Bulgaria Global Environmental Facility Biodiversity Project

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Bulgaria Global Environmental Facility Biodiversity Project
is a collaborative initiative between the
United States Agency for International Development
and the
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implemented by
Associates in Rural Development, Inc.
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ACRONYMS

ARD	Associates in Rural Development, Inc.
BSBCP	Bulgaria-Swiss Biodiversity Conservation Project
CoF	Committee of Forestry
COTR	Contract Officer's Technical Representative (USAID's "Project Officer")
GEF	Global Environmental Facility (note the acronym "GEF" is also generically in Bulgaria for the USAID/GEF Biodiversity project)
GoB	Government of the Republic of Bulgaria
ISC	Institute for Sustainable Communities
IUCN	World Conservation Union
MAFAR	Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Agrarian Reform
MEW	Ministry of Environment and Waters
MoE	Ministry of Environment
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding (between GoB and USAID)
NGO	Non-Government Organization
NNPS	National Nature Protection Service (of MoE)
OAR	Office of the A.I.D. Representative (USAID country office)
PMU	Project Management Unit (of GEF Bulgaria Biodiversity Project)
PSC	Project Steering Committee (of GEF Bulgaria Biodiversity Project)
REI	Regional Environmental Inspectorate (of MoE)
REI-NP	Regional Environmental Inspectorate for National Park
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USAID/W	USAID/Washington

PREFACE

The Bulgaria Global Environmental Facility Biodiversity Project (GEF)* is the culmination of collaboration between the Ministry of Environment (MoE) in Bulgaria and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) in the area of biodiversity conservation over the period 1991 - 1995.

Preceding collaborative activities, including development of a National Biological Diversity Conservation Strategy and work in Bulgaria with the US National Parks Service, led to the development of the GEF project. Through its Global Environmental Facility operations, the World Bank provided Project Preparation Assistance to MoE to conduct a biodiversity project design.

Associates in Rural Development Inc. (ARD), was awarded a contract to assist the Government of Bulgaria implement the project in July 1995 (USAID Contract Number DHR-0039-C-00-5070-00). ARD is supported by sub-contractors the Institute for Sustainable Communities, RESOLVE, and Sheppard Robson International.

The three year project assists MoE, other government organizations, including the Committee of Forestry, and diverse interested parties in:

- development of a collaborative Bulgarian system of administration and management for National Parks and protected areas through development of management plans for Central Balkan and Rila National Parks;
- strengthening of biodiversity conservation institutions (with emphasis on MoE's National Nature Protection Service and Park level agencies);
- development of financial mechanisms to support biodiversity conservation in the long term;
- provision of equipment to carry out the preceding tasks.

The project operates through ARD's Project Management Unit (PMU) based in Sofia. The PMU comprises a Senior Resident Advisor/Chief of Party, Project Coordinator, Training Coordinator and support staff. Most technical assistance and training is provided by Bulgarian consultants. International consultants furnish assistance from their broader experience and perspective, or on issues especially relevant to Bulgaria's transitional status.

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* In an international context "GEF" refers to the multi-lateral Global Environmental Facility administered by the World Bank, United Nations Development Program and United Nations Environment Program. In Bulgaria the term GEF (pronounced "Jeff") has become synonymous with the USAID Biodiversity project. GEF is used as the project acronym in this and other reports. USAID's Global Environment Facility activities result from a parallel bilateral funding option during the pilot phase of the "international" Global Environmental Facility.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Since contract award two years ago, the Bulgaria Global Environment Facility Biodiversity project (GEF) has experienced periods of rapid progress interspersed with periods in which activities are officially constrained. The period 1 August 1996 to 31 July 1997 covered by this Second Annual Report was highly productive, but ends with another long period during which some activities will not be possible. A mid-term evaluation praised the performance of Associates in Rural Development, Inc. (ARD) in project implementation, but concluded that current efforts were unsustainable unless legal, policy and institutional reforms were undertaken by the Bulgarian government. As a result of these findings, USAID and the Ministry of Environment and Waters agreed on an "interim implementation phase" from September 1997 to February 1998, during which the project will focus on providing assistance in:

- preparation of the draft Protected Areas Law for submission to parliament;
- preparation and submission of the National Biological Diversity Conservation Strategy to the Council of Ministers for adoption as an official document;
- building a constituency of public and policy-makers to support passage of the Law and Strategy;
- carrying out summer field work essential for development of management plans for Rila and Central Balkan National Parks, with full participation of staff of the Park bodies.

If these activities come to a successful conclusion, the project will then be able to resume full activities on a sound legal, policy and institutional basis.

A year of dramatic events and political change in Bulgaria had some positive and some negative impacts on GEF. By the end of the period the new government moved rapidly to address the problems arising from a period of uncertainty.

On the negative side:

- a period of approximately six months with no clear and continuing statement of government policy on nature protection in general and the GEF project in particular;
- the January/February economic collapse, and subsequent establishment of a national "Currency Board" severely limits the state budget contribution to nature protection;
- a resulting weakening of Ministry National Park bodies, which in turn raises questions concerning the institutional context and viability of the project as a whole.

Positive aspects include:

- an initial period of productive work including development and implementation of several project strategies and strengthening of the Ministry's new Park bodies;
- changes in leadership of Committee of Forestry in the interim government, and confirmed by the elected government, led to a dramatic shift in attitude to protected areas, the potential of which has yet to be fully realized;

- as the new MEW ministerial team's view towards nature protection and the GEF project clarified, new programmatic challenges were put forward which may ultimately lead to a stronger legal, policy and institutional base for nature protection.

Despite these events and changes, GEF had a busy and successful year programmatically. Important progress was made in:

1. Preparation and initial implementation of project strategies in: Information, Education and Communications; Environmental Information Systems; Public Participation in Protected Areas Management; Ecotourism; Financial Mechanisms to support biodiversity conservation; Management of Protected Areas.

2. Institutional Strengthening and Training. Intensive efforts with newly created Park bodies of the Ministry assisted in team-building, organizational development and implementation of the various strategies listed above. Capacity-building extended to development of a broad team of conservation partners from many government, academic, NGO and other organizations, with progressive attitudes to all aspects of nature conservation. A training needs assessment was followed by development of a training plan.

3. Stronger links with related donor projects were forged.

From a management perspective, ARD's Project Management Unit operated smoothly and efficiently. Thirteen international consultant missions, more than 100 local consultant contracts and thirteen workshops and other meetings were organized without problems.

The mid-term evaluation commends ARD's implementation of the project under difficult and changing circumstances. However, imposition of the 6 month interim phase means that it is unlikely that a sustainable biodiversity management system will be in place when the project ends approximately one year after the interim phase is over. The project hopes to assist the Bulgarian government in investigating the possibility of additional donor funding to continue the work until local capacity is sufficient.

Overall the GEF project had an active and successful year, despite major economic and political changes in Bulgaria. Recent agreements restricting the programmatic focus for the next six months will lay a firmer foundation for nature protection in the future. After that period the project expects to resume a broad program of activities leading towards attainment of overall goals and objectives.

1. INTRODUCTION

Annual reports for the Bulgaria Global Environment Facility Biodiversity Project (GEF) summarize and place in broad perspective project operations, and events which influence them. A detailed account of programmatic activities is not provided, as this can be found in quarterly reports. Annual Reports cover the period 1 August one year to 31 July the next, which corresponds approximately to the "contract year" (award to Associates in Rural Development, Inc. - ARD - was in July 1995). This Report covers the period 1 August 1996 to 31 July 1997. Implementation of the draft First Annual Work Plan of the project began on 1 September 1996. This Annual Report covers most of the period of its implementation, therefore.

The GEF project seeks to assist the Government of the Republic of Bulgaria (GoB) in development of improved management systems for biodiversity conservation. Assistance is provided in institutional strengthening at the national and regional levels and at the Central Balkan and Rila National Parks. Technical and logistical implementation of GEF in Bulgaria is administered by ARD's six-person Project Management Unit (PMU).

The reporting period can readily be divided into two phases. August to January was largely a development of circumstances following a substantive commitment by the GoB towards institutional aspects of the project (see First Annual Report). January to July was a period of dramatic political and economic upheaval in Bulgaria with a sense of stability and policy direction for biodiversity conservation being apparent only in the last weeks of the reporting period.

The new government is undertaking a major structural overhaul leading to changes in key institutions with which the project has links. GEF's counterpart ministry is changed from the Ministry of Environment (MoE) to the Ministry of Environment and Waters (MEW); the former Committee of Forestry (CoF) is absorbed into a new Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Agrarian Reform (MAFAR), as the National Forestry Board (English translation of this name yet to be confirmed); the former Committee of Tourism is part of the Ministry of Tourism and Trade; and there is a new Ministry of Regional and Urban Development which approximates to the former Ministry of Territorial Development and Construction. Implications of these institutional changes were unclear by the end of the period. The older institutional designations are used in this annual report for most purposes since they were operational for most of the year. Similarly, MoE's Park-level bodies are referred to as Regional Environmental Inspectorates for the National Parks (REI-NPs, or Park Inspectorates), although they were re-designated as Park Departments in mid-May 1997. New names are used when events refer specifically to the new institutions.

This annual report comes at the approximate mid-point of project implementation. An independent mid-term evaluation was conducted in June and July 1997. The evaluation concluded that while ARD's implementation efforts were impressive, project success was unlikely in the current legal and institutional environment. In view of these findings, MEW and USAID agreed that project activities for the next six months will be restricted to assistance related to improving the legal, policy and institutional situation for nature protection in Bulgaria.

2. DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS OF EVENTS

Table 1 provides a chronological summary of events which influenced project implementation during the reporting period.

National Developments

In late December the Bulgarian Socialist Party led coalition government resigned, with the intention of nominating a new Prime Minister and forming a new government. In early January to mid-February, public protests calling for early elections led to a constitutional and political crisis in which the President delayed appointing a new Prime Minister. Continuing protests led to agreement to dissolve parliament and hold elections in April. Meanwhile an interim government was formed in February until the new parliament was convened in May. Both the interim government, and the elected government appointed a new minister and deputy ministers at MoE/MEW. Significant institutional reform was discussed by the interim ministerial team, including improved structural arrangements for nature protection proposed by the director of the National Nature Protection Service (NNPS). However, the three month tenure was insufficient for major structural change, although the status of MoE Park level bodies was changed (see below). The incoming Minister of the elected government replaced the Director of NNPS. GEF thanks the former Director for his past efforts on behalf of the project and nature conservation in Bulgaria, and wishes him well. We look forward to continuing collaboration, in his new position as Head of the Department of Forest Ecology and Protected Areas at MAFAR. We welcome the new Director of NNPS, with whom a former working relationship has already expanded and deepened.

The interim government also brought changes at CoF. A new Chairman and other top level appointments brought a new attitude to protected areas management and collaboration with MoE. These appointments were confirmed when the Chairman became Deputy Minister in charge of forestry at MAFAR. As a former Director of Pirin National Park, with two decades of experience in park management issues, the Deputy Minister provides a strong commitment to development of World Conservation Union (IUCN) Category II National Parks. He also recognizes the importance of MEW's role in Park management, which was not always supported under previous CoF leadership. An improved relationship between MEW and MAFAR was demonstrated by joint signature of a Memorandum to assist in implementation of the GEF project in July 1997.

An economic decline, evident throughout most of 1996 was sharply accentuated by the hiatus in government at the end of the year and through the first two months of 1997. The value of the currency declined more than twenty-fold (almost fifty-fold at peak) relative to the US dollar. The official rate of inflation for 1996 was more than 300%, with hyperinflation during January and February 1997. Gross Domestic Product declined by more than 10% in 1996. Typical government salaries fell to the equivalent of less than $25 per month for professional staff during the most difficult period. Economic stabilization began with measures introduced by the interim government and continued by the permanent government. The most significant was introduction of a national Currency Board, which fixes the exchange rate to the German Mark, and controls money supply accordingly. These measures have enabled the International Monetary Fund and other multi-lateral donors to resume economic aid packages.

Table 1. Major Events Affecting GEF Project; August 1996 - July 1997. *Italics indicate events outside normal project concerns, but which affected operations indirectly.*

PERIOD/DATE	EVENT
August 1996	
1 August	Tripartite Letter of Agreement signed (MoE/CoF/USAID).
September 1996	Park Inspectorates Directors appointed by MoE.
1 September	Period of First Annual Work Plan begins.
October 1996	*Presidential Election (27th) indicates desire for political change.*
1 November	Project Steering Committee (PSC); First Meeting.
December 1996	USAID COTR visit.
10 December	Second PSC Meeting; discussion of Work Plan.
20 December	*Socialist-led Government resigns with intention of reforming under new Prime Minister.*
January & February 1997	*Political and constitutional crisis as socialist leadership fails to form new government. Economic decline throughout 1996 steepens with collapse of currency and hyperinflation.*
February	
7 February	MoE Order RD 49 of outgoing government defines location of Park Inspectorate headquarters, and broadens their territorial jurisdiction.
	Interim "caretaker" government formed.
March 1997	New interim MoE Ministers and Deputy Ministers and new CoF leadership appointed.
	Local bank used by project is closed for normal business.
April 1997	*Parliamentary elections (19th) result in United Democratic Forces victory.*
	Director of NNPS presents proposals for establishing unified, decentralized system in MEW for protected areas management.
May 1997	
14 May	MoE Order RD-155 changes Status of Park Inspectorates to Departments of Regional Environmental Inspectorates (see text).
21 May	*Elected government takes office.*
June 1997	New Minister of reorganized Ministry of Environment and Waters appoints ministerial team and new Director of NNPS.
18 June	GEF Mid-term Evaluation Team begins work in-country.
July 1997	USAID, GEF Project and mid-term Evaluation Team have first meetings with new MEW team. Decrees on main functions of MEW and MAFAR published. COTR visit.
1 July	*Currency Board stabilizes Lev and controls money supply enabling full resumption of IMF program.*
17 July	MEW and MAFAR sign memo for joint work with GEF project.
19 July	Evaluation Team completes work in-country.
23 July	Letter from USAID Representative to MEW expressing concerns about project viability raised by Evaluation.
24 July	MEW/USAID meeting to discuss GEF future in light of Evaluation findings, and MEW response.

These stringent financial and economic measures severely limit government expenditure, including that on nature protection. Staff cuts and drastically reduced recurrent budgets present significant challenges to MEW programs and effective implementation of GEF. Nevertheless, MEW, USAID and ARD are searching together for the best ways to continue project assistance and ensure conservation of Bulgaria's biodiversity.

Project Developments

The year began auspiciously with signing of a Tripartite Letter of Agreement concerning GEF project implementation between MoE, CoF and USAID on 1 August 1996 (see First Annual Report). This letter ended a period of *de facto* suspension of most project operations by USAID, which was initiated in the previous May following disagreements between MoE and CoF. A period of active cooperation followed for several months, though CoF persisted in expressing concern about its role in the mode of project implementation and jurisdictional issues in protected areas. CoF continued to develop its own programs in National Parks throughout the year, independently of MoE and GEF.

MoE established "Regional Environmental Inspectorates" for five National Parks including the GEF focal Parks of Central Balkan and Rila in June 1996. Directors were appointed in September, followed by additional staff in October and November. For a period, Central Balkan REI-NP had eight staff (two part-time) and Rila, seven. In February, the jurisdiction of the Park Inspectorates was extended in Order RD 49 to cover areas outside the Parks, but which are geographically part of the mountain ranges, and administered by the same Forest Enterprises as those operating within each Park. MoE initiated discussion on updating the draft Protected Areas Law to prepare for its submission to parliament. This law has often been regarded as crucial to successful implementation of GEF through defining roles and responsibilities of government agencies (notably MoE and CoF) in protected areas. Progress on redrafting was halted during the two changes of government in the first half of the year. The elected government indicated in July that submission of a revised draft is a high priority. At the end of the interim government an Order was issued reducing the status of REI-NPs to Departments of the other MoE Regional Environmental Inspectorates (or in the case of Rila, to a Department of the National Center for Environment and Sustainable Development).

MoE also established a Project Steering Committee (PSC) in November. The first meeting agreed on general operating procedures. A second meeting in December, coinciding with a visit from Washington DC by USAID's Contract Officer's Technical Representative (COTR), discussed the draft First Annual Work Plan. Although most participants indicated general agreement with the Work Plan, the CoF Representative requested a series of amendments which were provided in writing prior to the meeting. Because of the level of detail involved, the PSC recommended that MoE, CoF and the PMU review, and agree on any changes and report back to a special PSC meeting in the near future. An initial review meeting was held, but political events at the national level led to effective suspension of these discussions and the PSC (see Section 2). The PSC was not reconstituted during the interim government, as membership was likely to change yet again when a permanent government was in place. The newly appointed Minister of the elected government indicated a willingness to reestablish the PSC in the near future.

A mid-term evaluation of the GEF Project took place in June and July 1997, as required by ARD's contract with USAID. A three person team comprised two international consultants and a Bulgarian knowledgeable of the local biodiversity sector and international programs. The two international consultants had initial briefings at ARD headquarters with the home office management team and COTR (who traveled to Sofia for the latter half of the evaluation team's work in Bulgaria). The whole team convened in Sofia and spent almost one month conducting the evaluation.

Major findings constraining project implementation reflect issues which have arisen previously concerning institutional arrangements for biodiversity conservation and protected areas management in August - December 1996 and May-August 1997. The team concluded that key assumptions made during World Bank and USAID phases of project design have never been realized, and that sustainability of project efforts was impossible without reform of the institutional situation. Particular attention was drawn to:

- the lack of an integrated rational structure for biodiversity conservation and protected areas management under NNPS;
- unclear mandates and development of parallel programs in protected areas management by MoE and CoF; and, to improve on the situation regarding these two points;
- the need for clearer legislation, in the form of a Protected Areas Law, to ensure a unified system of protected areas management.

These assumptions are also implicit in the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) concerning the project between the US and Bulgarian governments. Both governments, and the evaluation team, recognize that GoB financial and staffing commitments under the MoU are unrealistically high, and that revisions to the MoU are required.

Subsequent discussions between MEW and USAID in late July 1997 concluded that the project should enter an "interim implementation phase" (1 September 1997 - 28 February 1997). Evaluation findings suggest that continued expenditure on strengthening of MEW's Park Departments is unwise until the legal status and institutional mandates of Park level bodies are clarified and confirmed. During this phase MEW undertakes to attempt to resolve outstanding issues prior to drafting of a revised MoU.

Section 4 outlines activities to be undertaken during the interim phase. Appendix 1 provides a summary discussion of the institutional issues concerning nature protection in Bulgaria. Appendix 2 indicates which aspects of the project Results Framework are compatible with the interim phase.

3. PROGRAMMATIC SUMMARY

ARD's PMU has led a full program of activities during the period of the draft First Year Work Plan (1 September 1996 to 31 August 1997). A Results Framework provides the basis for analysis of project progress which is formally reported in Quarterly Reports. The complete Results Framework is presented as Appendix 2. The objective of Annual Reports is to provide a concise, but broader view of the project overall and avoids repetition of material in Quarterly Reports.

Figure 1 lists events, training and consultancies undertaken. Twelve international consultants, working closely with local counterparts, assisted in development of project implementation strategies in various fields. The same consultant, ARD's Home Office Project Manager, Peter Hetz, worked on the Information, Education and Communications strategy, and the Training Strategy and Plan, making thirteen consultant visits in all. More than 100 Bulgarian consultants worked across all aspects of the GEF project. Thirteen working meetings were organized, primarily aimed at various aspects of institutional strengthening and training for nature protection. In addition, all visiting consultants presented their findings to various audiences. The mid-term Evaluation recognized the high quality of technical assistance and training delivered, and commended ARD on its extensive use of Bulgarian consultants.

An Annual Review and Planning workshop, hosted by MEW, was held in July to coincide with the Evaluation. A wide array of stakeholders expressed their feelings about progress of the project over the preceding year, and provided input for developing the project's Second Annual Work Plan. Relevant statements from that workshop are mentioned below.

3.1 Project Implementation Strategies

ARD's proposal in 1994 for the GEF project indicated a three-step approach to executing each task: assessment of the current situation; development of strategies and plans; and their implementation. During the year these steps were initiated in diverse areas:

1. **Information, Education and Communications.** Active implementation of a comprehensive strategy has proceeded in several interrelated directions. A mass media campaign includes weekly press releases on biodiversity issues on behalf of MoE; surveys and analysis of public opinion and content of newspaper articles on environmental issues; orientation for environmental journalists; support for a Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) conference in Sofia; and media interviews for MoE staff, PMU staff and visiting consultants. GEF has assisted the focal Park Inspectorates in developing and implementing their own public relations campaigns (including celebrations for the 5th Anniversary of each). Preparation of a "nature protection booklet" is well underway. The booklet will provide a wide public audience with accurate information on Bulgaria's biodiversity resources, international commitments, policies and institutions, and protected areas. A wide-ranging review of the environmental education curriculum for schools was conducted and a multi-institutional working group set up to promote improvements in the area of nature protection.

Figure 1
Implementation of GEF Biodiversity Project - Year 2; Main Activities

	1996					1997						
	Aug	**Sep**	**Oct**	**Nov**	**Dec**	**Jan**	**Feb**	**Mar**	**Apr**	**May**	**Jun**	**Jul**
Events												
Project Steering Committee				X	X							
Project Coordinator @ IUCN Congress			X									
Legal Analysis Seminar									X			
Field Research Priority Workshop										X		
Management Planning Workshop											X	
Mass Media Presentation												X
Annual Review/Planning Workshop												X
Mid-Term Evaluation												■
Training Events												
Park Inspectorates First Workshop				X								
Park Inspectorates Second Workshop							X					
GEF for Facilitators&Translators						X						
Communications Skills							X					
Nature Protection Control Checks									X			
Public Participation in Park Mgmt											X	
Partnerships in Park Mgmt												X
Group Process Facilitation												X
International Consultants #*												
Information/Education/Communications		■										
Environmental Information Systems 2		■	■									
Public Particpation 2			■									
Ecotourism 2							■					
Training Strategy/Plan									■			
Park Management										■		
Financial Mechanisms										■		
Management Planning 2											■	
Facilitation/Group Process												■
Local Consultants/Teams(bold) #*												
Info/Education/Communication												
Mass Media					▒	▒	▒	▒	▒	▒	▒	▒
Environmental Education 5							▒	▒	▒	▒	▒	▒
Opinion & Mass Media Surveys 3								▒	▒	▒	▒	▒
Nature Protection Booklet Planning 3								▒	▒	▒	▒	▒
Park Facilitators 2					▒	▒	▒	▒	▒	▒	▒	▒
Training Needs Assessment 4					▒	▒	▒	▒				
Legal Analysis 5					▒	▒	▒	▒	▒	▒		
Botany 18					▒	▒	▒	▒	▒	▒		
Zoology 24					▒	▒	▒	▒	▒	▒		
Forestry 23								▒	▒	▒		
Biological Science Info Mgmt 2					▒	▒	▒	▒	▒	▒		
Management Planning											■	
Park Visitors-Existing Info/Survey Plan												■
Financial Mechanisms										■		
Trainers/Facilitators 9							▒	▒	▒	▒	▒	▒

KEY

Long-term, part-time ▒
Short-term, intensive ■

* # = number of consultants (if > 1)

2. **Environmental Information Systems.** The assessment and plan were produced early in the period. Only limited progress has occurred in implementation. Lack of a suitably qualified person available to coordinate the technical and complex inter-institutional aspects remains a problem. New collaborative arrangements between MoE and CoF have improved prospects in this area. Discussions in July 1997 may lead to new initiatives involving MoE's Center for Environment and Sustainable Development. A sub-team of the group collecting biological and forestry information on Central Balkan and Rila Parks is building and maintaining databases for eventual incorporation into a Geographic Information System for each Park.

3. **Public Participation in Protected Areas Management.** ARD's GEF Sub-contractor the Institute for Sustainable Communities (ISC) prepared a well-received strategy including development of Park Councils representing stakeholder interests for the Park as a whole, and local activity groups (perhaps based at the municipality level) to work with Park authorities in carrying out concrete activities. The PMU judged that political events (Section 2) were too big a distraction to move ahead with the Park Council concept, particularly in the absence of a firm basis for development of management plans (see point 6., below). Meanwhile the Park Inspectorates, with GEF assistance have been very active in working with municipalities, cultural and educational institutions and NGOs. Each Inspectorate has developed a vision and concept of public participation. Staff at Rila have presented the Inspectorate goals and role to all surrounding municipalities. When GEF resumes full activities at the Park level, a reassessment of this strategy will be made in the light of new institutional and legal developments.

4. **Ecotourism.** Sub-contractor Sheppard Robson International provided a consultant team in this field. Useful information was compiled on concepts of ecotourism and approaches used elsewhere in Europe which may be applicable in Bulgaria. Proposals for specific programs for Central Balkans and Rila National Parks, and their surroundings, were made. Useful contacts were also made with various government, NGO and private-sector organizations with a tourism interest. The current state of the economy, reduced tourist use of the Parks[*] and government reorganization in the tourism sector have delayed further implementation. As with public participation, project work in this areas will be reassessed when a full range of activities resumes.

5. **Financial Mechanisms to support biodiversity conservation.** An assessment concluded that there are several promising means of demonstrating the economic value of protected areas and new ways of providing financing outside the state budget. However, the international consultant assisting in this area cautioned that state support and donor contributions remain essential in the short-term. Several studies are proposed which will provide information and analysis for informed decision making on biodiversity financing, and assist in building local capacity for environmental economics. Key studies are expected to take place during the "interim phase" of project implementation proposed by MEW and USAID (see Section 2).

[*] A marked decline in Park visitation is apparent over the last several years, including the summer of 1996. Early indications are that Park visitation is markedly higher in the summer of 1997. It seems that poor economic conditions are leading many people to redirect their normal Black Sea vacations to the mountains.

6. **Management Planning of Protected Areas.** Formal progress in development of a "Bulgarian model" of management planning was hampered for much of the year by disagreements over concepts and jurisdiction between MoE and CoF. The new leadership at CoF seeks to work closely with MoE in this area. ARD seized this opportunity by holding a workshop on the topic in June 1997, attended by both bodies and other interest groups. General agreement was reached on adaptation of the "Eurosite" model to the Bulgarian situation. Plans to move ahead at the policy and Park level were also agreed. Important steps in development of management plans for Central Balkan and Rila National Parks were taken in compiling existing biological and forestry information, identifying gaps, and planning summer field work to provide additional data of use to management planning. Field studies are based upon priorities agreed between researchers, NNPS, CoF and Park staff of MoE and CoF at a GEF workshop in May 1997. The field work was set to begin early in August. Existing information on visitor use was also compiled and analyzed and plans developed for a visitor survey.

3.2 Institutional Strengthening and Training

A major goal of the project is capacity-building for biodiversity conservation. The project design envisaged that this effort would focus upon large nature protection staff increases at MoE. It is widely recognized that projections in the MoU for MoE's budgetary contributions, through increased staffing, were unrealistically high (see mid-term evaluation). Actual staff increases were mainly through creation of Park Inspectorates (later Park Departments), and these are also much smaller than the project design assumed. In recognition of this situation, GEF takes the view that capacity-building should be broad-based through development of partnerships between MoE and other conservation/protected area stakeholders nationally and at the Park level. Indeed, this approach may better enhance long-term sustainability than focusing entirely on one government agency.

A training needs assessment, conducted by a Bulgarian team, focused on nature protection staff at MoE and CoF. A training strategy was then devised in April 1997. This strategy recommends a training program built around the management planning process in Central Balkan and Rila National Parks. It is an inclusive strategy, including participation by other MoE staff and partners. A further recommendation is to contract an existing Bulgarian institution (or institutions), with proven capabilities, to organize and deliver the program, supervised by the PMU. In this way, training capacity for biodiversity conservation will be built for further use during and beyond the project. This approach was tested successfully in June and July.

Although the training strategy was not finalized until the Spring of 1997, training efforts during the first half of the reporting period were substantial (see Figure 1). ARD's approach is to use all types of project activity as opportunities for training, including work by local and international consultants. Policy and planning meetings such as the "Field Research Priority Workshop", the "Management Planning Workshop" and the "Legal Analysis Seminar" provide opportunities for "learning-by-doing" and "on-the-job" training. The training strategy and its implementation includes the broad community of local consultants and others who are associated with GEF, both as formal and informal trainers and trainees. For example, biological, forestry and social scientists, local facilitators and trainers, government nature protection staff and PMU staff received training in group process applied to biodiversity issues.

GEF expended considerable effort in assisting the Park Inspectorates for Central Balkan and Rila in team building and organizational development. Many of the staff were new to nature protection, and had limited, or no experience in protected areas management. A series of training and technical workshops was held (Figure 1) which initially focused upon the Inspectorate staff, then broadened to include other colleagues from MEW (national, REI and other Parks) and partner organizations. In an innovative move, the project hired a "Park Facilitator" for each of Central Balkan and Rila Parks, who worked "on-site" with each Inspectorate for several days a month. These Facilitators, with PMU staff, focused upon team building, communications skills, public relations and partnerships with local organizations. They also played leading roles in many of the more formal training workshops. In this way a close relationship was built between Inspectorate staff and facilitators, which in turn built confidence in, and facilitated communications with the PMU. The project also funded computer and English language training for Inspectorate staff.

An international Park Management consultant and the PMU worked closely with the two Park Inspectorates in interactive development of staff job descriptions and a preliminary outline for an "Operations Manual" describing all activities required to manage a National Park. An important conclusion of this work is that management of protected areas goes far beyond the traditional MoE role of regulation and control. Other visiting international consultants provided briefings in their areas of expertise at Park and national levels.

A major initiative at the national level was an analysis of the legal status and institutional relationships concerning protected areas. Much of the controversy about the respective roles and responsibilities of MoE and CoF, which prevents effective management of protected areas, revolves around differing interpretation of existing legal documents. A five person team of Bulgarian lawyers produced detailed reports on all legal and regulatory aspects of protected areas management. This analysis clarified many points at issue and confirmed that existing legislation is a good basis for management, provided inter-institutional goodwill is present. Nevertheless, the team concluded that modifications to and passage of the draft Protected Areas Law will help to remove the remaining legal ambiguities concerning jurisdiction. A presentation of findings by the team in April was highly regarded by all participants, including those of MoE and CoF.

Related to the legal analysis was training on implementation of control checks by MoE, sponsored and organized by the project. Experienced biodiversity and forestry control staff of MoE trained their newer colleagues. This workshop initiated development of new documentation to improve the control system. A follow-up meeting is planned for early August 1997, which will include a review of the draft Protected Areas Law. It is hoped that participation by field-level implementers of the proposed law will improve the content during the revision process.

To conclude, ARD's capacity-building activities embrace a broad community of nature protection advocates and professionals at national and local levels, including MoE employees, other government staff, biological, forestry and social scientists, NGOs and mass media. Although difficult to measure, the PMU and other observers detect a growing confidence and cohesion among these diverse groups in support of biodiversity conservation. At the same time, intensive efforts with Park staff, in the context of this broader interest group, were the subject of favorable review by the mid-term evaluation team.

The subtle, but noticeable progress in nature protection "constituency-building" is reflected in several "*Major Accomplishments*" and "*Key Learnings or Breakthroughs*" recorded by the Annual Review and Planning Workshop in July 1997. Examples of written phrases emanating from small group sessions include: " partnerships between institutions"; "partnership with CoF"; "effective training of scientists and park administrations"; "new level of qualifications"; "dialogue instead of confrontation"; "involving the public"; "coordination between projects"; "new attitude of stakeholders"; "a lot can be done with less resources". Such positive attitudes were not shared by as many participants at a Work Planning workshop 14 months earlier.

3.3 Project Management and Collaboration

The PMU, in consultation with MoE, coordinates its activities with several closely related projects and programs, and maintains contact, or exchanges information, with many others. An envisaged role of the PMU was to assist MoE in formal coordination of nature protection projects. The new leadership of MEW is developing its own project tracking system. As a result, GEF will continue to maintain working relationships with other relevant projects, rather than taking the lead in development of a coordination system.

Bulgaria-Swiss Biodiversity Conservation Project. BSBCP and GEF have a range of formal and informal mechanisms for collaboration from the Embassy level to the field level. Both projects have MoE convened advisory committees (PSCs) on which the other project is represented. Informal meetings are frequent, as is attendance of each others workshops. Although BSBCP and GEF geographical interests overlap only in the Central Balkan, programmatic elements are quite similar and have tended to converge as the two projects develop. An emphasis on protected areas management planning, through development of partnerships, unites the two philosophically, while allowing a degree of experimentation with approaches and mechanisms for different situations. The BSBCP final evaluation in the Spring of 1997 reached similar conclusions to the GEF mid-term evaluation: clear policy and institutional arrangements at the government level are essential for effective continuation of GEF, and a second phase of BSBCP.

EU-PHARE. Exchange of information occurs on several projects. Additional support for biodiversity conservation from the country program is unlikely in the near future. Construction of the Rila National Park Visitor Center was completed, and a contract was let to a local firm to develop the Center in a financially sustainable manner. GEF expects to assist the Center in the future through provision of visitor information systems, though specific plans have yet to be developed. The GEF PMU held consultations with a team developing a proposal for a "Balkan Trail" from the Adriatic to the Black Sea. This trail, if funded by the PHARE multi-country program, will begin in Albania, cross Macedonia, and pass through Rila and Central Balkan Parks. GEF also had several meetings with the PHARE program at the Committee of Tourism, about possible collaboration concerning ecotourism development.

US-Government Programs. Potential exists for synergy between GEF interests and several USAID programs. To date the most active area is facilitation of development of linkages between the REI-NPs and NGOs. Several NGOs recently applied to the Democracy Network Program for grant funds for more active development of such

partnerships. Other USAID programs could be active in small business development around the Parks, when GEF resumes ecotourism activities (see 3.1).

The project actively collaborates with Peace Corps programs related to biodiversity conservation. A Peace Corps Volunteer, in collaboration with a local NGO, is active in development of an Environmental Education Center in the vicinity of Central Balkan National Park. Another, in Gabrovo, has prepared a booklet concerning tree species in the Central Balkan. GEF expects to provide financial and technical assistance to these projects. A high degree of active collaboration will occur if, in the Fall of 1997, Peace Corps places volunteers with all five of MoE's REI-NPs, as proposed. The exact nature of this collaboration will be restricted during GEF's interim implementation phase, but will be much more active later, if the project continues.

United Nations System. The GEF PMU assisted NNPS in development and revision of a proposal to the Global Environment Facility program of the UN Development Program. This project intends to develop a biodiversity Action Plan for Bulgaria in the framework of the European Landscape and Biodiversity Conservation Strategy. The proposal awaits further revision and resubmission by the new government. Active dialogue was also established with the World Bank, following up on earlier NNPS contact, concerning possible biodiversity activities in Bulgaria. ARD recognizes that sustainability of biodiversity management systems is unlikely during the life of the present project due to political and economic upheavals which have restricted implementation. Follow-on international funding will be essential to consolidate the progress made. A Global Environment Facility project funded by the World Bank is a promising source of such funding.

Contacts with **other projects**, or proposed projects, continue on an *ad hoc* basis. For example, information exchanges occur with the British Know How Fund on the Pirin and Rila Eco- and Sustainable Tourism project and other initiatives such as environmental education. Several meetings also took place with tourism aspects of the Swiss Interassist program in the Central Balkan region. MEW recently requested that the PMU provide a representative to the Steering Committee of a Japanese funded project working in the Maritsa River Basin in central Bulgaria.

Project Management

The six-member PMU had an active and successful year. The final member of staff, a Logistics Assistant, was placed on a permanent contract at the beginning of the reporting period. Figure 1 indicates the intensity of work, with numerous events and international consultants, and scores of local consultants. All of these activities were completed without significant organizational or management problems, despite major political and economic changes, many of which had repercussions for project implementation. The mid-term evaluation commended ARD and the PMU in this respect.

The four-cornered relationship between USAID-Washington, USAID-Sofia, ARD in Vermont, and the PMU in Sofia continued to operate smoothly in most respects. A finding of the mid-term evaluation was the exceptional quality of these relationships. Two changes of government, each accompanied by new Ministers and Deputy Ministers, caused delay in certain actions as did changes in Contract staff at USAID in Washington. For example, purchase of a minibus, for use by the PMU, was first agreed with the COTR and MoE in the Fall of 1996, but the vehicle remained undelivered at the end of July 1997.

Contractual issues arising from the "interim implementation phase" (see Section 2) will be discussed by ARD's CoP during visits to the home office in Vermont and USAID-Washington in August 1997. It is likely that a formal contract amendment will be required early in 1998 to take into account changes in project activities after the interim period.

Continued instability in Bulgaria's banking system led to the suspension of normal activities by the local bank holding GEF accounts. Many international projects, firms and embassies held accounts in the same bank. The future status of this bank, and when, or if, the project will regain access to the more than fifty-thousand dollars deposited there, were unclear at the end of the reporting period. The OAR is assisting ARD in attempts to release these funds. Meanwhile, ARD moved rapidly to transfer funds to enable the PMU to meet financial obligations. New accounts were opened in a foreign-owned bank.

Procurement was completed for set-up of the PMU office with purchase of a computer network, photocopiers and other items during the first quarter of the reporting period. Plans were developed in September and October, and presented to MoE, for purchase of 12 all-terrain vehicles for use of NNPS, the Park Inspectorates and other REIs, plus one all-terrain vehicle and one minibus for the PMU. Extensive evaluation of vehicles available locally, their proposed use, price and other factors was conducted. Only the minibus for PMU use was eventually ordered, and, after long delays, will be delivered in August 1997. Purchase of other vehicles was delayed because of lack of assured MoE budget to provide running costs.

Initial purchase of office equipment for the Central Balkan and Rila REI-NPs was proposed, carried out and delivered within two months of temporary offices being established in Gabrovo and Blagoevgrad. Equipment supplied comprises two computers, a printer, a fax machine and a photocopier for each Park. GEF has also funded development of a small documentation center at these Park Inspectorates. The two Inspectorates collaborated over requests for documents, then identified sources of supply and costs. A similar effort was put into drawing up lists of field and other equipment needed for the Inspectorates to carry out their duties. Unfortunately purchase of these items cannot be authorized until successful completion of the interim implementation phase of GEF. The PMU has acted as a review, advisory and funding source in these purchases/proposed purchases, placing the onus on Park staff to identify their needs. We feel that this approach supports the institutional strengthening aspects of the project (see Section 3.2).

4. PLANS AND PROSPECTS FOR YEAR THREE

The six month delay between contract award in July 1995 and the beginning of effective project implementation in February 1996 (see First Annual Report) means that this Report coincides with the mid-point of the project, approximately. Following the mid-term Evaluation and, linked to recent political and economic turmoil in Bulgaria, GEF faces an uncertain future. A verbal agreement between MEW and USAID, which is expected to be formalized in an exchange of letters shortly, will define an "interim implementation phase" (September 1997 - February 1998). At the end of the period, USAID will review whether and how the project should proceed, based upon the progress of legal, policy and institutional reform in the meantime. GEF activities during this phase are restricted to those related to providing assistance in the following areas.

1. Revision of the existing draft of the Protected Areas Law, and its submission to parliament.
2. Preparation of an updated version of the National Biological Diversity Conservation Strategy with an implementation program in a form suitable for submission to the Council of Ministers for approval as an official government document.
3. Constituency building in government and among the general public in support of passage of these two documents.
4. Essential summer field work related to management planning in Central Balkan and Rila National Parks.

Other aspects of the GEF project, such as purchase of equipment for MEW, or other institutions, and training programs unrelated to these activities are "on hold" pending a successful outcome of this interim phase. At the end of this reporting period (July 1997) programmatic details of the interim phase are not clear. Work over the next one to two months will develop a coherent series of activities in the context of the GEF Results Framework and Second Annual Work Plan (see Appendix 2). This work plan will be separated into two six month segments. In the first, details of activities during the interim phase will be presented. The second period will be less detailed and will need elaborating and/or revising early in 1998 depending on the outcome of the first period.

4.1 Constraints and Opportunities

Constraints

Imposition of an "interim implementation phase" with a restricted programmatic focus is a severe, but necessary constraint in moving towards overall project goals. This six month period in which many aspects of the project are curbed, compounded with previous delays to implementation (see other GEF Periodic Reports), mean that the project is unlikely to achieve its overall objectives in a sustainable manner. Most likely further external funding will be necessary in support of nature protection institutions. If a full program resumes after February 1998, only ten months remain before ARD's contract ends. A no-cost extension may extend this end-date by a few months.

Many aspects of project implementation will not move forward during the interim phase. Appendix 2 briefly reviews these restrictions in the context of the GEF Results Framework. Training in general, and organizational development and provision of equipment to MEW

Park bodies will be severely limited. Morale at the Park level may decline, as support at this level is a major project focus. Recent changes in status and reductions in staff add to this effect. Practical aspects of management planning for Central Balkan and Rila National Parks will not move forward, beyond further collection of field data. Project work with communities around the Parks, in public participation and ecotourism, will largely be on hold.

The GEF Annual Review and Planning workshop in July (held before the proposal for an interim phase) included a session on "Strategic Pillars" for the following year's program. Several of these will be restricted or impossible to implement during the interim phase, while others harmonize well (see Opportunities, below). Among those which can only be pursued in full by GEF if the project continues after February 1998 are:

- developing a package of financial initiatives [favoring biodiversity conservation];
- development of a program of training;
- laying the basis of a Geographic Information System;
- securing offices and equipment for the Park Units;
- organizing fund raising events for the two National Parks; and
- creation of a visitors' information system.

Opportunities

The current situation has drastic implications with respect to what GEF may achieve over the next year and a half. If conditions are such that the project continues after February 1998, there will be clear indications that institutional problems that have restricted progress in nature conservation and the GEF project are on their way to resolution. The interim phase, if successful in assisting in achieving the short-term goals agreed by MEW and USAID, will make a lasting contribution to the eventual sustainability of biodiversity conservation in Bulgaria. New and clear statements of law, policy and institutional responsibilities for protected areas will provide a firm basis upon which to plan the remainder of the project.

The "constraints" section above refers to areas for project assistance promoted by the GEF Annual Review and Planning workshop in July which are restricted during the interim phase. However many key programmatic areas (strategic pillars) agreed for the following year coincide with those which form the foundation for the interim phase. These are:

- developing a legal document package for the protected areas;
- developing of a legal basis for accepting the management plans;
- assistance in institutional assessment and restructuring of nature protection functions at MEW;
- gaining political support for biodiversity conservation;
- broadening public support.

Although the planned training program with MEW is suspended during the interim phase, GEF will continue to work closely with MEW staff at all levels in the areas defined above. Full participation in field work by Park staff will, of itself provide training in biodiversity resources and field techniques. It will also ensure that Park staff are in every day contact with visitors, chalet keepers and local people who use Park resources. Results of the field studies will provide important input to management planning when it resumes, as will

better legal and policy definition of the protected areas management planning process. Project assistance on policy issues during the interim phase, will also provide opportunities for "on-the-job" training.

Assuming that GEF resumes a full program of activities in February 1998, a careful assessment of how to achieve maximum impact in the time remaining will be made. At that point a contract amendment may be needed in recognition of changing emphases in the project. Completion of management plans for the two Parks will clearly be a high priority, as will implementation of the full training program.

Another important way in which GEF can assist is in facilitating opportunities for future funding in nature protection. Many of the management processes begun during the project will not be sustainable under current economic conditions without continuing external support.

4.2 Conclusions

In designing a project like GEF, it is impossible to predict political and economic developments. Foreign assistance programs in Eastern Europe should not assume a smooth process of transition to democratic and market systems. The GEF mid-term evaluation concludes that the MoE/World Bank and USAID phases of project design were too optimistic and prescriptive for effective implementation. A more realistic, or flexible design, and contract, may have enabled ARD to choose different avenues of implementation which avoid the pitfalls which have repeatedly held up progress.

ARD, with USAID concurrence, and evaluation commendation, has exercised maximum flexibility, within contract limitations, in maintaining programmatic momentum. As a result the project has experienced a very active and productive year. However, all parties recognize that this progress is not sustainable, unless institutional and legal arrangements for biodiversity conservation are clarified and improved. USAID and MEW have agreed to define a six month interim implementation phase for accomplishment of these reforms. During this period, project assistance is restricted as described above. ARD is ready to collaborate with MEW to develop a program addressing these requirements.

The broader implications of this period of restricted activity are less clear, as this decision was only made a few days before the end of this reporting period. If normal activities resume in February 1998, less than one year will remain in ARD's contract. Careful planning will be needed to focus subsequent inputs during this period to maximize project impact. It is clear that ARD cannot expect to achieve all the results previously expected (see Appendix 2 for Results Framework). Restrictions on project activities in May-August 1996 (see First Annual Report) and August 1997 to February 1998 were not foreseen in determining these expected results. Nevertheless, the PMU, supported by ARD's home office has demonstrated an ability to deliver a complex and intensive program of activities. Every effort will be made to ensure that the project achieves a significant and lasting impact.

SECOND ANNUAL REPORT

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1

INSTITUTIONAL STRUCTURE FOR NATURE PROTECTION

Substantial discussion has surrounded institutional relationships for nature protection and protected areas management between the Ministry of Environment and Waters (MEW; formerly Ministry of Environment, MoE) and the National Forestry Board (NFB[1]; formerly Committee of Forestry, CoF)) of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Agrarian Reform (MAFAR).

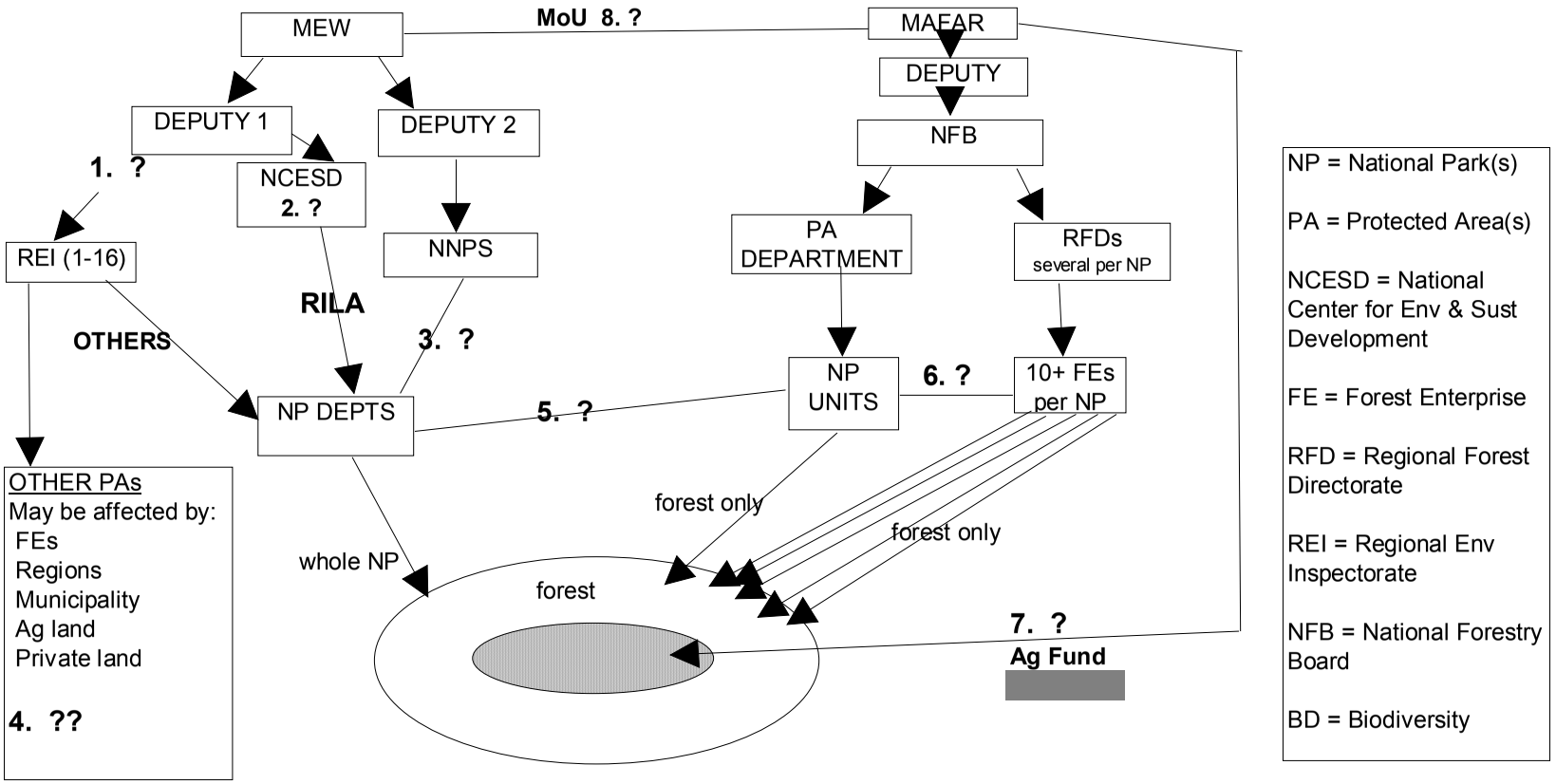
As pointed out by the GEF Project mid-term evaluation, several assumptions were made in USAID's project design about a unified hierarchical structure of all parts of MoE concerned with nature protection falling directly under the National Nature Protection Service (NNPS). Further it was assumed that CoF would play a limited and well defined role in protected areas management, guided by NNPS. These assumptions are also clear in both the draft Protected Areas Law, as submitted to parliament in 1993, and the internal MoE Regulations for NNPS issued in 1994. The Law was not approved by Parliament and the NNPS regulations were never implemented.

As a result, management of protected areas has been the subject of a protracted dispute between MoE and CoF with respect to interpretation of the extant Nature Protection Law, Environmental Protection Law and Forest Law. Of these, only the Environmental Protection Law is a "modern" law. A new Forest Law and modified draft of the Protected Areas Law should help to clarify this situation, if suitably harmonized, and passed by parliament. The new leadership at MEW and MAFAR has generated a spirit of cooperation which should help to assure clear division of roles and responsibilities in protected areas.

To understand why the institutional and jurisdictional issues confound effective protected areas management, it is necessary to analyze the existing structures (as of July 1997) in MEW and MAFAR which pertain to protected areas. Figure A.1 illustrates the lack of a clear reporting structure (see Comments box for areas of weakness). In the past, MEW's Regional Environmental Inspectorates (REIs) often fall under a different Deputy Minister to NNPS, though these responsibilities have been subject to reallocation on several occasions. This means that the Park Departments often report to REI Directors, who report to a Deputy Minister who does not have nature protection as a primary responsibility. Placement of the Rila Park Department under the National Center for Environment and Sustainable Development, while other Park Departments report to REIs is yet another complication.

[1] An official translation of the name of the forestry unit in MAFAR was not available when this report was written; NFB and National Forest Service have both been suggested.

Figure A.1 APPARENT SITUATION 7/97



COMMENTS

1. REIs may or may not be under same deputy as NNPS.
2. NCESD; no link to NNPS.
3. No formal reporting link NPPS with REIs or NPDs
4. Admin. links for other PAs (in and out of MEW) unclear.
5. Unclear mandates and relationship of NP units of MEW & MAFAR.
6. Unclear link betweem NP Units and FEs of MAFAR.
7. Ag sector interests in montane Ag Fund lands in PAs unclear.
8. MEW/MAFAR MoU has no subordination for PAs at national or PA level

Structures within MAFAR relating to protected areas, created by CoF, also have a reporting structure which is not conducive to coherent protected areas management. The basic field unit which carries out forest management activities is the Forest Enterprise. The forested territory of the larger national parks is split between numerous Forest Enterprises. In 1996 CoF created National Park Management Units to exercise certain functions within these Parks. The functions of these Units have never been fully clarified (a similar situation exists with the MEW Park Departments). However, it is clear that they do not have direct jurisdiction over Forest Enterprise activities whose territory includes portions of the Park. Forest Enterprises report to Regional Forest Directorates who traditionally have reported to a different Deputy Chairman at CoF than have the Park Units.

The Bulgarian "Land Fund" system is such that forested areas (Forest Fund) of the Parks formerly fell within the interests of the CoF, while the meadows and alpine areas above the tree line were part of the Agriculture Land Fund administered by the former Ministry of Agriculture[2]. The Ministry of Agriculture's primary interests have been in the more productive farm lands at lower elevation; to date claims to Park management responsibilities from this direction have not been actively made.

To summarize:

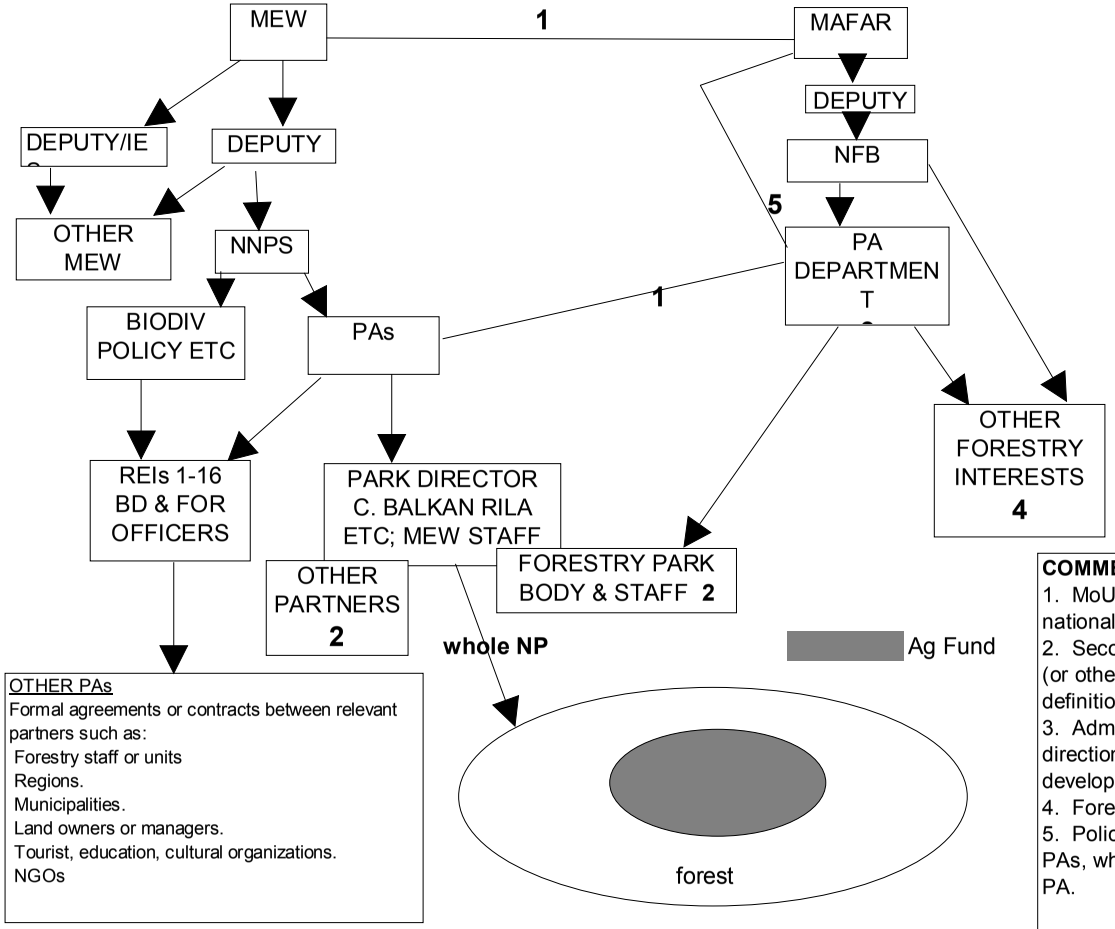
- a large number of different bodies have direct responsibilities for activities in one protected area[3] and functions of these bodies are not clearly defined with respect to protected areas management;
- reporting and organizational structures within MEW and MAFAR related to protected areas are not conducive to coordinated action within or between institutions or their various bodies.

As the mid-term evaluation of GEF concluded, there is, in effect, no **system** of protected areas management in Bulgaria. The evaluation team went on to recommend development of a coherent structure within MEW, and that this should be codified in a modified draft of the Protected Areas Law. These recommendations are similar to the Regulations for NNPS developed in 1994, and to various proposals made to MoE by the Director on NNPS in the Spring of 1997. Figure A1.2 is an elaboration of these proposals

[2] Declaring a National Park changes these jurisdictional issues concerning land such that the Park land falls under control of the MEW. The extent to which Forestry and Agricultural interests retain responsibilities for these lands is at the heart of the long dispute between MoE and CoF.

[3] Besides those mentioned, the Bulgarian Tourist Union has traditionally maintained chalets, shelters and trails in the mountains; ownership of the chalets seems to have been settled in the BTUs favor, though documentation remains unclear.

Figure A1.2 ELABORATION OF EVALUATION RECOMMENDATIONS



NP = National Park(s)

PA = Protected Area(s)

FE = Forest Enterprise

REI = Regional Env Inspectorate

NFB = National Forestry Board

BD = Biodiversity

Ag = Agriculture

COMMENTS

1. MoUs/interagency agreements at mininsterial and national Department level.
2. Secondment or interagency agreement placing forestry (or other) staff under MEW Park Director with clear definition of responsibilities.
3. Admin. oversight of forestry staff under general direction of MEW Director and oversight and policy development in forestry sector.
4. Forest Enterprises, etc, no role in PAs.
5. Policy and practical maintenance of Ag Fund lands in PAs, where appropriate under Forestry staff allocated to PA.

The main features of this proposal with respect to MEW are as follows.

1. Within MEW, all nature protection functions fall in a logical structure under one Deputy Minister responsible for NNPS. All MEW officers with nature protection responsibilities report to NNPS.
2. Field-level exercise of biodiversity policy and control in general is by MEW's biodiversity and forestry officers at the REIs.
3. Park bodies (perhaps called Directorates) exercise biodiversity policy and are responsible for management functions in the National Parks; responsibility for management of other protected areas could remain with the REIs, or in some cases with nearby Park Directorates (this would be clearly defined on a case by case basis).

The prevalent idea at MoE several years ago was for development of a Park Service undertaking all (or most) functions in the Parks. The GEF Memorandum of Understanding called for large MoE staff increases to ensure effective Park management. These ambitious ideas cannot be realized under present institutional and financial circumstances in Bulgaria.

Figure A1.2 shows a model of Park management, through development of partnerships with other bodies who already have staff or other interests in the Parks. The range of potential partners is elaborated elsewhere in GEF reports. NFB involvement is crucial, as it has substantial human and financial resources operating on Park territories. Now that agricultural and forestry interests are united in MAFAR, it may be possible for NFB to assume certain functions in the Agriculture Fund land in the Parks. It would be preferable to separate Forest Enterprise staff from those specifically allocated to Park functions to ensure unified action in each Park, rather than divided responsibility among several Forest Enterprises which also have responsibilities outside the Parks.

For a partnership system to work, it is essential that:

1. Each Park has one MEW Director recognized as such by all partners.
2. Formal interagency agreements are drawn up defining roles and responsibilities under the general direction of the Park Director. For non-government partners similar agreements or contracts would define the roles of each.
3. Authority is devolved to Park Directors to enable them to enter legal agreements, hold title to property, raise funds and undertake other activities in the interest of effective Park management.
4. Park management under MEW is seen as a broad range of activities, much broader in scope than the traditional "control functions" of MEW field staff[4].

[4] GEF's Park Management consultancy draft report of April 1997 elaborates on the wide array of functions essential to managing a national park.

At the national level a start has been made in signing a memorandum between MEW and MAFAR outlining their relationship to GEF activities in protected areas. However, this document is operational only during the life of the project. It may be necessary in the future to establish consultative, or even executive councils, under MEW leadership, at national level and for each Park, to ensure effective and coordinated management activities among partners in protected areas.

The scheme presented in Figure A1.2 is a logical structure which could ensure unified management of the National Parks (and other protected areas). Alternative concepts or details could be elaborated to achieve the same end. It is important that a logical, unified and effective **system** of protected areas management is clearly defined in the Protected Areas Law to avoid future problems. The concept of partnerships, and mechanisms for delegation of authority by MEW for certain defined management activities in protected areas, should also be clear.

APPENDIX 2

GEF PROJECT RESULTS FRAMEWORK
(and Implications of an Interim Implementation Period)

Within that framework, an overall *Objective* is approached by attaining two major *Results*.

Project Objective is: ***Improved Management Systems For Biodiversity Conservation In Bulgaria***.

Result A: *Stronger and more effective institutional structures and policies for management and administration of biodiversity conservation are operational.*

Result B: *Effective management regimes are adopted and operational in two National Parks.*

Specific GEF activities bring about a set of "*Intermediate Results*" which in combination bring about Results A and B. The complete framework is shown in Figures A2.1 and A2.2.

USAID/Sofia has a Results Framework for its country program which incorporates the GEF project under "Cross-cutting Programs and Special Initiatives". Within this framework discussions with the Office of the A.I.D. Representative (OAR) produced four indicators; two for GEF Result A and two for GEF Result B. Targets and timing for these indicators have yet to be agreed, though some progress has been made towards these Results.

Result A: ***Stronger and more effective institutional structures and policies for management and administration of biodiversity conservation are operational.***

Indicators:
1. National policy on biodiversity conservation passed.
2. Biodiversity agreements or policies directing government actions are approved.

Result B: ***Effective management regimes are adopted and operational in two National Parks.***

Indicators:
1. Biodiversity staff resources mobilized.
2. Improved biodiversity management practices carried out.

Figure A2.1

Result A: Results Framework Hierarchy

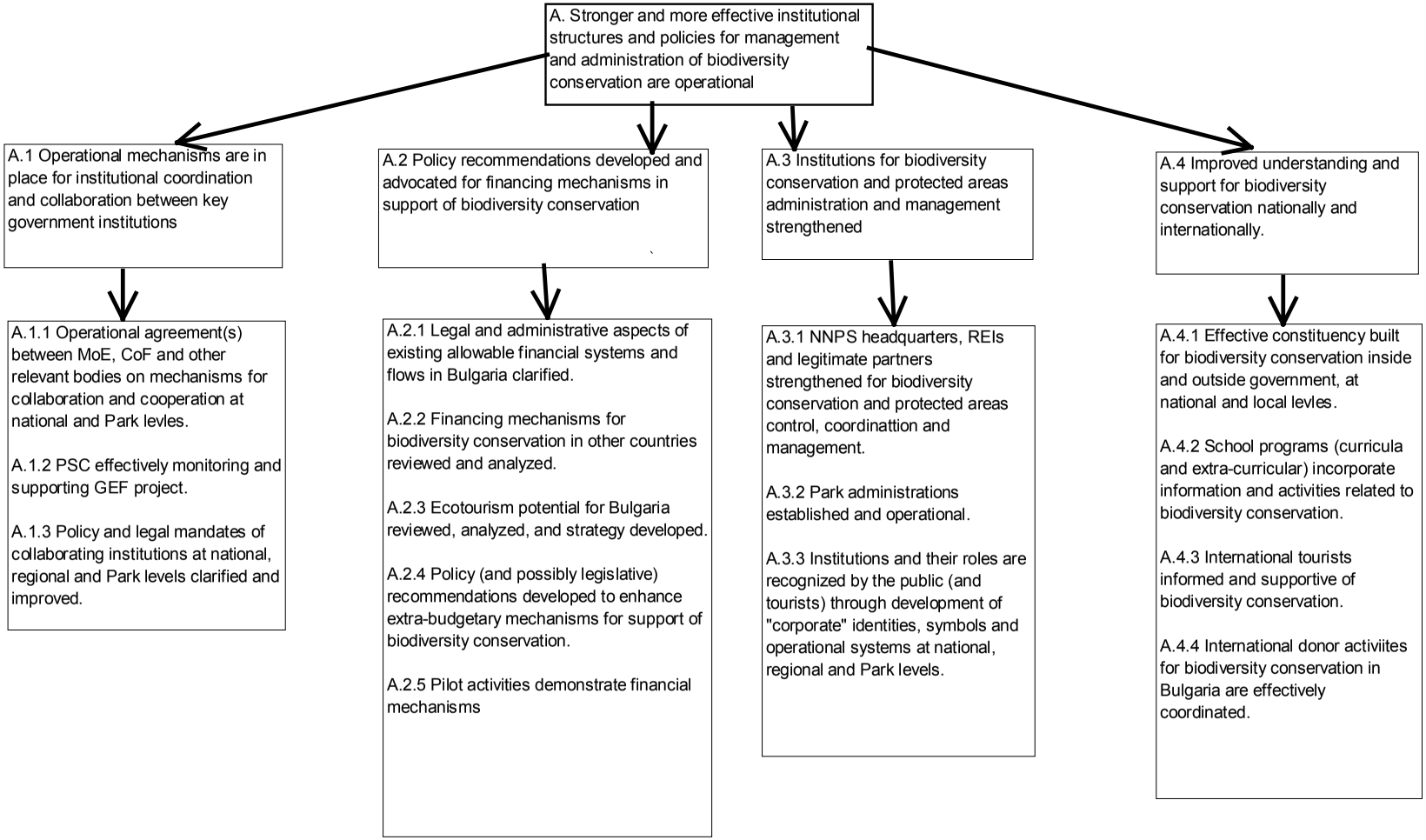
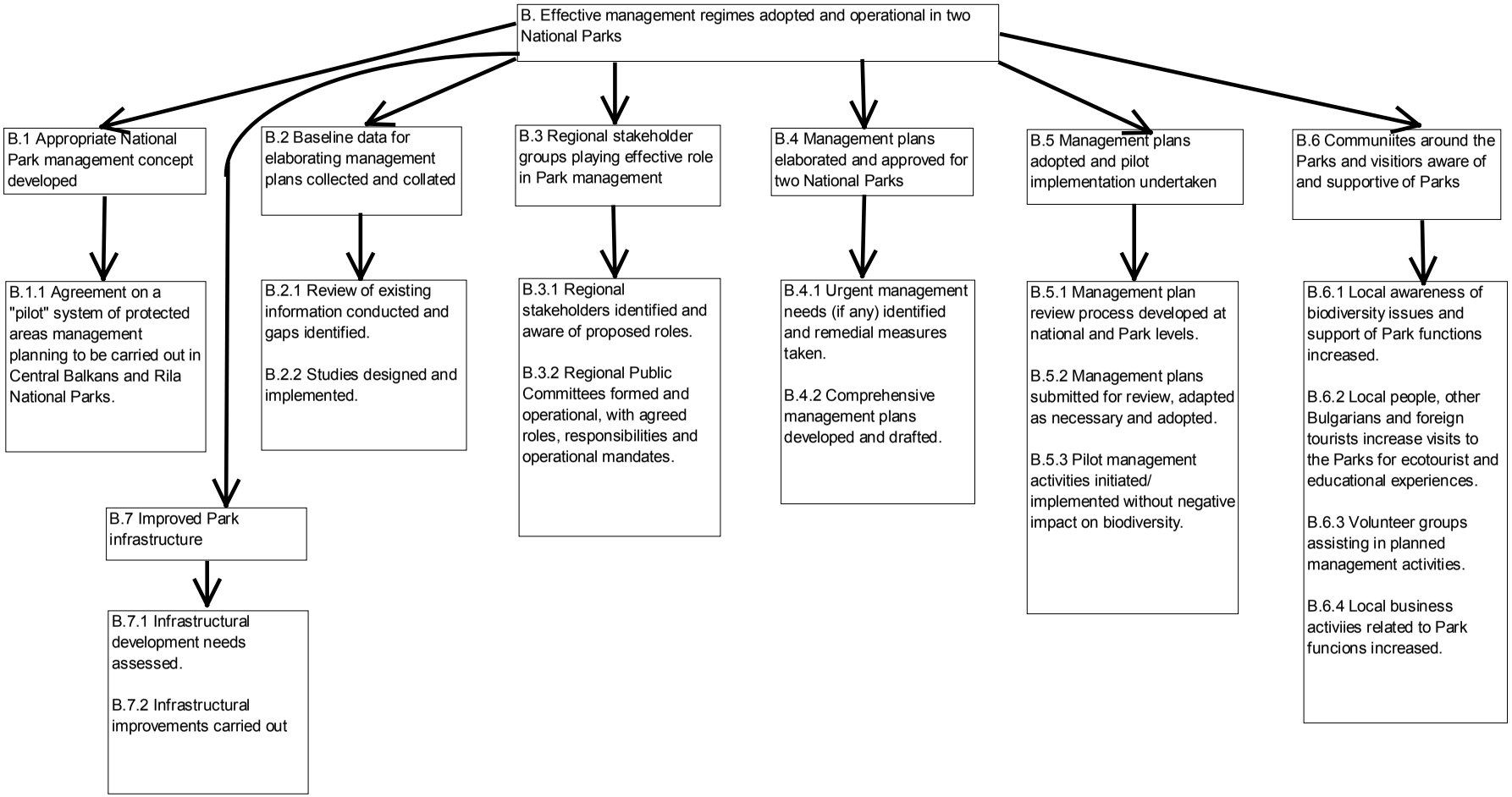


Figure A2.2

Result B: Results Framework Hierarchy



Results Framework and the Period September 1997 - February 1998

The interim implementation phase of GEF agreed between MEW and USAID restricts the types of activities which the project can undertake over the next six months (see body of report; Section 4). This period corresponds to the first half of the Second Annual Work Plan. Activities will focus upon the following aspects of the Results Framework.

The agreed activities clearly focus on **Result A**. Indeed, if successful, the interim phase could end with indicator 1 clearly realized through adoption of the National Biological Diversity Conservation Strategy (NBDCS) and/or passage of the Protected Areas Law (PAL). Achievements with respect to indicator 2 will also be apparent. At lower levels in the Intermediate Results system, progress will be made towards A.1.1, A.1.3, A.2.1, A.2.2 and A.2.4. Many activities under A.3 and A.4 will be curtailed except for aspects of A.4 related to constituency building in support of NBDCS and PAL.

Much less progress will be possible towards **Result B**. Allowable activities will largely be restricted to B.1 (specifically policy and legal aspects of management planning) and B.2 (summer field studies). The only activities under B.3 to B.7 will be those related to policy aspects of Park management and public support for it (limited activities related to B.5.1 and B.6.1, respectively).