

# 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: April 12, 2012

Screeener: 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:** 4768

**PROJECT DURATION :** 4

**COUNTRIES :** Argentina

**PROJECT TITLE:** Strengthening of Governance for the Protection of Biodiversity through the Formulation and Implementation of the National Strategy on Invasive Alien Species (NSIAS).

**GEF AGENCIES:** FAO

**OTHER EXECUTING PARTNERS:**

**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

Addressing the impacts of invasive alien species (IAS), both current and future, represents a key component of any national strategy to conserve biodiversity and ecosystem services, and STAP therefore welcomes this initiative to develop and implement an invasive species strategy in Argentina.

The project objectives and expected results as described respond well to the CBD strategic plan and GEF biodiversity focal area strategy. STAP also welcomes the effort to coordinate IAS management efforts on a regional basis, which will assist in addressing important pathways for invasive species and improve management efficiencies. The integration of the existing abundant but scattered information on IAS in the country into systematic "white" and "black" lists represents an important added value of the project.

The description of impacts, proposed strategy, and institutional arrangements to address the issue of the North American beaver (*Castor canadensis*) in Tierra del Fuego province is also well detailed and referenced. However, STAP believes there are a number of shortcomings in the current description of the project which could be taken into account in final project design.

With respect to baseline, the document does not clearly describe or quantify the current impact to biodiversity and ecosystem services from invasive species or expected benefits which would flow from the development of the IAS Strategy and management interventions " with the exception of the example noted above. This is also true for the assessment of global environmental benefits. The existence of IAS impact and/or risk assessment studies is noted. A list of invasive species with respect to this initiative is provided in Annex 1, which tends to be biased towards the eastern (wetter) areas of the country. However, no reference to species-specific or comprehensive impact studies apart from the *Castor canadensis* example are provided. Consideration of the scientific justification for the project is difficult without this analysis. In addition, a thorough examination of threats and impacts from invasive species to biodiversity and ecosystem services is an important prerequisite to the development and delivery any successful IAS strategy at national level.

A key component of the project's ability to deliver quantifiable global benefits is inter-agency coordination across sectors and from local to regional as outlined in the document " an approach which draws on lessons in IAS management from other countries and regions where similar strategies have achieved some success. While STAP concurs with this approach, the PIF is unclear on how this coordination will be undertaken or achieved. Experience from other countries would suggest that successful inter-agency cooperation in IAS management is often dependant on

a clear mandate from the most senior levels of government. STAP believes that the risk of failure in coordination of effort across government (and thereby to the delivery of global benefits) is under estimated in section B4 and requires greater clarification.

With the exception of a notation in section B.4, STAP believes that the project does not sufficiently indicate or take into consideration the likely impacts of climate change to future IAS risks and impacts. Current best practice recommends that coordinated efforts at national level to address invasive species be fully integrated with national strategies for climate adaptation or assessing/mitigating climate risk (Pyke et al, 2008).

The project as described at present would appear to focus efforts in terrestrial ecosystems – although it is noted that there is mention of freshwater ecosystems. Given the very different IAS detection and management challenges which exist across terrestrial, freshwater, and marine environments, STAP requests greater clarity whether marine ecosystems are facing threats from IAS and the extent to which such ecosystems in particular will be addressed in this project.

Given the focus on inter-agency cooperation, both within and exterior to Argentina, STAP believes that insufficient attention in the current outline has been given to IAS data collection and information management (component 5 of the project appears to address standard project M&E). Effective data collection, management, and sharing of these assets is essential to quantify the current impacts from invasive species and track changes over time, improve management efficiencies, and help raise awareness – as well as in supporting effective risk assessment and addressing potential IAS threats before they are established. This would be a potentially important contribution from the scientific community in Argentina.

There is an unbalance between the component related to the North American beaver, which is in general well supported by antecedents, well designed, and with some interesting experimental and demonstration components, and the rest of the project which appears considerably more vague. This unbalance needs to be addressed. Why is so much attention is going to the North American beaver at this stage? How are other IAS going to be approached, especially those that are very different, in terms of biology, distribution, links to land use and social actors involved, and therefore for which the North American beaver case will have little demonstration value? Is this a project with two parallel approaches, one focused on intensive field action (North American beaver) and the other mostly a compilation exercise (other IAS). If that is the case, what is the justification and how will they be integrated?

The strategy for engagement with key social actors is not clear beyond public awareness campaigns. How will be different sectors of society that play an important role in the spread and control of IAS be effectively engaged?

It is mentioned that particular attention will be paid to gender equality and tending to provide capacity building activities on IAS specifically focused on women and youth. Considering that hunting and fur trade are traditionally male-dominated activities, it would be useful to provide more detail as to how women will be incorporated in the process.

Concerning the risk assessment table, it is not clear in what cases it refers to the whole project or just the American beaver component. Also there is no scientific basis to rank the risk of the restoration of biodiversity not happening in a spontaneous way after eradication actions of IAS as low.

Finally, STAP wishes to draw the attention to the GEF project "Enhancing National Capacities to Manage Invasive Alien Species" in Mexico (GEF ID 4771) also currently being considered in this work program. STAP believes this project outlines a comprehensive, innovative approach for addressing invasive species management challenges, which should make a significant contribution to biodiversity conservation in this country. As these projects are being developed and eventually implemented, STAP believes that it would be beneficial to share knowledge and experience from these initiatives, particularly regarding successful management approaches with high replication potential in the region.

<i>STAP advisory response</i>	<i>Brief explanation of advisory response and action proposed</i>
<b>1. 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.
<b>2. 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: (i) Opening a dialogue between STAP and the proponent to clarify issues

	<p>(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.</p>
<p><b>3. Major revision required</b></p>	<p>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.</p>