

# Prespa Fastfacts



## MATTERS OF FACT

Prespa is a high-altitude basin at approximately **850** meters above sea level, which includes two inter-linked lakes, Micro Prespa **47.4 km<sup>2</sup>** and Macro Prespa **259.4 km<sup>2</sup>**. The lakes, along with the surrounding forested mountain slopes of Pelister mt **2,601 m**, Galichitsa mt, Mali i Thate mt, Varnountas mt and Triklario mt (Sfika) form a total catchment basin of **1,386 km<sup>2</sup>**. There are four islands in the lakes: Aghios Achillios and Vidronissi at the Greek part of

Micro Prespa and Mali Grad and Golem Grad in Macro Prespa in Albania and FYR of Macedonia respectively. A total of around **24,000** inhabitants live in sixty-eight villages in all three countries. The biggest settlement is the town of Resen, FYR of Macedonia, with approximately **15,000** inhabitants.

A unique biotope diversity is found in Prespa, owing to a combination of factors, that include its climate, geology (two types of underlying bedrock, granite and limestone), the lakes and the impact of human activities. Vegetation coverage in the area starts from the level of the lakes, **853m**, and gradually reaches the high mountain peaks at over **2000m**.



Photo: One of the many local non-governmental organizations benefitting from the GEF small grants programme in Prespa.

## Prespa Lakes Basin

The ecosystems within the Prespa Lakes Basin are of global significance and harbour a multitude of floral and faunal species. The Basin is a shelter for over 90 species of migratory birds, while the Prespa lakes are also home to tens of species that have been officially registered as critically endangered or vulnerable. Among them is the Dalmatian Pelican, one of the largest flying birds in the world.

Despite the contribution of a range of services to human wellbeing, these ecosystems are facing numerous challenges, stemming from the existing productive practices in many areas that directly or indirectly affect the lakes. Although the Prespa Basin is declared as symbolic trans-boundary "Park," it is in fact very much a productive landscape, where people live and work and impact the ecosystem around them. The preservation of this unique ecosystem and its biodiversity requires integrated and sustainable development planning that will restore and maintain the balance between a healthy ecosystem and the livelihoods of the people living on its shores.

## Integrated ecosystem management in the Prespa Lakes Basin of Albania, FYR Macedonia and Greece

Since 2006 the GEF-UNDP regional project, run in partnership with the Governments of Albania, FYR Macedonia and Greece has been responding to the pressures on the ecosystems within the Prespa Lakes Basin. Activities have included, the adoption of integrated ecosystem management in the Prespa Lakes Basin to conserve biodiversity, the mitigation of pollution in the trans-boundary lakes, and the development of a sustainable basis for the basin's further social and economic development.

The project works on the transboundary and national levels with interventions in infrastructure and technical capacity building. This includes the promotion of good agricultural practices that reduce the stress on ecosystems (the reduction of pesticide and fertilizers use, the use of agro-meteorological stations, training and manuals); improvement of the management of protected areas; restoration of local riverbeds; as well as the promotion of sustainable tourism.

The project is working towards the following goals: the development of

Local Environmental Action Plans for Liqenas and Proger Communes; the establishment of the Prespa Park Coordination Committee (PPCC) as a formal, international trilateral institution under international law, the mainstreaming of ecosystem health priorities into productive sector law and regulatory instruments; the building of local capacity in the areas of water and watershed management; the reduction of environmental impacts from productive sectors, the strengthening of civil society partners for ecosystem-oriented fishery, forestry and watershed management.

### GEF Small Grants Programme

Fostering sustainable and economically sound development, the GEF small grants programme has been enhancing livelihoods by supporting non-governmental organization and community-based organizations in recognition of the key role they play as a resource and constituency for environmental and development concerns. To date, Small Grants have funded a broad spectrum of project in the Prespa region. These include, sage cultivation, protecting a rare breed of cow, a geothermal greenhouse project and some small-scale eco-tourism, among many others.

### Upcoming activities

2 additional agrometeorological stations are to be established soon in the Prespa area to further the scope of agricultural prognosis and signalization. Technical assistance to the Organization of Fishery Management (OFM) will continue through the implementation of the Fishery Management Plan. Capacity building support will also be extended to the agriculture and forestry management sectors.



Photo: An agrometeorological station in Proger.

An intensive communication, education and public awareness strategy will be implemented. This will include the production and broadcast of environmental programmes within the Prespa area and the development of educational tools for the local community.

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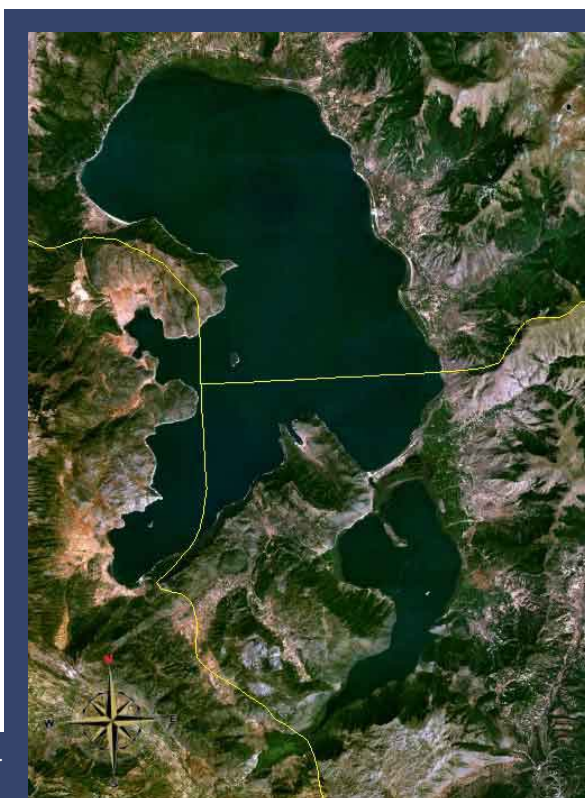


Photo: Prespa Lakes Basin.

Organization for Fishery Management (OFM) established.

Equipment and capacity building training provided to OFM in area of fishing management.

Agrometeorological station in Proger (Prespa area) installed to facilitate agricultural prognosis and signalization.

Workshop to strengthen the capacity of the Department of Fisheries conducted in Korca to facilitate community based management.

Improved waste management systems established in Prespa and Liqenas.

Local Environmental Action Plans for Prespa approved by Liqenas and Proger Communes.

Prespa agribusiness fair organized and conducted in Korça.

Web site for Liqenas and Proger commune developed and operational.