

## THE IDEASS – ARPAT CONSTRUCTED WETLAND MISSION TO THE LAKE OF PRESPA, ALBANIA

**March 9-11, 2008**

From March 4 to 7 and from 7 to 12, 2008, ARPAT (Regional Agency for Environmental Protection of Tuscany Region), realized two technical missions to Albania, in the framework of the “Ecological School – Constructed Wetland” IDEASS Project, implemented in the Albanian village of Narta, Vlore.

ARPAT held missions to Albania since February 2007, aimed at the start up and follow up of the transfer process of the Constructed Wetland methodology, within the UNDP ART GOLD Albania Programme and in close collaboration with the Albanian Ministries of Environment and of Tourism, the UNDP GEF and MedWetCoast Projects, the Local Economic Development Agency of Vlore “AULEDA”, and the Universities of Tirana and Vlore.

The “Constructed Wetland” project started to be implemented in Narta’s School, Vlore, in August 2007. The construction of a natural water depuration pilot system represents an important step in the further implementation of this methodology, on a wider scale, in Albania. The pilot system was intended to allow the Albanian experts, technicians, authorities and students from the Environmental Engineering of the Faculty of Civil Engineering to experiment the wastewater treatment, to check the analytical data about the system depuration capacity, to demonstrate the system suitability to be extended at a larger scale.

In Albania, many important natural areas suffer critical environmental condition, due to human pressure, soil erosion and water pollution. One of the most relevant, among them, is the Lake of Prespa, located on the Macedonia-Albania-Greece frontier, with an elevation of 2,800 feet (853 m) above sea level and an area of 106 square miles (274 square km). Fed by underground streams, it is linked by subterranean channels with Lake Ohrid. The Prespa watershed region, shared by Macedonia, Albania and Greece, is a habitat for a multitude of wild animals and plants. The ecosystem of the Prespa Lake is threatened by the use of pesticides by local farmers, dumping of waste, and unsustainable use of natural resources.



During ARPAT’s previous mission (December 2007), meetings were organized with the representatives of the villages surrounding the lake of Prespa. The technicians of the Albanian constructive enterprise trained during the project in Narta and the ARPAT’s experts informed the representatives of Prespa Community about the characteristics, the potentialities and the advantages of the Constructed Wetland System for the treatment of wastewaters. As a consequence, the authorities of the Albanian villages surrounding the lake sent a letter of interest to the IDEASS International Secretary. A collaboration started between the ART GOLD Albania / IDEASS initiative and the project in support of the Natural Park of Prespa (Albania), Ohrid (Macedonia) and Micro Prespa (Greece) implemented by the Italian NGO “CRIC”. “CRIC” considered the IDEASS initiative as extremely useful to improve the environmental conditions of

the area and offered support to the transfer of the Constructed Wetland methodologies, in collaboration with the Local Authorities and considering the potential involvement of local and environmental Authorities of Greece and Macedonia.

From 9 to 11 March, Dr. Beatrice Pucci, biologist of ARPAT and the ART GOLD Albania / IDEASS delegation realized a field mission to the Prespa area to evaluate a possible intervention in the Albanian villages of “Gorica e Madhe” and “Liqenas”, for the use of water natural depuration technologies. The mission made immediately evident the urgent need of actions aimed at the re-qualification of the urban environment, as well as the rehabilitation of embankments of the mountain torrent in the two villages, which is affected by erosion. Mrs. Pucci requested data and information to identify possible solutions and for the elaboration of a draft project proposal for the environmental re-qualification of the area. The Directorate of Forest of the Region of Korça took the commitment of providing the requested information, including data on weather conditions, particularly temperature and rainfall.

On March 10, a meeting was organized with the Mayor and the Local Authorities of the Commune of “Liqenas”. The Mayor highly appreciated the efforts made by all the actors, thanked ART GOLD Albania Programme, IDEASS and CRIC and made a short description on the initiatives undertaken by the municipality to face the critical environmental situation.



Dr. Pucci presented further technical actions of possible implementation. A hydrological study would assess the best solution while respecting the environment and landscape. In that sense, a possible collaboration was suggested with another IDEASS innovation proposed by the Faculty of Agronomy of the University of Florence, focused on bioengineering technology. This hypothesis could foster collaboration with the Faculty of Agriculture “Fan Noli” of the University of Korça, which hosted, on March 11, a seminar on the constructed wetlands technologies.



The seminary concluded the mission to Prespa of the IDEASS-ARPAT delegation and saw the participation of all local institutions and the environmental NGOs active in Prespa. The meeting was attended by 28 people, among them teachers of the Faculty, personnel of Directorate of Forests, local NGOs and local administrations including Korça, Liqenas, Gorica. The presentation raised great interest among the participants.

In the period immediately following the mission, ARPAT elaborated the document “*Preliminary study to treat wastewaters in the cross-border Natural Park of the Lake of*

*Prespa*”. The document contains an environmental project proposal to be implemented in Gorica e and/or Liqenas, also considering the possible use of the IDEASS bioengineering innovation.

The proposal was presented by ART GOLD Albania/IDEASS to the Presidency of the Albanian Council of Ministries and it is going to be submitted, after receiving official approval, to the International donor network.