## **TERMS OF REFERENCE**

## PREPARATION OF a Range management Plan for the Selected AREAS IN AZERBAIJAN

WWF-Caucasus Programme Office together with WWF-Azerbaijan Branch is implementing a project on *Increasing Biodiversity in a Priority Transboundary Protected Area in the Iori Mingechaur Region* (“the project”), supported by German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and WWF-Germany. Within the framework of this project, WWF-Azerbaijan will award a service contract for conducting assessments of pasturelands and preparation of a range management plan for about 30,000 ha of Gakh Protected Area (Sanctuary) and surrounding territory (Gakh and Sheki districts, Azerbaijan).

### **Background information**

The overall objective of the project is to improve status of biodiversity in a transboundary Priority Conservation Area, Iori-Mingechaur, by enhancing management of protected areas, sustainable management of pasturelands and re-introduction of the globally threatened Goitered Gazelle *(Gazella subgutturosa).*

The main part of the area is characterized by a mosaic of steppes and semi-deserts with drought-resistant grasses and partly wooden species.

The main economic activities within the project area are livestock keeping (mainly sheep) and agriculture. From October to April, much of the Iori-Mingechauri area is used as winter pastures: approximately 20,000-30,000 sheep are grazing here. Range management plans for these pastures are outdated. Although, the pastures are state owned and there are statutory provisions, grazing is still uncontrolled, with overgrazing as a common practice exercised presently. The sheep owners and shepherds are generally not aware of negative effects of over-grazing on the productivity of the pastures.

### **Objectives, scope and methodology for the assignment**

A management plan should be developed in close consultation with stakeholders, including [Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources and Ministry of Agriculture of Azerbaijan Republic](http://www.eco.gov.az/en/), Protected Area authorities, local governmental structures, shepherds and farmers.

For this purpose, different field surveys should be conducted: (a) land tenure; (b) ecological condition of pastures, rangeland degradation types and rates; (c) actually implemented grazing system; (d) reliable estimation of sheep numbers; (e) the sheep grazing impacts on natural ecosystems within the Protected Areas and in surrounding territories.

Subsequently, management plan should be produced with norms of optimal and sustainable livestock grazing for the target area (about 30,000 ha of Gakh Protected Area (Sanctuary) and surrounding territory – Ajonour and Sarija steppes, Dashuz and Akhar-Bakhar ridges). Critical areas for restoration should be identified and mapped. Also, rapid socio-economic and marketing assessment for the identification of possible sustainable pasture use options should be conducted and relevant recommendations produced.

As soon as selected, the consultant (jointly with the Project Country Coordinator for Azerbaijan) will develop a workplan and time schedule with description of each stage of the preparation of the range management plan, including the consultations with stakeholders.

The development of advanced range management plan is a key measure of the sustainable pasturing and will ensure co-existence with the gazelles, re-introduced under this project. In addition, the implementation of the management plan will reduce negative impacts on study area and ensure the sustainable productivity of pasturelands.

**Technical assistance and supervision**

WWF-Caucasus has many years of experience in biodiversity conservation. The work planned under this ToR will be conducted under the supervision of the Project Country Coordinator for Azerbaijan and with technical assistance and advice from the GIS Expert (electronic database, maps) hired under this project.

**Format and time scope of the range management plan**

The format (outline) and time scope (duration) of the range management plan should be determined on the basis of the best available technical guidelines and experience. These should be agreed at the initial stages of contract implementation.

### **Deliverables**

The deliverables should include the report containing a management plan - electronic version (Microsoft Word and PDF and, if applicable, other relevant formats) and three hard copies of these documents. This should also include GIS-based maps and information on and minutes of the meetings with the stakeholders.

**Duration and budget of the assignment**

The assignment should be completed and final draft of the management plan (agreed with all relevant stakeholders) should be submitted before 31 March 2014. Exact budget for the assignment will be calculated according to the volumes of workplan activities, logistical details and on the basis of experience and qualifications of the selected expert.

### **Qualification requirements**

A suitable candidate should have diploma or equivalent in biological/agricultural sciences or related fields. The candidate should also have experience in the field of range management and livestock keeping in general, preferably in Azerbaijan or other countries of the former Soviet Union. Apart from English, good knowledge of Russian would be advantage.