

## Boskov Most Hydro Power Plant, Macedonia

For more information

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**T**he Boskov Most HPP project involves the construction of a reservoir (33 m high dam) and a hydro power plant with a total capacity of 68MW. It will use the water from one main river and its 6 tributaries in the northwest part of the country. Around 80 percent of the plant will be located in the territory of the Mavrovo National Park, one of the oldest and most valuable protected areas in the country (established in 1949), a future Natura 2000 site and a core territory for the survival of the critically endangered Balkan lynx.

In November 2011, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) approved a loan of EUR 65 million for the construction of the power plant out of a total project cost of EUR 84 million.

### Concerns with the ESIA and subsequent need for bio-monitoring

The Environmental and Social Impact Assessment study for the project (released in July 2011) lacked sufficient data on wildlife in the territory of the Mavrovo National park. It insufficiently analysed mammal and bird species or the impacts of the project on them – for example it did not mention the Balkan lynx at all – and concluded that more baseline data is required before construction begins.

The ESIA has not been approved by the Ministry of Environment yet, so it is unclear why the EBRD has approved the project.

A bio-monitoring plan of 12 months before the construction and continuous monitoring for 4 years after construction begins was proposed by the ESIA study to address this problem. The Environmental and Social Action Plan also identified that a bio-monitoring programme and numerous additional plans to mitigate effects on various media (air, water, soil etc.) would be needed.

### The power plant site – a critical habitat

CSOs in Macedonia have communicated to the EBRD and the Project Sponsor their concerns about the project's impacts on the critical habitat of the Balkan lynx. The results of a 5 year monitoring programme of the Balkan lynx show that the territory of a single GPS monitored species overlaps with the Boskov Most project site. There are around 30–50 individuals of this species left and most of them live on the territory of the Mavrovo National Park.

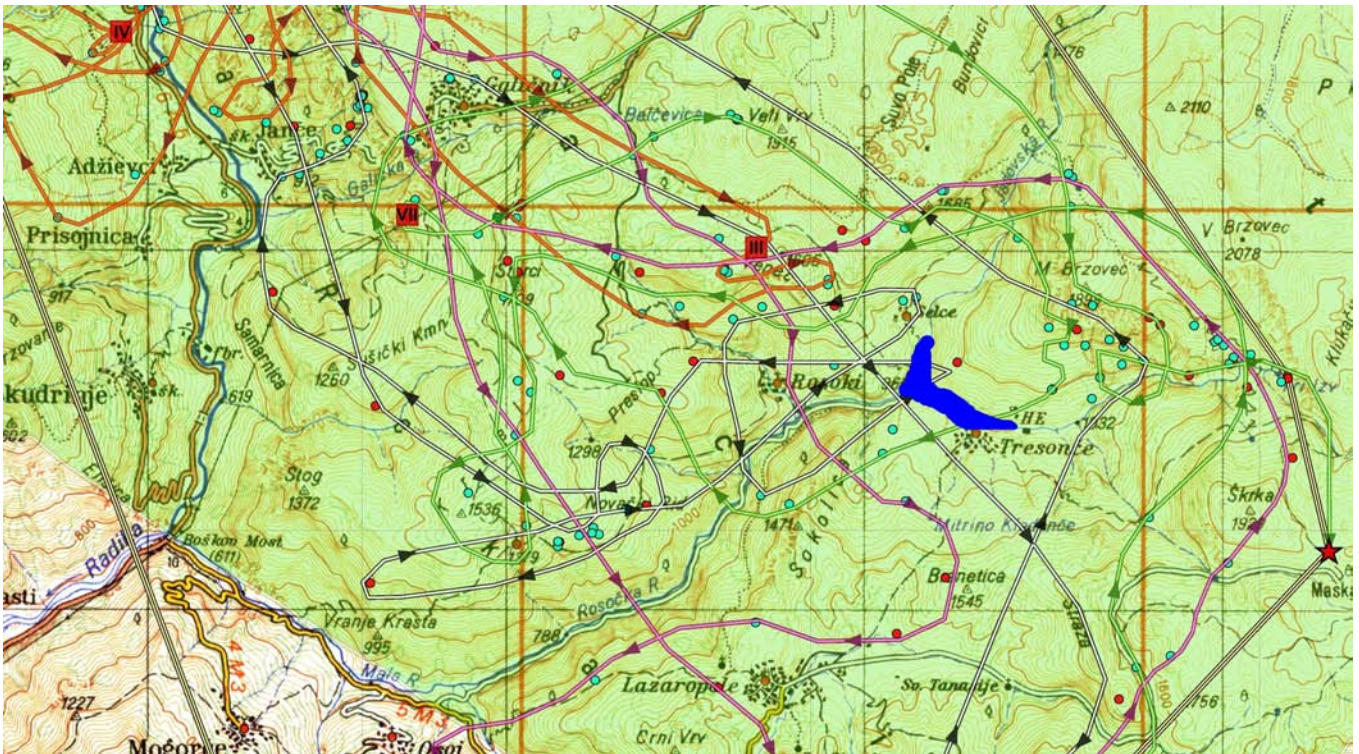
CEE Bankwatch Network's mission is to prevent environmentally and socially harmful impacts of international development finance, and to promote alternative solutions and public participation.



**Picture 1: This is a lynx – probably female – captured on photograph via camera traps located nearby the village of Selce, close to the Boskov Most location (17.04.2010). It is estimated that another female as well as a GPS-collared male individual frequently use the same area.**

As the lynx as well as its prey are very sensitive to disturbances from human activities, the survival of the lynx in the area of the Boskov Most HPP is questionable. This is because:

- The pre-construction phase planned this year will involve increased disturbance to wildlife due to increased movement of humans, vehicles and machinery,
  - The construction phase will last 4 years and will involve noise from heavy machinery, humans, and possibly detonations,
  - The Balkan lynx species and its prey will be forced to move from this territory and survival and adaptation will be more difficult due to changed surroundings.
- There are other hydro power plants under construction and in the planning phase nearby Boskov Most as well as within the National Park territory that decrease the possibility of adaptation of the species in new territories, due to ongoing disturbances.
  - The territory of the Boskov Most HPP is considered by Macedonian scientists as a critical habitat for the survival of this critically endangered species. Even though this subspecies of the Lynx lynx species is not yet on the IUCN list, the IUCN has issued an assessment of the population of the Balkan lynx, stating that without doubt, this subspecies is to be considered as “critically endangered”.



Picture 2: Movement of the GPS-collared lynx in the area of the Boskov most HPP. The reservoir is indicated in blue. The lines show movement of the individual in various directions, in the period of 2 months (14.03.-14.05.2010)

### Bio-monitoring must ensure protection

Both the Project Sponsor and EBRD have stated that no major construction activities will happen during the 12 months of bio-monitoring, however it is still unclear what “major construction activities” truly mean. The Project Sponsor ELEM has stated at public hearings and meetings that 'minor activities' means anything from the displacement of phone cables to road construction, with the exception of laying the asphalt.

At the moment (May 2012), the bio-monitoring programme is under preparation and so is the assembling of the expert teams which will undertake the monitoring. It is of utmost importance that both

the Project Sponsor ELEM and the EBRD guarantee that until the bio-monitoring is finished, **no preparatory activities which will compromise the results of the bio-monitoring take place – and that 'no preparatory activities' really means just that.**

CSOs are also calling for the regular disclosure of the monitoring results – not just one compilation report at the end – and a transparent process involving CSOs in the monitoring. We expect that the Bank will take all measures possible to ensure proper monitoring as well as effective measures be undertaken in order to protect the critical habitat of the Balkan lynx.