



REC PROJECT OFFICE BERKOVITZA

## ECO-TOURISM

## Pathway to progress

■ A 150-km long hiking trail passing through 10 settlements on the Bulgarian side of West Stara Planina has become the centerpiece of a two-year project to kindle tourism in a picturesque, but economically stressed mountain area. In November, the towns of Berkovitsa, Chiprovtsi, Chuprene and Belogradchik wrapped up a project to turn their mountain area into a tourist destination. Aside from creating the trail, the towns established three tourist information

centres, published promotional materials and created a trail map. The municipalities organised meetings of local people to explain how to get involved in offering ecotourism services.

The project aims to give economic opportunity to poor people from small, depopulated villages. More than 80 stakeholders helped plan the initiative.

*For more coverage on the Balkan environment, check the REReP Record at <[rerep.rec.org](http://rerep.rec.org)>.*

## CLIMATE CHANGE

## Inventory training

■ For economies in transition, the biggest challenge in implementing the Kyoto Protocol is to meet eligibility requirements to participate in flexible mechanisms. Capacity exists but is far from sufficient, according to views shared at a workshop held October 26-27 in Budapest. The event focused on capacity building on the implementation of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Kyoto Protocol in the economies in transition and Turkey.

Among the most difficult tasks is the establishment of reliable and sustainable national greenhouse gas emission inventory systems. For new EU member states and accession countries, meeting the requirements of both the EU (i.e. the EU Emission Trading System) and UNFCCC/Kyoto Protocol pose additional challenges.

The workshop was funded by the Government of the Netherlands and organised by the Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe (REC).

The need for this type of event was highlighted during the UNFCCC conference of parties in Buenos Aires in December 2004. The countries in transition, having similar historical, social and economic backgrounds, wanted to share experiences — both good and bad — in their efforts to implement the agreements.

## DANUBE DISPATCH

## Tours of transparency

■ As Danube countries strive to implement public participation aspects of the Water Framework Directive (WFD) and the Aarhus Convention, they need useful models. Help came through the ongoing project, "Enhancing Access to Information and Public Participation in Environmental Decision Making," implemented by a consortium of the REC, Resources for the Future and New York University School of Law with support from the United Nations Development Plan/Global Environment Facility through the Danube Regional Project.

The consortium recently organised two study tours, one to the United States, the other to the Netherlands. Each country participating in the project — Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Romania, and Serbia and Montenegro — sent two officials from ministries or water directorates and one representative from an NGO on each tour. A total of 30 participants — 15 on each tour — learned how well-developed environmental protection regimes ensure that the public obtains basic information about what their governments do (or don't do) about water pollution and how these countries involve stakeholders. They also got answers to special questions that their respective countries face.

The US tour emphasised environmental public participation, access to information, and access to justice — and included an illustrative field trip to Chesapeake Bay. The Dutch tour focused on implementation of the WFD by the Netherlands and its neighbours. Both tours included meetings with experts from the public and non-governmental sec-

tors on national, regional and local levels. Participants got tips on how to organise and manage information so that it can be readily accessed when requests arrive. They got ideas about how to anticipate requests and engage in "active" dissemination of information to the public.

They learned about specific ways to ensure that claims of confidentiality do not impede information flow to the public and techniques of identifying and managing information that is legitimately confidential.

Danube NGOs in particular were interested in how their Dutch and American counterparts use the public information obtained in awareness-raising campaigns and lobbying efforts. They wanted to know how their Dutch hosts got involved in advisory bodies, working groups and stakeholder platforms, as part of the WFD planning process. All participants heard candid assessments from citizen groups about whether governments did an adequate job of sharing information and whether their involvement influenced decision making.

The study tour gave the NGO and government participants ideas on how to work together in the long run, to build mutual trust and pursue common interests in cleaner water bodies. Finally, countries that are just beginning to implement the WFD gained insights from the EU experience, including a pilot project on WFD implementation in the international river basin of Scheldt (Scaldit project).

*For further details go to: <[www.rec.org/Programs/Public-Participation/DanubeRiverBasin](http://www.rec.org/Programs/Public-Participation/DanubeRiverBasin)>*