14 – Monitoring report 2006
- Annex 15 – Partner agreements of new partners – Jeri, Vilpulka and Ance municipalities
- Annex 16 – List of project articles
- Annex 17 – TV broadcasts
- Annex 18 - Maps of Natura 2000 sites and initial project site borders (maps with site borders as in Project proposal + existing Natura 2000 site borders)
- Annex 19 – Project envelopes
- Annex 20 – Report of seminar “Maintenance of biodiversity in rural areas – possibilities of Rural Development Plan” (in Latvian)
- Annex 21 – Maps of project activities
- Annex 22 – List of project partners