Project

Restoring the Amazon of Europe: Reconnecting Riverine Habitats in the first five-country UNESCO Biosphere Reserve

Terms of Reference for the Consultancy Services for the

Preparation of a Restoration Plan for the Danube Section between Kopački Rit Nature Park and the Special Nature Reserve Gornje Podunavlje (Output 2.4.)

Client:

WWF Adria

Boškovićeva 2

10 000 Zagreb

The assigned project

Restoring the Amazon of Europe: Reconnecting Riverine Habitats in the first five-country UNESCO Biosphere Reserve.

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1. THE PROJECT

1. 1. Background

The project "*Restoring the Amazon of Europe: Reconnecting Riverine Habitats in the First Five-Country UNESCO Biosphere Reserve*" focuses on restoring riverine and floodplain habitats within the Transboundary Biosphere Reserve Mura-Drava-Danube (TBR MDD), spanning Austria, Slovenia, Croatia, Hungary, and Serbia. The TBR MDD UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, also known as "the Amazon of Europe" is a unique five-country riverine protected landscape. It is the largest coherent and dynamic riverine protected area in Europe, stretching through five countries, covering 930,000 hectares and 700 km of rivers. The landscape hosts Europe's highest density of white-tailed eagle breeding pairs and second most important fish spawning area (after the Danube delta). It also provides habitat for 250,000+ water birds and has the Danube´s largest water retention area partially covered by floodplain forests.

This project focuses on the most outstanding part, the core zone (10% of TBR MDD) - a network of 13 protected areas, two Ramsar sites, and Natura 2000 sites designated in the EU part of the landscape. The buffer zone covers 19% while the rest of the landscape is under the transition zone with no restrictions. Restoration activities are carried out at two key sites: Nature Park (NP) Kopački Rit (Croatia) and the Special Nature Reserve (SNR) "Gornje Podunavlje" (Serbia). The project implements side-channel reconnection, removal of hydromorphological barriers, and floodplain forest restoration, improving the natural dynamics of the Danube and its wetlands. At the same time, it strengthens cross-border coordination through the Restoration Task Force, develops shared planning tools for future restoration, and engages local communities through creative and educational activities. By combining ecological restoration, institutional coordination, and participatory governance, the project establishes a sustainable and scalable model for nature restoration across the entire TBR MDD.

The project is funded by the Endangered Landscapes & Seascapes Programme and led by WWF Adria (hereafter referred to as the Employer), in partnership with WWF Austria, WWF Hungary, Public Institution of Nature Park Kopački rit and Public Enterprise "Vojvodinašume.

1.2. Objective and Purpose of the Assignment

The subject of this procurement is the development and validation of the Restoration Plan for the Danube section between NP Kopački Rit in the Republic of Croatia and the SNR "Gornje Podunavlje" in the Republic of Serbia, within the project *Restoring the Amazon of Europe: Reconnecting Riverine Habitats in the First Five-Country UNESCO Biosphere Reserve*.

The activity contributes to project outcomes aimed at strengthening the planning and coordination framework for riverine and floodplain restoration within the TBR MDD, and in particular to Indicator 2.4, which foresees the preparation and validation of a Restoration Plan through expert consultations and a participatory stakeholder engagement process.

The purpose of the Restoration Plan is to establish a shared planning framework for improving hydromorphological conditions, water connectivity, and ecological functionality of riverine and floodplain habitats within the selected Danube section. The plan will define a common restoration vision, identify priority sites and restoration measures, and enable coordinated planning and implementation of restoration activities in a transboundary context.

Emphasis will be placed on:

- improving natural river and floodplain processes;
- strengthening lateral connectivity between the river and the floodplain;
- conserving and improving habitats and species associated with aquatic and wetland ecosystems.

The Restoration Plan will also serve as a tool for strengthening institutional and technical capacities, building trust among key stakeholders, and encouraging their active involvement in the planning and implementation of restoration measures. Through expert consultations and stakeholder workshops, the process will support a shared understanding of restoration objectives and ensure support for the proposed measures, thereby creating conditions for their future implementation.

The development of the Restoration Plan builds upon methodological approaches established through previous restoration activities within the TBR MDD, including experience gained through the LIFE RESTORE for MDD project, ensuring continuity of approach and alignment with national and European restoration objectives. The Restoration Plan will serve as a joint planning and coordination document that:

- supports the work of the Restoration Task Force (RTF);
- enables identification of priority restoration projects;
- contributes to the preparation of future investment and project activities within the wider TBR MDD area.
- Improve and preserved natural condition in the TBR MDD

As such, the Restoration Plan represents a technical and strategic basis for further preparation, financing, and implementation of restoration measures, as well as for the replication and transfer of restoration approaches to other locations within the TBR MDD.

1.3. Description of the Project Area

Although it is the largest river in Europe, the Danube can also be considered one of its most dynamic rivers, as it has partially changed its course from decade to decade. Over the past thousand years, natural processes of erosion and sediment deposition have shaped the river landscape through the formation of river islands, locally known as *adas*, as well as sandbars, side channels, and other aquatic habitat forms. These processes result from the continuous interaction between river flow, sediment transport, and fluctuations in water levels.

The Danube is characterized by large water level amplitudes. Due to the configuration of the terrain, floodwaters do not spread abruptly into lowland areas but gradually flow through natural depressions, channels, and side arms. As a result, floodplain areas are inundated more slowly, and water also recedes gradually, maintaining specific hydrological conditions essential for the development of floodplain forests, wetlands, and high biological diversity.

As one of Europe's largest and most significant rivers, the Danube represents the primary natural factor shaping hydrological and ecological processes in the Middle Danube region. Its hydrological regime,

together with natural processes of erosion and sedimentation, directly influences floodplain formation, water conditions, habitat structure, and the overall functioning of ecosystems along the river corridor. The dynamics of flooding caused by water level fluctuations enable periodic inundation of lowland areas, the formation of side channels, sandbars, and river islands, and the maintenance of diverse natural habitats.

In the middle section of the Danube, on both the left and right banks of the river, lies a unique and well-preserved floodplain landscape formed by the Nature Park Kopački Rit in the Republic of Croatia and the Special Nature Reservate "Gornje Podunavlje" in the Republic of Serbia.

The NP Kopački Rit represents one of the most important and best-preserved floodplain areas in Europe. Located at the confluence of the Drava and Danube rivers, it plays a key role in maintaining regional biodiversity, hydrological regimes, and ecosystem services. Due to its highly dynamic hydrology and seasonal flooding, the area functions as a natural flood retention zone. Kopački Rit is designated as a Nature Park, listed as a Ramsar site, and included in the Natura 2000 ecological network, confirming its international conservation significance. The area serves as an important spawning ground, feeding site, and resting area for numerous endangered and strictly protected species of birds, fish, mammals, and plants. Historical river regulation, land-use changes, and habitat fragmentation have, however, partially disrupted the natural balance between river processes and ecological succession, leading in some areas to gradual shallowing, reduced water retention capacity, and biodiversity decline.

The SNR "Gornje Podunavlje" is an extensive protected floodplain area located in the northwestern part of the Republic of Serbia and represents one of the most important wetland areas within the Serbian section of the Danube basin. It is characterized by a diverse mosaic of ecosystems, including floodplain and lowland forests, wet meadows, reedbeds, side channels, and other wetland habitats that provide conditions for numerous rare and strictly protected species, such as the white-tailed eagle, black stork, beaver, otter, as well as a wide range of fish, amphibians, and wetland birds. In addition to its outstanding biodiversity value, Gornje Podunavlje performs an important ecosystem function in the context of climate change adaptation through floodwater retention, erosion reduction, and groundwater recharge. In certain parts of the reserve, the functionality of side channels has been degraded due to altered flooding regimes, sediment accumulation, and the spread of invasive species, resulting in gradual shallowing and overgrowth of aquatic habitats.

As a single hydrological and ecological unit, the Danube sector between NP Kopački Rit and the SNR "Gornje Podunavlje" represents one of the most valuable preserved floodplain systems of the Middle Danube, with significant potential for ecological restoration aimed at improving hydromorphological conditions, reconnecting water bodies, and conserving biological diversity.

1.3.1 Pilot section

The pilot section subject to the Restoration plan encompasses a transboundary stretch of the Danube River within the Transboundary Biosphere Reserve Mura–Drava–Danube (TBR MDD), located between the Republic of Croatia and the Republic of Serbia. It lies in the area between Nature Park Kopački Rit in Croatia and the Special Nature Reserve "Gornje Podunavlje" in Serbia, both of which represent key protected areas of high ecological value.

Nature Park Kopački Rit covers the Danube sector approximately from rkm 1412 to rkm 1382, while the Special Nature Reserve "Gornje Podunavlje" extends from approximately rkm 1433 to rkm 1367. The defined pilot section exceeds these protected areas and spans from rkm 1433 to rkm 1354, with a total length of approximately 70 km. It includes the Croatian stretch from Batina to Dalj and the Serbian stretch from Bezdan to downstream of Bogojevo. Approximated area is represented on the Map 1, and detailed map is showed on the end of this ToR.

In addition to the above-mentioned protected areas, the pilot section also includes several others protecetad areas in Croatia - Significant Landscape Erdut, as well as parts of the Natura 2000 network. These include the sites *Danube north of Kopački Rit* (HR2001309) and *Danube – Vukovar* (HR2000372), designated as Sites of Community Importance (SCI/POVS), and the Special Protection Area (SPA) HR1000016 *Podunavlje and lower Podravina*.

This section represents a highly valuable riverine corridor, combining important navigation functions with extensive floodplain systems and diverse habitats. It is an area of outstanding importance from the perspective of biodiversity conservation, flood protection, and nature protection, while at the same time serving as a key inland waterway for navigation. Owing to these multiple, often competing functions, the section is particularly relevant for the identification of concrete restoration sites, including both potential and priority locations, where ecological rehabilitation can be balanced with sustainable river management and safe navigation.

The focus of this task is to define restoration measures within the Danube River corridor along the specified section, with primary emphasis on the river channel and its hydromorphological processes. At the same time, the planning process shall take into account the associated floodplain areas, recognising their functional connection with the river system.

For certain parts of the floodplains, restoration measures have already been identified through previous studies and project activities. These shall be considered as an important reference for the planning process. In particular, the *Study of the revitalization of waters and water-dependent ecosystems of the floodplain of the Kopački Rit Nature Park* and the *Expert Supervision Report for the Special Nature Reserve "Gornje Podunavlje"* represent the primary baseline sources for floodplain-related measures.

Building on these inputs, the consultant is expected to further define and prioritise restoration measures, with a particular focus on interventions within the river channel of Danube, while ensuring coherence and complementarity with the surrounding floodplain.

The exact spatial delineation of the pilot sections is presented in the accompanying project maps. Additional cartographic materials and spatial data may be provided by the Contracting Authority where necessary.



Map 1. Project Area – Danube Restoration Plan Section marked with the red square (NOTE – detail map of the pilot section is listed in Anex 1)

1.4. Developing the Restoration Plans

The Restoration Plan for the selected sections shall be developed at the regional level to include all managers and stakeholder in the area of that project area (see Map 1- reed square and Anex 1) and shall define priority measures aimed at improving natural riverine and floodplain processes, including indicative implementation timelines and potential cost estimation. The proposed measures should focus on restoring natural hydromorphological conditions and dynamic processes, improving connectivity between the river channel and the floodplain, and enhancing the ecological status and functionality of riverine and wetland habitats.

The following existing documents and strategies represent the main reference documents:

- EU Nature Restoration Law (NRL), Article 9, as well as Articles 1, 4 and 23[1];
- Law on Nature Protection ("Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia", No. 36/2009, 88/2010, 91/2010 – corr., 14/2016, 95/2018 – other law and 71/2021);
- NRL Criteria and Guidelines;
- EU Water Framework Directive (2000/60/EC);
- National planning documents (e.g. development plans, Natura 2000 management plans, navigation documents, etc);
- Guidelines for a Dynamic River Corridor;

[1] Through the positive approval of the Nature Restoration Law (NRL) in August 2024, the Restoration plans should follow an integrative approach, relating to the implementation of the NRL mandatory National Restoration Plans (especially referring to Article 1, 4, 9 and 23; whereas Article 9 will be prioritised) - according the respective actual status.

- Study of the revitalization of waters and water-dependent ecosystems of the floodplain of the Kopački rit Nature Park;
- Expert Supervision Report for the Special Nature Reserve "Gornje Podunavlje";
- Floodplain Restoration/Preservation Action Plan in the Danube River Basin;
- INTERREG lifelineMDD "River Restoration Toolbox";
- UNESCO Five-country Biosphere Reserve Mura–Drava–Danube Nomination Form;
- Target Paper from LIFE Restore for MDD project – core goals and guiding principles of restoration; results and lessons learned from the LIFE RESTORE for MDD project;
- Restoration plans produced in the scope of the LIFE Restore for MDD project;
- Study - Monitoring of hydrological, hydraulic and morphological characteristics of the Danube River and Inventory of biodiversity components on the joint Croatian Serbian sector of the Danube River inventory of river regulation infrastructure related to navigation;
- other relevant documents to be identified during the preparation process.

The consultant shall consider the following principles:

- experience and lessons learned from previous restoration projects within the MDD area and beyond (e.g. goMURra, Drava LIFE, Natura Mura, LIFE Obere Drau II, LIFE RESTORE for MDD, Interreg Danube Transnational Programme – Danube Floodplain), IUCN Global Standard for Nature-based Solutions;
- participatory planning through stakeholder involvement and consultations with partners and experts within the MDD area;
- an integrated approach ensuring that the Restoration Plan addresses not only immediate ecological needs but also establishes a foundation for future scalable and unscalable restoration activities.

2. SCOPE OF WORK AND DELIVERABLES

The tasks shall focus on the key aspects of the project related to the development and validation of the Restoration Plan for the defined Danube section (Chapter 1.3.1), with the aim of strengthening the planning and coordination framework for riverine and floodplain restoration at the transboundary level, in accordance with Project Indicator 2.4.

The focus of this task is to define restoration measures within the Danube River corridor along the specified section, with primary emphasis on the river channel and its hydromorphological processes. At the same time, the planning process shall take into account the associated floodplain areas, recognising their functional connection with the river system.

For certain parts of the floodplains, restoration measures have already been identified through previous studies and project activities. These shall be considered as an important reference for the planning process. In particular, the *Study of the revitalization of waters and water-dependent ecosystems of the floodplain of the Kopački Rit Nature Park* and the *Expert Supervision Report for the Special Nature Reserve "Gornje Podunavlje"* represent the primary baseline sources for floodplain-related measures.

Building on these inputs, the consultant is expected to further define and prioritise restoration measures, with a particular focus on interventions within the river channel of the Danube, while ensuring coherence and complementarity with the surrounding floodplain.

2.1 Tasks and Responsibilities

2.1.1. Task 1 – Data collection and analyses

The consultancy shall collect and analyses existing baseline data relevant to the planning framework conditions, identifying deficiencies, constraints, development needs, potential opportunities, and necessary actions. This process shall encompass, but is not limited to the following aspects: land structure, habitat maps, sediment balance, hydro-morphology, hydrology, aquatic ecology, flood protection plans of all riparian countries, floodplain delineation, protected area management plans, Natura 2000 management plans (where applicable or available), existing and planned restoration sites, planned infrastructure projects within the river basin (e.g., roads and other infrastructure), restoration strategies, studies and action plans of previous as well as other projects as well as relevant local, regional, and national restoration projects or studies on restoration potential.

The following data will be obligatory to use:

- Flood risk management
- Maintenance – watercourse management
- Hydrology
- Sediments and river morphology
- River regulation structures
- Habitats
- Aquatic ecology
- Ornithology
- Groundwater
- Natura 2000 and protected areas
- UNESCO Five-country Biosphere Reserve Mura-Drava-Danube Nomination Form
- Recreation & leisure
- Land use and ownership, cadastral data
- River navigation
- Existing and planned restoration projects
- Threats and pressures in the pilot section
- Other planned river management or restoration interventions

Certain data will be provided by the client (WWF Adria) and the project partners, while some datasets are publicly available. Additionally, specific datasets from previous WWF studies conducted under past projects will be accessible under specific restrictions (Data Usage Agreement). The client will support

the consultancy of relevant data; however, the consultancy shall be responsible for obtaining any additional data required within the scope of the contract.

The consultancy should be aware that some data, documents, and information may not be available in English, but rather in the respective local language (Croatian and Serbian). The client expects that the consultancy will be able to process this data within the scope of the contract, utilizing its own budget and resources.

The compiled data and findings shall be presented and discussed in a dedicated workshop with WWF Adria followed by a subsequent workshop with the relevant stakeholder.

2.1.1.1. Deliverables

- List of collected and reviewed baseline data (Excel format);
- Baseline spatial dataset and GIS project containing compiled and processed spatial data relevant for restoration planning;
- Identification of data gaps and existing constraints relevant for the further planning process;
- Summary report consolidating all findings and main conclusions

2.1.1.2. Timeline and Milestones

The proposed timeline is indicative and may be adjusted in agreement with the Client, depending on data availability and the overall progress of the Restoration Plan preparation.

Milestone	Deliverable	Indicative timeline
Completion of baseline data collection and review	List of collected and reviewed baseline data (Excel format)	July – September 2026
Compilation of spatial data and GIS project	Integrated spatial dataset and GIS project containing all relevant layers	July – September 2026
Identification of data gaps and constraints	Report/list of identified data gaps and existing constraints	July – September 2026
Presentation of results to the expert working group	Presentation of analysis results delivered to the expert working group	September – October 2026

2.1.2. Task 2 – Field Visits within the Restoration Plan Area

The consultancy shall conduct field visits within the area covered by the Restoration Plan, with the aim of verifying collected data, assessing on-site conditions, and identifying spatial constraints and restoration potential relevant for the further planning process. The field visits shall contribute to a better understanding of the hydromorphological, ecological, and spatial characteristics of the pilot sections.

Field visits shall be organised in cooperation with the Client, protected area management authorities, and project partners, and shall cover the pilot sections defined within the Restoration Plan. Duration of the field visit will be 1 – 3 days, depending on the field accessibly. Collected data during the field visit should be incorporate and compliment the 2.1.1. Task 1 – Data collection and analyses.

2.1.2.1. Deliverables

- Field visits to the pilot sections completed;
- Brief field visit report summarizing observed conditions, identified constraints, and preliminary findings relevant for the further planning process.
- Baseline spatial dataset and GIS project containing collected data

2.1.2.2. Timeline and Milestones

The proposed timeline is indicative and may be adjusted in agreement with the Client, depending on data availability and the overall progress of the Restoration Plan preparation.

Milestone	Deliverable	Indicative timeline
Field visits	Field visits to the pilot section completed	August - September 2026
Field visit report completed	Field visit report summarising key findings	September 2026

2.1.3. Task 3 – Development of the Target Paper – Core Goals and Guiding Principles for Restoration

Based on the results of the collected data analysis, previous project outputs, and relevant guidelines and strategic documents (e.g. *Guidelines for a Dynamic River Corridor*, *River Restoration Toolbox*, the UNESCO Transboundary Biosphere Reserve Mura–Drava–Danube Nomination Form, and other relevant documents), the consultant shall prepare a Target Paper for the defined pilot section. The target paper should clearly build upon and align with previously developed target papers produced within the LIFE Restore for MDD Synergies project, which is implemented in synergy with project *Restoring the Amazone of Europe*.

The purpose of this document is to define the core goals and guiding principles that will serve as the professional and methodological basis for the further development of the Restoration Plan, as well as for the identification of potential and priority restoration sites and measures along the selected Danube section.

The core goals shall define the desired long-term target condition of riverine and floodplain ecosystems while the guiding principles shall focus on identifying synergies among different sectoral interests, minimizing potential conflicts, and developing solutions that generate multiple benefits (win-win approach).

Emphasis shall be placed on:

- improving natural hydromorphological processes and river–floodplain dynamics;
- strengthening connectivity between the river channel and floodplain areas;
- applying Nature-based Solutions (NbS) wherever feasible;
- aligning water management objectives, nature conservation goals, and navigation sector requirements, considering the importance of the Danube as an international waterway;

- defining a future space for river corridor development as a basis for long-term sustainable planning and implementation of restoration measures.

The Target Paper shall be presented and discussed at a meeting with the expert working group, followed by internal discussion and clarification if required, prior to its presentation at the stakeholder workshop.

Baseline reference documents and relevant project materials are listed in the Chapter 1.4.

2.1.3.1. Deliverables

- One Target Paper – Core Goals and Guiding Principles for Restoration for the defined pilot sections, prepared in English and translated into the respective local languages (HR and RS);
- Presentation materials prepared for the presentation of the Target Paper;

2.1.3.2. Timeline and Milestones

The timeline is indicative and may be adjusted in agreement with the Client depending on project progress and organisational requirements.

Milestone	Deliverable	Indicative timeline
Completion of Target Paper preparation	Target Paper – Core Goals and Guiding Principles for Restoration for defined pilot sections (EN, translated into HR and RS)	August - October 2026
Presentation and discussion with expert working group	Presentation of the Target Paper to the expert working group, including discussion and feedback	October 2026
Presentation at stakeholder workshop	Presentation of the Target Paper at the stakeholder workshop	October 2026

2.1.4. Task 4 – Restoration Plan development

Based on the preceding steps, the consultancy shall develop individual catalogues of measures for the selected pilot river section. This catalogue shall consist of the following components:

1. General Measures for the Pilot Sections

These are overarching, broadly applicable guidelines relevant to the entire river section (based on the specifications defined in the Target Paper). While not confined to specific sites, they must be considered in all future planning processes. They may include measures related to the preservation and optimisation of retention areas, securing areas within the “future corridor for river development”, river maintenance and management, sediment management, flood risk management (both structural and non-structural), research, and other cross-sectoral activities, including Nature-based Solutions (NbS).

2. Potential Sites for River Restoration

The consultancy shall identify specific sites with restoration potential based on the analysis of available data, field visits, defined general measures and previous project results.

For each identified site, the following aspects shall be defined:

- identified deficits and pressures;

- restoration objectives;
- need for action (e.g. reconnection of side channels, removal or adaptation of river regulation structures, improvement of lateral connectivity, relocation of dikes, etc.);
- relevant planning and spatial framework conditions;
- indicative types of restoration measures.

The objective of identifying potential sites is to improve the natural hydromorphological conditions and processes, sediment dynamics, and the overall ecological status of riverine and floodplain habitats of the Danube River.

Potential sites shall be spatially defined as indicative types of measures within the action plan, without detailed technical design. For each site, a summarized factsheet shall be prepared, enabling a clear overview and filtering according to the type of measure.

The hydromorphological condition of the pilot sections after the implementation of the planned measures shall be presented in a visual way through cartographically. The consultancy shall be responsible for the cartographic representation of the proposed measures and the target state.

All identified restoration sites, together with the collected data, shall be presented to the expert working group at a meeting and subsequently at the first stakeholder workshop, based on which priorities for further development within the Restoration Plan shall be defined. Large-scale maps covering the entire section and all proposed measures will be required to prepared for the stakeholders and expert workshop.

3. Priority Sites for River Restoration

Based on the general measures and the identified potential river restoration sites the priority sites for river restoration shall be defined.

Priority Sites shall be subject to a more detailed assessment, using, among others, planning modules from the INTERREG lifeline MDD River Restoration Toolbox.

For the mention pilot site, the consultancy shall prepare a preliminary concept of restoration measures, including a site plan and conceptual sketches based on the identified framework conditions (e.g. river width, sediment transport conditions, etc.).

For each designated priority site, a fact sheet should be prepared following the same structure and methodology used in the Restoration Plan developed under the LIFE Restore for MDD project.

The final Restoration Plan shall include at least the following elements for each Priority Site:

- description of the current state/conditions;
- description of the planned measure;
- cost estimation of the planned measure;
- description of the expected positive impacts;

- cartographic representation of the current and target state.

Where relevant, the consultancy may additionally provide graphical representations of the target state and indicative cross-sections.

The proposed measures shall be presented and discussed at meetings with the expert working group and presented at the second stakeholder workshop.

2.1.4.1. Deliverables

- Restoration Plan for the Danube section between Nature Park Kopački Rit and the Special Nature Reserve "Gornje Podunavlje", developed through an integrated and participatory planning approach, submitted in English. Translation into other languages is not part of the consultancy scope and will be ensured by the Client.
- The consultancy shall also prepare presentation materials required for communication and discussion of the Restoration Plan with the expert working group and stakeholders.
- Presentation of the restoration plan to the experts and stakeholders

2.1.4.2. Timeline and Milestones

The indicative timeline may be adjusted in agreement with the Client, depending on data availability, stakeholder consultation processes, and progress of the planning activities.

Milestone	Deliverable	Indicative timeline
Development of general and site-specific measures for the pilot sections.	Draft catalogue of general measures and indicative site-specific restoration measures for pilot section	August - November 2026
Identification of potential restoration sites within the Danube Restoration Plan area.	List and spatial definition of potential restoration sites, including indicative factsheets	August – November 2026
Presentation of potential sites at expert and stakeholder workshop	Presentation of identified potential restoration sites	December 2026
Identification and planning of priority restoration sites	Defined priority restoration sites and preliminary concepts of restoration measures	December 2026 – February 2027
Presentation of results to the expert working group and stakeholders	Presentation of results for review and discussion by experts and stakeholders	February – March 2027
Finalisation of the Restoration Plan.	Final Restoration Plan for the Danube section between NP Kopački Rit and SNR "Gornje Podunavlje", including detailed measures and supporting documentation	June 2027
Final presentation of the defined measures at the joint workshop	Presentation of results to experts and stakeholders at the final event	June 2027

*Note - The organisation of meetings with experts and stakeholders will be carried out by WWF Adria and its partners; sufficient resources have been allocated for this purpose, and the specific dates and

details will be jointly defined in accordance with participants' availability. These costs are covered by WWF Adria and its partners and should not be included in the contractor's budget.

It should be noted that additional meetings may be required during the course of the assignment, depending on project needs and stakeholder engagement. Any such meetings will be agreed in advance between WWF Adria and the contractor in terms of scope, timing, and level of participation. The contractor is expected to take this into account in their planning and ensure sufficient flexibility to accommodate potential additional coordination and consultation activities.

2.1.5. Task 5 – Expert Working Group and Participatory Process (Workshops and Meetings)

The development of the Restoration Plan shall be carried out through a participatory approach ensuring continuous communication and exchange between the consultancy, the Client (WWF Adria), project partners, the expert working group, and relevant stakeholders.

The objective of this task is to ensure technical validation of project outputs, facilitate knowledge exchange, and enable the involvement of relevant institutions and sectors in the restoration planning process, thereby ensuring understanding of and support for the proposed measures.

The expert working group shall include representatives of relevant institutions and experts from water management, nature conservation, hydrology, ecology, protected area management, and other relevant sectors. Its role is to review the results of individual planning phases, identify constraints and possible solutions, and provide expert guidance for the further development of the Restoration Plan.

Stakeholder workshops aim to present key outputs of the restoration planning process, enable exchange of views, and collect feedback from relevant actors, including representatives of competent authorities, protected area management bodies, water management institutions, nature conservation sector, local communities, and other relevant stakeholders.

Stakeholder workshops shall be organised in person, with activities planned to take place in both the Republic of Croatia and the Republic of Serbia, to ensure equal participation of all relevant stakeholders. The duration of the workshops is planned as one working day in Croatia and one working day in Serbia for each workshop. If deemed appropriate during the course of the assignment and subject to stakeholders' availability, joint meetings may also be organised to facilitate coordinated discussion and exchange.

The consultant shall actively participate in expert working group meetings and stakeholder workshops as a technical expert, present relevant outputs of their assignment, and provide technical explanations of the proposed measures. The consultant shall contribute to discussions and provide continuous technical support throughout the process and shall facilitate selected parts of meetings and workshops where appropriate.

WWF Adria, in cooperation with project partners, will lead the process of engagement of the expert working group and stakeholders. The organisation of meetings and workshops will be carried out in coordination between WWF Adria, project partners and the contractor, with additional meetings arranged as needed.

The working languages of the process shall primarily be Serbian and Croatian; however, English may be used where required.

All costs related to the consultancy's participation in meetings and workshops, including travel and accommodation shall be included in the total contract price (as lump sum).

2.1.5.1. Deliverables

- Presentation of the results of the collected and analysed baseline data, including baseline analysis findings, identified data gaps and existing limitations, to the expert working group, in the presence of the Client, for the purpose of defining further steps in the preparation of the Restoration Plan and identifying possible solutions related to missing data and identified constraints;
- Expert working group meeting held for the review and definition of the Target Paper – Core Goals and Guiding Principles for Restoration;
- Presentation of identified potential restoration sites to the expert working group for discussion and alignment on further steps in defining restoration priorities;
- Implementation of the first stakeholder workshop where the Target Paper and identified potential restoration sites are presented;
- One to two expert working group meetings conducted for the discussion and definition of priority restoration sites and proposed measures;
- Implementation of the final (second) stakeholder workshop where the finalized Restoration Plan is presented.

2.1.5.2. Timeline and Milestones

The indicative timeline may be adjusted in agreement with the Client, depending on data availability, stakeholder consultation processes, and progress of the planning activities.

Milestone	Deliverable	Indicative timeline
Presentation of baseline data analysis and discussion on data gaps with the expert working group	Presentation of baseline analysis results, including data gaps and constraints, to the expert working group in the presence of the Client, with agreement on further steps	August – September 2026
Expert working group meeting – definition of Target Paper and pilot section framework	Target Paper framework and key elements reviewed and agreed with the expert working group	October 2026
Stakeholder workshop (Croatia and Serbia) – presentation of Target Paper	Target Paper presented and discussed with stakeholders (one workshop day in Croatia and one in Serbia)	October 2026
Expert working group meeting – presentation of potential restoration sites	Potential restoration sites presented and discussed with the expert working group	December 2026
Stakeholder workshop (Croatia and Serbia) – potential restoration sites	Potential restoration sites presented and discussed with stakeholders (one workshop day in Croatia and one in Serbia)	December 2026

Expert working group meeting – discussion of results and priority setting	Presentation and discussion of results with the expert working group, including review and prioritisation of restoration sites and measures	February – March 2027
Presentation of results to the stakeholders	Presentation and discussion of results with the expert working group, including review and prioritisation of restoration sites and measures	February – March 2027
Final presentation of the defined measures at the joint workshop	Presentation of results to experts and stakeholders at the final event	June 2027
Additional expert working group meeting(s) (if required) – consultation on draft restoration measures	Consultation on priority measures and draft Restoration Plan elements	September 2026 – June 2027

*Note - The organisation of meetings with experts and stakeholders will be carried out by WWF Adria and its partners; sufficient resources have been allocated for this purpose, and the specific dates and details will be jointly defined in accordance with participants' availability. These costs are covered by WWF Adria and its partners and should not be included in the contractor's budget.

It should be noted that additional meetings may be required during the course of the assignment, depending on project needs and stakeholder engagement. Any such meetings will be agreed in advance between WWF Adria and the contractor in terms of scope, timing, and level of participation. The contractor is expected to take this into account in their planning and ensure sufficient flexibility to accommodate potential additional coordination and consultation activities.

2.1.6. General Requirements for Deliverables, Communication, Reporting and Visibility

The Consultant will work under the direct guidance and supervision of the Mura-Drava-Danube Biosphere Reserve Coordinator and Monitoring and Restauration Coordinator to whom will directly report and in full cooperation with and in collaboration with the rest of the Project team. The consultancy shall ensure regular and transparent communication with the Client throughout the duration of the contract. This includes participation in coordination meetings, consultations related to ongoing activities, as well as the presentation of intermediate and final results upon the Client's request. The exact number and format of such presentations and meetings shall be defined during the implementation of the contract. In the event that the agreed number of presentations or meetings is not delivered, the Client reserves the right to proportionally reduce the contract value."

The consultancy shall ensure effective internal coordination, continuous monitoring of progress against defined timelines and key milestones, and the implementation of quality assurance procedures to ensure the timely delivery of high-quality outputs. The consultancy shall proactively manage risks and ensure sufficient flexibility to adapt to unforeseen circumstances, while remaining compliant with the agreed scope of work, budget, and deadlines. The consultant will provide a detailed time schedule for the tasks (with activities clearly visible per month).

All deliverables shall be prepared in accordance with the visual identity of the Project. Templates and visibility requirements will be provided by the Client. Deliverables shall be submitted in editable (Word) and final (PDF) formats and other requested formats.

All outputs shall be clearly structured and prepared in English. Translation of produced documents into Croatian and Serbian, where required, is not part of the consultancy scope and will be ensured by the Client.

2.2. Consultancies Qualification

2.2.1. Participation as a Consortium:

Bidders are permitted to submit an offer as a consortium. In such cases, the consortium members must designate one party as the lead partner, authorized to represent the consortium towards the contracting authority. The consortium must submit a declaration signed by all members, confirming their joint liability for the performance of the contract. The contracting authority reserves the right to demand additional proof of the consortium's capacity to deliver the services and may require clarification regarding the division of responsibilities among members.

The consortium's composition may not be altered during the evaluation period or the execution of the contract without the prior to written consent of the Client (WWF Adria).

2.3.2. Personnel qualifications

The qualifications of the personnel who will be working on the project can be distributed among multiple individuals. However, they should be covered by the project team (except for additional qualifications). A CV must be included in the proposal for each person involved in the project, along with the specifically required proof of individual expertise.

Basic requirements for all staff:

- Degree, diploma, or vocational training.
- Proficiency in English (C1).
- Willingness and possibility to travel to HR and SRB.
- The ability and experience to work collaboratively with a diverse team of experts and stakeholders in a diverse and international environment is essential.

Project Manager (Lead Partner; if bidding consortium applies)

The consultants' Project manager should have:

- Minimum a master's degree/diploma in Ecology, Hydrology, Environmental Engineering, Water Management, Civil Engineering (with a focus on river or water infrastructure and/or landscape/river restoration), or related disciplines.
- Additional certifications in ecological restoration, water engineering, or environmental management are an asset.
- Proven work experience (at least 10 years) as project manager, preferably with references from comparable projects, consulting in the field of river engineering, hydrology, restoration, conservation, ecosystem management, or related areas.
- Minimum 10 years of relevant technical work experience.

- Proven ability to develop guidance materials.
- Strong interpersonal and communication skills to build effective relationships with stakeholders.
- Fluency in English (C1 or comparable evidence) - written and spoken.
- Capability to manage projects, meet deadlines, and deliver high-quality results in a timely manner.
- Strong troubleshooting and diagnostic skills.
- Commitment to timely delivery of tasks and responsibilities.

Technical Expert on River Restoration:

(the project manager can also be a technical expert if proven)

- Minimum a master's degree/diploma in Hydrology, Ecology, Water Management, Civil Engineering (with a focus on river or water infrastructure and/or landscape/river restoration), or related disciplines.
- Additional certifications in ecological restoration, water engineering, or environmental management are an asset.
- Minimum 3 years of relevant technical work experience, preferably with references from comparable projects.
- Knowledge of river morphology, hydrology, sediment management, and ecological processes.
- Familiarity with nature-based solutions and restoration techniques, such as: River bed widening; Bank stabilization with bioengineering methods; Re-meandering, side arm and floodplain reconnection; Dyke reallocation; In-stream habitat improvement (e.g., large woody debris, gravel bed improvements).
- Ability to interpret technical designs, maps, hydrological models, and ecological assessments.
- Fluency in English (C1 or comparable evidence) - written and spoken.
- Excellent documentation skills.
- Strong writing and reporting skills to produce clear and concise deliverables in English.
- Proficiency in additional relevant languages (e.g., Croatian, Serbian) is considered an asset.
- If staff do not possess such language skills, proof of a reliable translation solution must be provided (technical documents might only be available in local language).
- Ability to identify technical issues and propose effective solutions.
- Commitment to timely delivery of tasks and responsibilities.

Technical Expert on GIS-Data processing:

(the project manager can also be a technical expert if proven)

- Minimum a master's degree/diploma in Geoinformation or Environment, Environmental Engineering, Civil Engineering (with a focus on river or water infrastructure), Landscape architect, Geomorphologist, or related disciplines.
- Additional certifications in GIS-analysis, ecological restoration, water engineering, or environmental management are an asset.
- Minimum 3 years of relevant technical work experience, preferably with references from comparable projects.
- Ability to create technical designs, maps, hydrological models, and ecological assessments.
- Knowledge of river morphology, hydrology, sediment management, and ecological processes.
- Fluency in English (C1 or comparable evidence) - written and spoken.
- Excellent documentation skills.
- Strong writing and reporting skills to produce clear and concise deliverables in English.
- Proficiency in additional relevant languages (e.g., Croatian, Hungarian, Serbian, Slovene) is considered an asset.
- If staff do not possess such language skills, proof of a reliable translation solution must be provided.
- Ability to identify technical issues and propose effective solutions.
- Commitment to timely delivery of tasks and responsibilities.

Additional team qualification:

- Staff with proficiency in Croatian and Serbian is considered an asset
- Familiarity with the local river system, ecological context, and regional environmental practices is advantageous.
- Proven experience in the field of (floodplain river and forest) ecology, preferably with references from comparable projects.
- Proven experience in restoration planning in a transboundary context.
- Familiarity with national/local water management and conservation laws.
- Risk management competence in water environments (e.g., flood risk, working near or in water).
- Proven ability to develop guidance materials.
- Strong interpersonal and communication skills to build effective relationships with stakeholders.
- Demonstrated knowledge and experience on international level and global standards for river restoration.
- Familiarity with workshop settings, participatory processes and discussion.
- Understanding of environmental protection regulations, including water protection, species conservation, and sediment management.

Key Regulations and Considerations for a Bidding Consortium:

No Subsequent Alterations without written Approval: The composition of the consortium should not be changed during the procurement process or the contract performance period without prior approval.

- *Joint and Several Liability:* Consortium members should typically accept joint and several liability for the performance of the contract. This ensures the contracting authority can hold any member liable if the others fail to perform.
- *Designation of a Lead Partner:* One member should be designated as the lead or representative partner, acting as the point of contact for the contracting authority.
- *Proof of Capacity and Resources: The* consortium should demonstrate its collective capacity to fulfil the contract (e.g., combined financial standing, technical competence, and experience).
- *Commitment Declaration:* Members must submit a joint declaration confirming their commitment to executing the contract together.
- *No Subsequent Alterations without Approval:* The composition of the consortium should not be changed during the procurement process or the contract performance period without prior approval.
- *Compliance with Eligibility and Selection Criteria:* The consortium should collectively meet the eligibility, suitability, and selection criteria. Individual members may contribute differently to fulfilling these requirements.
- *Documentation Requirements:* Provide a power of attorney or consortium agreement outlining internal arrangements, responsibilities, and decision-making processes.
- Each member must individually be in compliance with all tax and legal obligations (e.g., free of outstanding liabilities to the state)

3. APPLICATION

3.1. Documents

The application must include:

1. **Cover letter** outlining clearly how the candidate meets the requirements via at least 2 reference projects;

2. **Detailed CV of the project manager** including evidence of work experience and links to similar projects the manager has worked on (not older than 5 years) a police clearance certificate (not older than 6 months)

3. **Detailed CV of all additional staff** including evidence of work experience and links to similar projects the respective staff has worked on (not older than 5 years)

4. **Demonstration of capacity to fulfil the contract** (in case of a bidding consortium at least the lead partner needs to include the following documents):

- by showcasing 3-5 reference projects that had been conducted by the applicant and/or the bidding consortium (one page each, not older than 5 years);
- by including actual evidence of business authorization (Civil Engineer (Licensed or Chartered Engineer, Engineering Office or Engineering Consultancy);
- by including evidence of their financial reliability and creditworthiness (credit report or creditworthiness information, not older than 6 months);
- by including a Company Register Excerpt/Extract from the commercial register.

5. **Technical proposal**;

6. **Plan that outlines the allocation of personnel** for specific tasks; including minimum the necessary staff;

7. **Timetable** according set dates/timeframes;

8. **Financial proposal** (the breakdown should include all applicable taxes and clearly outline the proposed terms of payment; all calculations must be provided in EURO. The quoted prices will be considered final and non-negotiable).

9. **Additional administrative and supporting documents** (to be submitted as part of the application or upon request by the Contracting Authority):

- Partner's Registration Certificate
- Certificate of impunity for legal representative
- Confirmation of whether the business entity is liable for VAT
- Certificate of settlement of liabilities from the tax administration (paid taxes and contributions)
- Latest annual financial statement
- Closed or Pending Legal Processes list

In case of a bidding consortium, the parties need to include additionally:

- Designation of a lead partner or representative partner, acting as the point of contact for the contracting authority.
- Proof of Capacity and Resources: The consortium should demonstrate its collective capacity to fulfil the contract (e.g., combined financial standing, technical competence, and experience).
- Commitment Declaration: Members must submit a joint declaration confirming their commitment to executing the contract together.

The application/offer need to be legally signed by the bidding parties.

The Client reserves the right to request additional documentation for due diligence purposes following the selection of the preferred candidate.

3.2. Application Process

Expressions of interest should be submitted electronically. Interested applicants are requested to submit the following documents to the following addresses:

Contact:

Marina Petrić – mgrgic@wwfadria.org

Anja Lasić – alasic@wwfadria.org

Any additional information regarding services can be obtained by email to the contact persons.

Deadlines for the submission

The deadline for the submission of the proposal is 19th July 2026 by the end of the day. Offers submitted after the defined deadline will not be considered in the evaluation process.

3.3. Regulations

In the course of the assessment, the calculation basis may be requested. The customer reserves the right to request detailed service description in order to clarify the content of the offer.

The lump sum offered in the specification is classified as fixed prices as stated in the future contract. **It cannot be renegotiated. The mentioned price is to be seen as fixed priced, and includes all expenses** (travel costs, daily allowances, etc.) plus VAT where applicable.

The contract comes about when the bidder gets notified that their offer was accepted.

3.4. Evaluation model

The winning bid will be the one that presents the most robust technical offer, supported by the most advanced analysis, and the financial offer with the best price/quality ratio. The tender is based on the principle “best-value-for-money” and must correspond to current market prices.

The evaluation of the offer will be done according to the following criteria:

- Consultants' qualifications (35%);
- Quality of the technical bid (35%);
- Amount of financial bid (25%)
- Bonus points (5%) as indicated below.

Why this Ratio?

- Qualifications (35%) – Ensures experienced, skilled professionals are handling the work. WWF Adria need to ensure that the project task will be implemented by the right expertise and proven experience.
- Technical Quality (35%) – Evaluation of how well the bidder understands the requirements and proposes effective solutions. WWF Adria need to ensure to prioritize the quality and approach of the proposed solution.

- Price (25%) – Evaluation of the financial offer, ensuring it provides the best value for money while aligning with the project's budget constraints.
- Additional Benefits (5%) – Allows flexibility to reward added value (e.g., extended support, innovative solutions, language skills).

3.5. Exclusion criteria

Suppliers will be excluded from taking part in a procurement procedure if they or persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control over them:

1. have a conflict of interests, real or perceived, that may affect, or may be perceived to affect, them in the execution of their responsibilities under the proposed contract;

2. are not registered on the professional or trade register of the State in which they are established;

3. have been convicted of failing to comply with environmental regulatory requirements or other legal requirements relating to sustainability and environmental protection;

4. are bankrupt or being wound up, are having their affairs administered by the courts, have entered into an arrangement with creditors, have suspended business activities, are the subject of proceedings concerning those matters, or are in any analogous situation arising from a similar procedure provided for in national legislation or regulations;

5. have been convicted of an offence concerning their professional conduct by a judgment of a competent authority which has the force of res judicata;

6. have been guilty of grave professional misconduct;

7. are not in compliance with their obligations relating to the payment of social security contributions or the payment of taxes in accordance with the legal provisions of the country in which they are established or with those of Switzerland or those of the country where the contract is to be performed;

8. have been the subject of a judgment which has the force of res judicata for fraud, corruption, involvement in a criminal organisation, money laundering or any other illegal activity.

The Contractor furthermore confirms to have read and understood the WWF's Ethics and Compliance Framework and commits to act in a way consistent with these guidelines. The contractor will not engage in discriminatory, fraudulent or corrupt acts and ensures to follow the WWF's values compliance and ethics in every sense.

3.6. Calculation Draft and Payment Method and Contractor's Obligations

The following table is a minimum template that should be adapted to the respective offer in detail and submitted via an Excel-table (and/or PDF). "Units" should be described explicitly and, if shown as a lump sum, explained additionally.

N°	Task	Unit	Amount	Costs
1	**Baseline data collection and analysis**			
2	**Field visits**			

3	**Development of the Target Paper – Core Goals and Guiding Principles for Restora-tion**			
4	**Restoration Plan development**			
5	**Workshops for the stakeholdera and expert working group**			
	Travel costs, accommodation and daily allowances (lump sum)			
	Total amount excl. VAT			
	VAT			
	Total amount incl. VAT			

The client has allocated funds for the provision of services within Restoring the Amazon of Europe: Reconnecting Riverine Habitats in the First five-country UNESCO Biosphere Reserve project, financed by the Endangered Landscapes and Seascapes Programme.

The selected contractor shall be required to provide a blank promissory note ("bjanko zadužnica") as a form of financial security upon signing the contract.

A financial calculation of the completed service, prepared as a cost estimate, must be provided along with the performed service. The contractor must specify the cost breakdown in the financial calcula-tion.

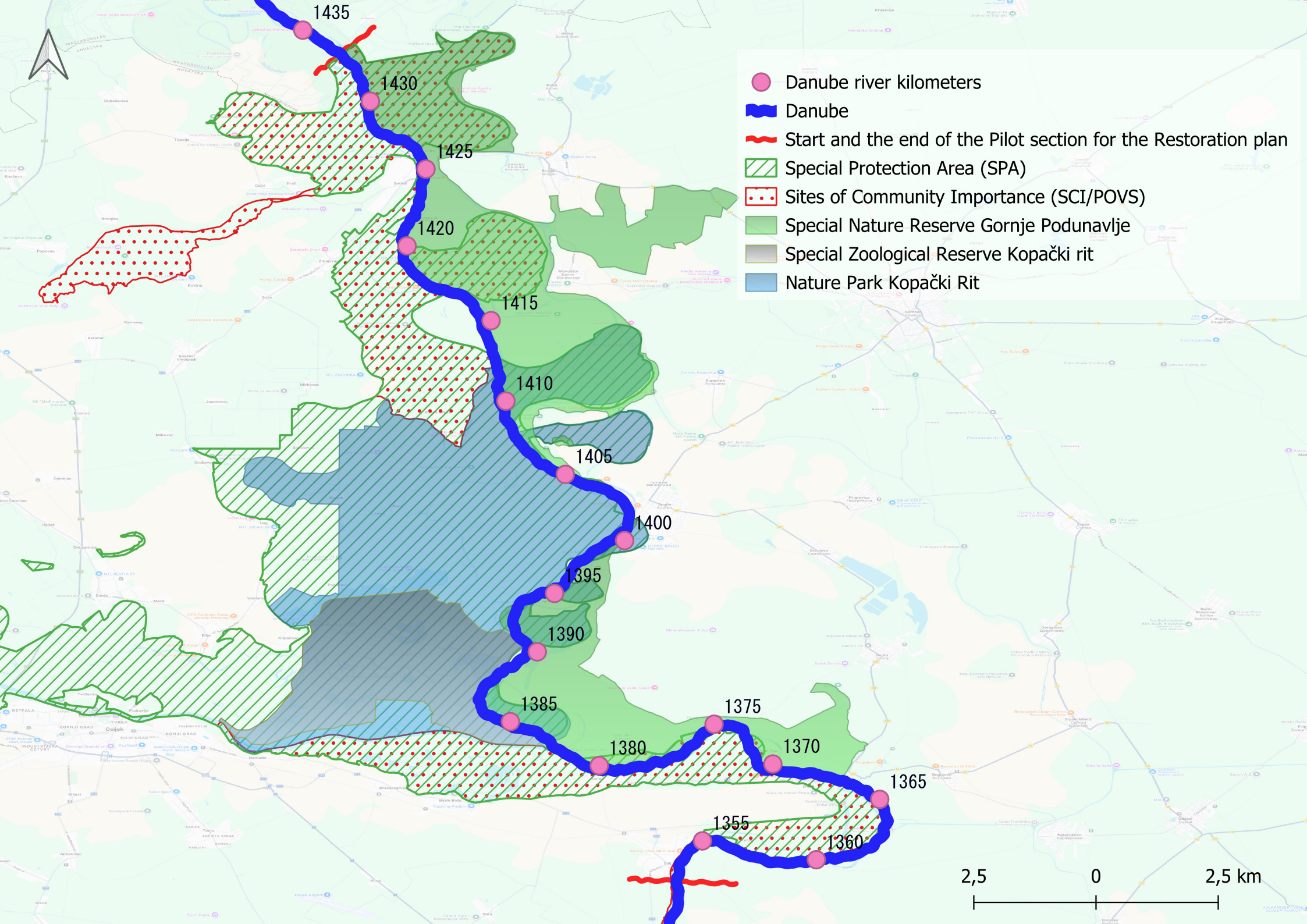
Invoice should be prepared after the submission of final versions of each report. Payment will be made by the client within 30 days of the official receipt of the invoice.

The contractor is required to include a report on the work carried out during the invoiced period as supporting documentation for the invoice.

Payment will be made according to the following payment schedule:

- 10% upon signing the contract
- 20% after the first conducted fieldwork for collecting data
- 30% after the approval of the potential restoration sites
- 20% after conducted stakeholder workshop for the prioritisation of the restoration sites
- 20% after approval by WWF Adria of the final Restoration plan for the Danube section

The contractor must ensure the availability of experts during the preparation of the reports.


1435
1430
1425
1420
1415
1410
1405
1400
1395
1390
1385
1380
1375
1370
1365
1360
1355
Danube river kilometers
Danube
Start and the end of the Pilot section for the Restoration plan
Special Protection Area (SPA)
Sites of Community Importance (SCI/POVS)
Special Nature Reserve Gornje Podunavlje
Special Zoological Reserve Kopački rit
Nature Park Kopački Rit
2,5
0
2,5 km