



# Prespa Ohrid Nature Trust Profile and Role

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## Overview

The Prespa lakes and the wider region around them, located in the South West Balkans and spreading between Albania, Greece and the FYR of Macedonia, have been frequently recognized for their high ecological, cultural and historical value. This ecoregion encompasses four National Parks (NPs) and environmental designations on European and international level, including three Ramsar Sites and a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve.

The effective conservation of biodiversity in the subject ecoregion depends on a series of factors, such as political leadership and commitment, international collaboration, adequate knowledge base, sound management, and sufficient funding.

The need for funding continuity that will contribute to a more effective conservation framework, led the decision of MAVA, a Swiss foundation with interest in Prespa, and KfW a German development Bank, to fund the creation of Prespa Ohrid Nature Trust (PONT), a conservation trust fund. In this framework, WWF Greece evaluated the feasibility of PONT in 2014, and is now working towards the establishment of the initiative.

## Mission

The mission of PONT is to ***provide long term financing for the conservation and sustainable management of biological diversity, natural processes and ecosystem services in Prespa and its wider area for the benefit of nature and people in the region.***

The PONT mission aims to respond to the needs identified within and beyond the studied region, still allowing for a potential programmatic and geographic expansion of focus in the future.

## Role

PONT is a private, legally independent grant-making institution, designed to provide sustainable financing to meet its mission. PONT is neither a government-affiliated agency nor an implementing agency. Its role is to raise and manage funds for the allocation of conservation grants supported by a rigorous monitoring and evaluation program, as well as to leverage political commitment and funding towards the achievement of its mission.

The funding priority of PONT is to complement the needs of Protected Areas (PAs) and NGOs with conservation focus in its geographic scope. Thus, PONT will implement its mission through two main grant programs: (1) co-financing the work of conservation NGOs and (2) co-financing operational costs of PAs. The beneficiaries of PONT for the initial phase are PA management authorities and NGOs working on conservation in the identified region. In line with the ecoregional approach of its mission, PONT is to also promote transboundary cooperation.

## Objectives

Considering its mission and role, PONT seeks to:

- Invest and raise funds aiming to generate complementary funding and provide long-term financial support to conservation initiatives.
- Co-finance key conservation actions, as a solid partner providing funding continuity for its beneficiaries, thereby contributing to long-term conservation objectives.
- Incite regional stakeholders and conservation actors to improve the quality and efficiency of management and to use the provided co-funding to reach the optimal impact on biodiversity conservation. This increases also their chances of receiving funding in the future.
- Promote transboundary cooperation and a collective eco-regional approach.
- Raise public environmental awareness and community engagement.
- Engage with governments to leverage funding and political commitments towards conservation.

## Geographic and thematic priorities

During the first years of its operation, the funding focus of PONT is in the area that includes the Prespa catchment basin across the three countries and the entire area of the neighboring NPs Pelister and Galicica in FYR of Macedonia.<sup>1</sup> This area, covers the significant biodiversity features of the Prespa catchment and its surroundings, considering the terrestrial ecosystems and/or habitat boundaries.

The funded projects by PONT should respond to priority conservation needs, threats and their possible socioeconomic and institutional root causes. Thematic priorities and specific funding criteria are to be developed at the very beginning of PONT's work.

Consistent with its charter, the Board of Directors may, subject to the voting rules contained in the by-laws, broaden the programmatic and geographic focus of PONT, always confirming that such change is supported by a conservation-based rationale and adequate financial means.

## Auditing, Monitoring and Evaluation

PONT will work as an exemplary financing organization of good governance delivering its mission by integrating such principles in its operation. The disbursement of PONT funds will be governed by preconditions clearly defined in its articles and by-laws. The allocation of PONT funds will be supported by financial and technical audits and their impact will be monitored.

## Contact:

If you are interested to learn more about the progress of PONT, you may contact the program coordinator, Ms Panagiota Kaltsa by emailing: [p.kaltsa@wwf.gr](mailto:p.kaltsa@wwf.gr)