



Project LIFE04NAT/LV/000198

# Restoration of Latvian Floodplains for EU Priority Species and Habitats

**PROGRESS REPORT**  
Covering period 01.10.2004 – 30.09.2005



Date of the report: 11 October 2005



Report compiled by Inga Račinska, project manager, Latvian Fund for Nature  
Address: Raiņa blvd. 31-6, Riga, LV-1050, LATVIA  
Tel: +371 7830998, fax: +371 7 830291  
E-mail address: [inga@lanet.lv](mailto:inga@lanet.lv)

# Table of Contents

<b>Section 1. INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>1.1. Background to the project</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>1.2. Overview of main conservation issues being addressed</b>	<b>3</b>
Decrease and fragmentation of open grassland areas, degradation of meadow quality, overgrowing of oak stands	3
Early grass mowing, risk of ploughing and afforestation of the meadows	3
<b>1.3. Objectives of the project as defined in application</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Section 2. SUMMARY</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>2.1. Summary of the activities during report period</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>2.2. Summary table of activities</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>2.3. Milestones during report period and checklist of identifiable products</b>	<b>6</b>
2.3.1. SUMMARY OF PROJECT MILESTONES	6
2.3.2. SUMMARY OF DELIVERABLE PRODUCTS	6
<b>2.4. Problems or difficulties expected</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Section 3. TECHNICAL REPORT (BY ACTIVITY)</b>	<b>8</b>
A. Preparatory actions, elaboration of management plans and/or of action plan	8
C. Non-recurring management	13
E. Public awareness and dissemination of results	16
F. Overall project operation	20
<b>LIST OF ANNEXES</b>	<b>22</b>
ANNEX 1 – List of project introduction meetings	23
ANNEX 2 – Examples of contracts – PP/I and PP/II	24
ANNEX 3 – Printouts of news posted on project home page (in Latvian and English)	
ANNEX 4 – List of articles and copies of newspapers	
ANNEX 5 – Printouts of project home pages in Latvian and English	
ANNEX 6 – Example of first letter sent to landowners	
ANNEX 7 – Study tour report – Norway	
ANNEX 8 – Study tour report – Lubans	
ANNEX 9 – Study tour report – Matsalu	
ANNEX 10 – International conference report – Finland	
ANNEX 11- International conference report – Austria	
ANNEX 12 – Booklet “Birds in Floodplains”	
ANNEX 13 – Video of TV broadcast “Green property” about project sites	
ANNEX 14 – PowerPoint presentations to 1 <sup>st</sup> and 2 <sup>nd</sup> Steering Group meetings	
ANNEX 15 – Monitoring report	
ANNEX 16 – Copies of partner agreements	
ANNEX 17 - Pictures of the project activities	
ANNEX 18 - Pictures of the project sites	
ANNEX 19 – Maps of project activities	
ANNEX 20 – Financial summary	

## Section 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Background to the project

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. All project sites are Natura 2000 sites and all are included in the list of nationally protected areas (either nature reserves or nature parks).

Therefore, LIFE Floodplain project is 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*\*.

### 1.2. Overview of 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, risk of ploughing and afforestation of the meadows***

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.

As for ploughing and afforestation, both management practices are not allowed in nature reserves by existing legislation, but still applied by farmers, due to economic considerations. Ploughing is taking place due to lack of information about other alternatives of management. Afforestation is taking place either naturally (when lands are not managed and overgrow) or on purpose, with aim to increase incomes from the lands. We are addressing these issues by educational seminars, explaining the value of floodplains and also the benefits that farmer can receive from Rural Development Plan funds if he/she is managing the land as biologically valuable grassland (e.g. late mowing of grazing).

### 1.3. Objectives of the project as defined in application

- To restore biologically most important and presently abandoned floodplain areas.
- To ensure subsequent continuous management for the benefit of species (e.g., *Crex crex*\*, *Aquila pomarina*\*, *Aquila clanga*\*, *Gallinago media*, *Osmoderma eremita*\*) and habitats (e.g., Fennoscandian wooded meadows 6530\*, Species-rich *Nardus* grasslands 6230\*).

## **Section 2. SUMMARY**

### **2.1. Summary of the activities during report period**

Project “Restoration of Latvian floodplains for EU priority species and habitats” was launched in October 2001. Most of the activities planned to take place in first year of the project have been successfully begun.

Among main habitat restoration activities implemented in this period, actions as removal of shrub in Floodplain meadows (in total 60% of planned already contracted for cutting) and in Fennoscandian wooded meadows (27% of planned contracted) and initial mowing of the meadows (36 % of planned contracted) should be mentioned as most significant. Please see more information in description to actions C.1, C.3 and C.5. Monitoring system for evaluation the impact of management measures on species and habitats is set up (action F.2) and providing the first information.

Involvement of local stakeholders in project activities is crucial to the successful implementation of the project, thus a lot of attention is paid to education of local farmers and municipalities. Numerous seminars, individual meetings, site visits, publications and study tours have taken place, and much more have to be done in future, as demand for information is very high, especially in rural areas. Special attention is paid to education of general public in project partner municipalities about Natura 2000 issues, as level of awareness of local public is very low, on Natura 2000 and nature conservation issues in general. Please see more information in description of actions E.1, E.5 and F.3.

In order to ensure coordinated and sustainable management of project sites, management plans for all sites are being prepared. Management plans for 9 project sites are in process in 2005 (8 of them funded by the project), 7 more will be prepared in 2006. Please see more information in description to action A.5.

The exchange of experience on floodplain management and species management issues is taking place already, as project staff visited Great Snipe experts in Norway, together with local people participated in study tour to Matsalu, presented project in conference „Sustainable Development through Education” in Finland and LIFE-Symposium “Riverine Landscapes - Restoration, Flood Protection, Conservation” in Austria. Please see more information in description of action E.5.

Project Steering Group has been established and held 2 meetings already. Please see more information about the meetings and content of the Steering group in description of the action F.1.

Some problems have with implementation of the project activities had already occurred, related to dramatic increase of fuel costs, legislative restrictions and inaccuracy of land ownership information. These problems are described more in detail in Chapter 2.4 of this report; we suggest also solutions for most of them.

We are describing the progress of the project activity by activity in following sections, according to project proposal. Any additional information to the description of activities, such as deliverables, pictures, copies and summaries of contracts, maps, published articles and other publications etc are attached in Annexes 1 to 19. Please see location of actions on map in Annex 19. Summary financial report is included in Annex 20.

## 2.2. 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
A.2.	Development and maintenance of landowner database	IV 2004 – I 2008	In progress
A.3	Collection and analysis of existing information	IV 2004 – III 2005	In progress
A.4	Preparation of digital maps for project sites, mapping of habitats	II 2005 – II 2007	In progress
A.5	Preparation of 13 site management plans, update of 2 management plans	I 2005 – I 2007	In progress
A.6	Supervising preparation of the management plans, organising public hearings and printing plans	IV 2005 – I 2007	In progress
A.7	Training of farmers on applying for EU support for grassland management	II 2005, II 2006	Delayed, planned in 2006-2007
A.8	Analysis and recommendations of improvement of existing legislation regarding management planning in Latvia	III, IV 2005 IV 2007-I 2008	In progress
A.9	Agreements and contracts for habitat restoration and management works	I 2005, I 2006, I 2007	In progress
C.1.	Removal of shrub	I 2005 – I 2008	In progress
C.2.	Destruction of shrub root system along melioration ditches	III 2005 – I 2008	In progress
C.3.	Removal of shrub around individual oak trees	I 2005 – I 2008	In progress
C.4.	Fence installation	I-II 2006	In progress
C.5	Controlled burning of grassland	IV 2005 – I 2008	Planned
C.6	Initial moving of grassland	III 2005 – III 2007	In progress
E.1.	Informal letters and stakeholder meetings	I 2005 – II 2008	In progress
E.2.	Design and update of project homepage	IV 2004 – II 2008	In progress
E.3.	Information signs	I 2006 – I 2008	In progress
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
E.6.	Production of grassland management handbook	II 2007 – I 2008	Planned
E.7.	Production of summary management plans	I 2006, I 2007	Planned
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
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
F.2.	Initiation of the monitoring system on effects achieved by management measures	I 2005 – II 2008	In progress
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 have begun earlier than planned
	Actions that are delayed
	Actions that have yet begun, according to the time plan



## 2.3. Milestones during report period and checklist of identifiable products

### 2.3.1. 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	Planned in 01/2006
40% of planned area mown	C.6	31.08.2005	36.3% mown to date
50% of planned shrub removed	C.1	31.03.2006	
50% of planned shrub root destructed	C.2		
60% of parkland meadows restored	C.3		
50% of planned area burned	C.5		
First km of fence made	C.7	30.06.2006	
Second farmer training conducted	A.7	30.06.2006	
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	

	Milestone achieved
	Milestone achieved earlier than planned
	Milestone not yet achieved
	Milestone not applicable to current report

### 2.3.2. SUMMARY OF DELIVERABLE PRODUCTS

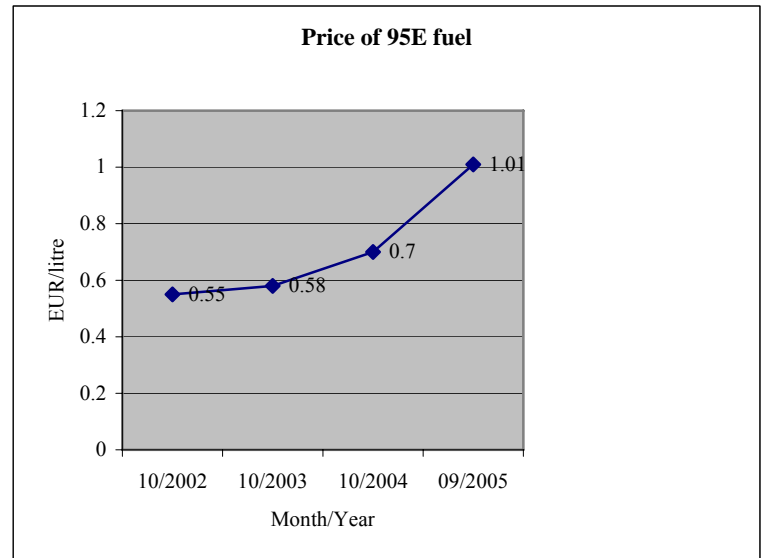
Product	Name or n° of reference action	Deadline	Accomplished
8 management plans completed	A.5 and A.6	31 March 2006	
8 summary management plans ready	E.7	31 March 2006	
First 10 booklets printed	E.8	30 June 2006	
7 management plans completed	A.5 and A.6	31 March 2007	
7 summary management plans ready	E.7	31 March 2007	
Digital maps ready	A.4	30 June 2007	
All booklets printed	E.8	31 March 2008	
Legislation analysis complete	A.8	31 March 2008	
Management handbook complete	E.6	31 March 2008	
Layman's report ready	E.9	30 June 2008	

Deliverable not applicable to current report

## 2.4. Problems or difficulties expected

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 C.6 have been slightly delayed, for different reasons, described below and in Progress sections of respective activities.

Nevertheless, we foresee that problems might occur in later stage, related to the very significant increase of fuel costs in Latvia in last 2 years. When planning the project in October 2003, the average cost of 1 litre 95E fuel was 0.41 LVL (0.58 EUR), it rose to 0.49 LVL (0.70 EUR) in October 2004 and reached already 0.71 LVL (1.01 EUR) for one litre of 95E fuel in September 2005. Although we have foreseen that fuel costs would increase in the course of the project, but the actual speed of price increase is going beyond all expectations – fuel prices have almost doubled since project was planned. The price of fuel has direct impact on travel costs of project staff and costs of habitat restoration activities. The price we are paying for restoration activities (C.1 and C.6) is already below the actual cost for the works due to increase of fuel prices. At the moment, we are monitoring the situation and will suggest the solutions in the later stage.



As it was stressed by major of Alsunga during the EC mission to LIFE-Floodplains project, 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.

Regional reform of municipalities is taking place in Latvia; therefore some of the partners are currently in the process of changing their status. The final date of the reform is political decision and it has not been set yet, according to information available on home page of Ministry of Regional Development and Local Government it could be year 2009. Nevertheless, these changes do not have significant impact on project implementation as administrations of local municipalities are in place and will be maintained also after reform. As part of the reform, some of the project partners, e.g. Pilskalne municipality have joined Ilukste novads (larger entity, something like sub-region) and our partner agreement is now signed with Ilukste novads. 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 regional reform of municipalities is finalised and final setting of sub-regional structures known. In case regional reform will not finish before the end of the project, we will act according Article 13.3 of the Standard Administrative Provisions.

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).

## Section 3. TECHNICAL REPORT (BY ACTIVITY)

### *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 recognised 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 will have to take place, to raise the awareness of local stakeholders on nature conservation issues, with special focus on Natura 2000 and floodplains.

Management planning and information analysis are proceeding with no problems, first plans will be finalised at the end of 2005.

<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> Annex 1 - List of introduction meetings Annex 17 – Pictures of the project activities

**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. Please see detailed list of all meetings in Appendix 1. Before the meeting, information and invitation letters were sent to all stakeholders (Action E.1), providing them with insight into project goals, meeting agenda. 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 will be 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. Usually only majors of municipalities raised their hands when asked “who has heard about Natura 2000?” Very few of them were informed about Natura 2000 single area support payments (28EUR/ha, foreseen by Single programming document), that is important additional financial support mechanism for extensive farming in Natura 2000 sites.

<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> Annex 17 – Pictures of the project activities

**Progress:** The framework for the database has been set up, it is now being revised by regional coordinators, additional data will be added based project’s daily activities and questionnaire mentioned below.

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 will be 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.

<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> No	<b>Additional information:</b> Annex 17 – Pictures of the project activities

**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 some of them will have to continue also in 2006. 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.

<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> Annex 17 – Pictures of the project activities

**Progress:** Digital mapping is used 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 have just begun, as first field season data from management plan experts and regional coordinators are gathering in Latvian Fund for Nature. Maps will be printed for management plans (project action A.5) at the end of 2005.

Digital vector layers of 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, we are using digital orthophotos and Landsat satellite images for digital mapping.

<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> No	<b>Additional information:</b> Annex 17 – Pictures of the project activities

**Progress:** Management plan editors for plans prepared with LIFE funding in 2005 were selected at the beginning of 2005. They are following:

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

First management plan preparation meetings 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.

Stakeholder introduction meeting for project sites took place in following dates and locations:

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
7. Kalnciems meadows – 07.03.2005 in Kalnciems
8. Meadows of Seda river - 14.01.2005 in Ergeme and 03.03.2005 in Seda.

Management Plan Supervisory Groups have been established for all 8 sites, please see more information is description of action A.6.

All site information has been gathered for management plans (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; to discuss the plans before public hearing processes of the management plans are taking place. Public hearing meetings are foreseen in December 2005 for most of the sites, also recommendations for “Individual Protection and Management Rule” and zoning for each site will be prepared by then.

<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> No	<b>Additional information:</b> Annex 17 – 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 8 sites, 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. First Management Plan Supervisory Group meetings have already taken place in all sites, except Vidusburtnieks (planned in October).

Management Plan Supervisory Groups have been introduced with initial versions of the plans, now they are being updated with visions and goals and management measures planned. Another Group meeting will take place for each of the Plans – to discuss final draft plans before public hearing process would start. Public hearing meetings are foreseen in December 2005 for most of the sites.

<b>ACTION A.7</b>	<b>Training of farmers on applying of EU support for grassland management</b>	
<b>Time plan:</b> II 2005, II 2006	<b>Variations/complications/delays:</b> Delayed, see below	<b>Additional information:</b> Annex 17 – Pictures of the project activities

**Progress:** Separate training seminar has not taken place yet, the Steering Group decided that first seminar should take place prior to next application round for Rural Development Plan support payments, namely at the beginning of 2006 (January or February), to ensure maximum effectiveness of the seminar.

Nevertheless, 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

Discussions with Latvian Rural Advisory and Training Centre are taking place to design the program of the training to take place in early 2006.

**Variations/complications/delays:** Separate seminar has not taken place yet, Steering Group decided that it should be held in early 2006, before next application round for support payments under Rural Development Plan.

<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> No	<b>Additional information:</b> No

**Progress:** Currently the process of redrafting of the Order of the Minister of Environment “Recommendations for preparation of the management plans” (No 120, 04.07.2002), this Order will be transformed into Rule of Cabinet of Ministers with amendments to the structure and procedure of elaboration of the management plans. Project manager is involved in this process, providing recommendations to the Ministry of Environment, in order to ensure that project initial experience is integrated in the Rule.

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, namely – 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; we will address these deficiencies by proposed changes to legislation. We are preparing the terms

of reference for expert that will undertake analysis of Latvian legislation concerning management planning and management of habitats, in cooperation with Nature Protection Board (project partner).

<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> Annex 2 - Examples of contracts for habitat restoration with private person (PP/I) and entity (PP/II), with translation of main parts of contracts Annex 17 – Pictures of the project activities

**Progress:** This action is taking place continuously, with average 12 contracts signed per month. In total 53 contracts for shrub cutting (C.1), 44 for initial mowing (C.6) and 8 contracts for cutting the shrubs around individual oak trees (C.3) have been signed to date.

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 in Annex 2) and with entities, e.g. companies or farms owned by local stakeholders (PP/II contract example in Annex 2). We provide also summary translation of main parts of these contracts (Annex 2).

**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, 105 habitat restoration contracts have been signed already, for restoration of 1406 ha of overgrown habitats. Methods include: shrub-cutting 590 ha, initial mowing 870 ha, cutting of shrub around individual oak trees 30 ha. In percentages, 60% of areas planned for shrub cutting, 36% of areas planned for initial mowing and 27% of areas planned for restoration of Fennoscandian wooded meadows have been already contracted for restoration. 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 as people are working towards restoration of their overgrown agricultural lands.

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. Controlled burning (C.5) is not taking place yet, as it will be only permitted when included in management plans of the project sites.

*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 19.

<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 17 – Pictures of the project activities Annex 19 – Maps of project activities

**Progress:** This action has been successfully begun and is proceeding faster than initially planned in the project. 53 contracts have been signed already, 590 ha (60.17% of areas planned for shrub cutting) have been already contracted for cutting; works have already finished in most of them.

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.

Implementation of the restoration actions (especially shrub cutting) is very much dependent on weather conditions (layer of snow, flooding periods etc) thus we expect that some of the contracts signed will not be 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.

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 will not be possible to begin mowing after first shrub cutting. In these areas we plan that repeated shrub cutting would have to be done on following year. Nevertheless, we expect that such cases will not be 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. In several areas where overgrowing level is high shrub cutting will be combined with initial mowing in following years.

<b>ACTION C.2</b>	<b>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> Annex 17 – Pictures of the project activities

**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.

<b>ACTION C.3</b>	<b>Removal of shrub around individual oak trees</b>	
<b>Time plan:</b> I 2005 – I 2008	<b>Variations/complications/delays:</b> No	<b>Additional information:</b> Annex 17 – Pictures of the project activities Annex 19 – Maps of project activities

**Progress:** This action has been successfully begun, 8 contracts for restoration of 30 ha of Fennoscandian wooded meadows have been signed to date (27% of total planned area). 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. Actions in Vidusburtnieks are pending; negotiations with landowners are taking place.

<b>ACTION C.4</b>	<b>Fence installation</b>	
<b>Time plan:</b> I-II 2006	<b>Variations/complications/delays:</b> Yes, see below	<b>Additional information:</b> Annex 17 – Pictures of the project activities Annex 19 – Maps of project activities

**Progress:** Contract was signed about construction of 2 km long fence with horse breeding farm “Burtnieki” in 27.07.2005.

**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 17 – Pictures of the project activities

**Progress:** 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 can only take place after management plans are adopted and include management measure “controlled burning”. First management plans for project sites will be finalised in December 2005, we hope that the Ministry of Environment will adopt them by February 2006, so that first burning actions can take place already in 2006.



**Variations/complications/delays:** Action is not taking place yet as planned, 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 expect that a lot of education work will have to be done 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.

ACTION C.6	Initial moving of grassland	
<b>Time plan:</b> III 2005 – III 2007	<b>Variations/complications/delays:</b> Yes	<b>Additional information:</b> Annex 17 – Pictures of the project activities Annex 19 – Maps of project activities

**Progress:** This action has been successfully begun in all project sites except Kalnciems meadows, Vidusburtnieks and Lake Durbe meadows. Contracts for these areas are in preparation; negotiations with landowners are taking place.

In total, 44 contracts for total 869.6 ha have been signed to restore the overgrown floodplains by initial mowing method. 36.3% are contracted for mowing to date, it is a good result, although is lower than planned in the project. The difference can be explained by following considerations.

When planning the project we did not consider the circumstances and situation carefully enough and thus planned that 40% of planned areas will be already mown by 31 August 2005. Due to restrictions related to avoiding disturbance and destroying the nests of breeding birds, mowing can only start after 15 July; therefore it is unlikely that by 31 August already 40% of total planned is mown. Mowing is continuing also in September and even October, so the final mowing results of year 2005 will only be known at the end of 2005.

**Variations/complications/delays:** Planned 40% of total 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 2005.

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.

The problem of removal of hay (already described in chapter 2.4 of this report) may become very pressing when further management of restored areas will be done with Agro-environmental support that is too small for areas with problematic access. This problems occurs mainly due to lack of demand for hay, as cattle breeding has decreased dramatically in last years.

## ***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 different publications, campaigns and other information and education activities.

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. Please see more information about the event in attached printouts of the home page of the project (Annex 3).

Numerous articles have been issued on different levels (from local to national newspapers), prepared by project public awareness coordinator. Please see the list of articles and copies of main newspaper articles attached in Annex 4 to this report. TV broadcast has also been shown on National Television, with story about floodplain restoration in project sites Burtnieki meadows, Ruja floodplains and Meadows of Seda river (in Annex 13 please see attached the video with TV broadcast).

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, printouts of home pages are attached in Annex 5 to this report, 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 3 study tours and 2 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 this booklet in description to action E.8, it is attached in Annex 12.

<b>ACTION E.1</b>	<b>Informal letters and stakeholder meetings</b>	
<b>Time plan:</b> I 2005 – II 2008	<b>Variations/complications/delays:</b> No	<b>Additional information:</b> Annex 6 – example of first landowner letter sent prior to the introduction meetings Annex 17 – Pictures of the project activities

**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. Please see the example of letter to the landowner attached in Annex 6. Some problems have occurred during sending these letters, 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.

<b>ACTION E.2</b>		
<b>Design and update of project homepage</b>		
<b>Time plan:</b> IV 2004 – II 2008	<b>Variations/complications/delays:</b> No	<b>Additional information:</b> Annex 3 - printouts of all project news posted Annex 5 - printouts of the project home pages Annex 17 – Pictures of the project activities

**Progress:** First project news were posted on project homepage on 07.10.2005, since then 17 news items have been posted on project home page within homepage of Latvian Fund for Nature. Please see printouts of these news attached in Annex 3.

Project home page has been established within homepage of Latvian Fund for Nature [www.ldf.lv](http://www.ldf.lv). 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. Please see printouts of both homepages (in Latvian and English) attached in Annex 5 to this 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 17 – Pictures of the project activities

**Progress:** Although activities within this action are only planned to begin in 2006, we have already started to work on designs and standards for information boards and other informative materials. Visual identity guidelines, funded by GEF/UNDP, are being prepared for North Vidzeme Biosphere reserve (6 of our project sites are situated in NVBR); we are contributing information about nature values and local municipality information to this process. After adoption of these guidelines, they might be adjusted and used as visual identity guide in all project 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. No additional costs involved to date, guidelines prepared might be after adjustment used for designing information signs for all project territories.

<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/complications/delays:</b> Yes, see below	<b>Additional information:</b> Annex 7 – Norway study tour report Annex 8 – Lubans study tour report, in Latvian Annex 9 – Matsalu study tour report, in Latvian Annex 10 – Finland conference report, in Latvian Annex 11 – Austria conference report Annex 17 – Pictures of the project activities

**Progress:** To date, two short study tours have taken place in 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, in Latvian, please see attached in Annex 8 to this report.

The other 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.

Two longer study tours outside Latvia already took place – one of them was organised to visit Norwegian experts on management of Great Snipe and to share information about conservation requirements of this species, in 29.06 – 04.07.2005. 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). Please see the report of the study tour attached in Annex 7 to this report, indicating the outputs of the study tour and benefits to the project.

The other study tour outside Latvia was targeted at grassland management experience in Matsalu, Estonia. It was organised for project staff and project partners, with 39 participants (including representatives from municipalities, nature protection governmental institutions, most active landowners, media and project staff). It took place in 4-5 August 2005. Please see report of this study tour (in Latvian) attached as Annex 9 to this report.

Please see pictures of all study tours attached in Annex 17 to this report.

In addition to participation in study tours, project staff has participated in 2 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. Please see the report of the conference and project visit (in Latvian) attached in Annex 10 to this report.

On 26-29 September 2005 project regional coordinator Ainars Aunins participated in international LIFE-Symposium “Riverine Landscapes - Restoration, Flood Protection, Conservation” in Austria. Please see report of the study tour attached in Annex 11 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 (LV)	3 study tours for project partners (EU)	5 international seminars
Already taken place:	3 study tours (Lubans, Engure and Norway)	1 study tour to Matsalu	2 seminars (Finland and Austria)

**Variations/complications/delays:** Study tour to Norway was not initially planned in the project. When we begun to plan site management and monitoring, it was recognised that more information about habitat requirements of Great Snipe should be gathered. Therefore, a special accept to organise study tour to Norway was received from European Commission DG ENV (letter DG ENV/D1/SL/nb D(2005) 7458, dated 18.04.2005).

<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.

<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> No	<b>Additional information:</b> No	

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

<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> Annex 12 - Booklet “Birds in Floodplains” Annex 17 – Pictures of the project activities	

**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. 8440 copies of the booklet has been distributed to date, mainly to municipality partners, also to rural consultants, protected areas administrations, environmental NGOs, nature guides, participants of study tours.

**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.

<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.

<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> Annex 14 – presentations about project performance to the Steering Group meetings Annex 17 – Pictures of the project activities

**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 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”. Please see attached (Annex 14) presentations by project manager presented to the Steering Group members. Next Steering Group meeting is planned to take place in December 2005.

**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> Annex 15 – monitoring report 2005 Annex 17 – Pictures of the project activities

**Progress:** Project staff decided on general monitoring system in project meeting on 11.04.2005. The project regional coordinators and hired experts were 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 was very useful also for preparation of management plans for project sites, action A.5. Please see monitoring report for first project season attached in Annex 15 to this report.

<b>ACTION F.3</b>	<b>Administration of the project</b>	
<b>Time plan:</b> IV 2004 – II 2008	<b>Variations/complications/delays:</b> No	<b>Additional information:</b> Annex 16 - Partner agreements Annex 17 – Pictures of the project activities

**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, next meeting planned in October 2005.

Partner agreements have been signed with all project partners, please see summary of contracts and copies of all contracts attached in Annex 16. Some of the partners are currently in the process of changing their status – as regional reform of municipalities is taking place in Latvia. The final date of the reform is political decision and it has not been set yet. Nevertheless, these changes do not have significant impact on project implementation as administrations of local municipalities are in place and will be maintained. Some of the project partners, e.g. Pilskalne municipality have joined Ilukste novads (larger entity, something like sub-region) and our partner agreement is signed with Ilukste novads. 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 regional reform of municipalities is finalised and final setting of sub-regional structures known. In case regional reform will not finish before the end of the project, we will act according Article 13.3 of the Standard Administrative Provisions.

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.

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 dramatically since the project was planned. We are discussing this problem more in detail in section 2.4 of this report.

<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.

## **LIST OF ANNEXES**

**ANNEX 1 – List of project introduction meetings**

**ANNEX 2 – Examples of contracts – PP/I and PP/II**

**ANNEX 3 – Printouts of news posted on project home page (in Latvian and English)**

**ANNEX 4 – List of articles and copies of newspapers**

**ANNEX 5 – Printouts of project home pages in Latvian and English**

**ANNEX 6 – Example of first letter sent to landowners**

**ANNEX 7 – Study tour report – Norway**

**ANNEX 8 – Study tour report – Lubans**

**ANNEX 9 – Study tour report – Matsalu**

**ANNEX 10 – International conference report – Finland**

**ANNEX 11- International conference report – Austria**

**ANNEX 12 – Booklet “Birds in Floodplains”**

**ANNEX 13 – Video of TV broadcast “Green property” about project sites**

**ANNEX 14 – PowerPoint presentations to 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Steering Group meetings**

**ANNEX 15 – Monitoring report**

**ANNEX 16 – Copies of partner agreements**

**ANNEX 17 - Pictures of the project activities**

**ANNEX 18 - Pictures of the project sites**

**ANNEX 19 – Maps of project activities**

**ANNEX 20 – Financial summary**

**ANNEX 1 – LIST OF PROJECT INTRODUCTION MEETINGS**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Municipality</b>	<b>Project site</b>	<b>Number of participants</b>
14.01.	Ērgeme	Meadows of Seda river	34
25.01.	Valgunde	Svetes lejtece	51
28.01.	Burtnieki	Burtnieki meadows, Vidusburtnieks	20
01.02.	Dundaga	Rakupe meadows	22
02.02.	Rugāji	Pededzes lejtece	23
11.02.	Sēļi	Vidusburtnieks, Ruja floodplains	25
14.02.	Litene	Sita and Pededze floodplains, Mugurve meadows	25
18.02.	Stradi	Mugurve meadows, Pededzes lejtece	36
24.02.	Līvberze	Svetes lejtece	19
25.02.	Vecate	Vidusburtnieks	23
28.02.	Durbe	Lake Durbe meadows	24
02.02.	Alsunga	Uzava floodplains	24
03.03.	Seda	Meadows of Seda river	26
07.03.	Kalnciems	Kalnciems meadows	13
09.03.	Jelgava, Cena, Jaunsvirlauka	Lielupe floodplains	23
16.03.	Valka	Burga meadows	14
29.03.	Bebrene	Dviete floodplains	46
30.03.	Dviete	Dviete floodplains	97
08.04.	Jeri	Ruja floodplains, Vidusburtnieks	18
		<b>Total participants:</b>	<b>563</b>

## *ANNEX 2 – EXAMPLES OF CONTRACTS – PP/I AND PP/II*

---

### **2 contracts attached:**

**PP-I/18**, the contract between Latvian Fund for Nature and Ligija Jermacane (work contract)

**PP-II/34**, the contract between Latvian Fund for Nature and farm “Madaras” (external assistance contract)

### **Main parts of both contracts are identical:**

#### *1. The Subject of Contract*

Description of work to be done, method and project activity.

Specification of area to be restored – location.

Specification on time frame of the contract.

#### *2. Rights and Obligations of the Contractors*

Specific note on legislative requirements to do the specified works.

Rules to follow if works are not done in time specified.

Practical communication matters.

Rules to follow to inform the project about finalisation of the works and agree about final payment.

Guarantee from the Contractor that no other support payments are received for restoration of contracted areas.

Guarantee from the Contractor that further maintenance of the area will be done, by applying for agri-environmental measure “Preservation of biological diversity in grasslands”.

#### *3. Contract Price and Terms of Payment*

Full price of works is listed here.

Terms of payment of advance (usually up to 40%) payment and final payment.

#### *4. Obligations of Parties*

General rules about legislative requirements.

#### *5. Term of Contract*

Beginning and end terms of the contract.

#### *6. Other Rules*

General contract Rules.

Information about attached Annexes.