



1. Project Data :	
OEDID:	TG010
Project ID:	P008290
Project Name:	Forest Biodiversity Protection
Country:	Belarus
Sector:	Forestry
L/C Number:	TF28621
Partners involved :	
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2. Project Objectives, Financing, Costs and Components :
The project was part of a cohort of 5 GEF projects designed to derive global biodiversity benefits in a number of ECA countries. It was also the first Bank activity in Belarus. The project's main objective was to conserve the biodiversity of key endangered forests (the Belovezhskaya Protected Forest Reserve - BPF) and the wetlands and forests of the Berezinsky and Pripiatsky reserve, through institutional support and investments in applied research and management. BPT design included a transboundary link with park management in the adjacent Bialowieza Primeval Forest in Poland (also supported by a GEF grant. BPF was the major component of the project. The project was supported by a GEF grant of US\$1 million approved in September 24, 1992 and closed fully disbursed on December 31, 20 months late.

3. Achievement of Relevant Objectives :
The project was slow to start and implementation was delayed considerably, due to Belarus' inexperience with the Bank and the relative inexperience with the project's interdisciplinary approach and the Bank's inexperience with Belarus. However, the project objectives of conserving key forest biodiversity and collaborating on transboundary conservation efforts were achieved. The two major outcomes were: first the improved management of the old growth forest ecosystem in BPF which itself improves the chances of for the persistence of its globally significant biodiversity and second that protected areas management in Belarus is now similar to that elsewhere in Europe.

4. Significant Achievements :
(i) Collaboration between Poland and Belarus went well beyond the project workplan. It was agreed to prepare a Joint Transboundary Management Plan for the contiguous protected area; to designate the contiguous protected area as a Transboundary Biosphere reserve and to standardize technical studies; (ii) a business plan for nature based tourism was drafted late in the project even though this was not originally planned.

5. Significant Shortcomings :
(i) given the ongoing fiscal difficulties of the state government, there is no indication that the national park's budget will be increased in the short-term; ii) shortcomings at project appraisal resulted in supervision costs four times the appraisal estimate.

6. Ratings :	ICR	OED Review	Reason for Disagreement /Comments
Outcome:	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	
Institutional Dev .:	Substantial	Substantial	
Sustainability :	Likely	Likely	

Bank Performance :	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	While this was a small project, it was also the first project in a new country . Nevertheless, i) project appraisal was insufficient; (ii) continuity in supervision and coherence between the cohort of GEF projects was a problem; (iii) technically supervision was excellent but administratively it was not - lack of management and procurement support hampered implementation (iv) adherence to internal Bank reporting requirement was weak.
Borrower Perf .:	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	
Quality of ICR :		Satisfactory	

7. Lessons of Broad Applicability :

An interesting feature was that the lessons were discussed during a regional meeting involving the participants of other GEF biodiversity projects in the cohort .. Among the lessons. An institutional capacity assessment is essential, particularly in countries where the Bank has not previously been active . Participation of local communities could have been enhanced by a social assessment early during project implementation. Professional development and training activities were an important ingredient of the project's success.

8. Audit Recommended? Yes No

Why? This was the first project in Belarus, but more importantly would be to consider a joint audit of the cohort of 5 GEF projects.

9. Comments on Quality of ICR :

The ICR was satisfactory.