



LIFE06 NAT/PL/000105

PROGRESS REPORT No. 2

Covering the project activities from 01.10.2007 to 31.12.2008



31.01.2009

“European Bison Conservation in the Białowieża Forest, Poland

BISON – LAND

Data Project

Project location	Poland
Project start date:	01.10.2006
Project end date:	30.09.2010
Total Project duration (in months)	48 months
Total budget	1 381 700 €
EC contribution:	956 000 €
(%) of total costs	69.19
(%) of eligible costs	100.00

Data Beneficiary

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List of abbreviations

MRI PAS – Mammal Research Institute Polish Academy of Sciences

RDSF – Regional Directorate of State Forests in Białystok

BNP – Białowieża National Park

GLPF – Green Lungs of Poland Foundation

BF – Białowieża Forest



1. Executive Summary

The Bison Land project was initiated in October 2006. It is implemented by 4 institutions: the Mammal Research Institute Polish Academy of Sciences, the Regional Directorate of State Forests in Białystok, the Białowieża National Park, and the Green Lungs of Poland Foundation. The project area is the Białowieża Forest (Natura 2000 Site of Community Importance PLC 200004). The major objective of the project is to prepare and implement new management strategy for sustainable conservation of European bison in the Białowieża Forest (BF). This is realized by improving the habitat conditions for the species within the BF and creating possibilities for the animals to disperse to the forest areas in the surroundings of the BF. Project actions encompass: designing ecological corridors and including them into Spatial Management Plans, improving food sources and water availability, conducting regular monitoring of the population, preventing potential conflicts between the bison and agriculture, and improving the level of social acceptance of local communities for the species.

The expected results of the overall project comprise: wider distribution of bison in the BF, expansion of the species' range, reduction of the damages caused by bison in forests and agricultural lands, and reduced dependence of the species on management practices. As an eco-tourist attraction, the species should be treated by the local communities as a valuable asset and not as a nuisance. The system of the species' monitoring will constitute a tool for effective conservation measures. Delimitation and protection of ecological corridors will improve migration possibilities not only for bison but also for a variety of other species, increase biodiversity of the region, and ensure coherence and better and sustainable protection of NATURA 2000 areas, thus contributing to the implementation of Habitats Directive.

The objectives for the second year of the project implementation were as follows:

1. Signing the partner agreement with the Białowieża National Park;
2. Conducting wide public consultations regarding the project and targeted species;
3. Production of the promotional materials and the TV film/spot;
4. Further implementation of management activities in the environment;
5. Successive execution of preventive actions in case of any conflicts caused by bison presence;
6. Contracting meadows for bison's use;
7. Regular monitoring of the species.

These objectives were successfully attained. We managed to sign the partner agreement with the BNP. The public consultations and other human dimension activities were implemented and were welcomed by the targeted audience. The information and promotional materials (including the TVspot/film) were produced. The project website proved a valuable source of information about the project and the species – 16 000 visits were recorded within the first year and this number is increasing quickly. We observed that the non-recurring activities implemented in the previous year (C1, C2, C4) have already brought first signs of expected results, such as: eager utilization by bison of the reclaimed areas and water reservoirs, splitting of the big herds of bison into smaller groups, movements of some individuals towards northern and southern parts of the BF, increasing number of the bison. The comprehensive system of bison monitoring including telemetry, genetics and direct observations has been continued and brought further data. The process of negotiation of implementation the ecological corridors into the Voivodship Spatial Management plans was initiated and in 2009 most of the work foreseen by the project should be executed. Actions which are dedicated to the protection of agricultural areas (D2) and involving local farmers into contracting scheme (D6) appeared as a reasonably effective tool for increasing the acceptance for the species by this social group. The networking and publicity activities were conducted – *Annex 15 and 22*.

The main obstacles encountered in 2008 were the problems associated with the uncertain legal situation connected with the national system of spatial planning and its provisions concerning ecological connectivity in Poland. Another issue that complicated the realisation of the project was an unstable Polish Zloty/Euro rate which strongly influenced reaching the threshold of the project budget. These obstacles should not affect the successful implementation of the project.

4. Technical development

A Preparatory actions

ACTION A.1: Preparatory measures for the implementation of the project

The action is completed. The objectives of this action were attained: preparing necessary materials for project implementation, informing local and regional communities and authorities about the project, building the project team, determining the exact location of undertaken activities.

It was carried out between October 2006 and August 2007. The duration was prolonged because of the problem with contract signing with the BPN. The activities conducted in this action during that period were described in the Progress Report no. 1.

In January 2008 the Partner Agreement with the BNP was finally signed (*Annex 2*).

ACTION A.2: Ecological audit of the proposed ecological corridors for bison between Białowieża Primeval Forest and other potential habitats of the species in the region

This action will be completed by the end of March 2009. These additional 3 months of the activity A2 are caused by prolonged process of receiving the feedback from the participants of the seminar organized within this action in November 2008.

In 2008 MRI PAS continued the ecological audit of the area between the BF, Knyszyn Forest and Mielnik Forest, and the audit was finished by the end of April 2008. Apart from checking the above mentioned regions, project employees met with local communes authorities (11 communes in project area) in order to receive more information about planned investments: road infrastructure, plants, human settlements in the potential area of ecological corridors. As a result of those activities the types of habitats and possible ecological barriers for bison migration were recognized. On the base of such data and also data including direct observation of bison inside and outside of the forest, results of telemetry, damages in agriculture areas caused by bison and recorded by the Regional Nature Conservatory, MRI PAS prepared a project of ecological corridors in the region (*Annex 18*). On the 20-22 November, during the workshops organized by the MRI PAS, this project was presented to the representatives of the local, regional and central authorities, state forests officers, scientists, spatial planning specialists, infrastructure developers, and NGO's representatives. The process of receiving the feedback from the workshops participants regarding the ecological corridors is in progress. The general conclusions should be gathered within 2-3 months and included into the final project of the ecological corridors and the strategy of their implementation into voivodship spatial plans and other appropriate documents. The particular details will be directly negotiated with the communes during the implementation of A3 action and the project of ecological corridors will be revised according to the results of the negotiations.

The workshops also provided the participants with a wide range of information about ecological corridors: (1) the influence of fragmentation of the natural environment; (2) ecological corridors within land management plans as a tool of preventing the fragmentation and isolation of habitats; (3) functions and methodology of determining ecological corridors; (4) solutions adopted in other European countries; (4) principles of planning within the corridors in relation to desired provisions in the planning documents; (5) review of the progress of works on the implementation of ecological corridors into spatial management plans at the local and regional level; (6) legal aspects of the protection of ecological corridors in relation to the laws of Poland and of the EU (current condition, determination of needs, indications as for the necessity and scope of legal alterations); (7)

ecological corridors versus the development of transport infrastructure (ecological corridors as a tool for proper planning of passageways for animals; works completed to date and procedures in force within the scope of minimizing the influence of investments on the ecological corridors); (8) possibilities of afforestations within ecological corridors (necessary activities, priorities, mechanisms); (9) possibilities of financing of the implementation and protection of ecological corridors. The photographs from the workshops are in the attached CD – *Annex 24*.

ACTION A.3: Implementation of ecological corridors into Spatial Management Plans

Action in progress. The first discussions about implementing ecological corridors into Spatial Plans and appropriate documents were started in 2007 on two levels: local (communes) and regional (Voivodship Spatial Management Office). The discussions showed that: (1) few communes are preparing their Spatial Management Plans; (2) few communes consider ecological corridors as important in their plans; (3) the costs of preparing spatial plans are considered high and the procedure of their preparation is long (4) legal rules do not define and require implementation of ecological corridors into spatial plans and the financial and organisational difficulties practically discourage communes from such activities (5) there is low knowledge about the importance of ecological corridors. The Beneficiary and the GLPF decided first of all to improve the knowledge about the ecological corridors – by means of the consultations conducted by the GLPF within action E1 (September 2007 – May 2008) and also by the workshops-seminar organized by the end of 2008 by the MRI PAS. Both partners organized 8 meetings to discuss the plan of A3 implementation and prepare the documents for the public tender (*Annex 29*). Public tender is supposed to select a contractor who would prepare the documentation concerning corridors, deliver them to the communes and voivodship authorities and then negotiate implementing corridors into the spatial plans and other appropriate documents. The public tender is planned for the 16th February 2009. This will be the only public tender to select the contractor which will deal with all 11 communes and the voivodship authorities in the period foreseen in the project. The date of the tender is appropriate for the contractor to finish the activities in the project's time framework.

C. Non-recurring management

ACTION C.1: Reclamation of meadows

The action is in progress. The action is executed by the forest districts: Białowieża, Browsk, and Hajnówka. Before the activity was started, the botanical inventory of planned areas had been conducted (the inventory report was attached in the Progress Report 1). This inventory eliminated the areas of high botanical value which should not be reclaimed. As a result some areas initially planned for reclamation were replaced by other, unmanaged areas or unproductive meadows. The reclamation involved removing of tree succession, soil preparation, sowing, introductory maintenance and seeding of specially prepared mixture of plants (the mixture is equal to natural flora of the BF and was accepted by the specialists).

Forest District	Total foreseen reclamation area in hectares	Reclaimed area by the 31.12.2008
Białowieża Forest District	25	10.39
Browsk Forest District	6	0
Hajnówka Forest District	30	30
Total	61	46.39

Białowieża Forest District was not able to conduct the reclamation of 6 ha of meadows (1 location) in 2008 due to the rainy season and water covering this area. The district will finalize this

reclamation in 2009. In case of the same weather conditions, the Beneficiary will suggest exchanging this area for another, more accessible one. The Białowieża Forest District organized a public tender for the reclamation of remaining 14.61 ha of meadows. Due to the very difficult technical conditions on the chosen areas for reclamation (the area is overgrown by larger trees, and additionally not plain; accessible only for sophisticated equipment which is not available in the region), no contractors submitted their offers. Thus, the required area for reclamation was relocated to Hajnówka Forest District and at the moment this district is applying for the permission from the appropriate authority for such activity to be conducted. In 2009 this action will be finalized. Taking into account the main objectives of the overall project – bison distribution and splitting big herds into smaller groups the foreseen change of this localization is justified. The new localization is on the main dispersion direction (southern) and will strengthen the final ecological result of this action. The bison observation and monitoring prove that these animals have been eagerly utilizing reclaimed areas. The reduction of the foreseen meadows area for reclamation in the Białowieża Forest District does not affect reaching the overall project objectives.

ACTION C.2: Construction of small water reservoirs

Action completed. Hajnówka Forest District prepared 5 small water reservoirs. Browsk Forest District executed 9 water reservoirs by the end of 2007. The localization is indicated on the GIS map (*Annex 28*). Observation proves that the water reservoirs are regularly utilized by bison and also other animals.

Forest District	Project number of reservoirs	Number of reservoirs executed by 31.12.2007
Browsk Forest District	9	9
Hajnówka Forest District	5	5
Total	14	14



Picture: Water reservoir – Browsk Forest District – 26cd department

ACTION C.3.: Planting and conservation of wild fruit trees

Action in progress. The Hajnówka Forest District planted the whole foreseen area (3.5 ha) with wild fruit trees. The plantation was fenced to protect it against damages from wild animals. Białowieża Forest District decided to change the localization of its plantation as the foreseen area appeared technically too difficult to conduct such activity. The foreseen area is overgrown and needs first of all a special equipment for reclamation. As there is no such equipment in the region,

none contractor submitted an offer during the public tender. Higher costs of such service were not considered as there are limited funds for this action. The Białowieża District considers relocating this activity to one of remaining forest districts. It will not affect reaching the overall project objectives. This action is planned to be done in 2009.

ACTION C.4: Construction of feeding sites

Action in progress. 18 out of 19 sites for supplementary winter feeding of bison were built. The last site will be completed in Białowieża Forest District in 2009. It was not executed in 2008 due to the lack of a contractor submitting its offer in the public tender. The Białowieża District organized one public tender for all planned for 2008 actions (C1, C3, C4) as it is economically justified to get them implemented by just one contractor. After analysing the monitoring data collected within D4 action and the potential migratory routes (A2 action) the Beneficiary and the Partner proposed to relocate the remaining feeding site to the Browsk Forest District (northern part of the BF) to strengthen the result of bison dispersal.

All feeding sites are provided with hay. Their localization is indicated on the GIS map (*Annex 28*).

Forest District	Project number of feeding sites	Number of feeding sites prepared in by the 31.12.2007
Białowieża Forest District	6	5
Browsk Forest District	8	8
Hajnówka FD	5	5
Total	19	18



D. Recurring management

ACTION D.1: Mowing of meadows and provision of hay for winter feeding

Action in progress. Mowing was carried out by the Forest Districts during 2008 season. The action met some difficulties caused by frequent rainfalls during the summer. The weather conditions also disturbed drying and collecting of hay. Eventually, the hay was collected and will supply all feeding sites established under the activity C4.

Forest District	Meadows to be mown in hectares (according to the project)	Meadows mown in 2008 in hectares (financed from other sources than LIFE project*)	Meadows mown in 2008 in hectares (financed by LIFE)
Białowieża Forest District	80	44.65	0
Browsk Forest District	50	76.44	0
Hajnówka Forest District	30	65	30
Total	160	186.09	30

* national funds, EU subsidies, own financial means

The LIFE funds were used by the Hajnówka Forest District for mowing 30 ha of meadows reclaimed in 2007. 186.09 ha of meadows were mown using other sources than LIFE - project national funds, EU subsidies, forest districts' own financial means.

As it was explained in the Progress Report 1, the cost of mowing has considerably increased since the time of project preparation in 2004-2005. Thus the budget foreseen for this activity project can finance mowing of only a part of the planned area. The remaining area can be mown using the above mentioned financial sources. The article 20.2 CP is respected and this activity is not double founded. There are financial documents confirming the area of mown meadows and sources of financing. After the second year of project implementation the Beneficiary confirms again that the additional costs of mowing are balanced by the surplus from other forest districts' activities. The RDSF budget planned for all activities C and D1 in total (external category) will remain at the same level as accepted in the project and will not influence overall budget of the project. The technical objectives of this activity will be also reached as the Partner will provide hay for winter feeding from the mown area, as planned in the project. Another advantage of using different financial sources (as agri-environmental schemes and EU subsidies, national funds) for meadows mowing is that it will ensure continuation of this activity also after the project is finished.

The amount of hectares managed in each of three selected project sub-sites (Browsk, Hajnówka, Białowieża Forest Districts) has differed from what is foreseen in the approved project proposal due to the following reasons:

1/ in 2007 the reclaimed areas within the action C1 could not have been mown yet; to provide hay for winter feeding the partners agreed to mow other areas and had to relocate the foreseen by the project areas. It does not affect the ecological result of the action D1.

2/ Since the project was submitted to the Commission in 2005 the particular forest districts entered some meadows into agriculture subsidies scheme. They cannot be double founded according to the CP.

ACTION D.2: Protection of agricultural areas affected by *Bison bonasus* and managing damage-causing individuals

Action in progress. Neighbouring areas to the BF, where bison appear near the human settlements, are regularly monitored by the staff of the Białowieża National Park (villages in the North: Babia Góra, Siemianówka, Zabrody, Tarnopol, Nowa Łuka, in the South – Biała Straż, Werstok, Kleszczele, Orla and inside the forest: Białowieża, Budy, Teremiski, Pogorzelce). During the second year of project realisation there were ca. **50 interventions** of the BNP staff regarding bison presence near people settlements. The damages caused by bison in those areas occurred. The damages occurred mostly in autumn and in spring, when the additional feeding is limited.

The protection actions taken by the BNP were: (1) scarring off the animals (gum bullets were used); (2) catching individuals and transferring them to the distant forest areas; (3) informing farmers and local communities about the possibility of protection of areas affected by bison; distributing leaflets (4) purchasing materials for preventing damages and preparing electric wires, erecting wooden

barriers for farmers who reported damage. Altogether, 10 farmers were supplied with such materials. Please see attached the copies of the protocols (*Annex 21*)

Although the BNP conducted the information action, it has taken a long time to make local farmers interested in the opportunities of protecting the agricultural areas and settlements against damages done by bison offered by the project. Good practices of farmers who entered the program attracted others and since that moment more farmers are willing to apply for the protection measures. As a result the BNP project staff can observe that due to the actions taken (including also Action D6) the acceptance for the bison in the region is increasing.

A brochure for farmers regarding bison damages prevention (*Annex 7*) was printed, distributed among local communities and delivered to the local authorities (3000 leaflets produced and 1000 distributed).

ACTION D.3: Supervision and annual censuses *Bison bonasus*

Action in progress. The staff of the BNP carried out the census in 2006, 2007 and 2008. The exact number of animals, as well as sex and age structure were determined. There were ca. 402 bison recorded in the BF in winter 2006/2007 and 439 in 2007/2008. The number of 2008/2009 census will be known in March 2009. It shows 11% increase of population size when compared to number of bison in winter 2005/2006. The details of the census are shown in the *Annex 4*.

Observation of distribution, size and composition of bison herds are conducted all year round in the whole area of the Białowieża Forest and also in the areas neighbouring with the forest. Sightings of bison are collected by the staff of the project partners (BNP, MRI PAS, Forest Districts) and recorded in the Bison observation cards prepared for the project. Over 900 observations of bison were collected in 2007-2008. Most observations were made inside the forest, however single males, groups of males and herds of cows were regularly or occasionally (usually in winter) roaming out of the Forest in a woodland-agriculture mosaic.

We recorded small herds of bison and single individuals in the Mielnik Forest and in the transitional area between the BF and the Mielnik Forest (south-west of the BF). One male was also observed in southern part of the Knyszyn Forest (north of the BF). It was probably a migrant from the BF. Unfortunately, it was found dead in November 2008 (due to an infection). Spatial monitoring of bison distribution proves, that bison increase penetration of areas adjacent to the Forest and start to migrate in expected directions, mainly to the south (in the direction of the Mielnik Forest).

Monitoring of bison distribution based on snow-tracking, which is effective in recording migrating individuals, was limited due to the very mild winters and lack of snow-cover.

The BNP purchased in 2008 the all-terrain car and other equipment (2 pair of binoculars).

ACTION D.4: Monitoring of bison distribution and dispersal with satellite telemetry

Action in progress.

In 2007 (January-March) 10 bison were fitted with GPS collars. At the same time 8 bison were wearing already 8 VHF collars.

6 out of 10 collars foreseen in the project were purchased in February 2008. The Beneficiary decided to refurbish the remaining 4 previously used collars. It was due to the increase of the GPS collar price - the cost of a collar refurbishing is lower than the cost of a new collar. Such solution does not have any consequences for the planned data/results to be obtained. 10 foreseen by the project collars were then provided for action implementation.

In 2008 next 7 bison (January-March) were fitted with GPS collars. In January 2009 next 3 bison were collared. In total, during first 2 years of the project, 20 bison were fitted with GPS collars and additionally 8 bison have been wearing VHF collars - the total number of monitored bison were 28 within those 2 years. This number altered in last 2 years in some periods due to the failures of collars - mechanical failures, running out of batteries, losing collars by bison.

In following months – February and March 2009 next bison will be fitted with the new/refurbished collars, which have already been delivered from the supplier to the Beneficiary (under guarantee conditions or from own financing).

Collaring is usually planned for winter season, when bison are not so mobile and less shy than in summer. Due to very mild last 3 winters the Beneficiary has had difficulties in immobilisation of bison roaming on the edges of the forest (individuals most valuable to disperse).

All collared bison belong to 6 winter aggregations (2-4 bison per aggregation). The Beneficiary takes into account 2 factors in further implementation of this action: (1) possible technical failures of collars (2) changes in the numbers of winter aggregations. This action requires continuous monitoring of technical conditions of collars and replacement the failure ones what can take place in winter season.

We collected over 30 000 localizations of bison wearing GPS collars. Bison utilised home ranges covering from 18 to 130 km². We found that in parts of the forest with higher share of forest meadows (some reclaimed during the project), home ranges of bison were smaller than in areas of continuous woodland. From spring to autumn bison strongly preferred meadows, eagerly utilising them for foraging. Four radio-tracked bison (single male, male in group of 3 individuals, and two cows with herds) in winter and early spring utilised the mosaic of woodlands and agriculture areas outside of the BF. Some of the movements were up to 6-8 km from the forest edge in the south-western and northern parts of the BF - in directions where dispersion of population and migrations are encouraged within the project. Two of these bison (single male and one of the cows continued utilisation of areas out of the BF in summer and autumn. Total area covered by radio-collared bison was 612 km². The results of the monitoring are described in the “Starting point assessment of the space use patterns and genetic structure of bison population (before implementing conservation activities)” MIL 2 (*Annex 31*) and presented in the maps of bison home range, movements, distribution, densities and winter concentrations (Del 5) – *Annex 14*.

Biologist working part time for the project were supported in 2008 in conducting the monitoring by other institute employees (who are paid from other financial sources) and also by students doing their training at the institute.

Additionally, within this action the samples for the genetic analyses were collected and forwarded to the genetic laboratory (action D5).

ACTION D.5: Genetical monitoring of expanding *Bison bonasus* population

Action in progress. The aim of this action is to monitor the data on genetic structure of European bison population, including animals from captive breeding centre, free-ranging, and migrating individuals. During the first two years of the project, over 100 tissue and DNA samples have been collected using DNA darts and tissue sampling during seasonal culling (according to the procedures described previously) and deposited in the European Bison DNA Collection. DNA analyses produced data that were added to the European Bison Genetic Data Collection of the MRI PAS. All the extractions and analyses were performed in the Mammal Research Institute PAS laboratories.

Skin samples have been collected from wildy roaming bison using DNA Darts system (Pneu-Dart Inc.), while blood and soft tissue samples were taken from seasonally culled animals. The tissue samples are stored at -20°C, while isolated DNA was subdivided and then stored in a deep freezer at -80°C for further usage. Altogether, there are over 300 DNA samples in the European Bison DNA Collection and over 800 tissue samples, including previously collected and stored, in the European Bison Genetic Data Collection. The collected genetic material allowed launching wide range of genetic studies considering genetic aspects of European bison ecology.

Nearly 180 samples were analyzed using 21 microsatellite DNA marker panel to reconstruct the post-bottleneck genetic structure of the species. The potential temporal changes of genetic structure and microsatellite allele composition were studied in a set of animals born between 1955 and 2005.

Mitochondrial DNA was studied in over 100 bison samples, revealing only 3 maternal lines in the contemporary population of the European bison.

We have initiated the large scale analyses of single nucleotide polymorphism (SNP) in European bison using The BovineSNP50 Illumina Genotyping BeadChip. Genotypes of 50 individuals of bison have been studied so far. SNPs, co-dominant biallelic markers represent both coding and non-coding sequences. Their variability is lower than that of microsatellites' but single nucleotide polymorphism is spread widely throughout genome and they are potentially inexhaustible source of markers. Out of 54 000 bovine SNPs applied only 900 segregate in European bison and the parameters obtained confirm the extraordinarily low level of genetic variation within the species. The sample set included animals with known pedigrees, which enabled the evaluation of SNPs for paternity/identity testing.

Another attempt was undertaken to evaluate the scale of loss of genetic diversity by the species after bottleneck event – DNA analysis of museum specimens sampled in the Białowieża Forest at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries (Darwin State Museum, Moscow, Russia). The test analysis of the samples is being performed. All the genetic data DNA from earlier studies on European bison are included in the European Bison Genetic Data Bank.

The results of the above activities of genetic monitoring of the bison are already described in a series of manuscripts prepared by MRI PAS researchers (**Annex 17**):

“Post-bottleneck mtDNA diversity in a free-living population of European bison: implications for conservation” (Journal of Zoology, doi: 10.1111/j.1469-7998.2008.00515.x),

“Post-bottleneck genetic variability in the European bison (Bison bonasus) population from Białowieża Forest over fifty years” (Biological Journal of Linnean Society, accepted),

“Depauperated genome variability in European and American bison detected using the BovineSNP50 Illumina Genotyping BeadChip” (re-submitted to Molecular Ecology), and

“Effectiveness of microsatellite and SNP markers for parentage and identity analysis in species with low genetic diversity: the case of European bison” (submitted to Heredity).

The references to the LIFE project funding is included in these papers.

Another manuscript, considering comparable genetic studies between European and American bison including microsatellite and SNPs attempts, co-funded by the Life project is being prepared for publication.

Laboratory chemicals and disposables have been successively purchased. Peltier thermocycler and deep freezer purchase has been finalized. One full-time technician has been employed according to the project guidelines.

ACTION D.6: Contracting of meadows for bison

Action in progress. The BNP is a partner responsible for this action. At the beginning of 2008 the BNP identified areas where the contracting could be implemented, taking into account their location on the migration routes from the BF and their proximity to the forest, as well as by consulting the farmers who could potentially be included into the scheme for 2008. The list of farmers claiming regularly damages caused by bison (received from the Regional Nature Conservatory) was also a base for choosing the farmers for meadows contracting. The contracts for season 2008 were signed with 21 farmers. The list of the farmers and the sample of the contract are in the **Annex 27**. The contracted area for 2008 was 51.79 ha which complies with project deliverables and milestones. The contractors received from BNP a mixture of grazing land grasses and plants seeds to improve the quality of hay. Two farmers were contracted to build the feeding sites and the rest of farmers had to keep the hay in the present feeding sites or in the stacks. From May to August 2008 there were 170 tons of hay collected on the contracted areas what according to the BNP should cover the demand for the hay for in winter season 2008/2009. The BNP workers have been monitoring the contracted areas regularly. The contracts could not have been signed for the whole project duration as in next seasons these contracted areas must be checked whether bison still utilize them or if any

new areas regularly affected by bison appear and have to be entered into this scheme. The intention of the BNP and the Beneficiary is to prolong contracts with the farmers but it must be well justified. To provide ensured long-term management of the meadows for bison in the after-LIFE period the Beneficiary is planning to promote the idea of a new agro-environmental scheme for bison management practices to be implemented from 2013-2014, and to develop a transitory programme for 2011-2012. 2009 activities and the conference planned for September should bring more detailed plan and or strategy how to implement above mentioned solution.

E: Public awareness and dissemination of results

ACTIONE.1: Consultation of project objectives and actions with local communities

Action completed. The Green Lungs of Poland Foundation realized following activities:

1/ 11 public consultation meetings for the representatives of 11 communes and 1 meeting for the representatives of regional voivodship authorities were organized from September 2007 to April 2008. The total number of participants amounted to 307 people. Each consultation lasted 2 days: lectures and discussions on the first day and a field trip on the second day. The participants were informed about the European bison, about the goals of the project and its actions, as well as their possible impact on local community and the whole region. The emphasis was put on the information about new possibilities offered by its presence, especially in the field of eco-tourism. They were also informed about possible conflicts related to the presence of bison and the ways of preventing them. The participants were provided with materials on European bison and the project. Presentations and distributed materials had a clear reference to LIFE financial support - including the LIFE and Natura 2000 logos and references to Natura 2000.

Special survey forms filled by the participants after the consultations show the level of public awareness and the quality of prepared materials and talks – Report on consultations with local communities (Del10) – *Annex 22*.

2/ 22 meetings and workshops in schools from targeted communes – 1660 students and pupils could learn more about bison. The results of the questionnaire after the meetings are also presented in the Report – *Annex 13*.

3/ 1 public consultation meeting for the tourist guides operating in the Białowieża Forest area. Such recipients can present further the information about the project to tourist coming to this region, which annual number reaches about 160 000.

4/ The contest organized for the regional schools for the best project of album dedicated to bison – 985 students participated in this competition – 40 albums were received. The final stage of the competition took place in the Białowieża National Park conference hall on the 29th May 2008. The GLPF purchased following prizes: books, digital cameras, DVD players, DVD films (books and films dedicated to nature conservation).

5/ Promotion of the project during the festival/workshops “Meeting Science and Art” organized by the Białystok University, the 28th May 2008. The lecture about the public consultations and their first results was given during that event. Project materials – leaflets, brochures and films were handed out.

6/ Photographs exhibition “Bison extermination and survival” accompanied 11 public consultation meetings mentioned above in point 1. The exhibition was supported by the book “Bison extermination and survival” and the catalogue of presented works – published by the GLPF.

7/ Presentation of the Bison Land Project during the meeting of the GLPF Board in Kaletka, Olsztyn the 3-4th April 2008, and presentation for the GLP Association Program Board in the Białystok Marshall Office on the 23rd June 2008.

8/ Presentation of the Bison Land Project during **the festival of Science and Art** in Olecko, the 5-7th September 2008.

9/ Presentation of the Bison Land Project during the meeting of the GLP brand mark beneficiaries in Ciechanów on the 30th January 2008.

10/ Presentation of the Bison Land Project during workshops organized by the GLPF in regional schools “Nature conservation in the area of Green Lungs of Poland” the 18th November 2008

11/ Presentation of the Bison Land Project during the **International Trade Fair for Environmental Protection - POLEKO**, Poznań 27-20th October 2008.

12/ Presentation of the Bison Land Project during the XXV Anniversary Session of GLP Agreement the 18th December 2008 in Białystok.

13/ Presentation of the Bison Land Project within the **campaign “Bison on Euro coin”** conducted by the GLPF from October 2008.

14/ Presentation of the Bison Land Project during other small events organized in 2007-2008 by the GLPF

*(pictures are presented in the attached CD **Annex 24**)*

During above mentioned events GLPF presented and distributed following promotional materials produced within the Life project:

1/ TV film/spot – in Polish and English version: 1500 pcs on DVD and 500 pcs on CD – distributed already 2000; Presented already in regional and cable stations: 19 times in regional local stations and 72 times in 1 local station in 2008 in total) – confirmations from the TV stations available on request. The film is also available on the main website of the region www.wrotapodlasia.pl - **Annex 5**

The TV spot foreseen in the project was understood by the Beneficiary as a short promotional film about the project (20 min). The budget was planned so as to produce it. Extra costs occurred for producing sufficient number of DVD and CD with the film (total number is: 2000 copies) but it does not influence the external assistance category of budget. The film is promoting the project and its objectives and it is distributed among local communities and also to national institutions and regional and central TV stations. The contracts with televisions for broadcasting have been signed. Till now there have been already 91 emissions on TV. Further broadcasting is planned. The film plays important role in increasing the social acceptance for the species and in dissemination of the project results. It receives a positive feedback from the society.

2/ GLPF project folder 5000 pcs printed – 4000 distributed - **Annex 6**

3/ banner SnupUp – a big banner presented on each event organized by the GLPF – the layout was presented in the Progress Report 1 (**Annex 32**); the banner can be seen on photos from the events organized by GLPF.

4/ Paper and cotton carry bags (*Annexes 25 and 26*) – 2000 pcs produced – 900 distributed.

5/ A book “Bison extermination and survival” (“Żubr zagłada i ocalenie”) 500 pcs, 300 distributed for 11 communes and other institutions - **Annex 20**

6/ materials produced in E4 activity (calendars 2008 and 2009 -1000 pcs produced and all distributed, leaflets 3000 produced – 1000 distributed, maps 5000 produced – will be distributed in 2009) and produced additionally by the MRI PAS (LIFE project leaflet 3000 produced and all distributed, Bison Track Path leaflet 5000 produced – 3000 distributed, Bison monograph (a book) – 50 distributed, “Pompik the Bison” – a book for children 200 purchased – 20 distributed).

Some materials produced within this action have already been evaluated by the EU as good examples of communication tools – calendar – poster for 2008, website, children corner, on-site panel.

All activities significantly strengthen the results of the public consultations and rise public awareness. The objective of informing the local and regional authorities about the conducted project and rising awareness about the bison was reached, although we will still continue our promotional

activities, trying to reach other member of the local communities and using other channels of information (TV, Internet, schools, meetings). We would like to assure that the budget of this action has not been exceeded and there will not be any substantial budget modification.

The results of this action are presented in the Report (*Annex 13*). It is also worth a mention that the Regional Authorities of Nature Conservation (Wojewódzki Konserwator Przyrody) evaluated the execution of this action as very effective and would like to transfer these good practices into other species human dimensions activities (regarding wolf, beaver, bison in the whole area of Green Lungs of Poland – Podlaskie and Warminsko-Mazurskie Voivodships).

ACTION E.2: Web site design and production

Action in progress. The website www.krainazubra.pl has been operating since 20 December 2007. It includes all planned elements and has been updated on regular basis for the last year. During the last 12 months there have been 16 000 visits recorded. The website is promoted on project's printed and presented materials like leaflets, calendars, presentations and lectures, and in the film. The Beneficiary decided not to install the on-line access to the internet cameras which would provide the live views of the bison due to the lack of technical conditions and lack of possibilities for transferring the data from the camera to the server. If the conditions improve in future the Beneficiary will still take the chance to have such transmission available.

ACTION E.3: Production of bison popular book and layman report

Action will be conducted by the end of the project. The report will be prepared to summarise the activities undertaken within the project and their results in September 2010. The preparation activities will be taken in the end of 2009.

ACTION E.4: Production of folders, calendars, maps, and brochures for farmers

Action in progress. After selecting the best offers in the public tender procedure, the BNP released in 2008 following materials foreseen by the project:

1/ leaflet for farmers "How to deal with a stubborn bison" (*Annex 7*) – 3000 pcs – 1000 copies among local communities distributed till end of 2008. Distribution is continued.

2/ calendars for 2009 – 500 pcs – all distributed in December 2008 to the local and regional authorities (the list of recipients available in the BNP). The number of calendars was not sufficient to supply all important institutions, educational centres, and authorities thus the Beneficiary decided to reprint 300 calendars and deliver them in January 2009 to the above mentioned recipients. *Annex 10*

3/ map of the project – printed in December 2008 – 5000 pcs. Distribution is planned for the next few months. (*Annex 3*)

All deliverables are available on the project website. All materials are used and successively distributed by all project partners. As a result the public awareness of the project and its objectives and activities should improve as well as the knowledge about the bison. All project materials bear logos of LIFE and Natura 2000 and inform about LIFE financial support and provide information about Natura 2000.

As an additional activity to the ones foreseen in the project the Beneficiary created the Bison Track tourist path by marking it in the BF and promoting with the leaflet in Polish and English (5000 copies, 3000 distributed in local tourist offices, authorities and institutions). The Beneficiary additionally purchased 200 books "Zubr Pompik" / "Pompik the Bison" and is going to distribute them among the libraries of the local schools and for the after-school clubs or day-care rooms. The book in a very simple but interesting and sufficient way delivers knowledge about bison to children - the youngest members of the local communities. Although the project did not foreseen purchasing such books for children, the Beneficiary realised the need to present the species also to the youngest

recipients (5-7 years old) within the activities for the project awareness and dissemination of results. Such action will create the positive attitudes in young generation towards targeted species and provide sound ecological knowledge about the species in an accessible way. The ecological education among pupils at schools is still not sufficient and must be supported by different means. The project has already been recognized in many local and regional schools and as a result children eagerly participate in contests (for the album about bison, for the poem on bison – the works are presented on the project website). According to the sociologists preparing the report from the public consultations (E1), education of the youngest population in this project should be treated as an investment and shall pay off in the future. In the 1st progress report the Beneficiary proposed to organize an extra activity (not foreseen in the project) - a large bison exhibition for adults and children. Unfortunately, after thorough investigation, the Beneficiary has not found enough financing for the realization of the whole idea and withdrew from this action.

ACTION E.5: Conference on the progress and prospects of the project

Action in progress. The preparatory activities were undertaken in November 2008. The conference was foreseen in the project for January 2009. However, the Beneficiary and partners consider this as too early to sufficiently present the progress of the project and its results and also discuss further after-Life activities. What is even more important, in 2009, the BNP is organizing the conference on the 80th anniversary of bison restitution in the BF, which will gather all specialists on bison from Poland and abroad. Organising two large bison conferences on bison in Białowieża in the same year would affect the participation and quality of speakers. The Beneficiary and partners discuss at the moment the most appropriate term for holding the LIFE conference and other organizational matters regarding the conference. We will inform the EC as soon as the date for the conference is set.

Organizing the conference later than planned in the project will postpone the deadline for the Deliverable 15 (Report on conference proceedings). The conference will be organized by the Beneficiary and supported by all partners. We would like to provide a simultaneous translation (Polish-English-Polish) – what was not planned initially in the project. We are expecting around 20 participants from abroad (including lecturers) speaking English. The cost is estimated for 3000-3500 Euro. We also consider inviting the representatives of the bison specialists from Bison Specialists Group - USA/Canada to give the presentation about good practices in bison management and conservation in America if the EC accepts the covering of travel and accommodation costs of such participants. The project has foreseen covering the travel costs of 5 people from neighbouring countries. The Beneficiary after analysing the list of potential participants has suggested more than 5 participants from the countries where bison are present and some conservation activities have been recently undertaken. Their presence at the conference will be valuable and will give the opportunity to create the platform for cooperation, exchanging experiences and learning from the LIFE good practices for other countries which introduce or plan to introduce free living bison populations. We would like to propose covering costs of travel for more than 5 people from abroad. These additional costs will not cause any substantial budget modification according to the Common Provisions. The overall category of travel in the project we will not be exceeded.

ACTION E.6: Bison seminar for teachers

Action in progress. The first seminar for teachers was organized on the 19th October 2007 and the second one on the 24th October 2008. In total, 40 teachers participated in both events. The agenda of the seminars included: (1) lecture on the history, restitution, ecology, biology, genetic diversity aspects and behaviour of European bison, with a special emphasis put on bison conservation; (2) visit to the European Bison Show Reserve in Białowieża connected with practical training (recognizing sex, age, and tracks of bison), and (3) workshops run by the specialists from the BNP.

The program of the first seminar was attached to the Progress Report I and the program of the second one held in 2008 is in **Annex 12(including lists of participants)**. Photographs from both events are available on attached CD. The teachers received educational materials, synopses of lectures on bison for pupils at different levels. The teachers filled in the questionnaires and evaluated the quality of organization, presented information and delivered materials (the survey is available in the MRI PAS office). The seminars were assessed very favourably.

The further preparation of educational materials for teachers foreseen in this action is in progress (Del 15) **Annex 30**. Delivering of this product is delayed because the Beneficiary and the BNP decided to involve teachers from regional schools into this action and prepare the lesson synopses. This idea additionally supports and strengthens the promotion of the project and the dissemination of its results. The latest synopses were received in September and October 2008. 20-22 synopses are at the moment edited and the synopses book will be then printed and distributed in local and regional schools. The deadline for the preparation of the book is planned for the 30th June 2009. The financial means foreseen in this action for the educational materials will be combined with the surplus from the activity E4 (the result of selecting the best prices in the public tenders for promotional materials). The last seminar to be organised for October 2009.

F. Overall project operation and monitoring

ACTION F.1: Project management and operation

Action in progress. Updated project staff organigram is attached in the **Annex 1**. There were some small movements in the project staff and at some stages the Beneficiary and the Partners had to support implementation of some actions by using the external assistance.

On the 19th December 2007 the annual meeting of coordinators and members of the Project Board took place in Białowieża. The next annual meeting is planned for January/February 2009. Other coordinating meetings of particular working groups (ca. 25 meetings) were held in 2008 by all Partners. The reports from the meetings are available.

ACTION F.2: Monitoring of project results

Action in progress. To monitor the progress of the project in 2008, the Beneficiary organized meetings with task coordinators (8 meetings). There were also working meetings organised with the project staff regarding particular activities (ca. 20 meetings). All meetings were recorded in reports. The Beneficiary together with the Partners usually set the short term plans for each tasks or action implementation. Verification of their implementation has been done by the Project Coordinator on the base of regularly submitted reports by the Partners (every 3 months) and visits in the sites where the activities had been undertaken.

The table below includes procedures of monitoring, monitoring indicators and sources of verification for each action – on the 31th December 2008

Action	Monitoring indicator	Sources of verification	Current status
A1/ Preparatory measures for the implementation of the project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of meetings organised • Examination of exact locations of actions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation of coordinator • Information from the task coordinator • Financial documents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completed • Reports and financial documents available for review
A2/ Ecological audit of the proposed ecological corridors between Białowieża Primeval Forest and other potential habitats of bison in the region	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of communes audited • Attendance during the seminar 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information from the task coordinator, report • Participation of coordinator, report • Financial documents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completed • 11 communes audited • Ecological corridors designed • Bison observation data collected • Reports and financial documents available • Photographs from the audit

			available
A3/ Implementation of ecological corridors into spatial management plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of communes with prepared documentation • Number of negotiation meetings with the communes • Number of consultations with the Voivodship Authorities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verification of documentation by the coordinator • Reports from the institution responsible for the activity • Information from Voivodship Authorities • Financial documents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In progress • Public tender procedure prepared • Working meetings organized and reports available • Financial documents available
C1/ Reclamation of meadows	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of hectares reclaimed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verification in field by the project coordinator • Financial documents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completed 40,39 ha • Verified by the Task Coordinator and Project Administrative Coordinator • Financial documents and photos available
C2/ Construction of small water reservoirs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of water reservoirs created 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verification in field by the project coordinator • Photographic documentation • Information from task coordinator • Financial documents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completed • 14 water reservoirs ready • Verified by Task Coordinator and Project Administrative Coordinator • Financial documents and photos available
C3/ Planting and conservation of wild fruit trees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of hectares of planted trees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verification in field by the project coordinator • Photographic documentation • Information from task coordinator • Financial documents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In progress • 3,5 ha of wild fruit trees planted in Hajnówka Forest District • Reports and financial documents available
C4/ Construction of feeding sites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of feeding sites constructed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verification in field by the project coordinator • Photographic documentation • Information from task coordinator • Financial documents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completed 18 feeding sites • Verified by Task Coordinator and Project Administrative Coordinator • Financial documents and photos available
D1/ Mowing of meadows and provision of hay for winter feeding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of hectares mowed • Number of feeding places where hay was dispatched 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verification by the task coordinator • Information from the institution responsible for the action • Financial documents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 216,09 ha mown in 2008 • In 18 feeding sites hay was dispatched • Verified by Task Coordinator and Project Administrative Coordinator • Financial documents and photos available
D2/ Protection of agricultural areas affected by <i>Bison bonasus</i> and managing damage-causing individuals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of damages reported • Number of hectares of fields where protection measures were implemented • Number of animals transported 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reports from the responsible institution • Verification in field by project coordinator • Photographic documentation • Information from task coordinator • Financial documents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report from BNP for the season 2007/2008 received • 50 recorded intervention • Financial documents available • Photographs available
D3/ Supervision and annual censuses of <i>Bison bonasus</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information on bison number and distribution produced each three months • Number of annual censuses carried out 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reports from the responsible institution • Information from task coordinator • Participation of Project Assistant • Financial documents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual report from BNP received for the 2007/2008 season • Financial documents available • Reports from the task coordinator received and available

D4/ Monitoring of bison distribution and dispersal with satellite telemetry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of bison fitted with radio collars • Number of bison positions collected 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information from the responsible institution • Verification by project coordinator • Photographic documentation • Financial documents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 out of 10 planned bison fitted with radio collars • Financial documents and photos available • 30 000 bison positions collected
D5/ Genetical monitoring of expanding <i>Bison bonasus</i> population	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of genetic samples collected • Number of samples analysed • Publication of genetic variability preservation guidelines 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information from the responsible institution • Verification by project coordinator • Financial documents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 300 genetic samples collected • Over 180 samples analysed • Financial documents and photos available • 2 publications ready; 4 papers in publication process
D6/ Contracting of meadows for bison	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of hectares contracted • Number of feeding places prepared 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Written agreements with farmers • Information from the task coordinator • Photographic documentation • Verification in field by project coordinator • Financial documents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In season 2007/2008 the contracts were signed with 21 farmers for an area of ca. 54 ha and supplying of ca. 170 tons of hay • 2 feeding sites built by chosen contractors • Written agreements available • Photographic documentation available • Verified by Project Administrative Coordinator • Financial documents available
E1/ Consultation of project objectives and actions with local communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of consultations carried out • Number of TV spot emissions • Attendance during the consultations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report from the consultations • Information from the responsible institution and task coordinator • Photographic documentation • Information from TV stations • Financial documents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Action completed • 12 consultation carried out with the 11 communes and representatives of regional authorities • consultations carried out in 22 schools in 11 communes • TV film/spot completed • Reports, financial and photographic documentation available • Presence of the Project Administrative Coordinator during consultation
E2/ Web site design and production	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publication of the web site • Number of visitors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information from the task coordinator • Information from the webmaster • Verification of project manager • Financial documents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Polish and English version available from 20 December 2007 • Verified by the Project Coordinator • Financial documents available
E3/ Production of bison popular book and layman report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of chapters written 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verification of project manager 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planned for 2009-2010
E4/ Production of, folders, calendars maps, and brochures for farmers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual production of folders • Annual production of calendars • Production of maps • Production of brochures for farmers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information from the task coordinator • Verification of project manager • Financial documents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project leaflet for farmers ready • Calendars for 2008 and 2009 ready • Additional rollup banner for presentations prepared • Information boards for the project area implemented • Financial and photographs documentations available • Map of the project printed • Distribution of materials in progress – protocols or

			confirmation available • Financial documents
E5/ Conference on the progress and prospects of the project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of presentations • Number of participants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information from the project manager • Financial documents • Report 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arrangements in progress • Planned for the 28-30th September 2009. • Reports from meeting available
E6/ Bison seminars for teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of seminars organised • Number of participants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information from the task coordinator • List of participation • Photographic documentation • Financial documents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I seminar organized on the 19 October 2007; II edition on the 24 October 2008 • 40 participants in total • List of participation, financial documents and photographic documentation available
F1/ Project management	• n.a.	• n.a	
F2/ Monitoring of project results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of monitoring meetings organised • Number of project's indicators controlled 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information from the project coordinator • Information from the task coordinators • Reports • Financial documents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reports, plans, photographs, other documents available • 8 monitoring meetings organised; 12 meeting of working groups • project's indicators of 19 activities are regularly controlled
F3/ External financial audit	• Carrying out the audit procedure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audit document • Financial documents 	• Planned for 2010
F4/ Preparation of "After-Life Conservation Plan"	• n.a.	• n.a.	• Planned for 2009-2010

Report on DELIVERABLE PRODUCTS and MILESTONES on the 31 December 2008

Deliverable or Milestone	Number of the associated action	Project Deadline	Status
Del-1 Materials and documentation of the planned actions collected with GIS maps	A1	30.12.2007	Completed
Del-2 Environmental assessment of the proposed corridors and other bison habitats and maps of verified corridor locations	A2	30.12.2008	Completed – 30.12.2008 – Annex 18
Del-5 Maps of bison home ranges, movements, distribution, densities, and winter concentrations	D3, D4	30.12.2008	Completed – 30.12.2008 – Annex 14
Del-9 TV spots	E1	30.10. 2009	Completed – 30.03.2008 – Annex 5
Del-10 Report on consultations with local communities	E1	30.12.2008	Completed – 30.12.2008 – Annex 13
Del-11 Web page	E2	30.06.2007	Completed 20 December 2007 – available in the Internet
Del-13 Brochures, folders, calendars, maps	E4	30.09.2010	1 project leaflet – delivered with the Progress Report 1 1 project folder – Annex 6 1 map Annex 3 1 leaflet "How to deal with a stubborn bison" – Annex 7 1 Poster of the project – Annex 8 Calendar 2008 – Annex 9 Calendar 2009 – Annex 10 Bison Track Path folder – Annex 16 Bison extermination and survival book – Annex 20 Pompik the Bison book for children – Annex 23 Paper carry bag Annex 25 Cotton carry bag – Annex 26
Del-15 Educational materials for teachers	E6	30.10. 2008	In progress – will be completed by the 30 June 2009
Mil-1 Completion of the preparatory measures for the implementation of the project	A1	01.04.2007	Completed in August 2007 due to the delay with partner contracts signing

Mil-2 Starting point assessment of the space use patterns and genetic structure of bison population (before implementing conservation activities)	D3, D4, D5	30.12.2007	Completed – Annex 32
Mil-3 Assessment after the completion of ecological audit	A2	30.12.2007	Completed – Annex 18
Mil-4 Contracting first 20 hectares of agricultural land for bison	D6	30.12.2007	Completed – 54 ha contracted in 2008
Mil-5 Seminar on audit results	A2	30.12.2008	Completed – 20-22 nd November 2008
Mil-6 Construction of first 5 water reservoirs	C2	30.12.2008	19 water reservoirs completed by December 2007
Mil-7 Construction of first 10 feeding sites	C4	30.12.2008	18 feeding sites completed in by December 2007

ACTION F.3: External financial audit

Action planned after the project is completed – October 2010.

ACTION F.4: Preparation of “After-Life Conservation Plan”

In 2010 under this action an “After-LIFE Conservation Plan” will be prepared as a separate detailed Annex to the Final Project Report. The main concepts/information will be also included into the Final Report as a chapter.

Networking activities October 2006 – December 2008:

Materials from the networking activities included in the *Annex 15*

1. Meeting with the Drawsko-Inski Landscape Park director and other park employees, March 2007, Białowieża – the institution maintaining free-living bison population in the Walch Forest (North-West Poland); exchanging experiences, starting cooperation between institutions;
2. Meeting in Białowieża with representatives (14 people) of different institutions implementing LIFE projects in Slovakia, 11-17 June 2007, exchanging experiences and good practices in project implementation, discussion, field visits
3. Bison Conference in Gołuchów, Poland 1-3 October 2007; presentation of the project LIFE, participation in discussion, experiences exchange;
4. The conference on the 80th anniversary of Bison Center, 06-08 March 2008– Springe, Germany; project LIFE presentation, exchanging experiences and good practices, field trip;
5. The conference „Law and nature conservation in Poland” at the University of Łódź, April 2008; poster presenting the activities of the project and on that basis proposing organisational and legal changes.
6. Bison Conference “Bison in Natura 2000 network” 15-16 September 2008, Cisna, Poland 2008; presentation of results of some activities conducted in LIFE project; presentation of the LIFE film, participation in discussion, experiences exchange.
7. Conference “Making Conservation Count” 25-29 September 2008, Frankfurt, Germany – exchange of the experiences in wild life conservation all over the world, including the LIFE project; presentation of the poster of the project; participation in discussions; starting the cooperation with the specialists from Ukraine, who are interested in developing the free living population of bison in Ukraine and expanding conservation activities;
8. “LIFE + - new perspectives” conference organized by the National Fund of Environmental Protection and Water Management on the 7th October 2008, Warsaw, Poland – presentation of the LIFE Bison Land project, participation in the discussion, exchanging practices;

5. Problems encountered

5.1. Lack of an amendment to the Spatial Management Act, regulating the issue of ecological connectivity in Poland. It causes some uncertainty as to the detailed way in which the implementation of Action A3 will be realised. This action requires a well-thought-out implementation strategy which is in preparation.

5.2. Unstable Euro rate which strongly influenced the prices of some activities conducted in 2008 and eventually affected the reaching of the threshold of the project budget and submission of the mid-term report with the mid-term payment request. The Beneficiary considers taking the opportunity of converting the expenditures using the rate applicable on the first day of the month in which the expenditure is incurred (CP 25.4).

5.3. Very mild winter 2007/2008 did not let to collar all the bison planned. 3 remained collars will be used in the season 2008/2009

5.4. Wet weather prevented 2 forest districts from implementing reclamation actions – the execution will take place in 2009 in changed, drier locations.

5.5. In mild winters, when bison do not visit the feeding sites very often the direct observation and conducting the census become more difficult and require more labor and time investments.

5.6. Very long process of encouraging local farmers to participate in the action D6 and D2. When the farmers became more trustful towards these actions, after seeing the good practices and experiences of their “neighbors” who joined the program, they started to apply to BNP more eagerly. We expect that these actions will become more and more popular with farmers in the nearest future.

5.7. It is difficult to organise a follow-up of the contracting programme for the farmers providing hay for bison. We are in contact with the Ministry for Environment and Ministry for Agriculture and we will try to promote the idea of a new agro-environmental scheme for bison management practices to be implemented from 2013-2014, and to develop a transitory programme for 2011-2012.

6. Financial issues

PROJECT COSTS INCURRED from 01/10/2006 to 31/12/2008

(Euro rate ECB 02/01/2008 1Euro =4,1638 PLN)

Cost category	Total cost according to the Commission's decision (Euro)	Total costs incurred from the start date to (Euro)	% of total category
1. Personnel	421 680.00	192 979.38	45.76
2. Travel	47 000.00	12 048.13	26
3. External assistance	577 520.00	169 459.87	29.34
4. Durables: total cost	119 000.00	91 795.48	77.14
5. Land purchase	0	0	0
6. Consumables	118 500.00	30 390.74	25.65
7. Other costs	8 000.00	0	0

8.	Overheads	90 000.00	34 767.13	38.63
	SUM TOTAL	1 381 700.00	531 440.35	38.46

1/ The second report was foreseen for the submission by the **31/10/2008**. The Beneficiary applied to the Commission to submit the interim report by the 31/12/2008 as the overall budget in September/October 2008 was just about to reach the threshold according to the Common Provisions. As the rate of Euro has increased during the last three months by 25%, the overall budget lost the required threshold. The Beneficiary considers taking the opportunity of converting the expenditures using the rate applicable on the first day of the month in which the expenditure is incurred (CP 25.4). The second solution is to wait for the lower rate of the Euro and recalculate the overall budget (in January 2009 the threshold lacks ca. 42 000 Euro). The Beneficiary expects to submit the mid-term report with the financial report and application for the second payment within the next 2-3 months.

2/ Despite some singular price increases and additional staff required, we do not expect any substantial modification of the foreseen budget. All changes in prices should be balanced in the range of one category and no budget category should be exceeded.

3/ Lower expenditures in the external assistance and durable categories results from (1) the limited financing of some activities in 2007 allocated for the BNP (when the partner agreement was not finalized) (2) selecting the best prices in the public tender procedures.

7. Planned project progress within next 6 months:

A3-organizing the public tender for selecting the contractor for documents preparation; implementation the ecological corridors into spatial plans and appropriate documents; conducting negotiations with the communes and regional authorities regarding implementation of the ecological corridors into the Spatial Management Plans;

D2-continuing protection of agricultural areas; providing farmers with protection means; continuation of the information action;

D3-conducting supervision and annual census;

D4-monitoring of bison distribution and dispersal with satellite telemetry; putting collars on 3 bison;

D5-continuing of genetic analyses; purchasing software for special genetic analyses;

D6-contracting meadows for 2009 – approximately 50 ha by the end of 2009;

E1-further distribution of the TV spot/film;

E2-regular updating the project website;

E4-production of calendar for 2010 and an updated folder about the project with project results; distribution of promotional materials;

E5-preparatin for the organizing the bison conference

E6-organizing bison seminar for teachers III edition– October 2009; production of the book with synopses of bison lessons – by the 30th June 2009;

F1-organizing regular meetings of staff to assure proper project implementation; organizing the annual coordination meeting on the 20th February 2009;

F2-regular monitoring of project indicators, deadlines of deliverables and milestones.