USAID CARPE PHASE IIA - FINAL TECHNICAL REPORT
2003-2006

Gamba-Conkouati, ROC, WCS

1. INTRODUCTION

Landscape leader: WCS

Landscape and segment: Gamba-Conkouati Landscape, Republic of Congo

Funding: $1,116,565

Cost share: $422,724

WCS Gamba-Conkouati, ROC segment objectives:

Objective 1: Develop and adopt a participatory strategy to reduce threats to natural resources and human welfare throughout the Conkouati-Douli Landscape.

Objective 2: Develop and implement mechanisms to strategically address threats to natural resources and human welfare across the Conkouati-Douli Landscape.

Objective 3: Develop and implement locally appropriate tools to measure conservation effectiveness and adapt the conservation strategy as the context changes.

Summary of achievements

1. Initial park surveys, establish baselines, monitor key species and threats that the park is facing.
In FY04 initial surveys were carried out in the park, in FY05 systematic monitoring designs were developed to monitor key-species and threats, in FY06 monitoring designs were applied in reference to the earlier established baselines and distribution maps were made for all key species and human impacts.

2. Reduce impacts on the site and reconstitute wildlife populations by immediate protection measures.
In FY04, anti-poaching efforts focused on public transport vehicles, but involvement of local authorities in bushmeat trafficking undermined the anti-poaching. This led to WCS suspending its operations at the site in protest and subsequent intervention from the Government to restore Conkouati-Douli National Park's (CDNP) authority. In FY05, 15 new ecoguards were recruited and

trained. A control post was built along the main coastal road. In FY06, a second control post was built along the forest road, herewith controlling both roads leading to Pointe Noire. A rotation system between post and forest missions has led to very rapid reductions in bushmeat traffic and the removal of over 20,000 wire snares.

3. Strengthen on-site capacity of management of biological resources and organize the development of the site.
Training has been provided for ecoguards, ecological research assistants, marine turtle monitoring teams, fisheries research assistants, community development and education agents, administration and logistics staff. Construction has included ecoguard housing, four research cabins on the beach, 2 road control posts, a generator house, a port and jetty, a garage, a meeting room, stores, an office extension and a guesthouse. An office was also rented in Pointe Noire. Major items of equipment purchased include an ocean patrol boat, two project vehicles, field equipment for research and surveillance and office and IT equipment as well as the installation of VSAT internet.

4. *Develop a model of viable and enhanced conservation adapted to the context of the site through regular official negotiations at all levels and through collaboration with villages.*
A team maintains permanent contacts between the management of the park and the local population to raise environmental awareness and promote sustainable fishing, small development projects and sustainable alternative livelihoods (agriculture, fisheries and livestock keeping). Nine alternative livelihoods projects were developed and their success has resulted in the voluntary creation of local community groups. They have replicated the park's pilot projects and approached the park on their own initiative asking for help in developing techniques for sustainable use of natural resources. Education efforts are very highly appreciated and led to the request by Government education inspectors and teachers for the Park to develop a document with environmental courses for introduction into the annual curriculum.

5. Develop an integrated landscape conservation plan including a revised park management plan, community-use zoning plans, and appropriate transboundary conservation measures.
The existing dysfunctional zoning of the Park was redesigned into a simplified core PA terrestrial and marine zone, surrounded by a CBNRM zone, which all stakeholders support. This will be submitted to the Government for consideration. Interior Regulations of access and resource use were completed for both zones and a new management plan is being developed. Two transboundary meetings with all the project directors and Government counterparts of all protected areas in the Gamba-Conkouati landscape were held at Mayumba NP in Gabon. A greatly improved level of collaboration between the Conkouati team and different sites in Congo and Gabon was established and an official bi-national collaboration agreement between the two countries is being developed for submission to the secretariat of COMIFAC during the course of 2007.

2. MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND RESULTS:

CARPE SO: Reduce the rate of forest degradation and loss of biodiversity through increased local, national, and regional natural resource management capacity.

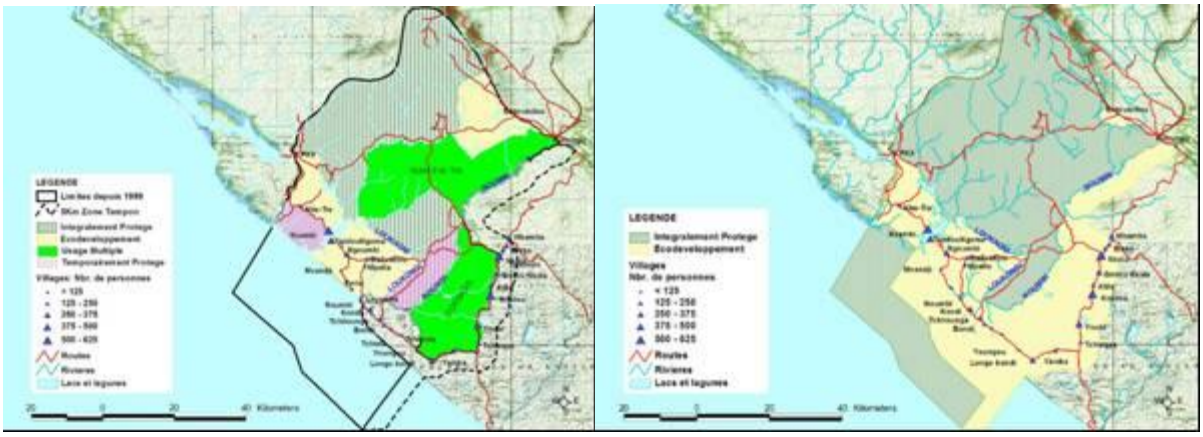
Intermediate Result 1: Natural Resources Managed Sustainably

Indicator 1.1: Number of landscapes and other focal areas covered by integrated land use plans

ROC segment

- **LU planning process convened and 75% of design phase complete for rezoning of PA areas** The ROC segment has attained its 3 year target. In FY05 and FY06, a rezoning strategy plan was drafted and macro zones of the ROC landscape were adapted to follow natural boundaries. Micro zones were established according to CARPE's LUP criteria. The ROC section of the landscape includes 1 PA; 2 CBNRM and 3 ERZ zones which overlap the CBNRM and PA zones (see below description of the zoning conflict issue). Using the results of ecological, socio-economic and fisheries research, the old dysfunctional zoning was simplified into a core CDNP-PA zone that was defined to include the most biodiverse, scenic and important key-species habitats and to exclude all human habitation, surrounded by a CDNP-CBNRM zone including the least important wildlife habitats and all human habitation (Fig 1).

Figure 1: Dysfunctional zones of 1999 (a) and simplified zones proposed in new Management Plan



In FY 06, the interior regulations of access and resource use were completed. The management plan is almost complete and the 3 documents will be sent to all stakeholders for amendment and to the Government for adoption in December 2006.

Indicator 1.2: Number of different use-zones (e.g., parks & PAs; CBNRM areas; forestry concessions; plantations) within landscapes with sustainable management plans

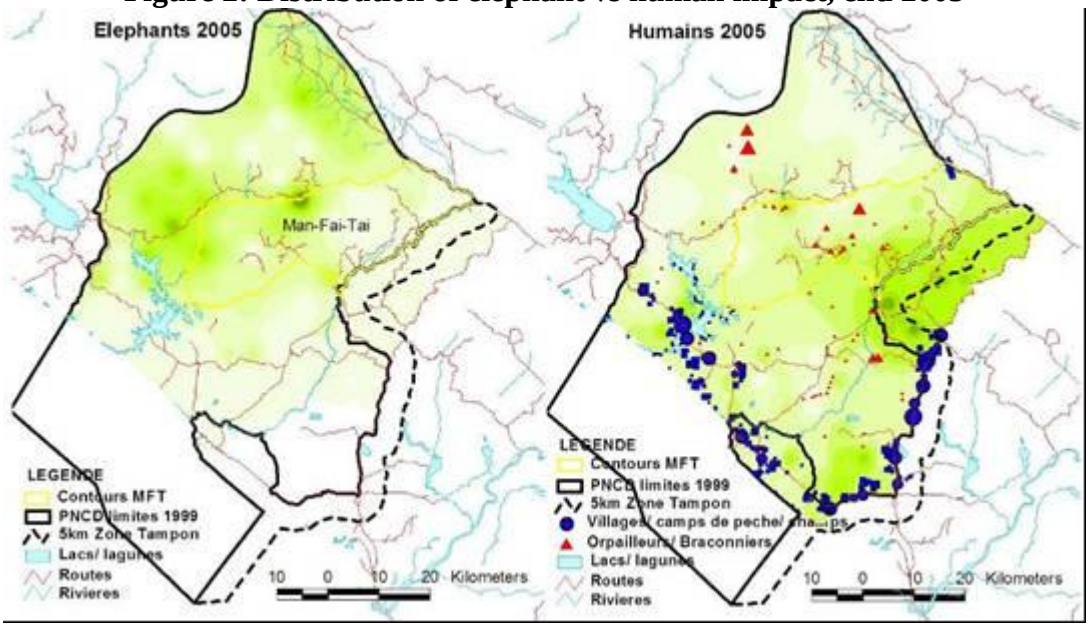
<u>Conkouati-Douli National ParkPA:</u>

100% LUP design phase complete, submitted to Government for adoption, 30% LUP implemented:

- **Complete baseline land cover impacts, human impact and key-mammal abundance surveys.** By FY05, a systematic ecological survey design was developed for Conkouati and we collected baseline data on key mammal distribution and abundance, as well as on human activity. Additional data on illegal human impact were assembled from forest surveillance missions (location and size of poaching and gold mining camps) and on legal impact from a fisheries study and a socio-economic study that identified fishing camps, villages, population size and the size and location of agriculture fields.

- Combining field-collected geographic data and remote sensed data allowed land cover impact maps to be developed as well as key species distribution maps. As is often the case, the distribution of elephants and several other animals (duikers, gorillas, bush pig) is almost directly negatively correlated with human activity distribution. Elephant densities were estimated at 0.17 elephants km^{-2} or 772 (±189) for the entire CDNP, with hotspots densities of >2 elephants km^{-2} and an average density of 0.03 elephants km^{-2} in the new proposed CBNRM zone and 0.27 elephants km^{-2} in the new PA zone (Fig 2).

Figure 2: Distribution of elephant vs human impact, end 2005



- In FY06, marine turtles and nests were monitored for the fourth successive year along 37 km of beach. Conkouati beaches are amongst the best leatherback and olive ridley turtle nest sites

on the Central African coast. The turtle teams receive training every year and their permanent presence on the beach has greatly reduced turtle and nest predation. Along 30km of monitored beach, leatherback turtles declined from 935 in 2001 to 350 in 2005, whereas olive ridley turtles increased slightly from 166 in 2001 to 235 in 2005. Turtles migrate long distances and the reasons for the radical reduction of leatherbacks remains speculative. It was registered at all monitoring sites along the coasts of Congo and Gabon. We do know that a certain proportion, are killed by trawler fishers who cut turtles from their nets (as opposed to cutting nets to release turtles), as evidenced by the dozens of dead turtles washed up on the beach every year with fins or heads cut off.

Ongoing meetings with villages to introduce new NP Management Plan and associated Interior Regulations.

- The new zoning plans to resolve problems related to the current dysfunctional zoning plan were discussed with all stakeholders: related meetings were held with the local population, village chiefs and village elders, and with government ministries. A threats analysis, based on research results, was sent to the Government in support of an official request to remove MFT logging concession from the PA zone. Interior regulations of access and resource use were developed for the CDNP-PA zone and the CDNP CBNRM zone. These allow access only for paying and organized eco-tourism and research to the PA zone, whereas sustainable exploitation of natural resources by local communities is permitted in CBNRM zones. An ecotourism associated Community Development Fund (CDC) will be developed to support community development initiatives. Interior regulations are designed to prevent an influx of people that are not resident. Local NGOs and village activity groups welcome the interior regulations and CDNP partnership in implementing the regulations to protect their resources and sacred sites from abuse.

Ongoing construction, purchases and training to optimize protection, research and local management efficiency.

- The infrastructure at CDNP has greatly improved Park management, administration, protection and research efficiency. Construction has included: a garage with mechanical repair workshop at the head quarters; a port house and jetty for project boats and motors; a generator house for the new 16KVA generator; two road control posts; an office extension at the headquarters; four marine turtle cabins and marine control post. Purchases include an ocean boat for marine surveillance and research, two project vehicles, two generators, internet VSAT and much office, education, research and surveillance equipment.

- Employee numbers have been increased from 20 permanent and 15 part-time (6 month turtle season) in FY04 to 45 permanent and 20 part-time in FY06. The surveillance section has been increased from 7 to 22 ecoguards in FY05 and they received two months of training. Three week long refresher training is given every year. A WCS marine expert trained the CDNP boat pilot to navigate the ocean boat safely. Marine turtle experts from the organization KUDU provide annual training at the start of the turtle season. Ecological research assistants were recruited and trained to conduct line transect surveys.

- The administrative and logistics team are trained to use systematic personnel, budget, stocks and movement tracking systems and capacity building is ongoing. Each section leader has been

trained to produce semestrial work plans and reports and monthly activity calendars follow a standardized format.

Promote conservation through education and PR (logo and ecotourism);

- The manatee is the CDNP logo and is therefore painted on park entrance boards. In FY04, three entrance boards were posted along the road and the beach. These sign posts indicate the entrance of the park and give people primary information about the status of the park and how its natural resources may be used.

- Environmental education was launched in FY05 and the first of a series of environmental lessons were given at all fifteen primary schools and both secondary schools around the park. Local authorities and politicians involved in the bushmeat traffic fueled and instigated hostile attitudes from local communities towards the park. Therefore, the education agent initially did not encourage discussions on subjects that provoked hostility but projected nature documentaries in the villages to gain their trust. By FY06, environmental education presentations on themes such as the role of plants, animals, ecological cycles and protected areas had been given at all the schools around the park, and teachers, education inspectors and parents have asked the CDNP to develop a series of environmental courses to include in the annual academic curriculum. The CDNP is now developing a teacher's guide with environmental courses based on an existing WCS document entitled "How nature works" through courses adapted to Conkouati's requirements. The courses also boost general vocabulary and mathematics via games.

- Two documentaries were made of Conkouati by Congo TV, one in which the main problems and attractions of the park were shown, and another in which CDNP efforts feature in a wider film, namely 'WCS in Congo, 15 years later'. Several CDNP activities were filmed by Congo TV and covered by newspapers. These included the CDNP ocean boat launch ceremony in Pointe Noire, assisted by the US Navy and the launch of the vehicle control posts along the forest road and several other incidents of arrest of shocking numbers of trafficked bushmeat.

- The marine patrol boat was been received, equipped, and registered for patrolling Congolese waters. A launching ceremony in late March supervised by the MEFE, CARPE, US Embassy, Admiral of 6th Fleet of the US Navy (in port with the US ship Emory), WCS, and local authorities of the Kouilou established the official mobilization of the Conkouati marine surveillance program. Extensive local and national media coverage of the event has raised awareness and support regarding the marine patrol program. Marine patrols have led to over a dozen arrests of illegal trawler fishing boats, and a noticeable reduction in their occurrence in the marine section of the Park ;

Plan strategically all access, resource use, research, protection activities and legal matters (i.e. infraction pursuits);

- By FY05, plans were developed with the MEFE conservator, assistant conservator, WCS director and assistant manager to improve anti-poaching efficiency. All research was organized and planned to provide baselines for use of improved management and surveillance. Based on

the results, a simplified new zoning was devised and included in a new management plan being drafted. Results were also used to develop interior regulations on access and resource use in the PA and CBNRM zones. All research and surveillance activities are geographically tracked as a measure of control. Monthly work plan calendars are developed and semestrial work plans and reports are written to draw up a summary of the results of actions and devise and adapt new semestrial work plans accordingly.

All legal matters are reported and tracked, including:

- repeated acts of aggression towards park personnel by local gangs of poachers supported by high level Government officials involved in the bushmeat trade which led to the suspension of WCS-MEFE project activities 2003;
- requests to the Government to remove the MFT concession from the park;
- requests for Government support to remove more than 1,000 illegal gold miners from the park;
- the confiscation of a tractor from a company illegally logging in the park;
- the stabbing of an ecoguard by a soldier;
- threats to the administrator by local police;
- the encounter of a team from the Chinese company LULU illegally prospecting for gold in CDNP with the support of the Ministry of Mining;
- complaints regarding unannounced offshore petroleum explorations by the company PPERENKO with the support of the regional governor and Ministry of Fisheries;
- multiple complaints about massacres of marine turtles and the illegal presence of commercial trawlers;
- unannounced onshore petroleum exploration by Zetah MAUREL & PROM.

- Some legal matters have resulted in very positive action, such as stopping LULU mining explorations; imprisonment of the soldier who stabbed the ecoguard; removal of the police who threatened the administrator; and the support of government military forces, - after many months of sensitization-, to remove the remainder of the over 1000 illegal gold miners from the park; and a high level meeting in Pointe Noire in October 2003 in which Minister Djombo (MEFE) and the Prime Minister condemned government authorities involved in commercial hunting networks. This government intervention was the result of influence by the US Government's high level dialogue with the Government of Congo on conservation issues in the Congo Basin.

- However, <u>recurrent problems at CDNP require continued WCS and USAID/CARPE attention at high levels</u>. Matters of industrial exploitation (the CDNP Decree N99-136bis does not authorize industrial exploration and exploitation in the PA zones), which are often directly influenced by high level Government officials have typically fallen on deaf ears. In FY06 alone, all of the following events occurred unannounced and were apparently concealed from the park:

- A logging concession taking over the MFT permit located in the middle of 2 integrally protected zones, which is legally not allowed;
- several dozen Chinese trawler boats exploiting the artisanal zone of the park were provided with a letter from the Ministry of Fisheries declaring their barges "improved artisanal canoes";

- a Chinese mining company LULU, provided with support letters by the Minister of Mining, was found in the North of the park;
- offshore petroleum explorations were conducted by company PERENKO supported by the regional governor and Ministry of Fisheries;
- on-shore petroleum exploration is currently being conducted by the company Zetah MAUREL & PROM with a Decree from the Ministry of Hydrocarbons,

- The latter incursion is taking place now. Several tented camps are erected and >50 vehicles drop and fetch some 500 people on a daily basis inside the park. No environmental impact study has been carried out; no emergency plan is available in case of pollution; though the same company has an outstanding fine for polluting a nearby lake 2 years ago; the company contributes no funds to ensure control of their staff to minimize environmental impact; and no food rations are given to the exploration staff when in the field (which has increased bushmeat consumption).

Conkouati-Douli CBNRM:

LUP PLANNING PROCESS CONVENED AND 50% LUP DESIGN PHASE COMPLETE

Baseline landscape impact, mammal abundance around villages, fish abundance and socio-economic monitoring in CR complete

- In FY05, socio-economic surveys were conducted, providing information on population density, population distribution, local customs, income generating activities and schooling, for all 25 villages around the park. The socio-economic survey that visited every household in the park, has facilitated dialogue between local communities and the park. Results have provided essential baseline information on the 5,487 people from local communities who depend directly on its resources. Over 50% of the population is below 16 years of age and over 80% of unemployed people are between 16 and 25 years of age. Agriculture is the main revenue generating activity and also the most important subsistence activity, although fishing is also important for some coastal villages and hunting for some villages along the forest road.

- In FY06, fisheries research was launched on the lagoons and large lakes to monitor the impact and distribution of fishing, the abundance of fish populations and their reproductive cycles. The results helped define interior regulations for fishing in the newly proposed CDNP-CBNRM zone to help reduce over-exploitation. The presence of research assistants on the water helps maintain dialogue between fishermen and the park. Catches of fish are monitored on a monthly basis on the large lagoons and lakes which allows fish distribution and abundance to be studied spatially and temporally.

- In FY06, as part of Michelle Wieland‘s doctoral study (University of Minnesota and Fulbright Scholar), a mammal survey was conducted in different habitats to look at different levels of human impact on mammal populations. This will help understand the effect of fishing and hunting villages on small mammal populations around the villages.

Meetings with village groups to define agreements for sustainable use of natural resources in return for technical support and subsidized equipment

- To develop village activities which use natural resource, CDNP asked villages to send in small project proposals for partial financial support. Around 50 community groups submitted proposals of which a number were reasonable and could be feasibly supported and these were subsequently interviewed. Nine groups benefited from partial financial support: 4 women's agriculture projects that benefit over 100 women, 4 mixed agro-forestry projects, 1 fisheries project and 1 fuel wood project. In return for financial and technical support the groups signed agreements that bind them not to engage in other destructive activities and to use resources sustainably. The alternative activity agent of the park provides technical assistance and visits each project. He also helps establish interior regulations to help groups organize their work and divide benefits between participants.

- Currently the most successful projects are 4 women's projects that are cultivating manioc in savanna, as an alternative to slash and burn agriculture. This practice also reduces erosion and human-elephant conflict. For crops to grow in savannah, local seeds of *Mucuna pruriens* were used as a green manure to fertilize the soil. The resulting crops have been successful enough for group members to extend their fields for a second year of crops and for other people from the local communities to copy the activities without CDNP intervention.

- During a meeting with some 30 representatives of local NGOs at the CDNP headquarters in May 2005, constructive collaboration initiatives were established. NGO representatives expressed the need for support by the CDNP to introduce systems of sustainable fishing and said they would help promote the systems locally. They also supported the CDNP proposition to promote the introduction of regulations and licensed off-take of resources in the eco-development and multiple use zones, as a way to manage off-take.

- By FY06, more and more village groups had formed and copied existing projects on their own initiative. Some NGOs such as ADECOR representing some 100 fishermen, and who also received a CARPE small project grant, have asked the CDNP headquarters for technical support to identify factors contributing to resource reduction and to propose solutions.

Investment in expertise input, equipment and infrastructure to improve management at all levels.

- In mid FY04, two new senior management staff were recruited to provide the necessary management input at all levels. The CDNP work plans for the remainder of FY04 and for FY05 were discussed between the country director, the new project director, and the conservator, and several steps were implemented immediately. The newly recruited Assistant Manager arrived on site in July after a period of training in northern Congo to standardize procedures between WCS/ MEFE managed protected areas in Congo. The assistant manager introduced and optimized administration and logistics tracking systems, as well as in the organizing and training of surveillance teams (e.g. map reading and use of GPSs).

- In FY05, A Masters level socio-economic researcher and education agent were employed and trained by the WCS-Congo community research expert Dr. N. Gami. They were introduced at all the villages (25) around the Conkouati protected area. They participated at several community development workshops organized by WCS. Two fisheries research assistants were also recruited and trained by fisheries expert Victor Mamonekene, who helped establish a systematic monitoring system for fish and fisheries impact. Ongoing training includes the handling of GPSs and map reading, IT training (Excel, Word, GIS ArcView) and use of census techniques for senior research assistants (Master level). All ecoguard teams use GPS to track their patrolling missions and enter data sheets to describe events. The assistant conservator downloads the GPS track-files into GIS, which helps him identify areas of high pressure (poachers' camps, cable snares) and accordingly organize subsequent patrols.

Promote sustainable use of natural resources via ongoing education and sensitization, by developing posters and SU labels and packaging.

- In FY04, CDNP signposts with illustrated signs of practices that are prohibited in the CDNP were painted and posted at the main entrances to the park so that everybody entering the CDNP via these routes are now warned that they are entering a zone where bushmeat trade, commercial fishing, and carrying of weapons is illegal. Adapted signposts will also be made to mark the CDNP boundaries at sea. In FY05, educational posters were developed for all activity categories, namely surveillance, ecological research, fisheries research and education and sensitization. In FY06, educational leaflets were developed to promote sustainable fishing for distribution in the fishing camps and villages. Subsequently, the project has been invited by different local fisheries groups to attend their meetings. A logo was also drafted to represent environmentally friendly cultivated or produced products, which will be printed on packaging materials in the future.

Interior Regulations for a participatory management of the Community Reserve.

- In FY05, agreement protocols and interior regulations were discussed and developed with nine pilot projects that were launched as alternative sustainable income-generating activities to reduce over-hunting, over-fishing, slash and burn agriculture and archaic charcoal production. The agreements request that each community group uses natural resources sustainably and in turn benefit from partially subsidized materials. Three agriculture pilot projects and one fisheries project were launched in four villages along the coastal road. In FY06, 4 mixed agriculture/ agro-forestry projects and one fuel wood production project were launched in four villages along the forest road. About 200 adults and their families benefit from the pilot projects out of some 1200 families in and around the park. Progress of the agriculture and agro-forestry projects looks very promising. Lessons learned from the projects will help elaboration of further alternative livelihood activities

- Late FY06, the fisheries group ADECOR, asked for technical and scientific research assistance to identify the cause of reduction in shrimp production. The group includes many people from the hunting village Mpella and many poachers decided to convert to fishing and three villages have agreed to help them. The 4 villages have agreed to reduce the number of shrimp traps

they use, to place them only at the surface (to avoid catching breeding adults who live at greater depth), and to not fish shrimps during the dry season. The park suggested a number of potential solutions including monitoring, seasonal fishing and zoning and ADECOR members proposed other solutions including diversifying activities. They also welcomed establishing interior regulations to ease the running of their group.

Exploitation Zones

- Serious deficiencies and conflicts in land-use zoning have resulted from the lack of coordination and rigor in the allocation of oil and mining permits in relation to each other and with protected area and forestry concession zoning. It is unclear what inter-ministerial procedures exist to guide the allocation of industrial permits which might overlap or conflict with each other. No formal mechanism exists either for the resolution of conflicts when they arise. This results in that they either these problems go untreated and have resulting negative effects, or they evolve into confrontations which do not benefit the parties concerned on either side. The case of Conkouati-Douli National Park is an example of a serious problem area where oil, mining, and fishing industries have granted illegal permits to exploit inside the Park disregarding the Park. It is not only a inter Ministerial problems, since the MEFE controls the Man Fai Tai logging permit (now given to a new company) and has allowed it to continue operating inside the CDNP.

Success story

Developing a community based support, a functional Conkouati-Douli National Park and ensuring wildlife population recovery

At the beginning of FY04, CDNP had only 13 ecoguards and half of these maintained dual roles. Infrastructure was lacking and equipment scarce. In light of this it was not surprising that CDNP had serious management problems. Poaching was rampant and the complicity of local authorities rendered anti-poaching efforts impossible, research was limited to reconnaissance surveys, baseline data was old or absent, education and sensitization was limited to promises with no action, all of which rendered the local population bitter and generally "anti-park." Animals were present but direct observations were extremely rare.

In the past two and a half years CDNP has experienced an astonishing revival. Systematic ecological, marine and socio-economic data have been collected throughout the park, new education and alternative activities have been developed, and perhaps most importantly the attitude of local communities has changed completely. Ecological baselines for key species and data for many types of human impacts are available, systematic monitoring systems have been introduced for surveillance, ecology, fisheries and marine-turtle monitoring. Administrative systems function well and include the tracking of vehicles, personnel, expenditures and contracts. Improved infrastructure and equipment for education, research, offices and surveillance as well as systematic development of work plans, reports per activity and continuous capacity building, have added great functionality. The outcomes have been rewarding; observations of animals have become increasingly common, sitatunga and bush pig are a common sight on the beach, buffalo are seen in the savannas and gorillas and elephants have dared to venture out of the forest (Fig 3). The local communities see proof of the effect of conservation and relations with the park have improved. As they see that promises of education and alternative activity support are being realized people in local communities have formed groups and approached the park for technical support. They show willingness to change long-rooted unsustainable resource extraction practices, asking the park to help them find alternative techniques and ways to protect and improve the production of their resources. If the issues of industrial exploitation can be addressed, the CDNP will enjoy a sound and steady recovery with the support of local communities.

Figure 3: Increased number of direct observations of animals at Conkouati, 2006

3. CONCLUSIONS

The CBFP partnership approach helps sharing and exchange of knowledge for improving management of protected areas. Relations between NGO partner institutions are strong between field sites.

In terms of conservation, there is a tangible difference on the ground between Conkouati in FY04 and in FY06. Conkouati is currently a well run park with increased (and increasing) animal populations, greatly reduced poaching pressure, no illegal gold miners, standardized management systems (systematic biological monitoring systems, systematic reporting, tracking of cash & movements & personnel), much reduced tension between local communities and the park, ongoing environmental education and sustainable alternative activities at village level. The relations with the local communities have improved such that local communities are requesting technical assistance from the park. The conservation success is the result of hard work and the availability of funds to implement the work plan that led to these changes. The WCS-Congo and WCS-Conkouati team, as well as the motivated MEFE partners on site, are responsible for this. CARPE has been by far the most important donor for Conkouati between FY04 and FY06 and therefore greatly contributed to this conservation success.

As regards the landscape approach, the concept is very good for developing conservation in a wider context, to identify ways of connecting protected areas and ways to standardize surveillance and research methods, as well as ways to provide information between sites that improves their management. They are excellent in that different protected areas can adapt each others strategies. It enables a framework to be created where more heads are bent over problems that occur in different sites of the landscape.

The CARPE matrix is an excellent tool to track what remains to be done. It is the most efficient, functional reporting method we have ever come across. It is useful to plan activities evenly across all activity categories. Once in place, it greatly reduces the time needed to report and forces the project to manage activities within a planned timescale.

4. LESSONS LEARNED

The lessons learned from executing the CARPE program are that conservation stakeholders that often times do not collaborate sufficiently, perhaps for a variety of reasons, can actually work together and benefit from one another without losing the conservation principles that each stands for. It urges conservation partners to take into account each other's sites and work collaboratively for joint solutions.

The landscape approach of the CARPE program forces partners to think out of the box, and to see protected area management, CBNRMs, and exploitation zones in a bigger geographical context. The landscape approach demands that PA managers explore and know what is happening outside the PAs, which is an effective tool for conservation.

One major drawback with the CARPE program for Conkouati turned out to be the project's dependence on CARPE funds, which made up the bulk of the budget. As a result, some newly launched activities that should be ongoing (i.e. systematic ecological and fisheries monitoring, ecoguard patrols, education and alternative livelihood activities) and associated have had to be reduced. For Conkouati, for which the annual CARPE budget has now been halved has been devastating to our ability to undertake and effect conservation.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS:

The program works very well and has had an amazingly positive impact for the ROC section of the landscape. However, the landscape approach does not work well as regards funding distribution. Funding should be decided based on site-specific conditions, both in terms of achievements and conservation impacts (as valued by the CARPE evaluations), as well as based on site-specific conservation management challenges. Although landscapes can be viewed in terms of surface area, serious differences exist between different sites in the same landscapes and between landscapes. Some areas maybe super biodiverse and large but needing less conservation money because management systems have been in place for a long time. Other sites may be smaller or less diverse but without systems in place and therefore needing more funds to set up systems. Some sites may have used CARPE funds to achieve important conservation goals and other sites (though perhaps in need of conservation dollars) may have had less of an impact with valuable CARPE resources. These different sites may all be found in one landscape and it is therefore not advisable to allocate funds within any one landscape based on surface area.

The unanticipated (important reduction in CARPE funds between the 2 phases results in having to lay off half of the existing personnel (which strongly impinges upon work ethic and motivation) and to reduce or even cancel activities in the work plan. Work plans for the second phase were developed to fit a certain estimated budget and when only 40% of this budget is allocated, it becomes impossible to implement the work plan efficiently. To avoid these potential disasters from fluctuations in funds between phases, we would recommend that CARPE stores a financial buffer between phases to allow either a gradual reduction (i.e. 10% per month until the intended reduction) or that reductions are implemented after a certain time (i.e. 9 months), which would allow projects the time to find funds elsewhere to absorb the anticipated reduction without resulting in disaster. Conkouati is at the moment of implementing the CARPE financial reduction, faced with an unanticipated new threat from petroleum exploration. A reduction in surveillance personnel at this stage, because there is no time to find other funds to cover the gap, may have serious consequences for conservation.

6. ANNEXES

Annex I – items purchased with US government money over US$ 5,000

a) Please refer to the Conkouati - ROC, WCS, FY06, Equipmt-DisposalLetter for the list of equipment

Annex II – disposal plan for items in Annex I above

b) Please refer to the Conkouati - ROC, WCS, FY06, Equipmt-DisposalLetter for the disposal plan

Annex III – GIS files of landscape zones and limits

These shape files will be sent directly to Jackie Doremus as requested.