Reopening Migratory Routes for Neretvan Nase

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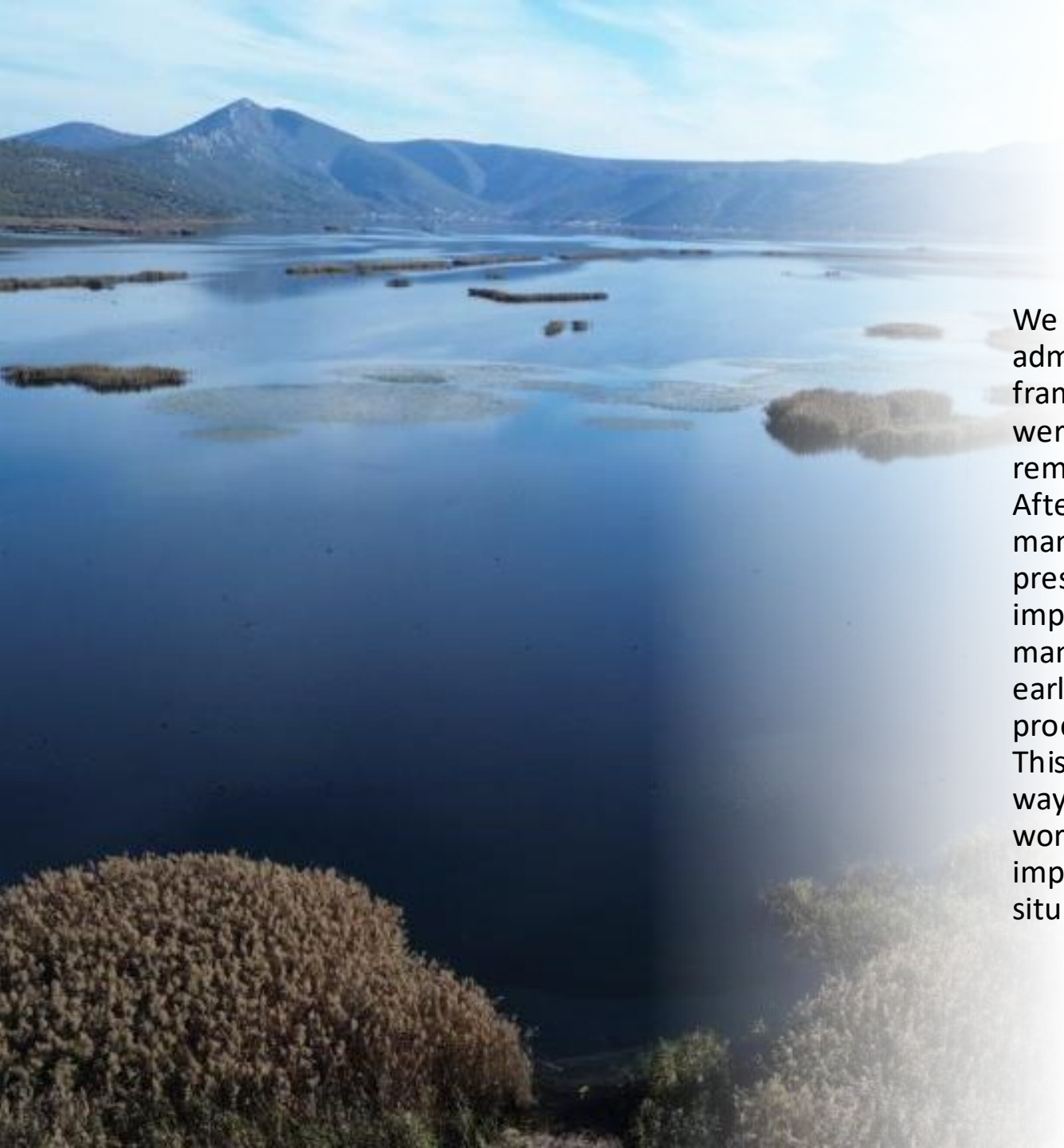
Udruga „Dinarica” Mostar

Dinarica

Hutovo Blato (Lake) is Ramsar site and Nature Park in line with national legislation, located in the south part of the country (Herzegovina);
It consists of several lakes, water courses and channels;
Dinarica has been working hardly, in collaboration with Nature park management, on development and implementation of Management Plan and Restoration Plan for the park for more than 15 years;
Plans were officially adopted by governmental bodies in charge for administrative surveillance of the Hutovo Blato

Dinarica

OPEN RIVERS PROGRAMME



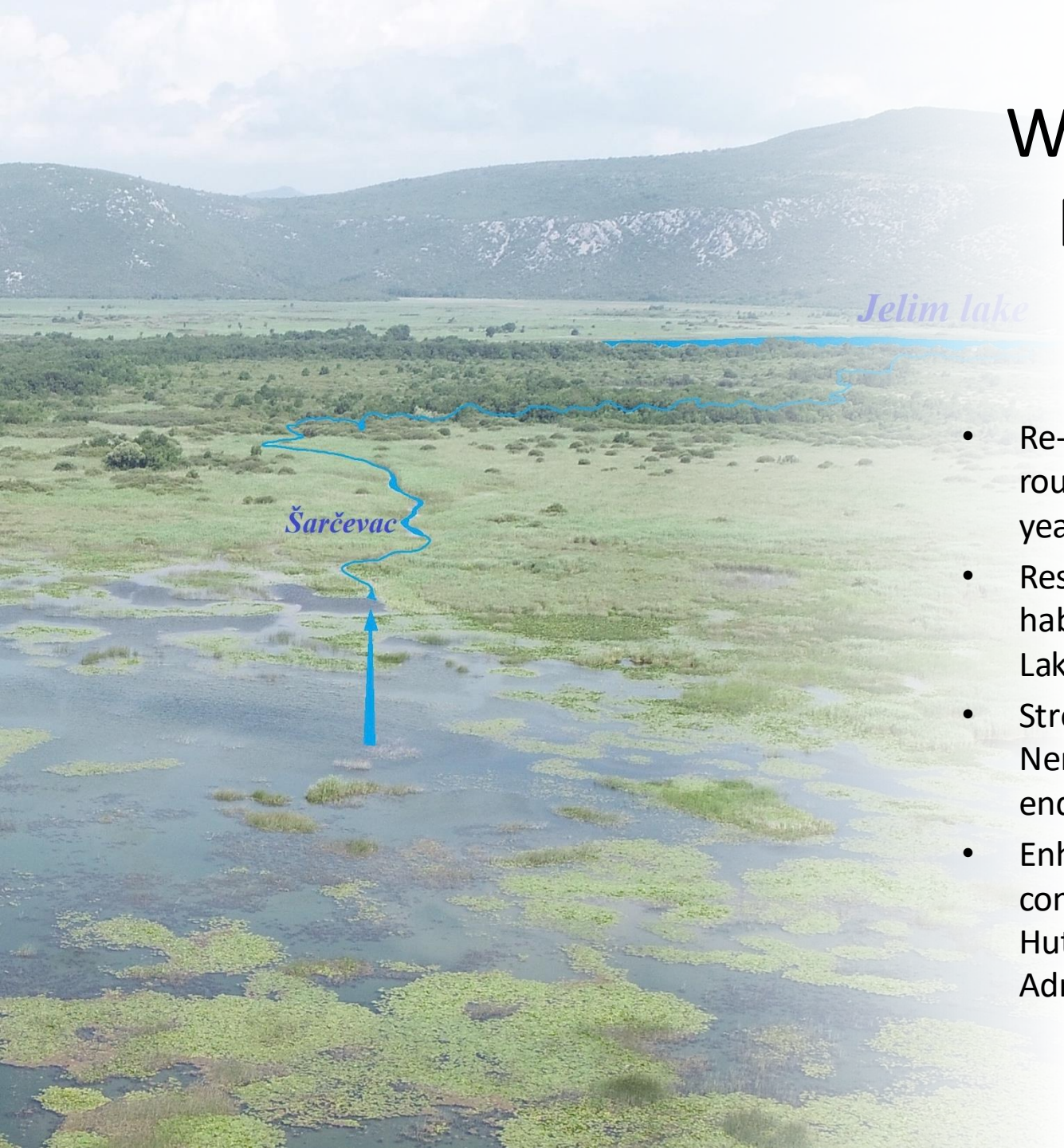
We faced lack of legal, administrative and procedural framework, which all together were a precondition for dam removal in Hutovo Blato.
After consultation with management of the Park, we presented this work as implementation of the management and restoration plan, earlier adopted in official procedure.
This was legal „acrobatic”, but only way possible to start „technical” work on dam removal and improvement of ecological situation in the Park.

The Endemic Neretvan Nase (Chondrostoma knerii)

- A steno-endemic fish found only in the Neretva River Delta.
- Lives in Croatian part of the delta, spawns upstream in Hutovo Blato.
- Spawning occurs in underground channels of Jelim Lake.
- Classified as Vulnerable due to habitat loss and blocked migration.

Migration Challenges

- Migratory routes blocked by 9 obsolete fish-catching barriers.
- Barriers constructed ~100 years ago on Jelimska Ričina & Šarčevac streams.
- Barriers are organic (wood, vegetation, silt) and often overgrown.
- Hydropower construction (Čapljina plant, 1979) diverted flows, stopping water circulation in these channels.



Why Barrier Removal Matters

- Re-establishes migratory routes unused for 50+ years.
- Restores natural spawning habitats in Jelim & Derane Lakes.
- Strengthens population of Neretvan nase and other endemic fish.
- Enhances ecological connectivity between Hutovo Blato and the Adriatic Sea.

Project Activities

1. Technical Plan for barrier removal (quantities, methods, access roads).
2. Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) with expert team.
3. Permitting in line with Hutovo Blato Nature Park Management Plan.
4. Physical removal of 9 organic barriers using amphibious machinery.

Expected Outcomes

- 3 km of reopened migratory routes.
- 30 km connection from Adriatic Sea to spawning grounds.
- Recovery of endemic fish populations (Neretvan nase, Dalmatian roach, Hutovo goby, Neretva loach).
- Strengthened biodiversity in Hutovo Blato wetlands.

Wider Ecological & Social Significance

- Hutovo Blato is a biodiversity hotspot with >20 endemic species.
- Restoration aligns with Ramsar Convention and Park's Management Plan.
- Benefits local communities through cultural heritage and ecotourism.
- Demonstrates replicable best practice for barrier removal in the Neretva Delta.

Conclusion

Reopening Hutovo Blato's blocked streams restores a lost ecological pathway, protects the iconic Neretvan nase, and sets a precedent for wetland restoration across the Adriatic region.