Request for proposals

Development of an Ecological Framework for the Pamir-Alai landscape and integration of its priorities into socio-economic development programs for 10 pilot districts

Project Title	Integrated Community-based Management of High Value Mountain Ecosystems in Southern Kyrgyzstan for Multiple Benefits
The responsible party (SLT)	The International Snow Leopard Trust
Project Outcome	Output 1.1 — Landscape-level integrated land use management approaches for Pamir Alay landscape designed and under implementation
Contract term	12 months
Publication date	July 2026
Reporting language	Russian/English

1. Context and rationale

The UNDP–GEF project «Integrated Community-based Management of High Value Mountain Ecosystems in Southern Kyrgyzstan for Multiple Benefits» aims to conserve the biodiversity of the Pamir-Alai, restore degraded lands, and sustain critical ecosystem services for the sustainable livelihoods of local communities.

Component 1 and Outcome 1.1 call for the development of an ecological framework for the Pamir-Alai landscape—a spatially interconnected system of natural core areas, ecological corridors, buffer zones, and areas designated for sustainable natural resource use. The project is being implemented in accordance with the decision of the Project Coordination Council (December 2025) to shift focus from a unified landscape plan to the Ecological Framework, with the subsequent integration of its priorities into the socio-economic development programs (SEDPs) of 10 target districts.

Geographical coverage: Leilek, Kadamzhay, Batken, Nookat, Chon-Alai, Alai, Kara-Suu, Kara-Kulja, Uzgen, and At-Bashi districts in the Batken, Osh, and Naryn regions.

The ecological framework implements the Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) principle of “avoid, reduce, restore” at the landscape level: spatial identification of natural cores, corridors, and degraded areas creates a planning framework for preventing further land degradation and serves as a scientific basis for subsequent measures to reduce degradation and restore disturbed areas within the framework of other project components. The results of this project directly contribute to the achievement of the national LDN indicators and to the implementation of the Kyrgyz Republic’s State Program for Biodiversity Conservation through 2040.

2. Purpose of the assignment

The objective of this task is:

- **to develop an Ecological Framework for the Pamir-Alai landscape** - a spatially linked system of natural cores, ecological corridors, buffer zones and areas of sustainable nature management - based on a comprehensive ecosystem analysis of 10 pilot districts (Activity 1.1.1 of the project document);
- **to integrate the priorities of the Ecological Framework into the Socio-Economic Development Programs (SEDPs) of 10 target districts** by developing specific provisions and supporting the process of their official adoption by district administrations (Activity 1.1.2).

3. Deliverables and deadlines

This project will be carried out over a 12-month period and includes 11 specific deliverables, logically organized into three sequential phases.

1. Development of Ecological Framework methodology, analysis of legal instruments for reservation
2. Analysis of ecosystem conditions and creation of ecosystem profiles for pilot areas
3. Work with local communities and integration into the SEDPs

Deliverable 1. Methodological Note

A document is being drafted to establish the scientific and organizational framework for the development of the Ecological Framework. The methodological note consists of three sections.

Section One: Coordination and Planning – defines the composition and functions of the expert group; a plan for coordination meetings with the SLT team on the integration of future SPARC modeling results[1] (taking into account the timing with the ecosystem assessment results); includes the collection of SLT data on relevant species, such as methodology, population data, migration routes, breeding zones, geographic distribution of populations and areas significant for them, and maps from the expert; a list of existing and provided project materials, including GIS layers, HCVF maps, climate change scenarios, and other data. The work plan should include adaptation measures to refine the framework based on SPARC data, which are expected within the first 6 months of the contract.

The second section is the methodology for forming a framework and assessing ecosystems[2], which includes defining the key types of ecosystems in the project area based on the national classification; criteria for assessing the state of ecosystems and their restoration potential; defining key elements of the

[1] SPARC (Spatial Planning for Protected Areas in Response to Climate Change) is a methodology developed at the request of the GEF Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel (STAP) and recommended by GEF as best practice for climate-adaptive management of protected areas. It combines climate projections with biological data to identify areas that will retain biodiversity significance in the future and to delineate climate corridors for species migration. SPARC outputs — including priority area maps (Level I and II), climate corridor maps, and projected species distribution maps — are expected by early 2027 and must be integrated into the Ecological Framework as they become available.

[2] An expert group of non-key experts is being formed; data on HCVFs for forests will be available by the end of August – the third month of implementation.

framework: natural cores, buffer zones, ecological corridors, sustainable nature management zones, and restoration sites; criteria for prioritizing territories taking into account the principles of the NBSAP; a unified ecosystem assessment matrix for 10 districts; and a list of data sources. The document is being coordinated with SLT, UNDP, and MNRETS KR.

Section Three: Analysis of Legal Instruments for Restricting Nature Use for Ecosystem and Biodiversity Conservation

Deliverable 2. Ecosystem profiles of the Pamir-Alai EcoFramework project landscape (Clarification of the ecosystem status in the pilot districts)

A cartographic document is being developed describing the most valuable ecosystems and natural areas, aligned with the administrative boundaries of the districts located within the project area, describing the natural characteristics of the area and the risks to biodiversity.
The document contains:

- the main ecosystem types; existing and planned protected areas; KBAs;
- forest, shrub, meadow, aquatic, and floodplain ecosystems;
- the most valuable ecosystems and areas of valuable biodiversity;
- potential ecological corridors; climatic refugia; areas significant for populations of flagship/indicator and umbrella species;
- degradation zones; and a threat map.

In accordance with the project document, the priority indicators are:

- Fauna (8 species): snow leopard, Central Asian ibex, Marco Polo argali, Severtsov's sheep, grey monitor lizard, golden eagle, snow pigeon, Eurasian otter;
- Vegetation (4 types): *Juniperus hemisphaerica*, *Juniperus zeravschanica*, *Crataegus knorringiana* and degraded mountain pastures.

These priority species and vegetation types are indicators primarily of high-altitude and mountain-rocky ecosystems and do not cover the full spectrum of ecosystems within the Ecological Framework. To ensure a comprehensive ecosystem analysis, the Contractor independently identifies additional indicator species, taxonomic groups or ecosystem indicators for other ecosystem types (forest, steppe, meadow, wetland, riparian, etc.) based on scientific literature, international methodologies and open-access databases.

Data to be provided by SLT/SLFK to the Contractor:

- monitoring data for 8 priority fauna species (population size and status, migration routes, breeding sites, spatial distribution, key habitats, cartographic materials);
- camera trap data from pilot districts;
- maps of Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs), existing and proposed protected areas;
- High Conservation Value Forest (HCVF) maps (563,949 ha, 11 leskhozes of pilot districts);
- results of SPARC analysis — as available (expected in early 2027).

Minimum dataset to be collected independently by the Contractor:

- field data on 4 priority vegetation types (*Juniperus hemisphaerica*, *Juniperus zeravschanica*, *Crataegus knorringiana* and degraded mountain pastures) at key locations across the project landscape;
- data on additional indicator species for ecosystems not covered by SLT/SLFK monitoring (forest, shrubland, pasture, aquatic, riparian) — primarily in areas identified under the project as priorities for biodiversity conservation, including Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs).

Field expeditions and methodology

Expedition teams visit the most ecologically significant areas of the project landscape to verify analytical data on the ground and collect field data according to the priority indicators listed above. Following each field visit, descriptive reports on the surveyed areas are prepared.

The detailed methodology for field work, including the selection of key sampling points and data collection protocols, is developed independently by the Contractor taking into account the list of materials provided by the project, and is agreed with SLT, UNDP and MNRETS at the first phase of contract implementation.

Products: maps of the ecological framework highlighting the most significant natural areas, including flora and fauna data, HCVF maps, KBA and protected area data, and hydrological and glaciological data referenced to the administrative boundaries of the pilot districts.

Deliverable 3. Socioeconomic data passports for 10 districts

A structured analytical document is created for each of the 10 districts, consolidating the data for subsequent analysis of stakeholders, land users, and biodiversity risks.
Each passport includes:

- land use data: agricultural lands: arable land and pastures, infrastructure;
- social data: population structure, including gender aspects, local government bodies, pasture committees, forestry enterprises, nature users, and NGOs;
- institutional data: defining the responsibilities and competencies of involved stakeholders.

The contractor will prioritize the use of existing project materials, including 10 district SEDPs.

Deliverable 4. Spatial Model (GIS Map) of the Pamir-Alai Landscape Ecological Framework

The contractor will develop a spatial model of the Ecological Framework, including layers indicating areas of varying degrees of protection and intensity of use: natural cores, ecological corridors and migration routes, buffer zones, restoration zones, sustainable nature management areas, existing and planned protected areas, KBAs, HCVFs, glacial zones, environmental conflict zones, and the nature of existing land use.

The spatial model should enable visualisation and analysis of key elements of ecological connectivity at the regional level and include, at a minimum, the following data:

- Natural cores (key biodiversity conservation areas); ecological corridors; buffer zones;
- areas requiring restoration of ecological connectivity;
- areas of sustainable nature management;
- existing and planned specially protected natural areas;

- key biodiversity areas (KBA);
- high conservation value forests (HCVF);
- glacial and high-mountain natural complexes;
- existing land use and main types of economic development of the territory;
- other spatial data relevant to the formation of the Ecological Framework.
- the results of the SPARC analysis are integrated into the map as they become available.

Based on the map, the following are identified and described: functional elements of the framework and regional conservation infrastructure; priority corridors and connectivity nodes; a list of areas for reservation, restoration, or strengthening of management regimes; and links to the principles of LDN and the State Program for the Conservation of Biodiversity of the Kyrgyz Republic until 2040.

Deliverable 5. Consultations with local communities, nature users, and other stakeholders

The contractor will organize and conduct a series of consultations in the pilot districts of the Pamir-Alai Ecological Framework on inter-district natural landscape clusters with the participation of representatives of aiyl okmotu (village councils), local keneshes (councils), pasture committees, forestry enterprises, directorates of specially protected natural areas, women's and youth organizations, the tourism sector, hunting users, farmer associations, and local non-governmental organizations.

The methodology for conducting consultations, including the principles for participant sampling, territorial coverage and data recording methods, is developed independently by the Contractor and agreed with SLT, UNDP and MNRETS at the first phase of contract implementation.

Consultations should be held directly near key natural areas, potential ecological corridors, areas of high conservation value, and ecosystem degradation zones. During the meetings, the contractor will present the results of the ecosystem analysis and a preliminary outline of the Ecological Framework, discusses existing conservation opportunities, identifies areas of particular importance to local communities, agrees on preliminary boundaries of natural cores, corridors, and restoration zones, and identifies areas where conservation measures can be implemented without significant social conflict.

Particular attention is paid to the involvement of women, youth, and other groups traditionally underrepresented in environmental decision-making.

During consultations, the contractor additionally collects qualitative information from local communities on observed climate-related impacts on livelihoods and natural resources (e.g. changes in water availability, pasture productivity, seasonal patterns), applying a simplified Impact Chain approach to map hazards, vulnerabilities, and impacts as perceived by communities.

Products:

- Consultation minutes;
- Stakeholder map
- Participant register with gender breakdown;
- Social interest maps by district;
- List of agreed environmental priorities;
- Recommendations on mechanisms for local community participation in the management and monitoring of the Ecological Framework elements.

Deliverable 6. Coordination of environmental priorities with district administrations

Based on the results of the ecosystem analysis, spatial modeling of the Ecological Framework, and social and institutional verification, the contractor will prepare draft district annexes to the socio-economic development programs (SEDPs) for the 10 districts.

To support the integration of the Ecological Framework priorities into the district SEDPs, the contractor will form a working group with representatives of district administrations, territorial divisions of MNRETS KR, local self-governments, and other interested organizations.

The group's work is carried out through working consultations, technical discussions, and consensus meetings held as project materials are prepared. This stage can be implemented in parallel with the completion of the consultation process and the refinement of individual elements of the Ecological Framework.

The main objective of this stage is to align the environmental priorities of the Ecological Framework with the existing system of territorial planning and natural resource management. The working meetings address issues of aligning natural cores, ecological corridors, buffer zones, and restoration areas with existing pasture use, forest management, land use, and infrastructure development plans.

Following the meetings, draft recommendations are prepared for incorporating elements of the Ecological Framework into district-level SEDPs.

Products:

- Minutes of the working meetings with district administrations;
- Agreed proposals for environmental zoning;
- Proposals for distributing responsibilities between interested agencies and organizations;
- Draft recommendations for integrating the Ecological Framework into the SEDPs;
- Agreed lists of environmental priorities for each district.

Deliverable 7. National Workshop

The workshop is held following the coordination of the Ecological Framework priorities with district administrations (Deliverable 6). The objective is to present the district-level coordinated priorities of the Ecological Framework to all stakeholders and gather final comments prior to the official adoption of recommendations in the SEDPs.

The contractor is responsible for the organization and content of the workshop: preparing the agenda and presentation materials, forming the participant list together with SLT, facilitating the event, ensuring gender-balanced participation (women, youth), and preparing the workshop's final outputs. The draft workshop agenda shall be submitted to SLT, UNDP and the SLT communications team for review and approval prior to finalization.

Financing for the event (venue rental, catering, participant transport, and other logistical costs) is provided by SLT under a separate budget line and is not included in the budget of this contract. Specific dates and logistical details are agreed between the contractor and SLT no later than one month prior to the workshop.

Participants: MNRETS, representatives of 10 district administrations, grazing committees, forestry enterprises, protected areas, and local NGOs.

Products:

- Minutes listing participants (with a gender breakdown);
- Presentation materials;
- Summary of comments and suggestions received.

Deliverable 8. Development of annexes to the SEDPs to integrate the ecological framework.

Based on the results of the ecosystem analysis, consultations, and working meetings, the contractor will develop a separate annex to the SEDP for each of the 10 pilot districts. Each annex should contain a list of the district's environmental priorities, a description of the key elements of the Ecological Framework, and recommendations for incorporating natural cores, ecological corridors, buffer zones, and restoration areas into territorial planning and natural resource management.

Objectives and measures for preserving the ecosystem framework territories must comply with the "Methodology for Developing Programs for the Socioeconomic Development of Cities and Aiyl Aimaks" approved by a joint order of the Ministry of Economy and Commerce KR (No. 32) and State Agency for Civil Service and Local Self-Government under the Cabinet of Ministers of the Kyrgyz Republic(No. 01-25/114) dated April 9, 2024.

Products: 10 district appendices to the SEDP for incorporating the Ecological Framework into planning, including proposals for environmental zoning of territories; proposals for distributing responsibilities between interested departments and organizations.

Deliverable 9: Official Submission of Recommendations by District Administrations

The Contractor ensures the submission of prepared appendices to the SEDPs, cartographic materials, and recommendations for integrating the Ecological Framework into the territorial planning system to district administrations.

The Contractor provides advisory support for the review of recommendations and documents the district administrations' position on the possibility of incorporating them in subsequent SEDPs updates.

Products:

- Summary report on the integration of the Ecological Framework into the Pamir-Alai territorial development system;
- Meeting minutes, minutes of the transfer of developed blocks for the SEDPs, or other documents confirming the district administrations' acceptance of recommendations for taking the Ecological Framework into account when updating the SEDPs.

Deliverable 10. Ecological Framework Implementation Plan 2028–2030

An operational document outlining the practical implementation path for the Ecological Framework after contract completion. Includes:

- priority measures for the protection, restoration, and sustainable management of framework elements for each district;
- responsible participants by land use category (district, ayil aimak, forestry enterprise, protected area, pasture committee);
- assessment of funding needs and possible sources;

- risks and mitigation measures.

Deliverable 11. Final Report

A comprehensive document summarizing all completed work and achieved results. It contains:

- a description of the methodology and process for developing the Ecological Framework;
- a summary of the ecosystem analysis results for 10 districts;
- a description of the Ecological Framework and its elements;
- the results of integrating the 10 districts into the SEDPs, with documentation for each (minutes, letters);
- an implementation plan for 2028–2030;
- gender-disaggregated documentation from all consultations and workshops;
- lessons learned from the process and recommendations for scaling up.

4. Summary table of deliverables and deadlines

#	Deliverable	Format	Duration
1	Methodological note (coordination architecture + ecosystem assessment methodology), agreed with SLT, UNDP, MNRETS KR	1 document	month 1
2	Ecosystem profiles of the Pamir-Alai Ecological Framework project landscape (Clarification of the ecosystem status in the pilot districts)	Set of profiles and cartographic materials	month 2-3
3	Socioeconomic passports for 10 districts	10 documents	month 4
4	Spatial model (GIS map) of the Pamir-Alai Ecological Framework	1 GIS map and analytical description	month 5
5	Consultations with local communities, nature users, and other stakeholders	Consultation minutes; 1 stakeholder map; 1 summary analysis of interests and potential conflicts in environmental management; 1 list of agreed environmental priorities; gender-disaggregated participant register	month 5-7
6	Coordination of environmental priorities with district administrations	At least 10 minutes of working meetings; 10 agreed lists of environmental priorities; 10 sets of recommendations for integrating the Ecological Framework into the SEDPs	month 5-7

7	National Workshop	Summary of comments and suggestions received from all stakeholders and expert community	month 8
7	Development of appendices to the SEDPs to integrate the environmental framework	10 district-specific appendices to the SEDP	month 9
8	Official submission of recommendations by district administrations	1 consolidated report; at least 10 supporting documents on the submission and review of recommendations; a register of confirmations for 10 districts;	month 9-10
9	Implementation plan for the Environmental Framework 2028–2030	1 operational document	month 11
10	Final report	1 comprehensive document summarizing all completed work and achieved results	month 12

5. Coordination Mechanisms

To ensure consistency between the work on the Ecological Framework and other project areas and its integration into the overall project logic, the contractor adheres to the following mandatory coordination mechanisms:

1. Coordination with SLT/SLFK on indicator species. The contractor develops a list of indicator species for the purposes of the Ecological Framework in close collaboration with SLT/SLFK, ensuring consistency between the two parties' approaches and avoiding duplication.

2. Coordination of climate analysis and SPARC. The contractor holds regular working meetings with SLT team members and contractors responsible for SPARC modeling and climate vulnerability analysis to identify overlaps and align approaches. The results of the SPARC analysis (climate corridors, predicted species distribution maps) are integrated into GIS map of the framework as they become available.

3. Use of existing project analytical materials. The contractor will prioritize the use of materials already developed within the project.

4. Regular reporting. The contractor will submit monthly progress reports and, as needed, participate in project meetings with SLT, UNDP, and MNRETS KR.

6. Requirements for the Contractor
Institutional Experience

- At least 5 years of experience in ecological mapping, biodiversity conservation, and/or spatial planning in Kyrgyzstan or Central Asia;

- Proven experience developing ecological frameworks, integrated land use management systems, or protected areas;
- Experience interacting with local governments, district administrations, and local communities;
- Experience working with UNDP, GEF, or other international organizations is an advantage.

Technical Competencies of the Expert Group

To implement this assignment, the contractor will ensure that the expert group has the necessary competencies in the following areas: botany and geobotany; zoology and ornithology; spatial modeling and GIS analysis; land, forestry, and pasture legislation of the Kyrgyz Republic; and facilitation of consultations with local communities, taking into account a gender approach. The composition and distribution of functions of the expert group will be determined by the contractor independently and reflected in the technical proposal.

For implementation, a unified expert team will be formed, including the project manager, key experts, and three working groups:

- Working Group 1. Developing a Methodology for the Ecological Framework and Legal Mechanisms for Reserving Territories for Ecosystem Conservation. The group's primary objective is to develop the scientific, methodological, and legal basis for the Ecological Framework for the Pamir-Alai landscape. The group may include specialists in landscape ecology, environmental law, land and forestry legislation, and territorial planning.
- Working Group 2: Analysis of ecosystem status and development of ecosystem profiles for pilot areas and a spatial model of the Ecological Framework. The main objective of the group is to conduct a comprehensive assessment of ecosystem status and prepare the scientific basis for the Ecological Framework. The group may include specialists from the National Academy of Sciences of the Kyrgyz Republic, botanists, geobotanists, zoologists, ornithologists, mountain ecosystem specialists, and GIS analysts.
- Working Group 3. Working with Local Communities and Integrating the Ecological Framework into the SEDP. The group's primary objective is to ensure stakeholder agreement on the Ecological Framework and the integration of its priorities into district socioeconomic development programs. The group may include local development specialists, SEDP experts, facilitators, and communications and community engagement specialists.

Project Manager: Provides overall management of the assignment, coordinates the activities of working groups, ensures interaction with SLT, UNDP, MNRETS KR, district administrations, and other stakeholders, monitors the quality of results and adherence to deadlines.

Key Experts: Key experts provide methodological support to all working groups and participate in the development of key project deliverables.

Leading Expert on Ecological Framework, Biodiversity, and Sustainable Territorial Development: Responsible for the overall concept of the Ecological Framework, the methodology for its development, and its implementation. Experience in assessing ecosystem status, analyzing ecosystem functions, and identifying territorial conservation priorities.

Expert in Socioeconomic Development Programs (SEDPs) — experience in developing, analyzing, or supporting socioeconomic development programs for territories. Experience interacting with local government bodies, district administrations, and local communities.

GIS Expert — processes spatial data, develops a cartographic base, and creates a GIS model of the Ecological Framework.

Non-Key Experts

Plant Community Expert/Geobotanist – knowledge of the flora and vegetation of the Pamir-Alai landscape; experience in geobotanical research and assessing the state of plant communities.

Ecologist (ornithologist and/or entomologist) – knowledge of the region's fauna; experience in field research and analysis of animal distribution data. Knowledge of the region's avifauna; experience in bird census and assessment of ornithologically significant areas.

Field Biologist – experience in organizing and conducting expeditionary surveys and ecological data verification.

Land Use Expert – knowledge of Kyrgyz Republic legislation on land, pasture, and forestry; experience in analyzing environmental management and territorial planning.

Social Issues and Community Participation Expert – experience conducting public consultations, facilitation, and stakeholder engagement; experience integrating gender approaches into sustainable development and environmental management projects.

Communications and Information Support Specialist – experience organizing public discussions, information campaigns, and stakeholder engagement.

Administrative Team

Financial Officer and Administrative Assistant

Technical Requirements

- Knowledge of Kyrgyz Republic legislation on protected areas, forestry, pasture, and land law;
- Knowledge of the structure and procedures for updating the district-level SEDPs;
- Knowledge of the national indicators of LDN and the State Program for the Conservation of Biodiversity of the Kyrgyz Republic until 2040;
- Readiness to conduct field trips to remote mountainous areas.

7. Institutional Conditions

- UNDP Kyrgyzstan provides overall supervision of contract implementation, quality assurance, and participates in the acceptance of key deliverables jointly with SLT.
- All final reports, cartographic materials, GIS layers and other datasets produced under this contract shall be transmitted to UNDP Kyrgyzstan, MNRETS and SLT in editable formats (including source GIS files, shapefiles, raster data in GeoTIFF format, and text documents in .docx/.xlsx formats).
- All products developed under this contract must comply with the visibility requirements of the UNDP-GEF project. Any public communications related to the results of the assignment shall be agreed with SLT and UNDP Kyrgyzstan prior to publication.

- Intellectual property rights to all products belong to the UNDP-GEF project and MNRETS.
- The assignment is implemented in full compliance with **UNDP's Social and Environmental Standards** at all stages of project implementation[3].
- Funding is provided through SLT under a subcontract; payment is made in instalments upon acceptance of deliverables in accordance with Section 4.

8. Technical Proposal Requirements

The Contractor shall submit the following as part of the technical proposal:

- **Conceptual approach** to the development of the Ecological Framework: understanding of the assignment, proposed logic and sequence of work across all deliverables, key methodological principles. The concept shall describe the approach to organizing field expeditions (expected coverage, number of visits, selection of key sampling points) and conducting consultations with local communities (geographic coverage, principles for participant sampling).
- **Work plan:** schedule of assignment implementation broken down by phase and deliverable.
- **Expert team composition:** brief CVs of key experts indicating their role in the project.
- **Financial proposal** in USD with an itemized budget: labour costs, field work, consultations, administrative expenses.

9. Submission of Applications

Applications are accepted until **18:00 (Bishkek time) on 17 July 2026** at the following email address: procurement@snowleopard.org. SLT reserves the right to reject any application or cancel this Request for Proposals at any stage without explanation. All costs associated with the preparation of an application are borne by the applicant.

[3] https://www.undp.org/publications/undp-social-and-environmental-standards