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Caucasus Protected Areas Fund (CPAF)

Signature of Pilot Project at Borjomi Kharagauli National Park (BKNP) in Georgia in Partnership with Bank of Georgia

The CPAF announces the signing of its pilot project grant agreement with the Republic of Georgia's Ministry of Environment Protection and Natural Resources. Mr. Goga Khachidze, Minister, and Mr. Giorgi Shonvadze, Chairman of the Ministry's Agency of Protected Areas (APA), signed for the Georgian side. Prior to signing the agreement, the CPAF secured an important donation from the Bank of Georgia. Through its charitable foundation, the bank will contribute a major portion of the funding for the project and become an official sponsor of Georgia's Borjomi-Kharagauli National Park.

The project is a €275,000, three-year program to support the operations of BKNP, which is one of the largest national parks in Europe and is home to a wide variety of flora and fauna. Important mammals include wolves, bears, lynx, and, with the help of a program currently underway to reintroduce it, the bezoar goat, which was hunted to extinction in the area. BKNP is an important bird area (IBA), according to Birdlife International, and the park has more than 100 species of butterfly within its borders, including the endemic *Parnassius nordmanni*. Interesting flora include rhododendron, cherry-laurel, ilex and Caucasian lotus.

The CPAF will contribute to the overall budget of the PA, and over the three year course of the grant, its funding will make a number of improvements possible, including a significant renovation project of the aging visitor's center and administrative facility in Borjomi, the purchase of patrol equipment and the modernization of BKNP's biodiversity monitoring program, improvements to aging tourist infrastructure as well as an increased focus on PA management effectiveness.

David Morrison, Executive Director of the CPAF, said:

"We have delivered our first PA project in Georgia for 2010 as planned. This is an enormous accomplishment for the Ministry and the APA, and is a very positive start to our partnership. We are particularly pleased to have won the support of Bank of Georgia as our initial corporate sponsor. This is a model we hope we can replicate.

"With the addition of new funding to the CPAF next year, we expect to be able to move on to a second project for 2011 in another of Georgia's magnificent protected areas. We have a long way to go, but today is an important first step for our mission to protect the Caucasus bio-diversity hotspot."

Contact Information

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David Morrison and Minister Goga Khachidze signing the CPAF grant agreement



David Morrison and Bank of Georgia Chairman Nick Enukidze signing the Bank of Georgia grant to the CPAF



Minister Khachidze and Giorgi Shonvadze, Chairman of the Ministry's Agency of Protected Areas

Background on the Caucasus Protected Areas Fund:

The CPAF commenced operations in 2008 with initial sponsorship from the German government (through BMZ and KfW), WWF Germany, Conservation International and Critical Ecosystems Partnership Fund. The Caucasus is recognized by the WWF and Conservation International as the most biologically diverse region in a temperate zone in the world. The CPAF focuses on the core Caucasus countries of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia, each of which obtained independence from the former Soviet Union in the early 1990s. In all three countries there is an abundance of pristine nature, and a developing system of national parks and reserves, but a severe shortage of funds for the day-to-day work of preserving it. Our mission is to meet this critical but unaddressed need: the funding of operating and maintenance costs for protected areas, such as salaries for rangers, park scientists and information officers, and costs for equipment, supplies and training.

In a region where political strife continues, this initiative represents a rare display of cooperation and dialogue among the three focus countries. In endorsing the establishment of the CPAF, each has agreed to submit proposals to increase funding for the preservation of their natural treasures. Critically, they have also agreed to provide at least 50% of the funding—assuring local “ownership”—of the programs. The CPAF will supply on an ongoing basis the balance. As a by-product, we hope to promote this nascent regional dialogue. Indeed the German government's contribution to the CPAF was made in the context of its Caucasus Initiative which encourages cross-border cooperation and contributes to conflict prevention.

The CPAF is actively seeking to broaden its donor base to enable to fulfill its promise in this vital region.

For more, visit our web-site at: www.caucasus-naturefund.org