



**USDA Forest Service
Office of International Programs
Trip Report**



**Mission to Support Landscape Planning Concept Development for CARPE
Landscapes and Finalization of the Lope National Park Management Plan**

Jan 30 – Feb 12

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Summary: Chris Iverson, USFS Assistant Director for Wildlife, and Oliver Pierson, USFS Africa Program Coordinator, traveled to DRC and Gabon to participate in landscape planning concept development and the finalization of a management plan for Lope National Park respectively. The work in DRC was planned to coincide with the return from the field of two USFS teams who were collaborating with CARPE partners (AWF and WWF) on the Maringa – Lopori – Wamba and Ituri landscapes. The principal objective of these concurrent USFS missions in DRC was to initiate the elaboration of a methodology for landscape management plan development on CARPE landscapes, one of the CARPE objectives defined in the February 2005 PMP workshop. Two individual USFS trip reports will soon be available to summarize their findings, and they will be followed by additional USFS contributions to landscape plan development. In Gabon, Iverson and Pierson worked with the Gabonese National Council for National Parks (CNP) to finalize the Lope National Park Management Plan. A five-day working session with CNPN focused on reviewing the near-final draft of the plan, and developing chapters on monitoring and evaluation, implementation planning, and information needs. CNPN will have a final draft of the plan ready by February 24, 2006.

Democratic Republic of Congo

Landscape Planning Debrief Meeting (Feb. 1, 2006): The two USFS teams that traveled to CARPE landscapes to initiate work on developing a methodology for landscape planning in the Congo Basin gave debriefings on the results of their field missions to a large group of CARPE and DRC government partners on February 1, 2006. John Sidle and Jena Hickey traveled with AWF to the Maringa-Lopori-Wamba landscape, and David Fournier and Becky Nourse traveled to the Ituri Landscape with WCS. Both teams gave presentations that described the overall CARPE activities on the landscape, reviewed planning activities to date within individual CARPE management zones or at the broader landscape level, and presented ideas and concepts for planning at the landscape scale. The teams also made reference to planning concepts used by the USFS for landscape-level work, including the new planning rule, the “NEPA Triangle,” principals for incorporating public participation, and the role of data for decision making.

Following each presentation, there was reaction and discussion from CARPE partners. The following issues were raised:

- How do you plan at the CARPE landscape level, when the CARPE landscapes have no legal significance, and the capacity of the governments to enforce laws in these areas is extremely limited?
- How does planning address population growth?
- How do you reconcile threat-based planning, used by CARPE NGOs, with “desired condition” style of planning, used by the USFS (see below).
- What is the difference between planning and zoning, and how does one plan to steer threats toward zones that can respond to them?
- Does the new DRC constitution clarify issues of who has ownership and use rights over forested areas? What about laws and forestry codes in other CARPE countries?
- How do you develop plans that are flexible and adaptable enough to take major shocks, such as refugee fluxes, into account?
- How do you plan amidst an environment of very confusing land tenure rights?
- How do you deal with landscapes that straddle two or more nations?
- What is the process for approving a landscape level plan? Who needs to be involved in drafting it?
- Are there any examples of USFS planning principals applied successfully in Africa? If so, what are they?

Clearly, this afternoon meeting did not answer all these questions. The USFS reports from these two missions will address some of these points, particularly how to apply USFS planning principals into the CARPE context. At the end of the meeting, CARPE Director John Flynn clearly laid out his expectations for USFS support to CARPE land use planning objectives. Mr. Flynn requested that USFS provide technical input to help CARPE partners develop two products:

1. A Template for a short strategy document for each landscape that will clearly document the overall approach that the landscape lead is taking to achieve CARPE objectives on that landscape
2. A guide providing clear process steps and elements of a landscape management plan that can be executed, including how to do it, who should be involved, what is needed, and how much it will cost.

Both of these documents need to be consistent and standardized across the CARPE landscapes, must be measurable, and must provide adequate flexibility to take the diversity of geographic, political, legal, social and biological dynamics of CARPE-land into account.

Threat Based Planning vs. Zone-based Planning: The concept of ‘threat based planning’ as an approach for biodiversity conservation was raised as a contrast to the USFS “desired condition and zoning” model of planning. The CARPE NGOs have been using primarily a threat-based approach for conservation planning on the CARPE landscapes. This model only addresses current threats in designing management direction. It suffers from the inability to react and consider future threats that may evolve. An alternative model utilized by the USFS for forest planning on national forests

and proposed in this work shop is the ‘desired condition’ model that outlines overall goals and objectives for the landscape to guide all future management. It describes the desired compositional and structural characteristics of the biological and physical features desired across the landscape to achieve plan objectives. Social and economic elements are also integrated into the desired conditions. In this approach, barriers, or threats, found within different CARPE management zones, that may limit the ability of land management to achieve or move toward the desired condition, are specifically addressed in regulations or zoning concepts. The desired condition model is more flexible and adaptable to address future threats and also incorporates opportunities that land management can provide.

As mentioned, the ‘desired condition’ model can be applied to address specific threats. For example, take a situation where illegal bush-meat hunting occurs in a block of otherwise pristine forest on a CARPE landscape. A typical “threat based” planning response would be to identify the threat, and then perform specific actions, such as anti-poaching patrols, to address this specific threat. The desired condition approach would strive to set specific objectives for the landscape (e.g. desired population size or distribution of bonobos, elephants, etc.) that are achieved through the development of rules and implementation of management zones. These rules and zones would allow land managers to address a range of current threats and prevent new threats from developing on the landscape, such as future road construction or illegal logging. The more limited threat based approach would not allow managers to deal with unperceived future threats, such as road construction. The USFS teams who worked in DRC and Gabon will strive to develop guidelines to successfully apply this model to planning in the Congo Basin, taking all the aforementioned challenges and limitations into account.

List of Landscape Planning Issues: The following issues were addressed as critical elements to take into consideration in any planning guideline in the Congo Basin.

Roles	Governance	Gov. Capacity
Decentralization	Trust in Authority	Provincial Role
Scale	Land Suitability	Data Needs
Potential Shocks (i.e. refugees)	Planning Process and methodology	New Constitution CARPE goals, limits

USFS Debriefing with USAID CARPE Team (Feb. 2, 2006): The 6 USFS employees in DRC met with USAID CARPE leadership to provide some additional focus on USAID expectations of the USFS support role and discuss additional aspects of landscape planning process within CARPE. USAID communicated their realization that the lead CARPE NGOs were struggling with plan development, particularly outside of protected areas, and did not seem to have the necessary expertise to develop plans for CARPE management zones on their own. This challenge was particularly observed through the CARPE partners apparent difficulties with developing short (5 page) strategy documents for each CARPE zone that they would develop a management plan for. One comment was that the NGOs could “not relate an activity implementation task to a benchmark.”

USAID had requested these strategy documents as part of grant/contract deliverables to demonstrate that the NGOs had a clear plan for their intended outcomes for each CARPE management zone. USAID also hoped that these strategy documents could become the overall monitoring tool for NGO performance under CARPE and that they would eventually replace the elaborate PMP reporting process developed by CARPE in February 2005. At the request of USAID, the USFS team agreed to develop a template for these short strategy documents for either each landscape or for each zone within the landscape to be managed via some sort of plan (to be confirmed with USAID).

The remaining discussion focused on the second requested area of support from USFS, and one that is more challenging: Guidelines for a Landscape Plan and associated process steps for CARPE landscapes. CARPE requested input on what the key elements of this plan need to be, how the NGOs should define a vision for the landscape, and the data standards and needs for an effective plan. There was also discussion about how to factor ongoing implementation activities into the planning process. The USFS experts present also brought up key issues such as:

- Is there a budget for planning?
- Are there planning indicators?
- Do the NGOs and other stakeholders have an idea of what their desired conditions on the landscapes are?
- What is the understanding of the role of public participation in planning in the Congo Basin?
- Who will do political heavy lifting to get plans in place?
- Has a data quality assessment been performed?

Once again, although all the questions and issues mentioned here had not been addressed, by the end of the meeting, USAID and USFS were clear about the “planning deliverables” that USFS would provide for USAID and CARPE partners (listed below), and the USFS team members began to discuss how to achieve these deliverables in the near future.

USFS Landscape Planning Deliverables

1. Individual Landscape Mission Reports for Ituri and MLW
 - **Available:** Mid March
2. Template for CARPE Partner Strategy Document (5 pages)
 - Who, what, where, why and how
 - Means for Verification
 - Timeline of Planning Steps
 - **Available:** April 10
3. Land Use and Zoning Management Plan Guidelines, Methodology, Outline
 - Minimum Data Requirements and Key Data Layers for Plan
 - Public Participation Plan
 - Process (Vision, Desired Condition, How to achieve consensus, Key Planning Steps)
 - Legal Analysis needs (eg. How to deal with different jurisdictions, what do forestry codes say, who approves plans, etc.)
 - **Available:** To be determined

Note: Points 2 and 3 may be accomplished at a USFS meeting in the Western US some time in Spring 2006, dates to be determined.

Gabon

Review of Lope National Park Plan: As stated, the purpose of the mission to Gabon was to finalize the Lope NP plan, in collaboration with WCS and CNPN. This plan had received serious attention from CNPN and WCS in late 2005, as part of the process to submit information to UNESCO for consideration of Lope NP as a World Heritage Site. However, the management plan was submitted in “near-final” form, pending a final working session with all actors. Based on the terms of reference sent by CNPN, this final working session was intended to focus on the monitoring and evaluation section of the plan. However, after an initial review of the plan by the USFS team, the working session was reorganized to add time for consolidation of the 75 page Chapter Four, “Amenagement des Ressources Naturelles du Parc” into two shorter chapters, an implementation plan and an information needs section. During the course of the review, many other additional elements of the plan were modified based on comments from all participants. A final draft of the plan, based on the 5 day working session, will be available from CNPN on February 24, 2006. At the end of the working session, the plan’s table of contents was as follows:

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|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. INTRODUCTION | 5. BESOINS EN INFO |
| 2. REGLEMENT INTERIEUR | 6. SUIVI ET EVALUATION |
| 3. ZONAGE | 7. GLOSSAIRE |
| 4. MISE EN ŒUVRE | 8. ANNEXES |

It is worth noting formally that CNPN’s participation in this workshop was stellar. Four conservators were actively engaged as well as key national-level park planning staff. Additionally, WCS’ technical contribution to the plan review was also critical to the success of this effort. Finally, valuable input was received from the Ministry of Tourism and Ministry of Water and Forests representatives.

Comments on the *Plan Cadre de Gestion*: The EU “Protected Area Valorisation Program,” in collaboration with WWF and CNPN, has supported the development of a national park network management plan, or “*Plan Cadre de Gestion (PCG)*,” based loosely off of similar work that was done in Madagascar and TOR developed by the EU and WWF. As we understand it, an outside consultant led this process during the last few months of 2005, and management objectives and guidelines for the entire network as well as each individual park were developed. However, the Lope and Loango Planning Processes led by the USFS and the process to develop the PCG were conducted completely independent of each other, and at the start of the workshop, there was little or no coherency between the Lope NP Management Plan and the Lope sections of the PCG. Additionally tensions between CNPN and EU were evident about the value of the PCG and the extent it should or should not dictate the content of the Lope NP Management Plan.

Contrary to what was done in Madagascar, the PCG document in Gabon presents a very detailed management planning framework for each park. This framework, much of which has to be filled in, consists of six documents for each park that provide a specific objective for the park, a set of six overall intended results, activities to achieve those results (not completed), a budget framework for the park (not completed), an activity implementation timeline for five years (not completed), and a monitoring and evaluation framework (not completed). These documents are included in annex to this report. The initial USFS reaction to the PCG was that it appeared to be a top-down process conducted by outside consultants that did not have CNPN ownership and failed to take previous work into consideration. As we worked through the Lope Plan, the EU representative brought up the PCG many times, pointing out that what was in the PCG should be reflected in the Lope NP Plan. The USFS perspective is that the opposite should occur, or that certain key elements from a ground-up planning process for an individual park should be contained in the PCG.

The usefulness of a PCG-type document can not be denied. However, the extent to which a national-level document should dictate activities, budgeting (over five years), the M&E framework, and intended results for each park can definitely be debated. The USFS perspective is that the national-level document should set broad objectives for the national parks network, and be used as a communication and marketing tool, and specific planning should follow national guidelines but be conducted at each park in specific planning workshops for that purpose. Based on that perspective, work continued to finalize the Lope NP Plan, with the focus on utilizing the results of all the participatory field-level planning exercises conducted by WCS, CNPN, and USFS out at Lope in the past. Therefore the vision and objectives contained in the Lope NP plan, which also formulate the basis for the M&E framework, are based on these exercises and are not the same as what is currently in the PCG for Lope. This issue has yet to be completely resolved, and CNPN leadership will need to work to obtain coherency between the PCG and the individual park plans.

Comments on the latest draft of the National Parks Law: USFS reviewed the latest draft of the Gabon National Parks law that had been signed by the “Conseil d’Etat” of the President’s Office. Particularly noteworthy was Article 12 that seems to leave the door open to both small-scale mining in the parks (if an authorization is obtained from the Council of Ministers), and to declassifying sections of a park for larger scale mining. There may be ways to add language to the law to provide stronger safeguards for existing parks, or to require offsets (equal value and size) if mining was to occur within a park.

Additionally, this law makes no mention of any type of subsistence use activity, as called for in the Loango Plan. A legal interpretation of this language means that if not mentioned explicitly as an allowable use, subsistence use activities are therefore not allowed in the parks (see Articles 9 and 10). This ban on subsistence use is not consistent with what has been developed for the Loango Plan. While in Gabon in February 2006, USFS addressed the social sensitivity of the Pygmies subsistence activities when developing the Lope plan. It is a delicate balance of providing for cultural heritage opportunities, but not letting local inhabitants abuse those opportunities (via using

Pygmies' rights as a conduit for illegal bush meat hunting). Therefore, USFS should provide formal comments on both of these issues as soon as possible to CNPN.

Next Steps for Finalization of Lope and Loango Plans:

- Final edits and review of Lope NP Plan final draft, available from CNPN on February 24, 2006. **TASK: Review and edits to be completed by USFS team.**
- Finalization of Loango NP Plan via USFS-led four day workshop on Information Needs, Implementation Plan and Monitoring Needs. **TASK: This workshop needs to be scheduled.**
- Support, in collaboration with WCS, WWF, and CNPN, the layout and design of two NP plans for publication (Lope and Loango). USFS will need to work with NGOs to determine how to pay for the plan's publication, and who will do the layout and design work. There is the possibility that the USFS Outreach and Marketing team could support this effort, either by sending someone to Gabon or by bringing one of the CNPN staff to Washington to finalize this plan. **TASK: These issues need to be discussed internally and with USAID leadership to determine how to move forward, and then with CNPN and CARPE partners.**
- Plan a signing ceremony for two plans in June with dignitaries during CBFP and COMIFAC meetings (if they are in Libreville), with the presence of some or all of John Flynn, David Tenny, Claudia McMurray, President Omar Bongo, etc.

Other Potential USFS Technical Assistance Activities with CNPN, CARPE:

- **Permit and Fee Structure:** CNPN has yet to develop a national level permit and fee structure to govern all uses of the national parks ((tourism, concessions, special uses, entry fees, etc.). Currently fees and permits are being assessed and issued on a provisional, park-by-park basis, or not at all. Therefore, it is a high priority for CNPN to develop a national permit and fee structure, and USFS has expertise to support the completion of this task. **TASK: Identify USFS expertise to develop a permit and fee structure at the national level, and plan mission.**
- **Recreation and Tourism Planning:** CNPN has requested assistance from the USFS with the development of an Ecotourism Development Plan for individual parks. Additionally, the Secretary-General of the Ministry of Tourism requested that USFS support the development of a new national-level "Tourism Development Plan," that would revise the existing plan from October 1995. Therefore, two future USFS-led technical assistance missions are listed below.
 - Work at Park Level to develop a park-level ecotourism development plan and consult on small recreation infrastructure lay-out (Staff rec. officer)
 - Work at Network / Ministerial Level to develop a Revised National-Level Tourism Plan (Potential USFS experts: Beth Pendelton, Marti Marshall)

However, the USFS needs to evaluate these requests in light of the other priorities defined in its revised role in the CARPE program. **TASK: Evaluate feasibility of USFS support in this area in light of other priorities.**

- **Gabon National Park Management Planning Guide:** Based on the results of the process to develop plans for Lope and Loango National Parks, it may be useful to develop a “NP management planning guide” for use in the development of management plans in the eleven remaining parks. This document could serve as the basis for a training activity with the conservators for these parks as well. It could also be utilized in other CARPE landscapes, especially because the USFS park planning process is being exported to DRC for the development of a NP plan for the Salonga landscape, in collaboration with WWF.