

# Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel

The Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel, administered by UNEP, advises the Global Environment Facility  
(Version 5)

## STAP Scientific and Technical screening of the Project Identification Form (PIF)

Date of screening: February 25, 2011

Screener: Thomas Hammond

Panel member validation by: Sandra Diaz  
Consultant(s):

### I. PIF Information *(Copied from the PIF)*

**FULL SIZE PROJECT GEF TRUST FUND**

**GEF PROJECT ID:** 4356

**PROJECT DURATION :** 5

**COUNTRIES :** China

**PROJECT TITLE:** Securing Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Use in China's Dongting Lake Protected Area

**GEF AGENCIES:** FAO

**OTHER EXECUTING PARTNERS:** Forestry Department of Hunan Province

**GEF FOCAL AREA:** Biodiversity

### II. STAP Advisory Response *(see table below for explanation)*

Based on this PIF screening, STAP's advisory response to the GEF Secretariat and GEF Agency(ies):  
**Minor revision required**

### III. Further guidance from STAP

1. STAP welcomes the project proposed by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) to maintain and restore biodiversity in Dongting Lake, China. This area has been recognized by the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands as one of the most important wetland areas for conservation in China, in addition to being an area of both regional and global importance. There are a total of three listed Ramsar sites in the Dongting Lake basin, which correspond to 3 of the 4 protected areas noted in this project description.

2. The national government has undertaken significant efforts to address the multiple use resource pressures in Dongting Lake and the wetlands and other areas surrounding the lake, as well as in tackling the impacts of point and non-point sources of pollution. The government of China has undertaken large scale reforestation and habitat restoration in the upper reaches of Yangtze River to reduce siltation and effective measures to control water pollution in the Dongting Basin, in addition to many actions to directly conserve biodiversity in the lake. STAP notes the positive results of these efforts as well as the previous GEF project in this area led by UNDP in partnership with Wetlands International, the Provincial Forestry Department, and numerous other stakeholders. Clearly, however, numerous resource management challenges and pollution issues remain.

3. While supportive of this initiative, STAP would like to stress the linkage between the proposed project and the completed UNDP/GEF China Wetlands Project. In reviewing the results of this project, it would appear that significant strides were made to build capacity amongst Government agencies at local levels to take into account wetland biodiversity conservation in decision making and policy "in effect" "mainstreaming" biodiversity into planning efforts. This is an important enabling condition for the proposed FAO project to directly improve the effectiveness of protected areas in Dongting, and address broader resource management challenges. STAP wishes to stress that this project should ensure that it builds on and consolidates these results from the previous GEF supported project in Dongting Lake. STAP notes that the ground work for a number of proposed results, such as "strengthening and operationalizing the provincial wetlands coordination committee" was established in the previous UNDP/GEF project noted in the proposal.

4. Overall, STAP believes that the project as currently described is well designed, and appears to address the primary pressures and drivers affecting biodiversity and effective resource management in the Dongting Lake basin. However, STAP wishes to propose a number of areas for specific consideration and development in the final project design. Currently, the PIF does not adequately outline how the threats to biodiversity in the region (which are well described) will be adequately addressed by the actions proposed.

Components 2 and 3 in Table B directly address some of these threats, and Components 1 and 4 are represent important enabling conditions, however given the complex and widespread nature of the problems described across sectors these efforts may not be enough.

5. From the information provided, it would appear that the problems in Dongting can ultimately only be resolved with all sectors the local government fully engaged in this effort. STAP suggests, therefore, that the future Project Document should clearly define the expected responsibilities of the project proponent and government counterparts.

6. Support for protected areas represents a key proposed undertaking in this project. However, in STAP's view the current project description does not yet adequately stress the improvement of PA management effectiveness, nor does it adequately describe the expected benefits (or possible impacts) of improved management of protected areas on local communities or livelihoods. In addition, addressing the challenge of sustainable financing of PAs is not adequately mentioned. STAP proposes that an approach which explicitly develops valuation (monetary or non-monetary) of ecosystem services as a possible strategy for long term sustainable management of the Lake and wetlands should be explored. While this is noted in the description, there is insufficient information to make an assessment in this regard.

7. The expected increase of 150 to 250 species (all taxa?) from interventions over the life of the project seems overly ambitious and may need to be reassessed. In addition, STAP would recommend that the project proponent ensure that data collected from these assessments be accessible to other research endeavors, and therefore be deposited in accessible and stable on-line repositories.

8. It is not clear how the proposed interventions will effectively tackle the issues of over harvesting of fish or precisely how the project will support the closure of paper mills, and address socio-economic problems which may ensue as a result. Activities by local farmers and fishermen are identified as major threats to diversity. These stakeholders are mentioned repeatedly, but there is no mention of how they will be engaged in the process.

9. It is not clear why the risk resulting from climate change is identified as low. The argument is mostly about how effective management of the wetland area will increase its resilience against climate change. However, given that extreme events "are projected to continue or increase under most future climate change scenarios and will likely adversely impact the DWE and component habitats and biodiversity that it supports as well as the livelihoods of community who depend on its resources" it is not clear why it has been identified as " low". This issue merits further consideration.

10. Lastly, the stakeholder section has listed many government agencies, and STAP would agree that collaboration with these agencies is important for project success. However, STAP notes that no civil society organizations or research institutes have been identified.

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#### STAP advisory response explanation

##### 1. Consent.

STAP acknowledges that on scientific/technical grounds the concept has merit. However, STAP may state its views on the concept emphasising any issues that could be improved and the proponent is invited to approach STAP for advice at any time during the development of the project brief prior to submission for CEO endorsement.

##### 2. Minor revision required.

STAP has identified specific scientific/technical suggestions or opportunities that should be discussed with the proponent as early as possible during development of the project brief. One or more options that remain open to STAP include:

(i) Opening a dialogue between STAP and the proponent to clarify issues

(ii) Setting a review point during early stage project development and agreeing terms of reference for an independent expert to be appointed to conduct this review. The proponent should provide a report of the action agreed and taken, at the time of submission of the full project brief for CEO endorsement.

##### 3. Major revision required.

STAP proposes significant improvements or has concerns on the grounds of specified major scientific/technical omissions in the concept. If STAP provides this advisory response, a full explanation would also be provided. Normally, a STAP approved review will be mandatory prior to submission of the

project brief for CEO endorsement. The proponent should provide a report of the action agreed and taken, at the time of submission of the full project brief for CEO endorsement.

<i>STAP advisory response</i>	<i>Brief explanation of advisory response and action proposed</i>
1. <b>Consent</b>	STAP acknowledges that on scientific/technical grounds the concept has merit. However, STAP may state its views on the concept emphasising any issues that could be improved and the proponent is invited to approach STAP for advice at any time during the development of the project brief prior to submission for CEO endorsement.
2. <b>Minor revision required.</b>	STAP has identified specific scientific/technical suggestions or opportunities that should be discussed with the proponent as early as possible during development of the project brief. One or more options that remain open to STAP include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) Opening a dialogue between STAP and the proponent to clarify issues</li> <li>(ii) Setting a review point during early stage project development and agreeing terms of reference for an independent expert to be appointed to conduct this review</li> </ul> The proponent should provide a report of the action agreed and taken, at the time of submission of the full project brief for CEO endorsement.
3. <b>Major revision required</b>	STAP proposes significant improvements or has concerns on the grounds of specified major scientific/technical omissions in the concept. If STAP provides this advisory response, a full explanation would also be provided. Normally, a STAP approved review will be mandatory prior to submission of the project brief for CEO endorsement. The proponent should provide a report of the action agreed and taken, at the time of submission of the full project brief for CEO endorsement.