

Notes from GEF project orientation meeting

DFU, Charlottenlund Castle, Nov. 16, 2001.

Attendees:

Henrik Degel
Brian MacKenzie (rapporteur)
Niels Axel Nielsen, Institute director, DFU
Helge A. Thomsen, Department head (Marine Ecology and Aquaculture), DFU
Jan Thulin, GEF Project coordinator
Stuart Reeves

Background information:

Jan Thulin, GEF project coordinator, presented the project in an open seminar to all interested colleagues at DFU.

One of the main objectives of the GEF project is to improve the research capacity and infrastructure in the countries in the eastern part of the Baltic. This will help meet a second objective which is to improve fisheries assessment and management of the fisheries and Baltic ecosystem.

The GEF funding will therefore be allocated primarily to institutes in the eastern Baltic. ICES will have overall responsibility for budgetary matters within the project.

The project is scheduled to start in 2002, which will be considered as a "planning year". This means that various coordination and implementation activities will be held such as introductory workshops, meetings, preparation of EU project applications for additional funding, etc.

Discussion:

Following the seminar, a meeting was held in which details of some practical arrangements were discussed. The discussion addressed the following issues:

- 1) general funding arrangements both within GEF and on bilateral basis between Denmark and individual countries
- 2) contributions to GEF project by Denmark and expectations of same by GEF.

Regarding point 1:

NAN and HD noted that the funding possibilities for data collection by eastern Baltic countries have now been weakened due to a change in EU funding arrangements for projects involving EU and non-EU countries. Improving or at least maintaining the current level of data collection for especially the 3 most heavily exploited fish species is one of the Danish priorities.

Possible funding mechanisms to achieve this goal and for funding other GEF-related activities were:

- Dance funding (Danish development aid organisation)
- other Danish funding from various ministries, including the Food and Agriculture Ministry and the Environment Ministry

Some inquiries have been made to these agencies at various levels by both GEF and DFU. These need to be pursued further and discussed among the various parties (ie, GEF, DFU, Dance, and involved ministries). Some coordination regarding funding requests to these agencies will be necessary once priority objectives for the funding are identified.

Some restrictions on project funding by Dance were noted by HD (ie, not only for data collection). This would mean that their contribution must also include other issues such as technical development and support, project objectives consistent with EU DG Fish policy, etc.

Bilateral funding arrangements (e. g., contracts) between a western country and an eastern country that lead to fulfilment of GEF objectives are encouraged. Examples of these arrangements are already in place for other (ie, non-GEF) projects. These arrangements could allow specific projects of high priority to a western country to be earmarked for funding by a western funding organisation. The eastern country would therefore receive funding from the western country and this funding would be considered by GEF as a contribution to the project. There is also a possibility that the western country could be re-imbursed by GEF for these contributions.

Regarding the status of Lithuania: This country is not presently a member of ICES, nor of the EU and therefore requires some special status since it does not participate in ICES working groups or activities. As a result, Lithuania will receive some extra support from GEF. One example is the establishment of a GIS data centre in Vilnius to encourage Lithuania to contribute and join other Baltic data collection and dissemination activities. In addition JT noted that the US embassy in Copenhagen has offered to pay Lithuania's membership fees to ICES for the first 2 years of the GEF project to encourage participation in both GEF and ICES.

Regarding point 2:

The role of DFU, and all western countries, within the project needs to be identified. This will be easier once colleagues at DFU receive and read the Project Implementation Plan (PIP) and supporting documents. This material is now publicly available and will be sent by JT to BRM who will circulate it to colleagues within DFU for comment and discussion. It was suggested that DFU colleagues identify their potential contribution to the project and then have a 2nd meeting with JT to discuss further DFUs role in the project and how these contributions fit into the GEF workplan.

Some very preliminary areas or topics where DFU could contribute were identified. These include the following (see below) but others will be added after the PIP is discussed further:

- data collection
- discards
- harmonization and calibration of aging methods
- recovery of existing basic fisheries data (e. g., lengths, weights, ages)

- fish diseases
- aquaculture
- contaminant (e. g., dioxin) removal from fish flesh

Followup issues:

1. DFU discuss the PIP. Identify and prioritize contributions.
2. DFU and JT meet in mid-late January to further discuss DFU role.