

Georgia

Quarter 3 Highlights



Work on the pilot project “Application of a strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) for the draft Alazani-lori River Basin Management Plan” continued. The SEA project team developed the draft report of the Strategic Environmental Assessment and disseminated it to stakeholders ahead of discussions in Q4.

In order to support MEPA in facilitating the economic reforms envisaged by the new draft Law on Water Resources Management, work continued on a study to introduce water abstraction charges in Georgia. An analysis of the current practice of water resources use in Georgia was completed and a draft report on Facilitation of Water Abstraction Charges was developed ahead of discussion with MEPA in mid-October.

The “[3rd Coastal & Transitional Waters Survey](#)” was conducted between 29 June - 4 July 2020. The Survey included sampling of transitional and coastal waters in the perimeter of a coastal strip from Sarpi to Kobuleti, corresponding to the Chorokhi-Ajaristkali RB District of Georgia. The main objective was to analyse general physico-chemical, biological, benthic invertebrates and sediment types at 8 coastal monitoring stations, 2 transitional water stations and 3 stations for macrophytes. The results of the survey will update the Coastal Assessment part of the Chorokhi-Ajaristkali RBMP and give an additional input on determining type-specific thresholds and the estimate the ecological status of the investigated CTW water bodies.

A slightly modified version of the EUWI+ draft delineation proposal, for Georgian coastal and transitional waters, has been approved for final delineation by NEA and the Department of Fisheries, Aquaculture and Water Biodiversity in Batumi.

The first mission to launch the Chorokhi-Ajaristkali Coastal RBM Planning update process was conducted on 24-25 August 2020 in Batumi, Georgia. Stakeholder meetings and discussions focussed on the collection of the data and information needed to update the coastal RBMP in accordance to the pressure-impact analysis and assessment of the ecological status of the identified Coastal and Transitional Water Bodies in the pilot region.

[The first-ever Joint Field Survey](#) to collect comparable water quality data in the transboundary area of the Khrami-Debed River Basin, shared between Georgia and Armenia, was conducted on 9-10 September 2020. The survey was the first (testing) attempt in the frame of preparing a bilateral agreement and an Armenian-Georgian Joint Transboundary Monitoring Programme that are both relaunched through EUWI+. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, the survey was performed

simultaneously from both sides of Debed River with results of the survey to be reflected in the first bilateral Survey Report, jointly with the Armenian colleagues in November 2020. The newly developed ESCS will be applied for ecological status assessment.

[The 2nd Public Consultation meeting to discuss the Alazani-lori RBMP](#) Thematic Summary and Programme of Measures was held physically on 31 July 2020. The meeting gathered up to 47 participants from key stakeholder including MEPA and also representatives of local municipalities and regional administration of the Kakheti Region; water supply companies, municipal irrigation services, NGOs, other basin stakeholders. Using these comments, the RBMP is being finalised to be handed over in Q4 to MEPA for approval and implementation.

[The 2nd Public Consultation meeting to discuss the Khrami-Dedeba RBMP](#) Thematic Summary and elaborated Programme of Measures) was conducted online on 22 September 2020. The meeting was attended by more than 30 participants (MEPA, local organisations of the Basin District municipalities, representatives of agriculture, irrigation, water supply & sanitation, energy, health sectors, basin stakeholders, and NGOs).

The [3rd Groundwater Survey](#) in the Alazani-lori Basin District of Georgia took place from 17-27 September 2020, involving experts of the NEA Hydro-geology Expedition team. The Survey collected water samples from 40 groundwater wells and springs throughout the basin. It is expected that the GW Survey results will be published in November 2020, as soon as the results of chemical analysis are available from the NEA Environmental Lab.

The Surface Water Monitoring Development Plan was submitted to the beneficiary institution (NEA) on 13 August 2020, who thereafter provided comments and feedback.

Two surface water training videos on a second biological quality element, phytobenthos (diatoms), were produced and will be published in Q4.

The procurement of 12 hydrological monitoring stations and 7 automated groundwater monitoring stations was being prepared.

A training concerning the concept of Investigative Monitoring took place in a webinar on 10 July 2020 and preparations for a pilot survey proceeded.

Quarter 4 Look ahead

A virtual stakeholder consultation will be arranged on 21 October to introduce the structure of the Alazani-lori RBMP, present key findings and conclusions of the SEA for the Alazani-lori RBMP and discuss feedback to inform finalisation of the draft SEA report. A training workshop on the applications of SEA for the water sector and RBMPs is planned for November 2020.

In mid-October, an online meeting will be organised between MEPA and OECD for discussion of the preliminary findings on the draft report of Facilitating Water Abstraction Charges.

By mid-November, the final development of the RBMPs for Alazani-lori and Khrami-Debeda will be completed.

The 2nd Fish Sampling Survey in the Chorokhi estuary, as part of a C&TW monitoring program at the Chorokhi-Adjaristkali pilot basin will be organised in October.

A training workshop to define the C&TW ecological status and summarise the survey results from July and October will be arranged in virtual format towards the end of October.

A study visit of selected lab members from the Department of Fisheries, Aquaculture and Water Biodiversity in Batumi to the Croatian Institute of Oceanography and Fisheries, may be organised in the Q4/2020 or the Q1/2021 period, if possible under the COVID 19 restrictions.

The SW Field Survey for Investigative Monitoring at pilot area of the lori River will progress in October, by assessing 10 selected sampling sites.

Public Consultation meeting to discuss outcomes of the General Plan of the Chorokhi-Ajaristkali RBD Coastal Zone will be organised online in November 2020, while the finalisation of the Plan is expected by December 2020.

The data management platform and its main tools will be transferred into the virtual machine within EIEC.

The pilot investigative monitoring is planned for October 2020; the related report prepared by NEA, discussed and finalised.

Discussions will open about the next possible NPD and EUWI+ communication and results presentation event with a view to arranging an online event during Q4 2020 or Q1 2021.

- The Groundwater Monitoring Development Plan will be developed
- 7 automated groundwater monitoring stations will be installed.
- Shipping of hydrobiological species identification literature (taxonomic keys for benthic invertebrates) and sub-sampling grid (AQEM)
- Publication of two surface water training videos on EUWI+ website, with national language subtitles. Feedback from national experts will be collected.
- Finalisation and publication of the Surface Water Monitoring Development Plan on EUWI+ website
- Installation of 12 hydrological monitoring stations
- Tender evaluation for procurement of a mercury analysis system for the NEA laboratory in Tbilisi.
- Delivery of small laboratory equipment and laboratory consumables to the NEA laboratories in Tbilisi, Kutaisi and Batumi
- Preparation of pre-audit reports summarizing the status and developments in the EUWI+ partner laboratories towards ISO 17025 laboratory accreditation and expansion of the analytical scope (WFD priority substances).