



Request for Proposals (RfP) Restoration Opportunities Assessment and Design of the Restoration Interventions in North Macedonia

ATTACHMENT 1: TERMS OF REFERENCE

1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

According to Global Forest Watch, North Macedonia lost 5,5% and Albania 6,5% of total tree cover in the last 20 years. Recent local analysis on forest cover change in Albania and North Macedonia showed concerning losses of 6.78% and 4.88% of non-degraded forests, respectively, over 12 years. Same negative trends are recognisable in high biodiversity value regions like core areas of Critically Endangered Balkan Lynx¹ and in crucial wildlife corridors. Management of key biodiversity landscapes in protected areas did not sufficiently prevent forest losses, while connecting areas outside of legal protection are particularly exposed to further degradation. Illegal logging has historically been an issue while recently numerous development projects intensified land use changes and forest losses. Climate change consequences contribute to increased wildfire damages in the whole region, which is especially threatening the lives and livelihood of rural communities. The diversity of stands and resilience of the forest ecosystem has decreased, leaving it exposed to the adverse effects of pests and diseases.

“Northern Forests Initiative: Forest restoration in North Macedonia and Albania (NFI)” is a project funded by Swedish Postcode Foundation and executed by IUCN in collaboration with two national partners – Macedonian Ecological Society (MES) and Protection and Preservation of Natural Environment in Albania (PPNEA). The project activities will be implemented in close cooperation and with the support of the relevant national and local authorities.

Overall objective of the project is to contribute toward preventing further net loss of forests in Albania and North Macedonia through initiating restoration work in key biodiversity landscapes and strengthening capacities and commitments toward sustainable forest management.

The project will be implemented by applying [Nature-based solutions \(NbS\)](#) for [Forest Landscape Restoration \(FLR\)](#) in areas of importance for the conservation of the Balkan Lynx. The project includes 3 groups of activities:

- development of FLR solutions (year 1);
- FLR field implementation (year 2);
- capacity building events and contents for local stakeholders (throughout the lifetime of the project).

The project aim is to implement restoration measures on at least 40 ha of forest landscape in North Macedonia and Albania. The wider focus area of the project will be in the Bukovikj area for North Macedonia and Pashtrik-Morina area for Albania.

The specific sites for restoration interventions are to be selected by applying a specialized [Restoration Opportunities Assessment Methodology \(ROAM\)](#). ROAM provides a flexible framework and approach for conservation actors to identify and assess FLR opportunities as well as to select highest value and priority interventions at national or sub-national levels. Important components of the ROAM process are the cross-sectoral stakeholder engagement, gender mainstreaming, inclusive governance, identification and development of financial and social incentives for implementation. The assessment methodology combines geospatial analysis, biological and economic modelling within a framework that assesses the social, political, and institutional readiness to implement restoration.

Read more about the guidelines and tools used during application of ROAM:

- 1) [Handbook on ROAM](#).
- 2) [Gender-responsive restoration guidelines](#).
- 3) [Biodiversity guidelines for FLR opportunities assessments](#).
- 4) [A Cost-Benefit Framework for Analysing FLR Decisions](#)
- 5) [Restoration Opportunities Optimization Tool \(ROOT\)](#).

¹ CR status by IUCN Red List of Threatened Species.

2. SCOPE OF WORK

2.1. Specific tasks. The present Terms of Reference seek to obtain the services of a consultant team to conduct a ROAM assessment and design FLR interventions in the Bukovikj area, North Macedonia (hereinafter – the “**Focus Area**”). The consultant team will need to perform the following tasks:

- conduct the ROAM assessment for the Focus Area to identify suitable FLR options and priority sites for FLR interventions, prioritising those of particular importance for the conservation of the Balkan Lynx;
- develop a clear technical design for FLR interventions in the prioritised sites of the Focus Area;
- provide support for the FLR implementation works and capacity-building activities.

2.2. Focus Area. Bukovikj Mountain is part of the Bistra-Stogovo Massive and represents a small mountain plateau of about 30 km², surrounded by forest. The total size of the mountain is 60.99 km² (Melovski et al., 2014); average elevation is 1150 m. The land within this area is used mostly for forestry and only small portion for agriculture (exclusively pastures and small meadows that are mowed). Continental climate prevails with some characteristics of mountainous climate in upper part. The borders of Bukovikj start from the Strazha pass, along the stream Sretkovska Reka downstream to Padalishka Reka inflow, then upstream till v. Padalishte (Han), then upstream along the dale up to the pass (the old road Gostivar-Kichevo), then downstream Svinski Dol till its inflow in Tajmishka Reka at v. Kolari, then upstream Tajmishka Reka and Gornoselska Reka streams to Strazha pass (Melovski et al., 2014).

Forests on Bukovikj are mainly spread on the northern and western parts of the mountain; eastern and southern parts are covered with degraded forests while pastures and bare land are found on the central part of the mountain. The following forests communities are found: *ass. Quercetum frainetto cerris*; *ass. Quercu-Ostrietum carpinifoliae*; *ass. Orno-Quercetum peraeae*; *ass. Festuco heterophyllae-Fagetum*; *ass. Calamintho grandiflorae-Fagetum*; cultivated forests with black pine and spruce.

Forests on Bukovikj mountain are state-owned and private. There are no available data for the ownership area. State forests are managed by the Public Enterprise National Forests through its branches Shar – Gostivar and Lopushnik – Kichevo. Several Special Forestry Management Plans are prepared by the PE National Forests for management of the existing forest units on the territory of Bukovikj.

Forests with high natural values have been identified on Bukovikj covering about 160 ha.

In total, three municipalities share the mountain: Kichevo, Mavrovo & Rostuche and Gostivar. It is in general scarcely populated and includes 10 villages.

2.3. Expected results, deliverables and time schedule. The assignment is expected to be completed within a maximum of 6 months, as follows.

No.	Assignment Component	Deliverables / deadlines
1.	ROAM assessment: November 2023 – February 2024	
1.1.	<p>Preparatory phase: November 2023</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Conduct preliminary analysis to identify: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – potential FLR options; – criteria / indicators that will be used in assessment of the FLR potential across the Focus Areas; – available data / knowledge, data gaps and solutions to address identified gaps within the project timeline; – a list of specific questions to be covered by the ROAM analysis; – providers of resources (seedlings, etc.) and services available to conduct FLR field works within the project horizon. ▪ Coordinate and facilitate an inception workshop. The workshop aims to gather all relevant stakeholders to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – discuss the opportunities for FLR in the Focus Area / share information on existing FLR activities; – share an overview of the strategy, parameters and plan for the ROAM assessment; – invite feedback on the presented ideas and plans. <p>Expected results: A preliminary list of FLR options, including references to providers of resources (seedlings) and services for FLR field works. The best locally sourced available species should be prioritised for the FLR actions, in accordance with expert local knowledge, experience, and site location characteristics.</p>	<p>An inception report that provides an outline of a final ROAM report, describes the methodology and highlights the results of the preliminary analysis.</p> <p>Deadline: 30 November 2023</p>

<p>1.2.</p>	<p>Data collection and analysis: December 2023–January 2024 Collect data and conduct geospatial, biological, socio-economic and legal analysis (desktop research). The ROAM assessment should include, but not limited to, the following aspects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ a geospatial analysis of physical, ecological and socio-economic characteristics of the Focus Area (i.e. geology, state of ecosystems and ecosystem processes, forest species richness, biodiversity hotspots, protected areas, ecological corridors, land degradation, current land use, land tenure, population, economic activities and development projects, conservation initiatives, etc.); ▪ an economic analysis of the cost and benefits associated with the identified restoration interventions, including a gender component; ▪ an analysis of the carbon sequestration potential and the associated co-benefits; ▪ a legal analysis that will determine the willingness of public authorities to mainstream FLR actions in their strategies and action plans; ▪ an analysis of the local resources (seedlings) and service providers available to conduct FLR field works within the project horizon. <p>Expected results: A draft complex assessment of restoration potential of the Focus Area, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ a set of FLR analytical maps, listing hot spots for restoration: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – general maps illustrating physical, ecological and socio-economic characteristics of the Focus Area; – a degradation map: a map of degraded lands and the individual proxies used to identify degradation, including a calculation of degraded hectares and presentation of the degradation drivers; – an opportunity map: a map presenting restoration opportunities and a calculation of available hectares for restoration; – a priority map: a map of priority sites recommended for the FLR actions; – an intervention map: a map of potential FLR interventions, including sites/specific land plots, their physical parameters (such as a calculation of the available hectares) and corresponding intervention types. ▪ a list of priority FLR interventions both suitable and feasible for the local context; ▪ a quantified costs and benefits analysis of each intervention type / priority site; ▪ recommendations for mainstreaming gender in the FLR interventions proposed; ▪ estimated values of additional carbon sequestered by the FLR interventions. 	<p>The draft ROAM report.</p> <p>A set of analytical maps of the Focus Area. Maps should be compatible to national geospatial standards and/or requirements to be accessible and editable by national geospatial agencies (such as ASIG). Shape file formats need to be delivered.</p> <p>Deadline: 31 January 2024</p>
<p>1.3.</p>	<p>Results and recommendations: February 2024</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Coordinate and facilitate a validation workshop. The workshop aims to share the draft ROAM Report with all relevant stakeholders and collect their inputs. ▪ Incorporate the feedback and inputs received at the validation workshop to the ROAM assessment results and deliver a final ROAM Report. <p>Expected results: A final complex assessment of restoration potential of the Focus Area, updated in accordance with the feedback and inputs received at the validation workshop.</p>	<p>The final ROAM report.</p> <p>Deadline: 29 February 2024</p>

2. Design of FLR interventions: March–April 2024

2.1.	<p>Building upon the ROAM process, produce a clear technical design for FLR interventions in the prioritised sites of the Focus Area. The FLR interventions should comply with national / local regulatory requirements.</p> <p>Expected results:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The detailed description of FLR actions to be implemented on the ground (tree planting, enrichment planting, assisted natural regeneration, potentially the application of bio-engineering measures to curb soil erosion etc.). ▪ The full list of administrative steps and documentation needed to obtain all necessary approvals for the proposed FLR actions. This should include a workflow of all anticipated permits and approvals, with corresponding timeline and responsibilities. ▪ An operation and maintenance plan for the FLR intervention(s), which should contain an indication of seeding survival rate considering microsite condition. The Plan should be accompanied by cost estimations and clear roles and responsibilities for operation and maintenance. ▪ A monitoring and evaluation framework for the FLR intervention(s). 	<p>The FLR design report.</p> <p>Deadline: 30 April 2024</p>
3. Providing support for the FLR implementation and capacity-building activities		
3.1.	<p>Participate in and present the ROAM assessment results in a sustainable forest management workshop(s) as well as support the preparation of capacity-building contents within the project.</p> <p>Expected results: the ROAM case study presented a case study to national specialists (policy makers, PA managers, technical staff of the forestry sector, etc.).</p>	<p>A presentation for a workshop, illustrating the ROAM / FLR design and its outcomes.</p> <p>Deadline: 30 April 2024</p>
3.2.	<p>Provide advisory support for the FLR implementation works upon requests of the national implementing partner. This advisory support will include, but not limited to issues that may arise during the procurement of goods and services for the FLR interventions, permitting, field works and capacity-building workshops.</p>	<p>Additional / updated materials according to the project needs.</p> <p>Deadline: upon request.</p>

2.4. Coordination. The consultants will work closely with IUCN's project team and MES, a national implementing partner (collectively referred as a project management team or the **PMT**), and in cooperation with the relevant national and local authorities. To ensure cross-sectoral stakeholder engagement, a temporary multi-stakeholder group will be created and consulted in the different stages of the ROAM process. The group will have representatives from public authorities - i.e. municipalities (forestry, water, environmental, local economic development departments), public enterprises for forests, private landowners, CSOs, women-led groups and grassroots initiatives.

While defining the FLR sites and measures, the consultants will also coordinate with an expert team working in Albania, another focus area of the project, in order to identify synergies and maximise the impact of the developing solutions.

Please note the inception, validation and sustainable forest management workshops will be organised with full support from the PMT. This implies the PMT team will be involved in providing all logistical support for the workshop organisation, as well as workshop follow-up (minutes).

Tasks, deliverables and timeframes may be adjusted in accordance with adaptive project management and updated yearly work plan and logframe. This will be done in consultation between the PMT and the expert team.

3. DURATION OF THE ASSIGNMENT

The duration of this assignment will last over the period from the signing of the contract to **30 April 2024**, with an exception for the obligations to provide advisory support for the FLR implementation works which will last till 31 December 2024.

4. MEETINGS AND TRAVEL

The consultants will participate in a number of physical meetings and consultations for validating ROAM outputs. Travel to the focus areas and to key project meetings and consultations in the region will be required as necessary.

Where possible in-person meetings will be prioritised, but if these are not possible due to travel restrictions, then virtual meetings and validations will take place.

All travels will be subject to IUCN's travel policy and potential travel restrictions in place at the time of planned travel. When applied, travel costs will be covered by IUCN ECARO and/or the national implementing partner. Approval of costs for travel will be subject to a) prior written approval by IUCN ECARO and/or the national implementing partner; and b) submission of all receipts.

5. RESPONSIBILITIES AND COMMUNICATION

The Consultant is mandated by IUCN for all the tasks and deliverables mentioned in above sections. All deliverables need to be submitted to IUCN ECARO in English by the given deadline.

6. PRICING INFORMATION

The maximum available budget for this consultancy is estimated at EUR 40,000 (including VAT).

7. EXPERIENCE AND QUALIFICATIONS

The consultancy is open to a consultancy company or a team of experts with the following expertise:

- Ten (10) years of experience in forestry, landscape restoration, and other related fields of expertise,
- An additional thematic expertise / experience in GIS, biodiversity conservation, socio-economic and gender aspects of conservation interventions.
- Demonstrated experience in both forest restoration opportunities assessment and design of the forest restoration interventions.
- Excellent analytical skills and proven record of preparing similar project design studies and reports.
- Experience in the Western Balkan region, including North Macedonia and understanding of the regional and national regulatory contexts.
- Excellent English and Macedonian language proficiency.