Maringa-Lopori-Wamba Landscape

The Maringa-Lopori-Wamba Landscape encompasses 4.2 million ha of lowland rain and swamp forest in the Equateur province of DRC. It falls within the districts of l'Equateur, Mongala, and Tshuapa. The ecological significance of the landscape is high, not only because it is covered by a globally significant area of rain forest, but also because it is home to the highly endangered bonobo, a member of the great ape family, and other species endemic to the central basin of DRC. Many other important wildlife species are extant as well, such as sitatunga, forest elephant, Congo peacock, more than 10 species of rare primates, amphibians and reptiles. The landscape has an extremely diverse avifauna life.

The biodiversity value of this landscape continues to be high despite the negative impacts of forest conversion, slash-and-burn agriculture, commercial and illegal logging, and the bushmeat trade. These impacts are the result of the ongoing political crisis, military occupation during the Congo war, and steadily increasing poverty.

Sustainable Resource Management

Most of the Maringa-Lopori-Wamba Landscape has been divided up for logging and agricultural concessions. In an unprecedented move, landscape-scale operational and conservation planning has been initiated with broad stakeholder participation. In October 2004, extensive biological and socioeconomic surveys were conducted with a large number of local and international NGOs. Data from this inventory of biophysical, socioeconomics, and infrastructure status is being used for the first landscape management plan that includes land use zoning for pioneering community forest management areas, enterprises, agriculture, and sustainable logging.
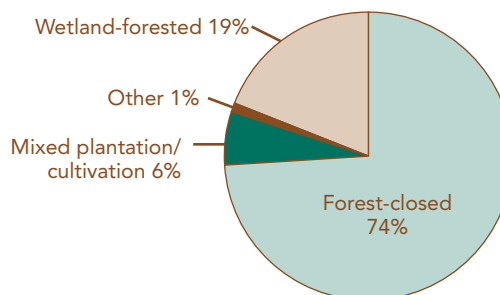
Natural Resource Governance

Capacity support for forest management mandates is a critical aspect of the conservation program being implemented in the Maringa-Lopori-Wamba Landscape. In collaboration with the Ministry of Environment and the World Bank–funded Forest Zoning Project, a conceptual framework for strengthening civil society to improve forest governance in DRC is under way. Preliminary assessments and stakeholder consultations are complete and a civil society specialist will be hired. Pilot sites selected in the landscape will provide a model for expanding the scope and scale of forest governance and institutional support work. As the landscape has only one small protected area (the 628 km² Luo scientific reserve), there are exceptional opportunities for introducing community-managed forest reserves to reduce destructive consequences of unmanaged, unsustainable use of forest resources.

Natural Resource Monitoring Institutionalized

The landscape's information system is being designed and will include community ranger–based monitoring, a socioeconomic survey, law enforcement, forest watch, and remote sensing/change detection. A landscape information officer has been hired and is working with local monitoring agencies and landscape partners. The results of the comprehensive meso- and macro-scale socioeconomic and biological surveys are forming the baseline for the monitoring network. Extensive trainings have been conducted with local stakeholders for their effective participation in the ongoing monitoring program.

Landscape Highlights

Surface Area: 102,847 km²

Partners: ICCN, WWF, WCS, ZSM, MPI, LWRP

National Parks: 1 (2 sectors), covering an estimated 36,560 km² (36% of landscape)

Biodiversity (N species)
TBD

Mammals: 53 (est.)
Birds: > 101
Plants: TBD

Threatened Species

Animals
- Forest elephant
- Bonobo
- Congo peacock
- Bongo

Plants
TBD

Major Threats to Landscape

Direct
- Commercial hunting
- Settlement and resource use in the national park
- Heavily armed poachers and national lawlessness

Indirect
- Lack of information
- Weak capacity
- Exclusion of local communities in decision making and management
- Lack of alternative protein and work for local people
- Civil strife and war

Key Interventions
- Initiating land use planning through socioeconomic and resource use studies
- Reinforcing ICCN capacity
- Including local communities in decision making and management
- Establishing site-based GIS database with links to national databases
- Reinforcing park management structures
- Lobbying provincial and national entities to stop armed, uniformed poachers