



BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION AND USE IN CHINA'S DONGTING LAKE

China's second-largest freshwater lake, Dongting Lake is located in the middle reaches of the Yangtze River. It is listed as one of the 200 most important ecological areas in the world by the World Wide Fund for Nature. It is also an important staging, wintering and feeding site for migratory birds, and provides a breeding ground and sanctuary for important aquatic species. Despite the significance of its highly diverse and productive biodiversity, the globally important ecosystem and the services it provides are increasingly at risk. The major threats on Dongting Lake wetland ecosystem (DWE) include water pollution, overfishing and unsustainable fishing practices, river traffic and sand mining activities, habitat fragmentation caused by reed farming, agricultural conversion and changes in the hydrological cycle. In order to seek effective ways to secure biodiversity conservation and sustainable use in the DWE, to achieve harmonious development between humankind and nature, and to promote the mainstreaming of biodiversity conservation, the current project was implemented, which is also in line with FAO's principle of "better production, better nutrition, a better environment, and a better life".



WHAT DID THE PROJECT DO?

The project goal was to promote the long-term sustainability of wetlands by strengthening existing management efforts to ensure the conservation of globally important biodiversity in the Dongting Lake region, while the development objective was to restore fish stocks, promote sustainable fisheries and rice production, improve livelihood patterns and increase the income of local fishers and farmers.

After more than six years of implementation, the expected goals of the project were achieved and a satisfactory rating for the final evaluation of the project was obtained, contributing first-hand experience from China on the governance of great rivers and lakes, biodiversity conservation and sustainable utilization.



KEY FACTS

Latest Approved Budget
USD 2 950 000

Duration
December 2014 – March 2022

Resource Partners
Global Environment Facility (GEF)

Partners
Hunan Provincial Department of Finance (HPDF), Forestry Department of Hunan Province (FDHP)

Beneficiaries
Provincial and local government agencies, universities, research institutions, civil society organizations, private businesses, local communities and residents living in or around Dongting Lake

IMPACT

Thanks to the activities of the project, the biodiversity of DWE has been significantly enhanced. A total of approximately 44 600 ha of wetlands in DWE have been restored since 2018. Key biodiversity threats, such as sand mining and illegal fishing, have been eliminated, and the number of indicator species and rare and endangered species in DWE has been rising every year, such as winter migratory birds and Père David's deer. Moreover, innovative co-management models have been explored to make sustainable use of biodiversity of DWE and increase the livelihoods of local people, such as rice-fish farming systems, ecological fisheries, nature education and ecotourism and the innovative utilization of reeds to cultivate mushrooms.

A detailed project sustainability plan was formulated by FAO and the Forestry Department of Hunan Province so that the important outcomes of the project can continue to contribute to the biodiversity conservation and sustainable utilization of Dongting Lake ecosystem. President Xi Jinping visited the project site in the East Dongting Lake national Nature Reserve in April 2018 and gave high praise to the work on wetland and biodiversity conservation. The successful experiences of the project, such as policy development, ecosystem approaches, capacity building, co-management, etc. can be referred to and replicated in other similar parts of China and the world. In particular, various co-management models can be replicated to promote the sustainable use of biodiversity of wetlands and natural resources.

ACTIVITIES

- Effectively promoted the integrated management of Dongting Lake ecosystem protection across departments and regions, compiled the Five-Year Plan for the Integrated Dongting Lake Ecosystem Management (2020-2024) and established the Dongting Lake Wetland Integrated Management Information System.
- Promoted biodiversity mainstreaming by improving laws, regulations and policies.
- Leveraged additional funding for the protection of Dongting Lake ecosystem, including over USD 52 million in co-financing provided by Government of China.
- Provided training for 1 500 government officials and protected area staff, which greatly improved management capacities.
- Piloted the biodiversity-friendly community co-management model to provide alternative livelihoods for local residents.
- Significantly enhanced the ecological protection awareness of local residents through a large number of publicity and communication activities, such as the Dongting Lake International Bird Watching Festival.

Project Title

Securing Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Use in China's Dongting Lake Protected Areas

Project Code

FAO: GCP/CPR/043/GFF
Donor: 4356

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