



Raise Plus Small Business Set Aside IQC

MID-TERM ASSESSMENT OF THE CENTRAL AFRICAN REGIONAL PROGRAM FOR THE ENVIRONMENT (CARPE)

Final Report

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USAID
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List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

AFLEGT	African Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade
AFR	Africa Bureau (USAID)
AWF	African Wildlife Foundation
BSP	Biodiversity Support Program
CAR	Central African Republic
CARPE	Central African Regional Program for the Environment
CAWHFI	Central African World Heritage Forest Initiative
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CBFP	Congo Basin Forest Partnership
CBNRM	Community-Based Natural Resources Management
CBO	Community Based Organizations
CEFDHAC	Conférence sur les Ecosystèmes de Forêts Denses et Humides d'Afrique Centrale
CEFRECOF	Centre de Formation et de Recherche en Conservation Forestière
CI	Conservation International
CIB	Congolais Industrielle du Bois
CIFOR	Center for International Forestry Research
CIRAD	Centre de coopération internationale en recherche agronomique pour le Développement
CITIES	Convention on the International Trade of Endangered Species
Co-Co-Si	Comite pour Coordination du Site
COMIFAC	Commission on the Forests of Central Africa
CTFS	Center for Tropical Forest Science
CTO	Cognizant Technical Officer
DFID	Department for International Development
DFGHI	Dian Fossey Gorilla Fund International
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
DROC	Democratic Republic of Congo
ECOFAC	Conservation and Rational Use of Forest Ecosystems in Central Africa Program
ENRA	Enzyme Refiner's Association
ERAIFT	Ecole régionale post-universitaire d'aménagement et de gestion intégrée des forêts tropicales
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FFP	Food for Peace
FORCOMS	Forest Concession monitoring systems
FSC	Forest Stewardship Council
FSN	Foreign Service National
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GFW	Global Forest Watch
GIS	Geographic Information Systems
GPS	Global Positioning System
GTZ	Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit
ICCN	Institut Congolais pour la Conservation de la Nature
IRM	Innovative Resources Management
IMAP	Information Management and Analysis Project
ITTO	International Tropical Timber Organization
IUCN	The World Conservation Union
LWA	Leader with Associates
LS	Landscape
MIKE	Monitoring the Illegal Killing of Elephants
MINFOF	Ministry of Forestry
MOV	Means of Verification
NASA/UMD	National Aeronautics and Space Administration/University of Maryland
NESDA	Network for the Environment and Sustainable Development
NPS	National Park Service
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NRM	Natural Resources Management
OCAT	Organizational Capacity Assessment Tool
OES	International Environment, and Scientific Affairs
OSFAC	Observatoire Satellital des Forêts d'Afrique Centrale

PA	Protected Areas
PASA	Participating Agency Service Agreement
PMP	Performance Monitoring Plan
RAPAC	Réseau des Aires Protégées d'Afrique Centrale
RCO	Regional contract officer
REBAC	Central African Botanist Network
REFADD	Network of African Women in Sustainable Development
REIMP	Regional Environmental Information Management Program
FRA	Request for Applications
ROC	Republic of Congo
RLA	Regional legal advisor
RSSA	Resources Support Service Agreement
SD	Office of Sustainable Development (Africa Bureau)
SI/MBG	Smithsonian Institution/Missouri Botanical Garden
SOF	State of the Forest Report
TCCB	Tayna Center for Conservation of Biology
TRIDOM	The Dja-Minkebe-Odzala Tri-National
UGADEC	Union of Associations for the Conservation of Gorillas and Community Development of the Eastern DRC
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNEP	United Nations Environment Program
UNESCO	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture
USFS	US Forest Service
USFWS	US Fish and Wildlife Service
USG	United States Government
WCS	Wildlife Conservation Society
WRI	World Resources Institute
WSSD	World Summit on Sustainable Development
WWF	World Wildlife Fund

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Purpose of Assessment and Methodology

CARPE II was authorized in 2003 for a 7-year period. After three years of implementation, the CARPE SO team felt that it was necessary to check the validity of the strategic approach based on expected and actual results at this mid-term point. The assessment was requested to look at three levels: **performance of the program** elements toward achieving their results; **the management structure** and how this is affecting the program performance; and the **overall strategic design** and how well it is moving the program to results that will ensure the long-term conservation of the natural resources in the Congo. These areas needed to be analyzed to determine if specific changes were needed in the program that would improve its effectiveness and help ensure that strategic objectives of CARPE are achieved. The following questions were asked:

- Is the program advancing on track, so that CARPE will reach its goals for Phase I by 2011, and for the overall program by 2015?
- Is CARPE design sufficient to ensure that the results and impacts achieved will be maintained beyond the LOP of CARPE?
- What are the priorities for maintaining and changing approaches of management and/or programming to ensure that CARPE is on track and that it stays on track?

USAID planned to use the answers to these questions to guide the mid-term decisions concerning program content, funding and management, in accordance with the obligation of FY 2006 funds and beyond. The timing of this assessment is made more salient because 2005 marks the end of the United States Government's commitment to the Congo Basin Forest Partnership (CBFP). An assessment at this time was seen as necessary to determine the results of the US effort in its participation in the CBFP via the Central African Regional Program for the Environment (CARPE), and to help CARPE strategize for the post-commitment era. One of the central questions for USAID and its partners is how CARPE and the CBFP integration should precede beyond the FY 2005 obligations, so as to most effectively achieve their two similar goals.

A four person assessment team was fielded in early October 2005 by Weidemann Associates in response to a RAISE PLUS IQC task order. The three US based members of the team initiated their work by reading key documents provided by the CARPE SO team. The team prepared a list of key assessment questions prior to initiating interviews with key actors. The team then conducted interviews with representatives of each of the US-based CARPE partners. The team felt that these 2-4 hour meetings were not sufficiently long to allow for a fully comprehensive understanding of the partners' views. Therefore, a questionnaire, with the team's key assessment questions, was prepared and e-mailed to each partner organization. Responses to the questionnaire, requested to be anonymous, were received from all but two CARPE partners.

The US based members traveled to Kinshasa on October 29, 2005 where they were joined by the fourth team member, who served as a local area specialist. The team spent three weeks in Central Africa, conducting interviews and site visits. The team spent one week in Kinshasa, a second week in Gabon with meetings in Libreville and site visits and interviews in the Gamba landscape. During the third week the team flew from Kinshasa to Goma and divided, in order to maximize their resources and time. The team leader focused on the Virunga landscape with travel to Rwanda (Kigali, Ruengheri, Volcanoes National Park), as well to the southern region of the Virunga National Park in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). The other team members flew to Epulu, DRC, to assess progress in the Ituri landscape and then visited Beni where they met with commercial loggers and CARPE partners. The team then returned to Kinshasa where they presented a draft set of conclusions and recommendations to the CARPE SO team, the USAID/Kinshasa mission director and to other mission officers.

The US based members returned to Washington, where after a few additional interviews with partners, a draft report was prepared during early December. This draft was submitted to the CARPE SO team leader in early January, 2006. After receipt of his comments, an edited draft report was sent to CARPE partners for their comments and suggestions. Taking these comments into consideration, a final report was prepared in February and submitted to USAID. In addition, the assessment team leader coordinated the preparation of public presentation materials (Power point and written summary) that were presented to the US based partners in late February, and a separate memorandum was presented to the SO team leader on future procurement recommendations.

Executive Summary

CARPE (Central African Regional Program for the Environment) is USAID's major conservation program in Central Africa and is one of USAID's largest field based conservation programs. Central Africa contains the second largest contiguous moist tropical forest in the world, representing nearly 20% of the world's remaining biome of this type. These forests are under significant threat. Most countries in the region remain fragile, many having suffered from war with large displacements of their populations. However the governments of the Congo Basin have recognized the threat to their forests. By signing the Yaounde Declaration in 1999, the region's presidents created a framework and action plan to achieve shared forest conservation objectives.

USAID began CARPE as a 20 year program in 1995. The current phase of the initiative, CARPE II, began in January, 2003, and will operate until September, 2011. CARPE II is carried on in nine countries with the strategic objective of reducing the rate of forest degradation and loss of biodiversity through increased local, national and regional natural resource management. The design of CARPE II corresponded with the initiation of the Congo Basin Forest Partnership (CBFP), an international agreement between governments, NGOs and the private sector reached at the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD), with the leadership of US Secretary of State, Colin Powell and the Government of South Africa. The United States Government (USG) commitment to the CBFP was to support forest conservation in eleven large landscapes in the region.

The USG chose to use the CARPE II as the program umbrella for most of the activities that it would finance as part of the CBFP, with a commitment to provide \$53 million over three years (FYs 2002 to 2005). An Interagency Advisory Board was established in Washington to provide advice and recommendations related to CBFP activities. CARPE also works in the Virunga landscape that includes territory in Rwanda and Uganda, that are not CBFP signatories. Approximately \$15 million/year was planned for the total CARPE program, with \$12 million dedicated to the landscape program (all but the previous CARPE I funding level of \$3 million/year). Only activities in support of conservation of the 11 CBFP landscapes were to be considered for funding that drew on the \$12 million per year. USAID management costs, cross-cutting non-CBFP activities and Virunga landscape funding all had to be funded from the original \$3 million, and USAID management costs were capped at \$1 million/year.

In order to move quickly into an implementation phase, USAID issued Requests for Assistance for work across the landscapes. They were issued to each of the four non-government organizations (Implementing NGOs) that had initiated the concept of the CBFP, that had major programs in the region and that had pre-competed Leader with Associate (LWA) cooperative agreements with USAID. The implementing NGOs divided up the landscapes and agreed on partnering arrangements within the landscapes. USAID accepted this division of responsibilities. USAID also negotiated PASA agreements¹ with six USG federal agencies and with two other organizations to provide various complementary "cross-cutting" services to the CARPE program, on demand. CARPE agreements with the Implementing NGOs require "substantial" matching funds from the landscape leaders amounting in aggregate to more than 50% of the USAID contribution.

CARPE II has been operational for almost three years; and the USG funding commitment to the CBFP has been met. The CARPE SO team felt at this mid-term point that it was necessary to check the validity of the strategic approach, based on expected and actual results, and to use the answers to these questions to guide mid-term decisions concerning program content, funding and management in accordance with the obligation of FY 2006 funds and beyond. Thus, a four person team was fielded in October, 2005 by Weidemann

¹ Participating Agency Service Agreements (PASAs) are agreements that transfer funds and services between US federal agencies.

Associates to provide an independent assessment of CARPE II. This assessment has addressed three major issues: **performance of the program** elements toward achieving their results; **the management structure** and how this is affecting the program performance; and the **overall strategic design** and how well it is moving the program to results that will ensure long-term natural resource conservation in the Congo.

CARPE Program Performance to Date:

CARPE has three Intermediate Results (IRs):

IR 1: Natural resources managed sustainably;

IR 2: Natural resources governance (institutions, policies, laws) strengthened;

IR 3: Natural resources monitoring institutionalized.

Landscape activities (IR 1): The vast majority of program resources (approximately 80%) have been dedicated to achievement of IR 1 landscape objectives. Although most field activities have been operational for less than three years, with appropriate adjustments, CARPE II is and should stay on track to achieve its goals of reducing the rate of forest degradation and protecting biodiversity by 2015. The move from Phase I to Phase II successfully built on limited CARPE I and on other NGO programs, to leverage the established advantages of the implementing NGOs. Much of the progress to date has been focused on protected areas, especially national parks, within landscapes, where implementing NGOs have the most experience.

In most of the landscapes there has been significant progress made in regard to biological and socio-economic surveys and in regard to the initial zoning of landscape units, especially within protected areas; the program is on track towards meeting indicator targets to create baselines and to convene the land use planning process by September 2006. Implementing NGOs also work closely with government agencies charged with protected area conservation and management and have built the capacity of these agencies' personnel. However, the implementing NGOs have limited relationships with government agencies that have the legal authority to work in the landscape areas that are not protected areas (PAs), such as forest concessions. Progress in working with forest concessions and in establishing community based natural resource management (CBNRM) reserves is limited. The variety of conservation strategies being used to address threat-based challenges is field-testing a wide range of innovative models. These models push the limits of implementing recent enabling legislation and, with continued refinement, are on track to provide a sound basis for conservation management. Little progress has been made in addressing conservation threats, such as bushmeat hunting, that occur in non-protected and non-concession forests.

Factors that have the greatest influence on the achievement of goals at the landscape level include: a long-term NGO presence, previous investments in infrastructure and local partner capacity, an existing information base for planning/management, NGOs' success at leveraging additional funding, and commitment by the lead NGOs to convening the land use planning process. The main constraints to progress at the landscape scale include: remoteness, difficult access to the sites, lack of an information base for planning/management, lack of infrastructure, lack of agreements in place to work with government agencies mandated to manage lands outside of PAs, low tourism potential, and low local partner capacity. In several landscapes, insecurity makes access impossible or dangerous in parts of the landscape.

Landscape partners or teams in perhaps half of the landscapes have not worked well together to achieve landscape-wide objectives. This is attributed to competitiveness between the partners, poor management skills or lack of interest in management by landscapes leaders, and USAID's practice of segmenting landscape funding, rather than channeling all funds through the landscape lead organization. The extent of the authority of landscape leaders is not clearly defined. The partnerships that were most effective were those where the respective capacities of the NGOs were the determining factor in assigning functions and

responsibilities. At sites where long-term collaboration was already ongoing, the appropriate roles were clear. At newer sites, some partnerships were formed without a good mutual understanding of comparative strengths as the basis for organizations' roles. Collaboration across the program's landscapes is also less than desirable. Although many useful models are being built, there has been insufficient progress in exchanging and replicating models or in sharing information, ideas and lessons learned across landscapes.

Cross-cutting activities and objectives (IR2 and IR3):

Four major cross-cutting issues that have the most potential to contribute to the strategic objective and program results and which are within the comparative advantage of CARPE partners are: a) Capacity Building, b) Policy and Governance; c) Bushmeat, d) Remote Sensing Technology. Very limited funding was provided to address these objectives; the funding was dispersed across a confusing array of USG and NGO organizations whose efforts were unevenly implemented in scope, scale, and geographic focus. The roles of the federal agencies are not clearly understood by the partners as a whole. The "market approach" with Implementing NGOs encouraged to buy their services has failed. Only the US Forest Service (USFS), the National Aeronautics and Space Administration/University of Maryland (NASA/UMD), World Resources Institute/Global Forest Watch (WRI/GFW) and the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) have a proven track record that is likely to lead to a continuing demand for their presence in CARPE.

Capacity Building: The mix of NGOs and federal agency service providers has not effectively addressed the capacity building objective. NGOs have strengthened park management and surveillance capacity, but impact on Community Based Organizations (CBOs) and local NGOs has been much less effective. Federal agency capacity-building efforts have been too sporadic (lacking continued follow-up), and too limited in scope to have made broad program impact.

Policy: One major success of the CBFP has been to stimulate donor participation in forestry and conservation policies. The Commission on the Forests of Central Africa (COMIFAC) *Plan de Convergence* provides a vehicle for encouraging the countries of the region to come together on policy issues. At the national level (and sometimes at the Basin level), several major policy issues have been identified and most are being addressed by donors. CARPE partners appear to be influencing national policies by taking the lead in: a) establishing community management reserves and concession agreements and (b) developing landscape tourism plans.

Bushmeat: CARPE participation in the Bushmeat Task Force underscores the need to integrate bushmeat strategies with other programs such as poverty reduction, livelihoods, mining, and health. Much of CARPE's focus to date has been on monitoring the severity of the bushmeat problem. CARPE natural resources management (NRM) activities outside of protected areas (forest and oil concession enforcement, local control) show promise for reducing small scale bushmeat hunting.

Remote Sensing Technology: The natural resources monitoring supported by NASA/UMD, despite remaining gaps, is providing objective assessments on the status of forest cover. This work is valued, not just for the quality of the data provided, but also for its political neutrality. Monitoring will continue to require CARPE resources and greater availability of funds could accelerate the establishment of necessary baselines across the landscapes. COMIFAC demands and the related State of the Forest monitoring will require increasingly precise information that can be systematically collected at the field level using comparable methodologies.

Progress in meeting USG objectives for the CBFP: The CBFP has been extraordinarily successful in bringing the conservation needs of the Congo Basin to a broader audience and in increasing donor funding (\$150 million). Active French "mediation" of the CBFP and COMIFAC should continue to be welcomed and supported by CARPE and by the USG.

CARPE Management Structure

CARPE's management structure, operating in 9 countries, 11 landscapes and 15 landscape segments, and having 12 principal partners, is under-funded and over-performing. Transfer of CARPE management responsibilities to the field has effectively and appropriately focused USAID's attention on the field. The cognizant technical officer (CTO) has been extremely active and available to all parties, but has been hampered by a small fluctuating staff and with problems relating to CARPE's field-based focal points. Despite the presence of the CARPE office in Kinshasa, the overall USG presence and attention to environmental issues in the region have been insufficient, with very limited US Embassy capacity.

Program roles and responsibilities are clearly established with the major exception of national governments and landscape leaders (see above). Host government expectations of involvement have not been met; even when they have accepted that no CARPE funding will be provided directly to them. Indirect support provided via partners has not been well documented or acknowledged by governments. CARPE's annual planning process essentially ignores national governments, although it typically involves locally-based government officials in the landscapes.

The most significant problems in agreement execution relate to: a) long delays in the approvals of sub-contracts and sub-grants during periods of short staffing in the regional contract officer's headquarters RCO/Nairobi; b) absence of Regional Legal Advisor support and c) continuing revisions in work plans and in the performance monitoring plan (PMP) reporting requirements. The degree of USAID's substantial involvement as defined in the cooperative agreements appears to be normal, but has been exercised aggressively by requiring great detail in the work plan and in the monitoring requirements. Most partners have accepted or have seen value in USAID's insistence on planning and monitoring at this level of detail.

The structure of the cooperative agreement awards encourages a strong landscape focus. Budgeting and monitoring by landscape segment has put a very heavy load on the CARPE SO team, with the team involved with annual budget decisions on landscape segments that would be described elsewhere as mini-projects (funding as low as \$150,000/year).

CARPE Assessment of Strategic Design

Essentially, CARPE II has three major design elements:

1. Grants to large international conservation NGOs (Implementing NGOs), leveraging their country and regional presence to implement field "landscape" level activities;
2. A set of mostly US-based organizations that work across landscapes in common thematic areas such as multiple-use planning, forest monitoring, policy and governance and uncontrolled hunting;
3. A regional program management structure based in USAID Kinshasa, with country-specific focal points as program antennae and with modest backstop and coordination functions in Washington.

The rapid scale up and five-fold increase in CARPE funding led to a number of the following design compromises:

- Too strong of a linking of funds to geographic areas, without adequately linking them to existing governance regimes.
- Insufficient USAID management structure for the scope of the undertaking.
- A design that did not facilitate important cross-cutting, transversal functions such as monitoring, policy coordination, and determining best practices that were dispersed across a confusing array of USG and NGO organizations.

- Disproportionate support to one of three intermediate results (IR1) via a strong weighting of funding and through emphasis on local, mostly protected area-level implementation and capacity building.

The lack of a USAID presence has been insufficiently bolstered by other CARPE/CBFP resources such as the State Department Regional Environment Officer, the focal points and Washington based partners. However, where it has received adequate attention, the basic design for working in non-presence countries appears sound. CARPE needs to increase resources to cross-landscape, system-wide, and regional concerns, especially as other donor funds become more available at the field level and within landscapes.

The “landscape” approach has succeeded as a concept by shifting attention from a nearly exclusive focus on parks (and protected areas), but it has built limited local buy-in. In spatial terms, landscapes are project units and do not correspond to existing administrative planning units. Landscape leaders and partners need to develop suitable mandates and links with institutions beyond the parks and forest departments to appropriately support local governance. This can be done by balancing landscape with other elements of a conservation program.

Major Recommendations for the remainder of CARPE II:

The report sets forward six major programmatic recommendations and then provides additional recommendations for the resolution of significant CARPE II issues. In some cases several program options are presented in order to encourage further discussion and more in-depth analysis by USAID and by the partners, since the assessment team was not able to review in depth all of the elements of this complex program. It is anticipated that these recommendations will prove useful to the team that will soon assist the CARPE CTO team in designing the next phase of the CARPE II program. Finally, no specific procurement-sensitive recommendations are included in this document, due to USAID regulations.

Programmatic Recommendations:

- Improve program balance by focusing more attention and resources on IRs 2 and 3 and on program management. With the experience of the past three years, funding can be allocated much more efficiently than by using the artificial proportional limitations established when CARPE II was initiated.
- Strive to link landscape programs more closely to existing governance structures and to increase host country participation in program decision making. The weakness of host government and even local citizen support for the landscape programs is CARPE II’s “achilles heel” that needs to be addressed.
- Diversify the skill base of CARPE partners working in landscapes to ensure that livelihood needs, as well as conservation threats, are addressed in a way that builds a local constituency for conservation. The teaming agreements for the landscapes need to provide a greater diversity of talents during the remainder of CARPE II.
- Gradually focus less attention on protected areas (PAs) in landscapes, and focus increased attention on addressing threats and opportunities in forest concessions and with communities. Placing priority attention on PAs was an appropriate strategy for the initial phase of CARPE II, but cannot remain the center of attention in the next phase, if CARPE’s landscape goals are to be attained.
- Reinvigorate the USG financial commitment to CBFP and back that commitment with increased staff attention to basin-wide and national policy issues. The USG should continue to provide leadership for this program by announcing a continued USG commitment to CBFP of at least \$15 million/year through 2015. Just as importantly, the State Department and USAID can build on the initial success of the CBFP with some modest increases in staffing and with active involvement in key policy issues.
- Increase emphasis on country-level and basin-wide coordination (country teams, prioritization of non-landscape activities), while at the same time reducing the isolation of landscape programs and

improving opportunities for intra-landscape learning from successful models. A new CARPE support contract is recommended to sustain this effort.

Other Recommendations:

a. Tighten program focus: Focus CARPE activities on those programmatic or spatial landscape activities that will most directly reduce identified threats. Leverage recent CBFP partner contributions to selectively and efficiently limit unnecessary use of USAID funds. Limit “cross-cutting” federal agency involvement in the follow-on design to areas where they have a demonstrated comparative advantage.

b. Improve landscape performance: Continue to use and promote a landscape approach, but place less emphasis on the concept of “landscapes” as territorial units. Landscape programs need to move beyond first-stage targets (largely protected areas) and should deal with broader and difficult landscape issues, including livelihoods issues. Adjust designs to explicitly account for inevitable variability in conditions of stability/security.

Continue working through Implementing NGOs as the primary means to anchor the CARPE program, but adjust grant mechanisms to encourage more synergistic consortia that better integrate strengths of a wider range of partners. Insist that, where appropriate, teaming arrangements include improving livelihoods, forestry, local governance and sometimes, conflict resolution or other specialized contractors/sub-grantees. Conservation NGOs should seek partners that can provide the needed expertise.

Allocation of landscape funds:

Option a: Normally, all landscape funding should be funneled through the landscape leader. To eliminate double overheads, implementing NGOs would need to accept that these funds would be subcontracted or sub-granted to other Implementing NGOs, with no or low overhead charges. Exceptions would be made on a case-by-case basis, primarily when Trans-boundary landscapes do not lend themselves to joint planning and when threats can be isolated and addressed without unnecessary administrative and management overhead.

Option b: Maintain the present system of unbundled funding for segment leads, but increase the formal authority of landscape leads to approve/disapprove annual plans and budgets.

c. Prioritize and make better use of Cross-Cutting program components. Four major cross-cutting issues that have the most potential to contribute to the strategic objective and program results and which are within the comparative advantage of CARPE partners are: a) Capacity Building b) Policy and Governance c) Bushmeat, and d) Remote Sensing Technology for natural resource monitoring. Lead partners should be clearly identified for each of these issues in the next phase of CARPE procurement. The cross-cutting leads would be primarily responsible for recommending and sometimes executing CARPE-funded activities outside of landscapes, providing guidance but not funding within landscapes, and coordinating CARPE reporting. In each case, a CARPE II agenda (e.g. policy agenda, capacity building agenda) should be developed and clearly communicated to all CARPE partners. Recommendations for each of these four cross-cutting components are provided in Chapter 5.

CARPE should continue to support a small grant program in each country focused on strengthening the institutional capacity of NGOs and CBOs at both the national and landscape levels. Management of the small grants fund should be one of the tasks implemented through the proposed CARPE support contract.

d. Improve Program Management: Reduce and better distribute the Program’s management burden. The CARPE management burden is unusually heavy and the CARPE SO team’s capacity is limited and too dependent on one person. Bolster the USAID/CARPE staff in Kinshasa. Strive to reduce the number of management decisions that must be made by the CARPE SO team: e.g. approval of small grants, reduction in

the number of landscape segments. Establish a CARPE support contract (new mechanism) that will: support the CARPE country teams, increase capacity to manage the focal point and small grant programs, provide venues for country and regional exchange of lessons learned and successful models, coordinate non-landscape capacity building and policy activities, provide broad technical support to IRs 2 and 3, and perhaps assist the CARPE SO in program reporting. Make the Focal Points more effective elements of the USAID management team.

e. Continue program funding and reinvigorate USG support: Reinvigorate the USG's commitment and level of support to CBFP and CARPE objectives. Support to CBFP and CARPE is harmonious with broader USG and European goals of democratization and development in the region. Announce a continued USG commitment to CBFP through 2015. CARPE is an extraordinarily broad and ambitious program that could absorb much more than the funding presently available for it. A minimum of \$15 million/year (ideally more) will be needed through 2011 if CARPE is to have an opportunity to meet its Phase II objectives.

Increase USG staff and program support for the region. Establish a new International Environment, and Scientific Affairs (OES) position for Central Africa (only). Revitalize and broaden support for CBFP/CARPE by creating a new Washington-based coordination body that includes all CARPE partners and reaches out to other potential partners. Establish a more visible USG/USAID identification (branding) that will normally be used for CARPE-funded activities and commodities.

f. Improve CARPE's relationships with national governments, of which many do not appreciate CARPE and could limit its future success: For the remainder of CARPE II, a) establish a clearly defined role for local government officials in annual activity planning in landscapes and b) establish a clearly defined role for national government officials in approving an annual set of CARPE activities within each country. Make communication and coordination with national governments the primary task of re-invigorated Focal Points.

g. Develop a more precise approach to balancing conservation and development activities in landscapes: Possible options:

- Require landscape leaders in the Request for Applications (RFA) response to: a) analyze development needs in their landscape; b) identify development partners; and c) indicate a level of funding and a development approach needed to address the most critical needs and to alleviate threats to long-term conservation. A floor of 5% or 10% funding for development might be required by USAID.
- Announce the establishment of a second "development window" in the CBFP. Encourage donors to provide and implementing NGOs to search for development funding (matching funds or co-financing agreements with donors), to complement conservation funding in landscapes. This approach leaves development to the development specialists, and follows the approach of the World Wildlife Fund's (WWF's) partnering with the Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ) in Cameroon and the Central African Republic (CAR) and USAID/Kinshasa's funding for LacTumba.
- USAID/DRC and USAID/Rwanda, as well as the CARPE SO team leader should explore opportunities to access central and regionally-funded USAID programs (e.g. the Population-Health-Environment initiative; Office of Conflict Mitigation resources, FFP resources, Office of Energy resources), to supplement mission bilaterally-funded development activities in CARPE landscapes.
- Work closely with the Washington CARPE team to identify and help channel other resources to the CARPE (and CBFP) effort. For example, the USFWS has resources independent of those deriving from former CARPE monies that could be tapped by Congo Basin conservation entities.

I. Background and program history

Central Africa contains the second largest contiguous moist tropical forest in the world, representing nearly 20% of the world's remaining biome of this type. More than 60 million people live in the region, and they depend on their rich forests and on other biotic resources for their livelihoods and economic development. The Congo forests form the catchment of the Congo River, a basin of local, regional and global significance. The forests provide valuable ecological services by controlling and buffering climate at a regional scale and by absorbing and storing excess carbon dioxide released from the burning of fossil fuels, thereby helping to slow the rate of global climate warming. The forests also provide food, shelter and livelihoods for many of the region's people. Nearly half of the region targeted by CARPE is under forestry concessions, making productive forest use central to the region's economy. Deforestation trends and other threats to the forest are increasing in the region and, if unchecked, will ultimately negatively impact the development potential of the region.

Most countries in the region remain fragile, many having suffered from war and large displacements of their populations since the CARPE program began. However, the governments of the Congo Basin have recognized the threat to their forests and through the Yaounde Declaration, have indicated a desire to act. Several governments have begun to put appropriate legislative and policy frameworks in place, though implementation is lagging due to inadequately trained personnel and to other deficiencies in their capacity to implement these commitments. There is significant official recognition of the need for regional cooperation in tackling these environmental challenges, which has already led to cooperative work and to the formation of channels and structures for collaboration.

Recognizing the importance and difficulty of conservation in the Congo Basin, USAID began a 20 year program in 1995 aimed at reducing the threats of deforestation and the decrease in biodiversity. The current strategic phase of the initiative, CARPE II, began in January 2003 and will operate until September 11, 2011. CARPE II includes nine countries within the Congo Basin having the strategic objective of reducing the rate of forest degradation and the loss of biodiversity through increased local, national and regional natural resource management. CARPE II is using the knowledge and capacity built under CARPE I to implement sustainable natural resource management practices in the field, improve environmental governance in the region and strengthen monitoring capacity.

An evaluation of CARPE in 2001 concluded: "In sum, CARPE and its partners have worked with great cost-efficiency to deliver a complex, flexible and imaginative contribution to forest conservation in the Congo Basin...the first Phase of CARPE has been an extremely worthwhile effort, benefiting greatly from the intellectual diversity of the many organizations, both in the U.S and in Central Africa that have worked together to execute its program." Although CARPE I was viewed as successful, the evaluation revealed several issues that needed to be considered in moving forward. In its initial phase, CARPE focused on two main issues, namely, building an information base regarding the region's natural resources and building local capacity through a small grants program. CARPE I divided its effort into themes that included forestry, protected areas, and environmental governance. The program suffered from the combination of its broad focus and its small, \$3 million/year budget. The evaluation recommended, *inter alia*, that CARPE program management be moved to the field in order to raise the program's profile and operational effectiveness. The evaluation also suggested that CARPE Phase II focus more on how land and resource uses could be zoned and regulated to support the conservation needs for forests and biodiversity. The evaluation praised the small grants program, because of its ability to involve local people and to build local capacity; it gave high marks to forest monitoring activities. Given the small budget anticipated for a follow-on CARPE II, the evaluation recommended that the program limit itself to a few landscapes where an integrated approach would be supported.

Unforeseen during the evaluation, the timing of the design and implementation of CARPE II corresponded with the initiation of an international agreement reached at the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) where governments, NGOs and the private sector recognized the importance of conserving the Congo by creating the Congo Basin Forestry Partnership (CBFP). The essential background to the CBFP starts with the 1999 Yaounde Summit and the resulting Yaounde Declaration, where the region's heads of state created a framework and action plan (the *Plan de Convergence*) to achieve shared forest conservation goals. The Summit also endorsed the concept of conserving broad landscapes. The Commission on the Forests of Central Africa (COMIFAC) was created to monitor and to coordinate actions of the member states relative to the Declaration, with a small secretariat based in Yaounde, Cameroon.

In 2000, a WWF-sponsored priority-setting workshop in Libreville involving more than 150 national and international specialists, determined the conservation principles for the Congo Basin that led to the definition of eleven landscapes as the priority targets for conservation in the Congo Basin. These eleven landscapes stretch across six Central African countries (DRC, Gabon, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Equatorial Guinea, Democratic Republic of the Congo and Sao Tome-Principe²), and encompass 36% of the Congo Basin territory. As a next step, several large international conservation NGOs (WWF, WCS, AWF and CI) proposed to the USG that it initiate at the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) a major new program, named the Congo Basin Forestry Partnership, to stimulate international cooperation in the Congo Basin. They proposed that the USG also provide financial and political support for a major conservation program in these landscapes as the USG contribution to the CBFP. The USG agreed with this proposal and, in concert with the government of South Africa, Secretary of State Colin Powell announced the CBFP at the WSSD in 2002³. Priorities of the CBFP⁴ are to:

- Provide people sustainable means of livelihood through well-managed forestry concessions, sustainable agriculture, and integrated ecotourism programs;
- Help countries develop a network of effectively managed national parks, protected areas, and corridors; and,
- Improve forest and natural resource governance through community-based management, combating illegal logging, and enforcing anti-poaching laws.

The USG chose to use the CARPE II as the program umbrella for almost all of the activities that it would finance as part of the CBFP. The USG commitment to CBFP was to provide \$53 million over four years (FYs 2002 to 2005). An Interagency Advisory Board was established in Washington to provide advice and recommendations related to CBFP activities under CARPE. While CARPE landscapes encompass all of the CBFP areas, CARPE also works in one additional area, namely, in the Virunga landscape, that includes territory in Rwanda and Uganda.

While some components of CARPE I were extended for an extra year, USAID prepared to initiate the expanded CARPE II program. The program design focused primarily on the USG's commitment to conservation in the eleven landscapes, but the design team melded this element with the most successful components of CARPE I, and also fit the program closely to the Strategic Objective Framework used for CARPE I.

² Sao Tome-Principe is included in the CBFP although none of the eleven landscapes touch on its territory. Cross cutting activities may be carried out in that country.

³ Subsequently,

Secretary Powell traveled to Libreville, Gabon where the head of state, Omar Bongo, announced a commitment to establish thirteen new national parks and a national park service in support of the CBFP.

⁴ US State Department, Office of Environmental and Scientific Affairs, "Official Final CBFP Fact Sheet," 23 August 2002.

Revised for Performance Management Plan

CARPE II Results Framework

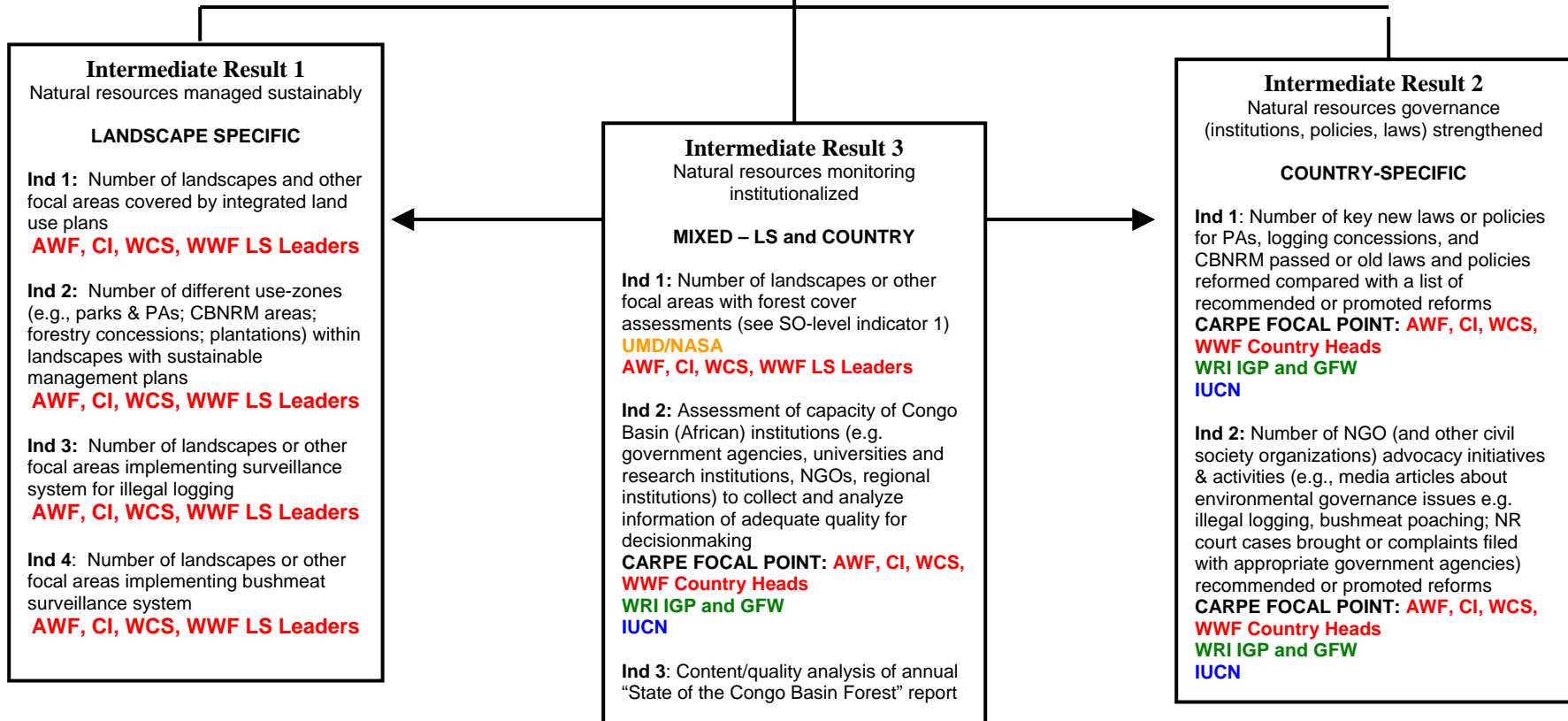
Reduce the rate of forest degradation and loss of biodiversity through increased local, national, and regional natural resource management capacity.

SO Indicators:

Ind 1: Change in area of forest from intact/pristine to “degraded,” modified, or secondary forest or to non-forest; and from “degraded” forest to non-forest

Ind 2: Population status for selected biodiversity “indicator” species such as: wide-ranging “landscape” species and/or ecological keystone species (e.g. elephants, large predators) and/or globally threatened species (such as, mountain gorillas, bonobos, etc.)

Intermediate Results



Approximately \$15 million/year was assumed to be available for the total CARPE program, with \$12 million dedicated to the landscape program (all but the previous CARPE I funding level of \$3 million/year). Only activities that supported the conservation of the 11 CBFP landscapes were to be considered for funding that drew on the \$12m per year. USAID management costs, non-landscape activities carried out by federal agency partners and funding for the non-CBFP Virunga landscape all had to be funded from the original \$3 million.

In order to move quickly into an implementation phase, USAID decided to issue Requests for Assistance for work across the landscapes. The RFAs were issued to each of four founding international non-government organizations (Implementing NGOs) under Leader with Associates (LWA) agreements, which had been pre-competed and had already existed between USAID and each of the four. USAID asked for proposals that would differentiate each of the eleven landscapes and also 15 landscape segments. The proposals from each NGO should propose a “landscape leader” and a “partnering agreement” for work in the landscape that might include other Implementing NGOs or other organizations (e.g. CARE, local NGOs). Although the historical record becomes somewhat murky at this point, the Implementing NGOs met several times and negotiated among themselves a division of responsibilities for the package of landscapes. When USAID received and reviewed the four applications, they found that they had been presented with a single proposal for each landscape and for each landscape segment. USAID accepted this division of responsibilities, but found that none of the applications were fully satisfactory. USAID provided comments and questions to each of the NGOs and requested revised proposals. After some further negotiation, the revised proposals were accepted. The division of responsibility for the Implementing NGOs within the eleven landscapes and their estimated life-of-program funding is provided in three tables located in Annex I.

About the same time, USAID also negotiated PASA agreements⁵ with six USG federal agencies to provide various complementary “cross-cutting” services to the CARPE program, on demand: US Forest Service: *Multiple use planning at the landscape scale addressing community use, protected areas, and extractive zones* ; US Fish and Wildlife Service: *Bushmeat Initiative*; US National Park Service: *Technical assistance to Gabon in protected area management*; NASA⁶: *GIS and forest monitoring*; Smithsonian Institution: *Biological assessment capacity building*; and Peace Corps: *Local Natural Resource Management education*.

In addition, a CARPE I contract with the World Resources Institute was extended to continue the work of its GFW program. WRI was asked to submit an application from its Forest Governance Program to lead policy studies and initiatives. An international agreement with the World Conservation Union (IUCN) was extended to continue support in the region through a regional NGO, CEFDHAC (Conference sur les Ecosystemes de Forets Denses et Humides d’Afrique Centrale).

Finally, a separate PASA with USDA and the University of Missouri was initiated in FY02, with the expectation that CARPE II would be managed by USDA. This PASA was eventually used to hire the CARPE II SO team leader and the CARPE SO team and to pay for certain other program management costs. All of these CARPE management costs are “program-funded” rather than funded through USAID’s operational expense accounts.

Most of these CARPE partners began CARPE II activities in the region in FY2003. The CARPE SO team leader arrived in Kinshasa to open program operations at the USAID/Kinshasa office in January, 2003.

⁵ Participating Agency Service Agreements (PASAs) are agreements that transfer funds and services between US federal agencies.

⁶ NASA subcontracted with the University of Maryland for much of this program.

Status of Program Funding: The USG’s funding commitment to provide \$53 million from FY2002 through FY2005 to the CBFP has been met. USAID contributed \$3 million in FY 02 and \$45 million from FY03—05 (\$15 million each year, plus an additional \$1million earmarked by the US Congress for gorillas in FY 04 and \$2.5million earmarked for the Great Apes Conservation Fund in FY05). The US Fish and Wildlife Service and the State Department (\$2.25 million in ESF funds) funded the balance. The CARPE strategy statement recommends a funding level of \$15 million annually through FY2010.

In addition, CARPE agreements with the Implementing NGOs require “substantial” matching funds from the landscape leaders amounting in aggregate to more than 50% of the USAID contribution. Approximately \$150 million is also being “leveraged” from other CBFP partners: international donors and other non-USG sources.

II. Assessment of Program Performance

A. Performance at the landscape level

i. Analysis of progress towards land use planning and landscape management

The implementing partners originally proposed the landscape approach and identified the eleven priority landscapes. Later the Virungas focal area in Rwanda and the DRC also became one of the CARPE field locations. The landscape approach entails a systematic methodology to address threats both within and outside the protected areas, including deforestation, loss of habitat, pollution from oil extraction and mining, bushmeat trafficking, human migration and agricultural expansion, and other activities that involve both legal and illegal exploitation of natural resources. The CARPE strategy is based on the assumption that the landscape approach can mitigate these threats through improved natural resources management (NRM) planning, legal and regulatory reform, increased capacity, and broader stakeholder participation in the implementation of both policies and management. CARPE II’s strategic objective to “reduce the rate of forest degradation and loss of biodiversity through increased local, national, and regional natural resources management capacity” cannot be achieved without a broad, integrated approach that encompasses land uses other than protected areas.

Each landscape is unique and difficult to compare with the others. Criteria for choosing the landscapes included vulnerable and irreplaceable species or biodiversity richness, and/or ecosystems that had remained unusually intact or that were unique in the region. The delineation of landscape boundaries is being re-examined, and revised boundaries have been proposed by landscape leads for at least five of the landscapes to reflect a better understanding of the threats and options to address them. Several landscape level implementers also have determined that the greatest threats derive from far outside the landscape, especially the demand for bushmeat from distant urban markets or mining centers.

Implementing partners working in the landscapes have made significant progress in conducting biological and socio-economic surveys. There is not yet a consensus among all partners as to how to survey biodiversity. Most of the surveys within the CARPE landscapes are monitoring megafauna (elephants, gorillas), identifying populations, habitat, and migration patterns. This approach assumes that the populations of endangered megafauna are an indicator of the extent to which primary habitats are being protected. Other implementing partners argue that megafauna are not necessarily indicators of healthy, biologically diverse ecosystems, and that a more scientifically valid approach would be to monitor a much broader range of species, including plants, invertebrates, reptiles, amphibians and birds, as well as large mammals. The Smithsonian Institution/Missouri Botanical Gardens (SI/MBG) program has introduced an approach focused on plants and vegetation, which can form the basis for long-term inventory and monitoring, as well as for the delineation of zones and decisions on management practices within zones.

This more intensive approach to biodiversity monitoring is being carried out in the Monts de Cristal LS segment in Gabon and in the Ituri-Epulu-Aru LS in the DRC. However, some NGO partners argue that this level of monitoring would be too costly to be feasible as a basin-wide approach, and would require resources that could be better invested in other activities. An integration of the two approaches should involve identification of specific threats, endangered and/or sensitive taxa (both plants and animals), and interventions that are expected to have an impact on ecosystems, and application of the intensive approach in targeted areas, while continuing the megafauna surveys over a larger area.

Landscape strategies and protected area management plans have been initiated in most landscapes. Landscapes that have made the most progress have prepared draft strategy plans for the overall landscape, draft management plans for protected areas, and have initiated zoning in areas outside the protected areas, such as community conservation reserves, wildlife reserves within forest concessions, and fishing zones. Socio-economic surveys are an important element in the preparation of conservation plans, and are also generally the first step to gather information needed for planning and interventions outside the protected areas. All of the implementing partners have made significant progress in conducting the socio-economic surveys and in using them to further analyze threats from human activities in the landscapes. Only a few landscape teams have progressed to the point of preparing management plans for zones outside the PAs. The work plan targets for IR 1.2, in terms of land use plans adopted and implemented, will only be met partially. The performance monitoring plan (PMP) defines an “Adopted Land Use Plan” as one that “is legally recognized by the legal controlling authorities that govern the specific land use types (Parks Services, Forestry Ministry etc).”⁷ For the most part, the land use plans have not met this standard of formal or official adoption; nevertheless, the landscape partners are moving forward with the implementation of the plans. USAID has agreed that landscape partners should move forward with simultaneous implementation activities, while working towards convening a landscape planning process and the adoption of management plans.

Landscapes that involve a wide range of local and international partners, that are implementing interventions in several zones, and that are building synergy between conservation and development activities, tend to be ones in which implementing partners have had a long-term presence. These areas were less disturbed by conflict and NGOs were able to maintain a presence at times when they had to pull out of other areas. Landscapes in which the implementing NGOs have launched activities more recently, including the Salonga-Lukenie-Sankuru landscape and the Lac Toumba landscape segment, are still at the partner identification stage. Landscapes in which the NGOs have a much longer history of operation, such as the Sangha Tri-national (TNS), are much more advanced in terms of protected area conservation, as well as for broader land use management outside the protected areas. WWF has partnered with GTZ in TNS to address rural development, socio-economic and livelihood issues.⁸ Some of the NGO partners have been very successful at leveraging additional funding, by demonstrating that the landscape is a good investment for conservation and for possible future tourism.

All landscape implementers face enormous constraints, especially lack of national government investment in the protected areas and in park services personnel, who are very poorly paid. The governments may be providing even fewer resources in landscapes that appear to have low potential to generate revenues from tourism development. These factors also affect the extent to which NGO partners have been able to generate significant matching funds from other donors. Nevertheless, several landscapes, in which the implementing partners are relatively new, have overcome start-up challenges and have put in place a creditable range of activities in a short time.

⁷ PMP

⁸ Comments on draft evaluation report from WWF 02/03/2006

Table 1: Progress in meeting landscape level targets (as of September 2005)

Landscape, segment, partners, and country				Ind. 1.1 Number of landscapes and other focal areas covered by integrated land use plans	Ind. 1.2 No. of different use-zones within landscapes with sustainable management plans
1	Monte Alen - Mont de Cristal				
Seg 1	CI (SL)	Equatorial Guinea	Monte Alen	LUP process 25% convened	CBNRM and ERZ plans 25% achieved
Seg 2	WCS (SL)	Gabon	Monts de Cristal	LUP strategy 25% achieved	PA strategy document finalized
Seg 2	WWF	Gabon	Monts de Cristal		
2	Gamba Conkoati				
Seg 1	WWF (LL)	Gabon	Gamba Conkoati	Land use planning process convened Strategy Completed FY05	PAs LUP strategy 25% achieved; CBNRM strategy 20% achieved; ERZ LU design 70% complete
Seg 1	WCS	Gabon	Mayumba & Loanga NPs		PA management planning process 50% convened
Seg 2	WCS	ROC	Conkoati-Douli		PA & community reserve LUP process convened; PA design 50% & Community Reserve design 25% complete;
3	Lope – Chaillu – Louesse				
	WCS (LL)	Gabon		LUP Process 50% Pre-Convened	PA LUP processes convened, strategy documents finalized
		ROC			
4	Dja-Minkebe-Odzala Tri-National (TRIDOM)				
Seg 1	WWF (LL)	Gabon	Minkebe	LUP process 40% convened & plan 15% complete	PA Mgmt plans convened & design 10% complete; CBNRM & ERZs LUPs in progress
Seg 1	WCS	Gabon	Ivindo		
Seg 2	WCS (SL)	ROC	Odzala		
Seg 2	WWF	ROC	Odzala		
	WWF	Cameroon	Dja-Boumba Bek	LUP process 40% convened & plan 60% complete	50% of PA & 65% CBNRM LUPs complete; ERZ LUP design 100% complete
5	Sangha Tri-national				
Seg 1	WWF (LL)	CAR	Dzanga-Sangha	Strategy document 60% achieved; LUP 50% implemented	LUP convened & design 75% complete; CBNRM hunting, agriculture & logging zone strategies in progress
	WWF	Cameroon	Lobeke		PA & CBNRM 100% of LUP design complete; ERZ design 50% complete
Seg 2	WCS (SL)	ROC	Nouabale-Ndoki		PA Strategy document 75% achieved; community hunting/NTFP zones & wildlife management in timber concession zones in progress
6	Leconi – Bateke – Lefini				
	WCS (LL)	Gabon	Bateke	LUP process 25% convened	PA LUP process convened; CBNRM LUP process 25% convened
	WCS	ROC	Lefini		
7	Lac Tele - Lac Tumba				
Seg 1	WCS (SL)	ROC	Lac Tele	Land use planning process convened Strategy Completed FY05	Community Reserve LUP process convened
Seg 2	WWF (LL)	DRC	Lac Tumba		Scientific reserve LUP process convened & 30% of design completed; 40% of CBNRM LU design complete
8	Salonga – Lukenie – Sankuru				
	WWF (LL)	DRC	Salonga Lukenie Sankuru	40% Land use planning process convened	10% of LUP process convened
	WCS	DRC	Salonga NP		
9	Maringa - Lopori – Wamba				
	AWF (LL)	DRC	Lomako & Djolo	Land use planning process convened Strategy Completed FY05	PA and CBNRM plans 25% achieved as of FY05 (?) CBNRM & ERZ plans 25% achieved as of FY05 (?)
	CI	DRC	Kokolopori & ERZ		
10	Maiko-Tayna-Kahuzi-Biega				
	CI (LL)	DRC	Maiko - Tayna	LU Planning Process 50% convened	Maiko PA 50% LUP design complete; Tayna Reserve management plan 85% completed; UGADEC reserves LUP design 25% complete; Itombwe strategy 20% achieved
	WWF	DRC	Kahuzi Biega NP		
	WCS	DRC	Kahuzi-Biega & Maiko NPs Itombwe CCR		
11	Ituri - Epulu – Aru				
	WCS (LL)	DRC	Ituri - Epulu - Aru	LUP pre-convened	PA LUP phase 15% complete, including agricultural zoning
12	Virungas Focal Area				
	AWF (LL)	DRC	Virungas NP	Commenced LUP process	Virunga NP 40% convened
	AWF	Rwanda	Volcans NP		PA management plan exists

The management planning in most of the landscapes has focused on conservation plans for the protected areas, including national parks, faunal reserves, and community reserves, with less attention given to plans for forest, oil, or other mineral concessions; and for agricultural, fisheries, CBNRM, and rural/urban community infrastructure zones. The planning for production zones outside the protected areas reflects the NGOs' conservation priorities, with most of the effort concentrated on wildlife corridors (usually within forest concessions) and on buffer zones. Efforts to develop livelihoods programs have, so far, emphasized subsistence agriculture, fishing, non-timber forest products, and community-based NRM, and have involved small-scale pilot interventions and demonstrations.

The emphasis on conservation plans over development plans derives from the NGO partners' main concern which is to protect biodiversity and key endangered species such as elephants, gorillas, and bonobos. Not all of the NGO implementing partners agree with the priority placed by USAID on broader approaches to land use planning. Some landscape leads seem to assume that delineation of zones accomplishes the land use planning process, and therefore they had not made much progress on developing management plans for the zones. The implementing partners work closely with government agencies charged with protected area conservation and management and have built the capacity of these agencies' personnel. They have more limited relationships with government agencies that have the legal authority to work in the landscape areas that are not protected areas (PAs), such as forest concessions. Some of the NGOs said that they only have agreements with governments to work with national park agencies in the protected areas, and therefore have no mandate to work with other agencies, such as Eaux et Forêts, on land use planning outside the protected areas. Some of the conservation NGOs have in-house expertise, for example in forestry, that could contribute to the development of logging concession plans, but personnel in the field tend to be wildlife specialists.

The USAID SO Team evaluates progress based on implementing partners' performance, and makes annual incremental funding allocations based on the technical and financial performance of the grantees. Performance targets were included in the Cooperative Agreements, but are established in more detail through the approval of the annual work plan and monitoring system. In addition to the annual report monitoring matrix, the implementing partners submit Means of Verification (MOV) and a narrative report. The narrative reports highlight successes, explain deviations from the work plan, problems that have constrained progress, benchmarks that have not been met, mitigating circumstances or factors outside of the implementing partners' control, and plans to make up any deficiencies.

The SO Team evaluates the annual reports and proposed work plans and uses a point system to compare CARPE sites across the basin. The achievement of benchmarks is used to determine annual budget allocations, as well as the total amount of available funds, financial performance, and organizational and segment pipelines. Therefore, some sites have received high overall scores based on the annual report and work plan, but a low funding allocation, because of unspent funds in the pipeline for the landscapes. The performance-based management system is intended to inform program decision-making and resource allocation and to advance the adaptive management process. It is also perceived by the implementing partners as a competition, which requires them to commit to ambitious work plans to secure funding. The idea of competition is positive if it motivates implementing partners to a higher level of achievement, and if it does not lead to unrealistic target inflation.

Conclusions.

- Most of the landscapes have made significant progress on biological and socio-economic surveys and initial zoning of landscape units, especially within protected areas, and are on track to meet indicator targets to create baselines and to convene the land use planning process by Sept. 2006.

- The targets for formal or official adoption of management plans probably will not be met by Sept. 2006. Nevertheless, partners are proceeding with the implementation of management plans without formal approval.
- Factors that have the greatest influence on the achievement of goals at the landscape level include: long-term NGO presence, previous investments in infrastructure and local partner capacity, existing information base for planning/management, NGOs' success at leveraging additional funding; and commitment by the lead NGOs to convening the land use planning process,
- The main constraints to progress at the landscape scale include: remoteness, difficult access to the sites, lack of an information base for planning/management, lack of infrastructure, lack of agreements in place to work with government agencies mandated to manage lands outside of PAs, low tourism potential, and low local partner capacity. In several landscapes, insecurity makes access impossible or dangerous in parts of the landscape (LS).
- Some implementing partners proposed over-ambitious work plans, and therefore did not meet their targets. The performance management system has proven effective in identifying sites where lagging implementation indicated a need to review resource allocations.

ii. Effective integration of LS partners

The development of strong linkages for cooperation between implementing partners is an important outcome for this phase of CARPE, especially linkages to expand the landscape approach to land use planning outside the protected areas. Development of land use plans for concession areas and other productive land use zones will require a greater level of commitment among partners to share best practices to successfully combat threats such as illegal logging and bushmeat trafficking. The implementing NGOs will also need to engage with additional partners, including government agencies such as Eaux et Forêts, private sector concession holders, and a broader range of local NGOs in the rural development and civil society sectors.

Lack of consensus and communication between partners has hindered planning and implementation in several landscapes. To some extent, this is due to differences in CARPE partners' management or conservation approaches. Some NGO partners emphasize the short-term need to secure protected areas, investing in training, equipment and infrastructure for eco-guard patrols. Other implementing partners focus on conserving protected areas by investing more resources into long-term research, to better understand the ecosystems and how to manage them, as well as to analyze the threats to protected areas, in order to design interventions to counteract them. Some NGOs direct efforts towards strengthening partners' capacity, while other NGOs are trying to extend their own capacity to tackle development and livelihoods issues.

Strong collaborative partnering relationships between international NGOs seem to be more the exception than the norm. Sites that have not experienced these problems include the Ituri-Epulu-Aru and Leconi-Bateke-Lefini landscapes, where only a few organizations form the partnership. The Gamba-Conkuati landscape involves a complex array of NGO, government, and private sector partners working in an effective collaboration. Trans-boundary interaction has included a formal cross-border landscape meeting which was held in 2005. Cross border threats have been identified and a draft action plan to address these threats has been developed. The Dja-Minkebe-Odzala Tri-National (TRIDOM) and Sangha Tri-national landscapes have demonstrated good cooperation, in spite of the difficulties of trans-boundary coordination.

Examples of poor coordination among LS partners that were cited in interviews implicated both landscape leads and their non-lead partners. Landscape leads complained about lack of information about partners' activities, leading to possible duplication of effort; also late or incomplete submission of reports, work plans and means of verification (MOVs). Non-lead partners criticized the convening of the land use planning process, especially where partners had not been fully included in the process. Other coordination issues

involved management, performance and reporting problems; personality conflicts; and inadequate staff presence in the field. The response to questions about whether CARPE partners shared a common vision were mixed; but there were enough negative responses to the written questionnaire to indicate that there was not a clear consensus or a common vision for the landscape approach. This lack of consensus was confirmed through interviews with participants.

Landscape or segment leads have been designated for most sites, although at some sites this did not occur for administrative reasons.⁹ The SO Team leader has addressed questions about the role of the landscape leads and their responsibilities in several memos in response to implementing partners' questions. The performance monitoring plan (PMP) also provides very specific definitions of the terminology used to determine achievement of benchmarks, such as 'Land Use Planning Process Convened.' This benchmark is reached when "a finished, written strategy exists that plans tasks and responsibilities for a specified timeframe, at the end of which the entire landscape will be macro-zoned and some of the preliminary tasks have already begun (the landscape unit plan is the ultimate product of the strategy)."¹⁰ Nevertheless, implementing partners still expressed confusion, especially about the LS Leads' role in initiating this process, in deciding which partners should be involved, and in ensuring their input in the plan.

Landscape leads also pointed to existing structures, such as the *Comités de Coordination du Site (Co-co-si)* in the DRC, and suggested that they should convene the land use planning process. The Co-co-si committees were created to provide a coordination mechanism for the protected areas during the conflict. However, there still exists a great deal of confusion among national government representatives about the landscape approach, the delineation of the eleven landscapes, and what is meant by land use planning. It seems unlikely that the Co-co-sis are ready to take over the leadership for land use planning, although increasing local government officials' capacity with the objective of transferring this role to them, should be a priority.

According to the CTO's memo dated 3/16/2005, landscape leads are responsible for "preparing the integrated Annual Work Plan, Budget and managing the landscape/segment program according to their agreement with 'sub-partners' and they are also accountable to USAID for the results which are the sum of the efforts for the constellation of CARPE partners, whether they be sub recipients or not. CARPE expects that each landscape/segment leader should have a written agreement with the sub partners that, at a minimum specifies the administrative and management arrangements."¹¹

Most LS leads said that they see their role as a facilitator, rather than as a coordinator or leader of the other implementing partners. Some are reluctant to recruit additional partners, as this increases their management workload. They also find the process of entering into agreements with partners to be cumbersome and time consuming. In several landscapes, implementing partners receive funding through cooperative agreements with USAID, rather than through cooperative agreements with the landscape lead. Especially in these cases, where they do not have a prime and sub-recipient relationship, the landscape leads are concerned that they do not have authority to compel partners to meet performance requirements. They also would prefer to not have the added responsibility of managing partners.

Poor cooperation between NGO partners has not yet led to delays in implementing activities in the landscapes. Significant progress is being made in landscapes, even where collaboration has been most problematic. However, the lack of exchange of ideas, information, best practices, lessons learned, and

⁹ CTO Memo 3/16/2005

¹⁰ PMP

¹¹ CTO Memo 3/16/2005

successful models for replication, has the potential to undermine CARPE's potential as a regional program, addressing basin-wide threats to biodiversity and to forest degradation.

To compare progress between landscapes in terms of their achievement, NGO partners' vision for the landscape approach and their commitment to land use planning should be considered. CARPE and the participating NGO partners should build consensus for a common vision for the program, by engaging in partnerships with organizations that can provide expertise in areas in which the conservation organizations are weak; also in providing leadership to convene LS partners and involving them in strategy and work plan development; ensuring good information exchange between LS stakeholders; outreach to community organizations, private sector actors in the LS, and government agencies managing lands outside the PAs.

Conclusions

- The partnerships that are most effective are those where the respective capacity of the NGOs was the determining factor in assigning functions and in specifying the division of responsibility. At sites where long-term collaboration was already ongoing, the appropriate roles were usually clear. At newer sites, some partnerships were formed without a good mutual understanding of comparative strengths as the basis for organizations' roles.
- In cases where implementing partners receive funding through cooperative agreements with USAID rather than through cooperative agreements with the landscape lead, they do not have a sub-recipient relationship with the landscape lead. This can exacerbate poor collaboration, as the partners are not compelled to cooperate with the LS lead and with other partners in the way that a sub-recipient would be.
- Although many useful models are being built that should be replicable across landscapes, the long-term potential for negative consequences due to ineffective partnerships is the failure to exchange and replicate models, and to share information, ideas and lessons learned.
- The factors that seem to contribute most to effective collaboration include a shared perception of threats that demand priority attention, and a clear understanding and appreciation for partners' strengths in terms of approaches or methodologies. Integration has been least effective where NGO partners were perceived to be parachuting experts in, rather than providing long-term, field-based staff with knowledge and experience at the site, and where partners were not involved in the development of landscape strategies and land-use plans.
- Some LS leads seem reluctant to make use of in-house expertise or of the expertise of other partners for land use planning; this applies, especially to the US Forest Service (USFS), even though the USFS has demonstrated clear leadership in multiple-use land planning, as well as long-term experience in planning for production forests, which is needed in concession areas and community extraction zones. The USFS can also help to develop cooperation with government agencies such as Eaux et Forêts in the Congo Basin countries. The role of the Implementing NGOs should be to provide leadership in convening, coordinating, and mobilizing the land use planning process, while building capacity to transfer the leadership of the process to local partners.

B. Progress on Cross-cutting and Country-Level Activities

Cross-cutting components were designed to address issues at the country level, such as policy, legislative and regulatory reform; and also to provide tools, technical specialization, and approaches that address issues across all of the CARPE landscapes. Cross-cutting partners include US federal agencies and other organizations providing specialized technical assistance in the areas of environmental governance, natural resources monitoring, and economic development.

The idea of cross-cutting activities emerged from a meeting of potential stakeholders in 2003. Because most of the CARPE funds are allocated for activities within the landscapes, it was envisioned that landscape leads would seek any needed outside expertise or technical services from qualified organizations in the broader “marketplace,” including NGOs, universities and federal agencies. For contractual reasons, the appropriated funds could not pass through the implementing partners to federal agencies; therefore USAID set up separate agreements with several of them. When the implementing NGOs still did not make use of the federal agencies’ expertise, USAID eventually developed specific scopes of work for their involvement. For example, the involvement of the USFS to conduct workshops and to prepare management plan templates and other training materials, has increased the understanding and application of land use planning approaches.

The implementing partners serving as the landscape and segment leads tend to be highly focused on their individual site-specific threats and conservation needs. In interviews, many of implementing partners said that they were poorly informed about the activities of other organizations working in the landscapes, but they acknowledged that a great deal of information is available through the CARPE website and from other sources. They explained that the problem is not that the information is not available. Rather it is more a case of information overload, and the need to concentrate on obtaining the data needed to meet reporting requirements for the landscapes for which they had an implementation or management responsibility.

i. Capacity Building

The cross-cutting component that has the most potential to contribute to the strategic objective and program results is the capacity building component. Capacity in the region is generally very low and a variety of donors are beginning to make investments in institutional assessments and organizational strengthening. While the focus of CARPE is on local solutions and on management models to address specific threats to landscapes, CARPE was designed to support human and institutional capacity building at multiple levels .

CARPE’s overall approach is to transfer technical skills and management capabilities to local level resource users. CARPE’s comparative advantages for capacity building are in the areas of land use planning, natural resource monitoring, strengthening the role of local NGOs and CBOs, and management of protected areas. Capacity building within CARPE is carried out at a number of different levels and encompasses a wide range of topics. CARPE has funded programs through which approximately 2000 participants were trained during FY 2005.

Building capacity of regional networks and civil society. Institutional strengthening efforts have targeted networks and regional organizations, such as the Conference on Central African Moist Forest Ecosystems (CEFDHAC), and the Network for the Environment and Sustainable Development (NESDA). CARPE support to NESDA, an Africa-wide NGO, has been primarily to its Cameroon branch office through assistance from WRI to strengthen its capacity to carry out policy analysis and to support legislative reform. The WRI approach to building both individual and institutional capacity for policy research is rigorous and intensive, and the participants involved in the program have been published in scholarly journals and have received international recognition. This gives the researchers the credibility to take objective, analysis-based positions on controversial topics. There is also growing recognition of NESDA’s institutional leadership in convening stakeholder groups around specific policy issues and its potential to influence decision-making.

The CARPE grant to the World Conservation Union (IUCN) is principally for support to CEFDHAC, which has organized workshops and other activities to promote advocacy initiatives and to mobilize network members to participate in national and regional initiatives, such as the African Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (AFLEG), CBFP, and the Commission on the Forests of Central Africa (COMIFAC). IUCN support for the Network of Local and Indigenous Population for the Sustainable Management of the Central African Moist Forest Ecosystems and for the Network of African Women for Sustainable

Development (REFADD), provides a unique opportunity for women and indigenous people to have a voice in these issues in the region.

Conference sur les Ecosystemes de Forets Denses et Humides d’Afrique Centrale (CEFDHAC) is a regional network composed of civil society representatives and is recognized as a forum through which a broad range of participants can engage in a dialogue on forest management and policy. CEFDHAC is often described as having an independent but complementary relationship to the Commission on the Forests of Central Africa (COMIFAC). Outside observers have commented that CEFDHAC is still loosely organized, that it has not developed strong internal structures, and that its capacity is spread thin. There are signs that CEFDHAC’s institutional capacity has been diffused rather than strengthened, possibly as a result of trying to take on too many activities, which has diminished the network’s ability to follow through on recommended actions and on its overall impact. Nevertheless, it has an important role to play. Institutional strengthening support should focus on defining this role, especially in relationship with COMIFAC and should focus on a limited set of objectives and on a clear plan of action.

Building capacity for civil society organizations and networks is a key element towards deepening understanding and advocacy for needed policy reforms, especially in the absence of broader USAID funded democracy and governance programs in the region. Capacity building programs for these organizations should increase analytical skills, demonstrate effective advocacy approaches, and assist them with planning, prioritization, and goal setting. In addition to civil society networks and researchers, WRI has built capacity in Cameroon for democracy and governance and for better understanding of natural resource policy issues within local and international NGOs, forestry agency technicians, local government representatives, and parliamentarians. In addition to providing natural resource information at the national level through the Interactive Forest Atlas, WRI/GFW has built capacity for natural resource monitoring at the sub-regional levels through COMIFAC and CEFDHAC.

Local communities and community associations. Training of community members at the landscape sites has been aimed at improving livelihoods and involving community members in the zoning and land use planning process. Strengthening of community based organizations (CBOs) has also focused on increasing their role in local governance through the creation of community reserves and associations. Practical livelihoods training has been conducted through demonstrations and extension, to: improve farming and fishing practices, introduce alternatives to bushmeat, to develop community based enterprises, such as eco-tourism, or to assist communities to re-establish trade networks, for example by organizing transport for produce to markets. Implementing partners have involved local communities in the zoning and land use planning process by training them in participatory, community mapping methods to delineate community land and resource use zones. Implementing partners have also organized training in data collection methods, to involve community members in baseline surveys and in natural resource monitoring. For example, WWF has trained members of a fishermen association and local NGO staff to collect data on the daily fish catch, including quantities, weight, and species; the amount sold per fisherman, and gross and net revenues. Building the capacity of CBOs to collect their own data, gives them a set of tools to manage the fisheries resource and to sustain the local economy. It also gives them a role in the planning process within the landscape.

In most of the Congo Basin countries, forest land is automatically state property, even though there is some recognition of forest communities’ traditional rights and forestry codes that allow a community forest reserve designation. Several implementing partners have gained official support for the creation of community reserves within landscapes, and have begun working with community-based organizations to develop conservation plans for these reserves, and to strengthen the CBO’s capacity to manage the reserves and implement the plans. In the Maiko-Tayna- Kahuzi-Biega landscape, the Tayna Gorilla Reserve was

established as a community conservation reserve through a Ministerial decree. The communities have established committees to map, zone, manage and patrol the reserve, and they hope to develop eco-tourism to generate revenues to sustain these activities and to create local employment. Several neighboring communities within the landscape have asked for assistance to develop similar community reserves. These communities organized the UGADEC (Union of Associations for the Conservation of Gorillas and Community Development of the Eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo) Federation in 2002. The Federation has an office in Goma, and is organized into five directorates for education and outreach, GIS, science, planning and community development, and administration and finance. Community development activities have focused on improving health services, and on creating awareness of links between human and environmental health.

Implementation of the small grants program under CARPE II was delayed due to contractual reasons. So far only a few local NGOs or community-based organizations have received grants or benefited from capacity building through the implementation of the grants, although leveraged funds were used for this purpose at some sites. In the Maringa-Lapori-Wamba landscape the CARPE small grants funds have been used to maximize results through local partners. AWF reports significant results made in strengthening local partnerships in the landscape through the small grants program.¹² In the Maiko-Tayna-Kahuzi-Biega landscape, Conservation International (CI) has provided subgrants (not small grants) to the Tayna Center for Conservation of Biology (TCCB), community organizations under UGADEC, and Vie Sauvage, with additional technical assistance provided by CI partners, DFGFI and BCI. These organizations are carrying out an array of conservation, development, training, and outreach activities within the landscape.¹³ Implementing partners should use the small grants funds to develop the capacity of local NGOs and CBOs to play larger roles in protected area conservation, community mobilization, land use planning, and economic development activities, in support of overall CARPE goals. A primary objective should be to develop organizations with the capacity to become full partners in CARPE's longer-term implementation.

National staff working at decentralized level. Most institutional capacity assessments have been limited to Park/Protected Area services units at the landscape level to identify training, equipment, and infrastructure needs.

National Park and PA administration: The landscape framework provides an effective umbrella under which to build park and protected area staff capacity. Essential staff training, equipment, and infrastructure needs are mostly being met by CARPE and program match funding. This was reflected in favorable assessments of implementing NGOs by park rangers and staffs. Beyond PA staffs, the capacity building experience produced mixed results and less comprehensive coverage. Government to government capacity building is underway through the US Forest Service (USFS) and with NPS undertaking support to Gabon park administrators. These initiatives show some promise but are subject to limitations discussed elsewhere in the document, including the lack of a mechanism to fund national agencies in the region. Other limitations include host government capacity and willingness to engage in transparent cooperation. Institutional strengthening activities have focused on providing training and equipment (patrol boats, radios, signs to mark boundaries, etc.) to eco-guards and survey teams and constructing or rehabilitating critical infrastructure, including patrol posts and office facilities. Capacity building of decentralized government staff has included training of park wardens in protected area administration and management; training of patrol units to carry out boundary monitoring, to identify signs of encroachment and illegal activities and to enforce the protected status of parks and reserves; and training data collection teams to carry out socio-economic and natural resource/biodiversity surveys and compile and report the data.

¹² Comments on draft evaluation report from AWF 02/03/2006

¹³ Comments on draft evaluation report from CI 02/03/2006

Implementing partners have also provided training on land use planning to national staff, and the transfer of land use planning skills methods to government partners has taken place mostly at the decentralized level. WCS and WWF have carried out joint training of wardens and eco-guards for all of Gabon. The training was carried out in the Gamba-Mayumba-Conkouati landscape with funding from the Moore Foundation. Significant resources have also been used to train park managers and staff in data collection, use of GPS, and imaging technology. In some landscapes, protected area management staff have been trained in conflict resolution and community outreach.

Government Agency Field Staff: CARPE did not undertake a training or manpower support role for government staff involved in natural resource management issues or in alternative livelihood strategies¹⁴. There has been little effort to engage national staff at the decentralized level, who work in agencies involved in management of forest concession lands, such as Eaux et Forêts. Most of the implementing partners say that they are constrained from working with these staff or involving them in capacity building activities, because the NGOs do not have an official mandate to partner with them. As a result, training in forest concession management, in participatory methodologies, in local administration and in other relevant areas has been mostly a bi-product of landscape specific planning and of meeting needs. Implementing NGOs have used additional donor support funds, including USFWS, to achieve some capacity building. USFS multi-use planning training and knowledge transfer has shown promise.

Forest Concessions: CARPE has been working with forest concession operators in and around several landscapes to bring them toward sustainable forest management practices and in one case toward Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certification. NGO partners have involved ITTO, FSC, USFS and others to strengthen private operator capacities. The USFS secured a USAID-funded Global Development Alliance (GDA) grant to develop a reduced impact logging program for the Congo Basin. This initiative was designed to complement CARPE's objectives and activities. In the Ituri-Epulu-Aru landscape, WCS is working with the Enzyme Refiner's Association (ENRA) to control encroachment of the forest by farmers in the ENRA concession and to improve forest inventories and inventory techniques (through a SI/MAB sub-contract), in order to promote sustainable forest management practices. The needs far outweigh the coverage obtained thus far, but concession management practices will probably be transferable as models are clearly articulated.

Provincial government and local decentralized administration: WRI's work in Cameroon has shown promise for building local government capacity and towards transferring rights and responsibilities to the appropriate local structures. Some landscape programs have begun to develop village land use and conservation plans with local governments, but the region has been characterized by instability and by the absence of effective local governments, or by overly centralized structures, so progress has been limited. As WRI noted, Cameroon was chosen for initial policy and governance initiatives in the region because there must be a government structure in place to work with local government processes. Several of the landscapes overlap national, provincial, and local administrative boundaries, and this may be a factor contributing to limited involvement by local government units. Nevertheless, convincing local authorities to extend formal recognition of the status of community reserves or other landscape zones, is often the first step towards official designation at the national level. The participation of local leaders in these processes will help to legitimize their role in natural resource decision making. The capacity of provincial, district and local level government units has been strengthened through exposure to CARPE activities, including the Co-co-si structures in the DRC, and local government units in Cameroon that have been involved in WRI activities to transfer resource rights and responsibilities at the local level.

¹⁴ This was due, in part, to perceived restrictions on providing "direct" CARPE assistance to governments.

CARPE can point to the training of park managers and protected area staff as a successful outcome. Most of the protected areas have experienced a major increase in capacity, even though some protected areas are still understaffed or need additional investments in equipment and infrastructure. The capacity of government staff assigned to other decentralized agencies, such as those responsible for production forest management, varies a great deal. Implementing partners need to engage with these agencies as they expand activities outside the protected areas, and need to involve them in training on land use planning. These training opportunities should be identified to involve the agencies in activities linked to addressing a critical threat.

National staff working at national level. CARPE does not have a mechanism to fund centralized government agencies in the region. However, through the involvement of the US Federal Agencies, which have provided training and training materials, national level staff have participated in CARPE capacity building activities. The Smithsonian Institution's (SI) botany training courses have included senior level scientists and managers. SI built on this training by forming the Central African Botanists Network (REBAC), which has continued to build capacity in the region, focusing on leaders who can have impact within their institutions and governments. This network could be called upon to contribute to more targeted and intensive biodiversity surveys within landscapes. The SI/MBG program has unique qualifications to contribute to additional capacity building in biodiversity monitoring methods in the Congo Basin, especially through linkage with national research centers and universities. WCS also has a long-standing relationship with SI in support of its strategic vision to link national researchers with international researchers in the region to build individual and institutional capacity. The role of the US National Park Service is also to engage at the national level with centralized government agencies. The NPS led two workshops in FY05, on the legal and policy framework for a national park system; and on establishing and administering a concessions management program within the park system. Participants included park managers, staff from the national park council, and representatives from national staffs.

In Gabon, the USFS delivered three workshops, and organized a fourth one to be held in Feb. 2006 on the preparation and refinement of national park management plans. CNPN staff in Gabon participated in the workshops, which included training on development of annual NP workplans. The workshops resulted in the preparation of draft plans for Lope and Loango National Parks, and these plans will serve as models for the preparation of plans for Gabon's other NPs. In the Republic of Congo (ROC), the USFS has sent two teams to provide GIS training to the Centre National des Inventaires et de l'Aménagement Forestier (CNI AF). The training was provided in collaboration with WWF and WCS and covered topics including information needs assessments and developing protected area land cover datasets.¹⁵

Although other donors are providing technical assistance and training to national staff working at the national level, CARPE should look for opportunities to involve these personnel in landscape level activities, such as training events. This will increase their knowledge of and support for well structured field based activities and for CARPE.

University level education. In a few cases, university level centers have been strengthened or created with some assistance from CARPE partners. Conservation International has supported the development of a new Biodiversity Institute at the National University of Equatorial Guinea (UNGE). The new institute will have graduate level research and teaching facilities, through which the university will be able to greatly increase natural resource management and conservation capabilities in the country. The Tayna Center for Conservation of Biology (TCCB) is being constructed partially with CARPE funds and is training students at the university level in conservation and biological sciences. The Centre de Formation et de Recherche en

¹⁵ Comments on draft evaluation report from USFS 02/03/2006

Conservation Forestière (CEFRECOF) Research and Training Center in the Ituri Faunal Reserve, is managed by WCS through an MOU with ICCN. The Centre was built in large part with funding from USAID in the 1990s to host visiting scientists and to provide facilities for field courses conducted by the University of Kisangani's Dept. of Conservation Biology, and for training programs for ICCN staff and other government agencies. The University has held regular training courses at CEFRECOF, and is also part of the Smithsonian Institution's Center for Tropical Forest Science (CTFS) forest dynamics network. This network of large forest plots represents an important source of information to improve understanding of forest management implications in the region.¹⁶ It has been used for short-term training on conducting biological surveys, and also can support long-term student research projects. CARPE activities have involved students in research and surveys, and implementing partners' staff have provided mentoring and supervision of these students' work.

Other donors are providing much needed investments in universities and forestry schools in the region; nevertheless these institutions are generally very weak, and even limited CARPE support for university level training can have long-term impacts in terms of human resource development. Linkages between CARPE partners and universities and forestry schools to increase the skills of faculty and students by involving them in research, policy analysis, field level surveys and other activities, should be expanded.

Capacity building in natural resource monitoring. CARPE has responded to the demand for training in GIS technology and in the use of remote sensing data. Building capacity to use these tools is probably one of the most effective investments of training resources, especially given the vast area that the program is trying to monitor. Training has also been provided to community-based organizations in some landscapes to participate in community mapping and zoning, as well as some outreach and technical assistance related to livelihoods (agriculture, fisheries, and natural resource management). A GIS lab was set up at the University of Kinshasa and training was conducted in collaboration with ERAIFT, national agencies and NGO staff. The USFS sponsored three grant requests for GIS software and hardware from ESRI_USA (2 grants) and Leica Geosystems (1 grant), and a request from ESRI-France for the French language software package. These requests were approved and the software and hardware were distributed to CNPN, WWF, and WCS in Gabon. The University of Maryland staff provided GIS training to partners in the Lope landscape. WRI provided training on monitoring the use of GIS tools and technology in the DRC, ROC and Cameroon, and prepared a technical report assessing Remote Sensing and GIS capacity and training activities carried out in Central Africa. In Cameroon, GIS capacity has been built through training in remote sensing and GIS applications, development of the Interactive Forest Atlas, and workshops to promote its use in monitoring and advocacy.

Focusing capacity building on increasing skills and analysis in the use of remote sensing and GIS technology and applications is an effective use of training resources, given CARPE's emphasis on natural resource monitoring and the vast area of difficult to access terrain. There is also considerable interest and demand for this training. Several of CARPE's partners, including NASA/UMD, and WRI/GFW, have impressive credentials to bring to this task.

Conclusions

- CARPE has the potential to build capacity and understanding of the landscape approach and land use planning at all levels, but especially at the level of local and national government partners, and decentralized government partners, and to secure their buy-in to the landscape approach.
- Capacity building at the landscape level is needed to integrate local NGOs and CBOs more fully into the overall program through use of the small grants program and through other training activities.

¹⁶ Comments on draft evaluation report from WCS 02/03/2006

- CARPE’s emphasis on institutionalizing natural resource monitoring requires capacity building capacity in a broad range of approaches, including remote sensing and GIS technologies, as well as on-the-ground biodiversity monitoring and forest inventory, which encompasses a variety of skills and assessment methods. Federal and university partners that can provide training, including the USFS, USFWS, the SI/MBG program, and UMD/NASA, can also help to build networks and linkages with national agencies, institutions and networks in the region.
- USAID has made it clear that CARPE’s capacity building initiatives are not limited to training activities within the landscape. Country teams can do more to identify training priorities for strengthening civil society to support CARPE priorities at the national level. These networks and organizations are key CARPE elements to influence NRM policy, while building strong democratic fora. Efforts should be focused to ensure that networks such as CEFDHAC have the intended impact and that they will be self-sustaining over the long-term.

ii. Natural Resource Monitoring

The use of remote sensing technology to monitor forest cover, area, and change (through degradation or conversion), and the data on this provided by UMD and NASA, is seen as one of the most effective cross-cutting components. Because the data is perceived as objective and politically neutral, it can potentially be used in support of legislative and regulatory reform, land use planning, monitoring threats, and other decision-making. The availability of remotely sensed data is also especially important given the extensive area in which the implementing partners are working, the limited data available about the area, the difficulty of on-the-ground access, the limited local infrastructure and capacity, and the time and effort required to bring about and to monitor change.

An important contribution to achieving CARPE SO monitoring results is through an agreement with NASA/UMD. Funding for monitoring was limited initially and was further reduced by necessary cuts in the CARPE budget. The NASA/UMD collaboration utilizes US space-borne assets and makes the data available to the CARPE program through a variety of presentational formats and tools, including the interactive CARPE-Mapper. Monitoring tools and data are intended to support both regional and local levels. Monitoring forest cover change at the landscape level has been hampered by the absence of LANDSAT imagery in recent years, but should be in place for much of the remainder of CARPE II, and baseline images are available and being used to the extent that the budget allows. Because of Landsat malfunctions, UMD is undertaking to obtain data from other sources, with support from NASA. This data acquisition initiative represents an important contribution by the USG. More information about this is detailed in Annex XX: Comments from Implementing Partners.¹⁷

Natural resource monitoring brings together multiple partners in a structured way to address multi-faceted, long-term issues. The processes set up for the NR monitoring have yielded some of the most effective collaborations between CARPE partners, including the State of the Forest (SOF) report, increased GIS capabilities in the region, and shared data and information about the status of ecosystems, illegal activities, fire, and other threats to forests and to biodiversity. The process of bringing partners together to produce the SOF report, reaching consensus on the indicators, and putting in place the monitoring systems, is a significant accomplishment in itself, and it has gained broad international support. This process will be especially important for putting in place a more systematic approach to monitoring of biodiversity.

The University of Maryland (UMD) is working on updating baseline maps of the landscapes; mapping changes over time within the landscapes; and making the datasets available in digital format. The data provided by NASA/UMD has been used to chart landscape features such as roads, rivers, and villages and to

¹⁷ Comments on draft evaluation report from UMD 02/03/2006

delineate protected area boundaries, but it has not been used much for zoning and land use planning. As the database expands and as forest cover types are more accurately characterized through ground-truthing, the data and GIS analysis tools should prove more useful as the basis for identifying wildlife habitat and for forest management planning. The NASA/UMD data will probably be less useful in mapping biodiversity across the Congo basin. UMD supports regional capacity building through Observatoire Satellital des Forêts d'Afrique Centrale (OSFAC) partners by developing training capacity at the University of Kinshasa's ERAIFT (Ecole régionale post-universitaire d'aménagement et de gestion intégrée des forêts tropicales). The assignment of a GIS Specialist to a field location (Kinshasa) has provided an important link between the work done by NASA/UMD and its application in the field. He has helped a range of implementers and stakeholders increase their understanding of how GIS can be used for land use zoning and planning. He has also disseminated data, provided training, and advised on the establishment of GIS labs in Gabon and the DRC.

Another important contribution has been the development of the Interactive Forestry Atlas of Cameroon. The Ministry of Forestry (MINFOF) officially recognized the product for distribution, which represents an important step towards greater transparency at the government level in terms of the availability of natural resource data. Because the interactive atlas has been so successful in Cameroon, WRI/GFW plans to develop pilot versions of a forest atlas for both Gabon and ROC this year. These will use already existing data, and will be used to demonstrate the utility of the tool. They will also carry out a data gap analysis to identify the need to create additional data. WRI/GFW has MOUs with Ministries charged with forestry and forest management in several countries. These MOUs provide opportunities to build relationships with national governments and to obtain "buy-in" from them for broader dissemination of and more transparent access to information about natural resources.

All of these activities have built capacity for natural resource monitoring, while at the same time making available much needed data for ongoing activities in the field. This set of activities represents an important factor in achieving Result 3 to institutionalize natural resource monitoring. The success of this strategy can be seen in the continuing demand for additional training and capacity building in this skill set at all levels.

Conclusions:

- The natural resources monitoring supported by NASA/UMD and GFW, despite remaining gaps, is providing objective assessments on the status of forest cover. This work is valued not just for the quality of the data provided, but also for its political neutrality. There is still a need for improved, systematic data collection, management, sharing and dissemination by and between CARPE partners.
- NGOs, so far, have used remote sensing data more for verification and adjustment of protected area boundaries, than to delineate land use zones. With some additional data, the GIS tools could be applied to better forest management in the concession areas, to identify pockets of important wildlife habitat, or evidence of illegal logging.
- Monitoring will continue to require CARPE resources and greater availability of funds could accelerate the establishment of necessary baselines across the landscapes, especially given the concerns about satellite malfunctions and the need to coordinate data acquisition from other sources.
- Input from CARPE landscapes into the SOF monitoring and reporting process is an important contribution to the CBFP that also increases public awareness, and is a valuable process in terms of building collaboration and information sharing.

iii. Policy

Although forestry and wildlife conservation legislation for Central African countries addresses basic legal and regulatory issues, there are some conflicting laws and gaps in the frameworks. Furthermore, field level

implementation of existing laws is hampered by low legal literacy, corruption, and weak enforcement agencies. CARPE support for governance interventions such as judicial reform, equipment and empowerment of enforcement authorities, and other measures to improve implementation of existing laws are constrained, because of limits on USAID direct funding to CARPE country governments. By engaging with government agencies, CARPE activities can help build the legitimacy of national institutions that have a valid role in natural resource decision-making. Support for good governance processes, as well as for specific policies, will help to institutionalize effective strategies and procedures.¹⁸

At the national level (and sometimes the Basin level), several major policy issues have been identified and most are being addressed by one or more donors:

1. Forestry Codes, Concession allocation and management: World Bank, French via export/import regulations for wood and wood products (FLEGT) Monitoring support from Global Forest Watch/WRI.
2. Mining and Forestry code compatibility/Natural resource management: World Bank (Gabon). Private sector leadership could develop internal industry regulations and models (e.g. Shell).
3. Creation/basic structure of National Park Services and protected area master plans through cooperation with other donors, including UNDP/GEF, ECOFAC, EU, GTZ.
4. Adoption of Sustainable forest management plans and codes of conduct: World Bank/GEF, Implementing NGOs working with individual forest concessions.
5. Community-based natural resource management and access to hunting/fishing in forestry concessions: Part of World Bank forestry management plans.
6. Wildlife Management/Bushmeat within forest eco-systems: Implementing NGOs and USFWS
7. Sustainable Financing: GEF/UNDP, WWF, CI, WCS, MacArthur Foundation.

The grant to WRI and CIFOR for policy work was relatively small, and most of the resources have been focused on Cameroon, where there was perceived to be more possibility for shifts in the legislative framework. WRI has worked with members of parliament in Cameroon, rather than with Ministries, to promote legal and regulatory reform. The parliamentary approach may take longer to bring about reform, than Ministerial decrees, but it reinforces accountability and strengthens representative governance. The reforms implemented in Cameroon have the potential to demonstrate the positive outcomes of legislative change to other governments in the region. WRI-IGP has supported policy work by individual analysts and researchers, legislators, ministries and government departments and local government leaders from several Central African nations.

The Heads of State Summit in Brazzaville in Feb. 2005, at which the COMIFAC Treaty was ratified, was a highly significant achievement for all of the parties involved, and an important outcome of CARPE support for an improved policy environment in the region. In the binding treaty, the Heads of State of the Congo basin countries agreed to support conservation and sustainable resource management and to harmonize forestry and biodiversity policies. The following are some additional successful outcomes from CARPE supported policy activities:

- The interactive forestry atlas for Cameroon produced by WRI/GFW contributes both to landscape level knowledge of the forest resource and to accountability, transparency and good governance at the national level.

¹⁸ Comments on draft evaluation report from WRI 02/03/2006

- Publications by WRI have addressed issues of distribution equity, for example how governments invest revenues generated from natural resource based industries, and comparisons between forest enterprises managed by communities and concession-holders. These publications have been widely disseminated. WRI mapping activities in Cameroon link poverty and environmental issues and are a tool to demonstrate and help assess equity in the distribution of benefits and costs.
- Capacity of policy researchers and advocacy organizations (NESDA and CEFDHAC) has been built by WRI and IUCN.
- WRI/GFW has been instrumental in developing a system to monitor forest concessions based on voluntary participation by the concession-holders. The Forest Concession Monitoring System (FORCOMS) will be a step towards adoption of practices to meet criteria for forest product certification. WRI, IUCN, and the Inter-African Forest Industry Association (IFIA), a private organization that includes logging and wood processing companies, are working together to design this system.
- Trans-boundary agreements covering protected areas in the TRI-DOM and TNS landscapes will reinforce protection of national parks, and increase cooperation across national boundaries to address threats such as poaching, bushmeat trade, and illegal logging.
- WCS has contributed to the World Bank Forest Sector Review document for DRC. This document when finalized will represent a major policy reform.

CARPE should continue to engage in policy issues through coordination with other donors and development partners to identify legislative and regulatory gaps; policy implementation, law enforcement and judicial strengthening needs; and opportunities for civil society involvement in governance. CARPE partners are particularly well positioned to identify policy issues emerging from landscape level implementation. Depending on whether policy roundtables already exist, CARPE can lead or participate in country level processes to identify priority issues and needed actions.

Conclusions:

- One major success of the CBFP has been to stimulate donor participation in forestry and conservation policies in the Congo Basin.
- The COMIFAC Plan de Convergence provides a vehicle for encouraging the countries of the region to come together on policy issues.
- CARPE partners appear to be influencing national policies by taking the lead in a) establishment of community management reserves and concession agreements (WCS/ROC, DFGI/Maiko) and b) developing landscape tourism plans (Gabon, Virunga).
- Several broader policy issues affect CARPE landscapes, but cannot be directly addressed by CARPE: e.g., demobilization of militias/soldiers; effective decentralization of government authorities, resolution of trans-boundary disputes. .

iv. Bushmeat

Bushmeat hunting is traditionally practiced by many indigenous groups for their own consumption, and this level of extraction is generally considered to be sustainable. In the last ten years there has been increasing awareness in the conservation community that commercial trade in bushmeat has greatly increased, due to demand from logging, mining, and military camps, and from urban markets. In addition the techniques and equipment used by hunters have become much more effective, and illegal poaching in protected areas has become more widespread. These factors have had a major impact on wildlife, including on endangered species in Central Africa. The illicit bushmeat trade could also have an impact on rural livelihoods, by depleting wildlife resources that traditional hunters depend on for their own household consumption. However, in some landscapes, the local hunters are supplementing their income by participating in the

bushmeat trade. Threats to wildlife from bushmeat hunting and trade will continue to be a concern, especially where poaching for ivory is not controlled and where there is continued conflict in the region. Bushmeat hunting and trade is cited as a major threat to biodiversity conservation and to key species in all of the landscapes.

CARPE partners have initiated monitoring and other interventions related to bushmeat in almost all landscapes. There is no standard approach to bushmeat monitoring, because the specific threat varies depending on the demand from military camps and on other economic activities in the broader landscape, such as mining and logging operations, access to markets and traders, roads and transportation, and urban demand. Bushmeat monitoring methods include reports by protected area patrols and wildlife enforcement agencies with data on confiscated game and weapons, socio-economic surveys to determine the relative importance of bushmeat to local livelihoods, and market research to estimate the amount of bushmeat being traded. These studies have given CARPE partners a better understanding of the economics of bushmeat trafficking. However there is a concern among some implementing partners that too much of the available resources are being spent on monitoring. More resources should be applied to using the information about bushmeat hunting and trade to develop interventions to reduce or control the threat to wildlife.

Although all CARPE countries have laws to prevent illegal hunting and to protect endangered species, national and local governments have little capacity to enforce the laws. In many areas there is a lack of political will to enforce the laws, possibly linked to a belief that the resource is inexhaustible. Implementing NGOs cannot implement enforcement activities directly – they can only train eco-guards, and provide support in the form of equipment, infrastructure, and salary supplements. The CARPE NGO partners have provided much of this support from their match contribution and other leveraged funds. There are also some positive examples of private sector involvement, for example cooperation with logging concessions within landscapes to develop and implement plans for wildlife conservation, by closing roads, prohibiting the practice of using bushmeat to feed workers, and outlawing the use of company vehicles to transport bushmeat.

Enforcement of existing bushmeat and anti-poaching laws are problematic simply because the areas to be covered by patrols are so large, and government agencies lack the resources to greatly increase enforcement personnel. Some implementing partners have promoted alternatives to bushmeat, such as raising poultry or small livestock as substitute protein sources. It will take time to transfer animal husbandry skills to reach the point where they are widely adopted by rural populations, especially in the absence of extension, veterinary, and credit services. Furthermore, producers will not be able to sell their meat competitively without better access to markets. Improved fishing and fish preservation techniques represent an excellent alternative to bushmeat, especially where there is a local preference for fish. Other partners have focused on developing alternative income generating projects or enterprises that will decrease participants' dependence on bushmeat hunting, processing and trade for their livelihoods.

Cooperation between WCS and Congolais Industrielle du Bois (CIB), a timber company with a forest concession in the ROC segment of the Sangha Tri-National landscape, has led to improved control of poaching and commercial bushmeat hunting, WCS works with local communities to map traditional hunting areas, to set quotas for wildlife capture, and to organize committees to enforce the regulations. CIB has introduced a permitting system to regulate hunting within the concession; it protects tree species that are important to gorilla habitat, and imports processed meat to supply its logging camps, to reduce the demand from the camps for bushmeat. WCS is helping CIB to meet FSC criteria for forest certification, including these steps to conserve wildlife as well as improve forest management.

The US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) provided a small grant to the Bushmeat Crisis Task Force to develop the Bushmeat Information Management and Analysis Project (Bushmeat IMAP). WRI/GFW also provided data and links to the GFW website. The IMAP includes online searchable databases of bibliographic references and bushmeat projects, and a tool to create maps showing factors contributing to bushmeat trade of various species.

Bushmeat issues have been mostly tackled by CARPE at the landscape level, but efforts to prevent bushmeat trafficking need to be addressed at the national policy level, as well as at the local enforcement level. Public awareness campaigns that increase awareness of the danger of transmitting diseases from wildlife to humans, such as simian HIV and Ebola, which can develop from processing and eating bushmeat, are also needed. It is not easy to change consumer preferences and it also takes time. However social marketing strategies have successfully promoted changes in other similar behaviors. A public awareness campaign must target specific audiences with carefully prepared messages. A public awareness campaign on reducing demand for bushmeat should include the following points:

- Health concerns with respect to bushmeat as a vector of disease;
- Continued bushmeat hunting is not sustainable and will rapidly deplete existing resources. This will have a negative impact on livelihoods across the basin;
- The private sector must play a role in addressing the illicit bushmeat trade, including investing in the production of alternative protein sources.

Conclusions

- Bushmeat surveillance efforts by implementing partners have focused on surveys and market analyses to determine economic forces that are driving the demand for bushmeat, and also on reports from protected area patrols and anti-poaching enforcement units.
- It is not necessary for all of the implementing partners to adopt the same methodology to monitor bushmeat trafficking in each landscape, and a too rigid monitoring methodology would be counterproductive. However, there is a need for a systematic approach to compiling the data and using it to push for stronger enforcement of existing laws.
- Bushmeat strategies should be integrated with other programs and economic development sectors such as poverty reduction, livelihoods, mining, and health.
- CARPE NRM activities outside of protected areas (forest and oil concession enforcement, local control) show promise of reducing a smaller scale bushmeat trade.

v. Gender

The USAID SO Team and the USAID/DRC Mission have provided leadership in this area, working with implementing partners on several occasions to foster an understanding of gender issues. A workshop was held in Kinshasa early on to encourage implementing partners to integrate gender into CARPE activities. The implementing NGOs acknowledge the importance of developing gender strategies to ensure that benefits are shared equally by men and women, but can provide few examples to illustrate that this has been done. Implementing partners generally report on gender only in terms of participation in training courses or in other CARPE sponsored events.

Although some of the participants interviewed pointed to livelihoods or training activities that involved women, they could not describe a strategy to deal with gender issues. There has been little effort to ensure that development activities result in equitable benefit sharing by both women and men. Rural women generally do not hunt, but they are involved in bushmeat processing, transportation, and marketing. Changes in policies regarding bushmeat and other natural resources, such as harvesting and trade of non-timber forest

products, will have an effect on women's livelihoods, but there is little available information about how this would impact women specifically.

Several women employed by CARPE NGO partners are in positions of responsibility, but on the government partners' side there are very few women in professional positions. NGOs and government partners cite the lack of women having an NRM education and experience in the region; however, increasing women's participation in training activities has also not been a priority. IUCN and CEFDHAC have provided technical assistance to the Network of African Women for Sustainable Development (REFADD) on forestry laws and policies that affect the livelihoods of women forest-dwellers. They worked with the REFADD network to develop strategies to raise awareness among women of basic conservation and biodiversity protection issues.

Conclusions

- Gender strategies have not been developed at either the country or the landscape level, and the underlying information needed to develop these strategies is lacking for the most part.
- The issues and recommendations raised in the report prepared by Nancy Diamond in 2002¹⁹, *Engendering CARPE*, are still valid and should be further developed or implemented.

C. Performance of the Small Grants Program

The small grants program was one of the most successful components under CARPE I, and was credited with making excellent progress towards building capacity among local NGOs. The grant review and award process was managed by the Biodiversity Support Programme (BSP), a consortium of The Nature Conservancy, World Resources Institute and World Wildlife Fund. WWF managed the grants program at the country level with Focal Points handling administration in Cameroon, Gabon and DRC. Although USAID funding for the BSP support to CARPE ended in 2001, the CARPE II design entailed continuation of the small grants program. Although initially the CARPE CTO planned to transfer the management of the grants program to the USDA PASA, USAID's legal staff did not approve this approach. Therefore it was decided to amend the cooperative agreements of the four international NGO implementing partners that were already working at the landscape level, to include funds for small grants in their budgets. An RFA was issued in August 2004, and the cooperative agreement budgets were subsequently modified. However, this resulted in a significant delay in re-launching the small grants program. In most of the CARPE sites, implementing partners have only recently initiated the steps to request proposals.

The CARPE Phase II small grants program was intended to be cross-cutting and to have very specific objectives to: "promote and build a constituency for conservation among local NGOs; foster partnerships between the US lead partner NGO and local NGOs in the field; fill gaps in CARPE's analytical framework; enable Central Africans to participate in CARPE activities leading to a conservation "buy-in"; reinforce local Civil Society capacities to sustain CARPE activities and objectives in the region; effectively integrate CARPE activities in the field and on the ground; and raise local awareness of CARPE and thereby provide knowledge and support for the program objectives."²⁰

A total of \$456,000 was available through the amended cooperative agreements, equivalent to about \$38,000 for the small grants program in each landscape. The rationale for allocating the funds to the landscape leads was that these implementing partners had a good knowledge of local NGOs and they also knew how these NGOs could best be integrated into landscape programs.

¹⁹ Diamond, Nancy, 2002. *Engendering CARPE: An Assessment of Gender Issues, Potential Impacts, & Opportunities Under the New CARPE Strategic Objective*. Final Report, USAID/Africa Bureau/SD, 30 pp.

²⁰ USAID Regional Development Services Office, East and Southern Africa, August 2004, RFA 623-P-04-046

The CARPE SO Team provided implementing partners with very thorough, detailed guidelines in the CARPE II Grant Manual to assist them in the selection of grantees and procedures for the management of the funds.²¹ However, implementing partners have complained that the administration of the small grants program places too great a management burden on program staff. The process of awarding the grants is not seen as overly cumbersome, but ensuring sub-grantees' compliance with USAID regulations is seen as a heavy administrative task. Nevertheless, the small grants program is an important mechanism towards building the capacity of local organizations, so that they can play more substantive roles in the future. Successful implementation of small grant funded projects also increases the local organizations' eligibility to attract funds from other donors.

In general, CARPE partners seemed to prefer that the small grants program be managed at the country level, and the procedures outline in the grants manual indicates that the process should be coordinated by the Focal points. In the ROC and Gabon, CARPE partners were coordinating the process at the country level at the time of the field visits. In the DRC, there seemed to be confusion among some CARPE partners about the availability of funds for the small grants program and in regard to the process for awarding grants. Once the AWF cooperative agreement had been amended to include funds for small grants, AWF proceeded to make awards to local partners in the Maringa-Lapori-Wamba landscape, without USAID review and approval.

Several implementing partners have funding from other sources that they have used to fund local partners through mechanisms similar to the CARPE small grants program, but with fewer restrictions on the use of the funds. These small grants are easier for the implementing partners to administer and supervise. For example, WWF has provided several small grants in the Gamba landscape from three different funding sources, and the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) has made a number of small to medium grants to local and international organizations through the Great Apes Conservation Fund and the African Elephant Conservation Fund. USAID participates in the USFWS grant review and award process, but recipients are apparently not required to follow USAID procurement procedures.

Conclusions:

- The small grant program was viewed as a very positive element of CARPE I, especially in terms of building capacity of local partners, but has been delayed in CARPE II. The small grants program could still have an important capacity building impact, if the grants can be finalized quickly.
- Implementing NGOs are not clear about the scope of the small grant program and about USAID's rules regarding its use (only for activities inside landscapes; USAID's clearance role). Some of the confusion seems to stem from the RFA's emphasis on management of the grants at the landscape level, and the grants manual procedures which call for coordination at the country level.
- Most Implementing NGOs have access to non-USAID small grant funding and some landscape leads see the USAID program as an additional administrative burden.
- Small grants used to strengthen NGO/CBO institutional capacity (equipment, capacity building) have been especially appreciated by the recipients, and do achieve the objectives of building a conservation constituency and program buy-in.

D. Progress to date in meeting the three Intermediate Results

The overall CARPE Strategic Objective is: "to reduce the rate of forest degradation and loss of biodiversity through increased local, national, and regional natural resource management capacity in nine central African

²¹ Tchamou, Nicodème, 2003, CARPE Phase II Small Grant Policy and Procedure Manual, 95 pp.

countries: the Central African Republic, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Republic of Congo, Burundi, Cameroon, Rwanda, and Sao Tome & Principe, and the DRC.”²² CARPE has three Intermediate Results (IRs):

IR 1: Natural resources managed sustainably;

IR 2: Natural resources governance (institutions, policies, laws) strengthened;

IR 3: Natural resources monitoring institutionalized.

The Results Framework with Strategic Objective and Intermediate Results Indicators is presented in Annex B.

The CARPE II Intermediate Result indicators and targets, were developed through a consensus process in collaboration with the principal NGO partners. The Performance Management Plan (PMP) which defines the indicators, the data collection methods, and the means of verification, was approved in Jan. 2004, and revised in March, 2005, with input from implementing partners. CARPE partners working at the landscape level prepare annual work plans with specific activities and implementation targets. They submit semi-annual and annual reports that report their progress against these work plan targets, and against the IR indicator targets. The work plans include activities such as meetings with local officials, convening stakeholders to conduct threats assessments, conducting community meetings, and workshops to determine landscape zones. The landscape leads forecast the extent to which these activities will be completed during the period covered by the work plan, and report on actual accomplishment of the targets. They must also determine the extent to which work plan accomplishments roll up as indicator targets at the landscape level. The target for IR Indicator 1.1 is reported as the extent to which the landscape planning process has been convened, defined as a percent.

At the end of FY 05, implementing partners submitted annual reports which showed the most significant progress to date towards the achievement of work plan targets and IR indicators. The reporting matrix has been structured, so that the targets and benchmarks roll up to the indicators in the CARPE PMP. The four NGO Landscape leads report on progress in each landscape, but only on targets for Indicators 1.1 and 1.2. Most of the implementing partners are conducting surveys on bushmeat off-take or demand, and some are conducting surveillance of illegal logging activities. The findings from these studies are submitted in the MOV documentation. However, they are not yet required to report on indicators 1.3 and 1.4 in the reporting matrix, as a consistent methodology to monitor these indicators has not been established. Annual reports on progress at the Country level are submitted by WWF (for Cameroon, CAR, DRC and Gabon), WCS (for ROC), and CI (for Equatorial Guinea). The Country Reports assess achievement of targets related to indicators 2.1, 2.2 and 3.2. WRI also submits an annual report on activities and progress towards indicators 2.1, 2.2, and 3.2. The report submitted by NASA/UMD addresses five tasks that are in support of monitoring for indicators 3.1, 3.2, and 3.3.

The IR indicators demonstrate incremental progress towards program benchmarks. In addition to the IR indicators there are two Strategic Objective level indicators designed to measure long-term impact:

SO 1: Change in area of forest from intact/pristine to “degraded,” modified, or secondary forest or to non-forest; and from “degraded” forest to non-forest.

SO 2: Population status for selected biodiversity “indicator” species such as: wide-ranging “landscape” species and/or ecological keystone species (e.g. elephants, large predators) and/or globally threatened species (such as, mountain gorillas, bonobos, etc.)

²² USAID, 2005. CARPE II Revised Performance Management Plan, 28 pp.

The SO indicators measure impact across the basin, and impact at this level will be affected by a number of factors that are not being addressed by CARPE interventions. Therefore SO indicators are measured separately from the IR indicators. The UMD and NASA are also the only CARPE partners providing data for SO 1. Remote sensing technologies are the main source of data for this analysis, because of the difficult access to large areas of many of the landscapes. All of the implementing partners working at the landscape level are conducting biological surveys. This data is being reported in the MOV reports, but is not being aggregated at the SO indicator level. A State of the Forest Report (SOF) committee has been formed to develop a consistent approach and a set of SOF indicators for biodiversity monitoring; and CARPE implementing partners are providing input into the process of identifying the indicators, as well as compiling the data for the SOF reports.

The goals for the CARPE II phase through FY 2006 are realistic, and the measures of accomplishment are fair. While there is a clear relationship between work plan activities and achievement of the IRs, some interpretation is needed to roll up work plan targets into indicator targets. Several landscape leads feel that the process is especially nebulous in terms of quantifying the convening process. This complicates the preparation of the Annual Report matrices and means of verification (MOVs), and limits their usefulness as a way for USAID to compile a clear narrative about project accomplishments. There are also inconsistencies between the reported targets and the MOVs. In February 2005, CARPE Country Teams were established to address nation-wide impacts that were not being picked up and reported at the landscape level. It is not clear yet whether this mechanism has improved reporting at the country level.

The Cooperative Agreements are performance based, and funding for annual work plans has been tied to results within the landscape. However, several NGO participants made the observation that some protected areas could attract funding from other donors, or eventually graduate from the need for ongoing donor assistance, especially those that have benefited from long-term support by NGOs. Some also have the potential to generate tourism revenues to support much of their conservation expenses. Several newly created protected areas or ones that have received little NGO or government support until recently, are generally the ones that have shown the slowest progress against performance indicators, partly due to difficult access and communications, and lack of existing infrastructure and local capacity. These protected areas do not necessarily have the most spectacular scenery, and, in fact, they may never be able to attract significant numbers of tourists. Nevertheless, they contain important biodiversity resources and unique ecosystems.

Tables from the FY05 Annual Report compiled by the CARPE SO team show progress to date towards reaching the longer-term IR objectives (see Annex G). The State of the Forest Report which will be issued in the spring of 2006 will also include data collected by CARPE implementing partners, along with other CBFP partners, and much of this information will overlap with CARPE IR indicators. The SOF committees are also working on the adoption of consistent monitoring and measurement approaches, which could help resolve some of the methodological problems encountered in trying to implement the CARPE PMP.

Additional comments and recommendations on progress to date in meeting the three Intermediate Results can be found in Annex F.

Conclusions:

- CARPE is on track to meet overall results and goals. Much of the reporting to date has been on the establishment of baselines and on the accomplishment of processes to create the enabling environment for the achievement of the IRs, rather than monitoring the impact of the activities.

- Serious concerns are the potential for further forest loss due to the opening of roads and agricultural encroachment, especially in the eastern basin regions. A net loss in terms of overall forest cover and continued forest degradation due to illegal logging and encroachment, is likely. The remote sensing data is proving to be the most effective means to monitor the indicators related to changes in forest area and conditions.
- COIMIFAC demands and related State of the Forest monitoring will require increasingly precise information, and much of this information will need to be systematically collected at the field level, using comparable methodologies.
- Capacity is increasing at the local level, especially for land use zone delineation and planning, but progress is much slower at the national and regional levels. Work plan targets tend to measure numbers of training participants and events rather than the 3.2 indicator to assess institutional capacity to collect and analyze information of adequate quality for decision-making -- although WRI has prepared a report on *“Preliminary assessment of capacity of Congo Basin (African) institutions to collect and analyze information of adequate quality for decision-making”*.
- Although most of the landscapes have some economic development activities to improve livelihoods in local communities, these tend to be small-scale, and have not yet had much impact on alleviating poverty.
- Several initiatives are underway that are aimed at illegal logging and anti-poaching, but so far CARPE efforts have focused more on monitoring rather than on laws and governance.

E. Progress in meeting USG objectives for the CBFP

The US government’s goal for the CBFP is to: “promote economic development, alleviate poverty, combat illegal logging, enhance anti-poaching laws, improve local governance, and conserve natural resources...through support for a network of national parks and protected areas, well-managed forestry concessions, and creation of economic opportunities for communities that depend upon the forest and wildlife resources of the Congo Basin.”²³ The CBFP goal summarizes the main elements of the CARPE strategic objective, and the State Department Fact Sheet describes the US partnership focus on the eleven landscapes. The State Department language encompasses a much broader partnership than CARPE II, while CARPE II is the principal mechanism through which the USG delivers the resources committed to the CBFP.

The CARPE goal and its IRs are much more hands-on and field-oriented than are the objectives of the CBFP Partnership which are to: “increase awareness of the programs being funded and implemented by its member organizations, enhance the efficiency of these programs and relevant coordination processes, and identify and eliminate gaps and overlaps in programs and funding.”²⁴ CARPE support for the SOF report has been the most effective means through which CARPE has communicated information about its contribution to the CBFP.

The CARPE strategic framework is also much more focused on conservation than the CBFP language that starts with “promoting economic development and alleviating poverty”. The CBFP has been extremely successful in augmenting the number of donors and the level of assistance provided in the Congo Basin, with almost all funding directed towards conservation and related objectives.

The CBFP was co-initiated by the US and South African governments as a process that would encourage governments of the region, donors and other partners to loosely coordinate needed policy reforms and

²³ Congo Basin Forest Partnership: US Contribution Fact Sheet, 2003. Bureau of Oceans and International and Scientific Affairs, US Dept. of State, Washington, DC

²⁴ Briefing Book – US Government User Version: Central Africa Regional Program for the Environment (CARPE), Oct. 2005.

program actions. The CBFP was meant to have no formal structure, but would be “facilitated” initially by the USG. This facilitation initially was embodied in the part-time services of a former US Ambassador who tried to encourage information sharing policy reform within the region and donor program coordination. Operating without financial resources and without any recognized authority, this effort reportedly bore little fruit.

In 2004, CBFP mediation responsibilities were passed to the French government, which has been quite active in stimulating coordinated actions in the region. The “mediator”, a government minister located in Paris, is ably supported by a full-time assistant in Libreville. The French have used the COMIFAC structure and the ‘Plan de Convergence’ to address three priorities: 1) Sustainable Financing; 2) Establishing a governance system for timber exports (FLEG) from the region to Europe; and 3) Improving training capacity in the region, especially at forestry schools. Two expatriate advisors have now been assigned to work with COMIFAC headquarters to help implement the Plan de Convergence goals. COMIFAC will soon initiate a series of annual national meetings in each participating country and will name a “COMIFAC focal point’ in each country (normally a senior official in the environment ministry). The French do not envisage that COMIFAC will become an organization that manages funding, but would remain as a coordination body.

The CARPE CTO and the US Embassy Regional Environment Officer stationed in Libreville are effectively the USG liaisons with the French mediation team and with COMIFAC. Working relations between these officials are excellent, as illustrated by French funding to support European involvement in a recent State of the Forest workshop.

The announcement of the CBFP, following on the actions of the 2000 Yaounde Summit and the Plan de Convergence, as well as the publicity related to Gabon’s creation of 13 national parks, have all stimulated a major increase in donor funding for conservation in the Congo Basin. Approximately \$150 million in new funds are being made available through a series of World Bank loans, a new E.U. ECOFAC program, a significant increase in French government assistance, and the arrival of some new donors in the region (Dutch government, Moore Foundation).

In the near future, the USG/USAID will need to decide if it wishes to: a) encourage the formalization of CBFP within the institutional structure of COMIFAC; b) provide direct technical support and indirect financial support to COMIFAC’s efforts to harmonize the region’s conservation policies; and c) utilize COMIFAC as a home for specific CARPE cross-cutting program activities.

Conclusions:

- The CBFP has been extraordinarily successful in bringing the conservation needs of the Congo Basin to a broader audience and in increasing donor funding.
- Active French “mediation” of the CBFP and COMIFAC should continue to be welcomed and supported by CARPE and the USG.
- CARPE should consider using COMIFAC as a “ventilator” to help publicize CARPE programs and to disseminate lessons learned.
- The SOF process is probably the best existing forum for building consensus and constitutes a common vision among the implementing partners.

III. Assessment of Management Structure and Performance

The management structure developed for CARPE II included several major changes from the CARPE I structure. CARPE I was managed by USAID/Washington with the support of an interagency coordination

committee. CARPE II is managed from Kinshasa and functions in the context of a USG international commitment to cooperation across 11 CARPE landscapes and the Virungas “focal area” in nine countries, only two of which have USAID missions. The landscapes are the basic framework for management decisions of CARPE, although some partner activities are executed outside of the landscapes, usually managed by other CARPE partners. The CARPE SO team in Kinshasa works with the support of USAID procurement and legal staff located in Nairobi, and the mechanisms used for obligating money involve collaboration with the EGAT and Africa bureaus in Washington. Finally, CARPE’s activities as linked with the CBFPP are overseen by an Interagency Advisory Board in Washington made up of USG agency representatives and representatives from the CARPE federal agency implementing partners. Additionally, the CARPE management team includes up to five Focal Points who work at the country level under the technical direction of the CARPE SO team.

This is an unusually complex management structure for a USAID program, and the assessment team was asked to review seven key management issues in order to determine if improvements could be made in both the management structures and the management procedures now being utilized. These seven issues are discussed below.

Management Findings and Conclusions

A. Effectiveness of the transfer of CARPE Management to Kinshasa

The transfer of USAID management responsibilities to Kinshasa has had a very positive effect on USAID’s ability to coordinate a complex field-based program. The CARPE SO team’s presence in the region is viewed as essential to enable the team to: a) respond in a timely manner to needs and questions of implementing partners working in the region; b) monitor progress; c) improve collaboration among partners; d) build and widen partnerships with host governments, as well as with private sector entities in the region; and e) support CBFPP political objectives by working with other donors and regional institutions. The CTO has been active and visible in the region, despite staff shortages. The move to Kinshasa had a perceived additional advantage of distancing the CTO from Washington-based conservation politics.

But this transfer has not been without significant problems. When the SO team leader arrived in Kinshasa to establish the CARPE office in January, 2003, USAID/Kinshasa was itself a newly created USAID office,²⁵ with very limited capacity to support the program logistically and technically. The SO team leader had therefore to hire and train his own CARPE staff members, but also had to train many USAID/K staff members in USAID procedures. The CARPE SO team has been quite small, including only one senior officer, two FSNs, one PSC and one or more interns. Recruiting a second CARPE expatriate staff member to work in Kinshasa has also proven to be difficult; and several support positions (Controller, Executive Officer) have been extremely difficult to fill.

Kinshasa is reasonably centrally located for the CARPE program, with most of its landscapes in the DRC, Gabon and the ROC. Commercial air travel from Kinshasa to other locations within the 7 country region is improving, but is not always efficient. For example, one must normally fly from Kinshasa to Nairobi, in order to travel to Yaounde, Cameroon. CARPE utilization of private AirServe planes to fly to landscape sites and between CARPE countries has been extremely helpful in offering alternative flight options to both CARPE CTO staff and CARPE partner organizations. Neither of the most likely alternative locations for the CARPE management team, Libreville, Gabon and Yaounde, Cameroon, have functioning USAID missions; however, they might be considered as fallback locations in case of future political turmoil in the DRC. Most

²⁵ USAID/Kinshasa terminated operations in ____ due to the civil conflict and re-opened its doors in _____. Unlike most USAID missions, due to the long hiatus, there is no tradition of experienced Foreign Service National (FSN) officers who form the core of most USAID administrative and financial support offices.

CARPE partners have established offices in Kinshasa, which makes it a growing hub for informal, as well formal, coordination amongst partners. Each of the CARPE-funded Implementing NGOs, except for Conservation International, has a senior officer stationed in Kinshasa.²⁶

The move to Kinshasa has not necessarily led to improved support for CARPE from USAID's procurement and legal offices. These support functions were transferred from Washington to the USAID Regional Office (REDSO) in Nairobi. However, the regional contracts officer (RCO) responsible for CARPE has changed four times over less than three years, and the regional legal advisor (RLA) position has been vacant in the past and has again been vacant for several months. This lack of continuity contributed to significant delays of often several months and up to nine months in RCO approval of several implementing NGO subcontracts and sub grants. A belated RLA decision blocked the CARPE SO team from initiating the CARPE II small grants program as originally planned (effectively delaying use of this resource until year 3 of the program); and another RLA decision resulted in the need to prepare individual Environmental Impact Assessments prior to funding most of the significant field program activities. RCO support has "significantly improved" in recent months, and both the RCO and RLA have delegated several responsibilities to the CTO. Meanwhile, USAID technical support, provided by USAID/Washington when requested by the CTO, has reportedly been good.

Coordination between CARPE and the USAID mission in Kinshasa has been quite good, with strong program support from the two mission directors that have served there since 2002. Beginning in FY 2002, USAID/K financed a project with economic growth funding (SO 4) that would provide complementary development activities in the Lac Tumba landscape. and there has been some effort to ensure that CARPE landscapes are priority locations for mission-funded SANRU health/family planning/HIV-AIDS activities. USAID/Rwanda, on the other hand, has not yet provided any complementary assistance to the Virunga landscape from its mission budget, but has facilitated CARPE discussions with the GOR and has been generally supportive of the program.

The transfer of CARPE management to Kinshasa has left a vacuum in Washington and the role of the Interagency Advisory Board is now unclear to USG partners. This group now meets only on special occasions, e.g., when the CTO is in Washington and had not met for a year prior to briefing and answering questions posed by the assessment team. No Washington or U.S.-based structure has been developed that includes all of the CARPE implementing partners (Implementing NGOs, federal agencies and other partners such as WRI). The only functional coordination mechanism appears to be the work of the Editorial Board for the annual CARPE-initiated State of the Forest report, with the University of Maryland as the lead editor.

Although CARPE is supported by a project officer in USAID's Africa Bureau and with 10% of the time of a technical officer in the central Environment Office, these positions have focused on internal USAID requirements (budget, reporting) and "fire fighting", e.g., responding to Congressional queries. This support has not been particularly visible in representing CARPE to other donors such as the World Bank, to the Congress, or even to the full set of CARPE partners.

The level of interest of the US Department of State in CARPE and especially in its creation, the Congo Basin Forestry Partnership (CBFP), also is waning. The USG filled the role of CBFP facilitator from 2002-mid 2004 with the part-time availability of a former Ambassador who operated without sufficient funding and authority to be effective. Now that the facilitator role has been transferred to the French government, State

²⁶ CI's recently modified global institutional strategy distances the organization from direct implementation responsibilities. CI now typically provides funding to sub-grantees for program implementation (such as DFGFI and BCI) and has fewer CI staff located in program regions. The one CI field officer in the CARPE region was relocated, due to family reasons, in early 2005 and has not yet been replaced.

Department interest in the region's environment and conservation issues has lessened, perhaps inevitably given the passage of time. Embassy personnel could not remember receiving any messages from Washington on CARPE or CBFP-related environment or conservation related issues for the past year. One State environment officer stationed in Libreville (one of three OES "Hub" positions in Africa) is responsible for covering all of West and Central Africa, including all CBFP-related issues.

Despite the apparent lessened senior level USG involvement in Washington, Congressional interest in the CBFP and CARPE remains strong and bipartisan. Although the USG commitment to the CBFP formally expires in FY2005, the foreign assistance legislation for FY2006 includes \$15 million in earmarked funding for CARPE (the same level as in previous years), as well as an additional \$2.5 million for the USFWS for activities in the CBFP region.

Conclusions:

- The transfer of CARPE management responsibilities to the field has been effective in focusing USAID attention on the field where it should be.
- The transfer has made it much easier to maintain reasonably close coordination with Implementing NGOs and with other field managers in Kinshasa and the region. Consequently, USAID is much more visible to Implementing NGOs and donors and is modestly more effective with national governments.
- The CTO has been extremely active and available to all parties, but has been hampered by a small staff and problems with his "eyes and ears" (the focal points).
- Despite relocation of the CARPE office to Kinshasa, USG presence and attention to environmental issues in the region has been minimal (one part-time State Department officer and the SO team leader). USG presence is also limited by the absence of USAID bilateral agreements with any of the countries in the region and a USAID mission presence only in DRC and Rwanda.
- CARPE coordination with the USAID mission program in DRC is good. Initial efforts to supplement CARPE presence in landscapes with other USAID-funded programs (economic growth and health) are underway in one landscape.
- Meanwhile in Washington, interagency and partner coordination has atrophied. The TOR of the inter-institutional body in Washington is unclear to USG partners and no inter-stitutional body, including all partners, has been established. USAID/W support has been at the working level with little/no direct contact with the World Bank, AFR or AF leadership, or the Congress.

B. Roles, Responsibilities and Staffing of USAID, its partners and other actors

USAID and the CARPE SO team: The traditional roles and responsibilities for a USAID CARPE SO team include strategic planning and program design, program management, monitoring and evaluation and liaison (often including policy dialogue) with the host government(s) and with other donors. These roles have been carried out very actively and effectively by the CARPE SO team and appear to be accepted by the CARPE partners. The CTO has been very aggressive in establishing a program framework and a program monitoring plan (PMP) for what was initially a well-funded initiative with vague, difficult-to-measure objectives. The implementing NGOs have gradually accepted (and even applauded) the leadership of the CTO in transforming CARPE into a results-based program with region-wide indicators of achievement. Some partners report that "they have gone back to school" to learn how to prepare annual work plans and how to monitor program results using the CARPE framework. CARPE SO team staffing, however, has been limited by: a) an informal budget limitation of \$1 million for "CARPE management" imposed by USAID/AFR that made it impossible for the SO team leader to establish the team of seven that he initially wanted to manage

the program²⁷; and b) difficulties in staffing the deputy director position (the position was filled for only six months due to health problems of a late-arriving incumbent; and there have been delays in recruiting and fielding a replacement). A series of interns and personal service contractors have carried out functions that would normally be performed by USAID staffers (FSOs and FSNs). These staffing and funding problems have limited the ability of the CTO to carry out all of his functions, despite his reputation as “a person who seems to work 24 hours a day.”

The Implementing NGOs: The roles and responsibilities of the four large US based environmental NGOs are clearly spelled out in their individual cooperative agreements. The implementing NGOs (and USAID) feel comfortable with most of these responsibilities, although CARPE financing has resulted in a major expansion of their existing programs in the region and has enabled the initiation of new programs. The implementing NGOs are grappling with several management issues²⁸ as part of this expansion:

1. Sub-contracting to other partners for work in the landscapes has been slow and laborious in part due to NGO delays;
2. Procedures for efficient transfer of funds from NGO headquarters to landscapes have not always been efficient, especially for WWF due to its international structure and because of problems in funds control in their Kinshasa office;
3. Making sub-grants to local NGOs using USAID procedures has been slow, with only AWF and CI aggressively using this resource; and
4. Meeting USAID work plan and program monitoring requirements, more stringent than other of the NGO funding sources, has more than normal staff time.

Many of the management responsibilities related to these complex programs in remote landscapes are carried out by Ph.D. technical specialists with modest training in program management. In response to these management weaknesses, most implementing NGOs have beefed up their country-level management support teams and some have established new and more efficient financial and administrative management systems. It is not yet clear whether the qualifications and/or training of landscape leaders and the composition of the NGO landscape teams are now adequate to carry out program activities with the level of controls required by USAID regulations.

The Federal Agencies: The CARPE SO team leader envisaged roles and responsibilities for several USG federal agencies that included: a) providing “market driven” services to implementing NGOs for work within the landscapes; b) meeting some of the “cross-cutting” needs of national government institutions, such as a national park service or the ministry of environment, separate from CARPE landscape activities; and c) bringing additional funding into the program to help finance their activities in the region. These roles and expectations have not been fully understood or accepted by all of the CARPE partners. The implementing NGOs have rarely called upon the federal agency services to work in landscapes with the exception of USFS land use planning and the GIS support provided by the NASA/UMD. The implementing NGOs have never transferred any of their landscape funds to the federal agencies via the ‘market’ mechanism envisaged. Although some cross-cutting issues were identified and agreed upon as important for the CARPE program, there has been no clear identification of a leader for a ‘cross cutting issue’ among the federal agencies. Informally, NASA/UMD. provides leadership for GIS mapping and monitoring, including the State of the

²⁷ The costs of stationing an expatriate in this region are quite high, estimated by CARPE at approximately \$450,000/year. Third country national (TCN) costs approximate \$300,000/year.

²⁸ The role of “landscape leader” and his/her responsibility for the work of other CARPE partners in the landscape, especially those with unbundled funding will be discussed later in this chapter.

Forest report; USFS provides some leadership for multi-use land use planning; and WRI provides leadership in forest monitoring via Global Forest Watch program.

The Park Service support directly to host governments has been less than satisfactory, in part because the visiting personnel had little or no previous experience in Central Africa and limited French language capacity.

National Governments: Many governments in the region have a history of colonial and then autocratic centralized administration from the capital. In several countries, it has been sometimes difficult to get clear and consistent program guidance from two or more government department leaders (a not-unheard-of problem in the US, as well). Most of these governments do not have much experience working with USAID and have little knowledge of USAID rules and regulations. Therefore, their roles in relation to CARPE are not at all clear to them. Their expectation that CARPE would provide funding and direct program assistance to governments has not been met. Even those officials that now accept that USAID cannot provide “direct” assistance to them in the absence of bilateral country agreements, still complain that they are inadequately involved in program planning and are also not informed about the CARPE activities in their country. At worst, they see CARPE as a program wherein the US government simply provides funds to US conservation organizations to carry out the NGO’s agendas in huge tracts of their countries. These governments contrast this “assistance” unfavorably with donor programs managed by the European Union, the World Bank and other bilateral donors that are managed in direct cooperation with host government institutions.

C. Coordination Among Partners

USAID believes that coordination among the various implementing partners at various levels of interaction is essential to the achievement of CARPE objectives. Coordination, however, does not come easily, especially for implementing NGOs that have traditionally seen themselves as competitors.

Strategic Planning: The implementing NGOs carried out the initial strategic planning that led to: a) the Yaounde Declaration that established COMIFAC and prioritized conservation work in 11 landscapes; b) the announcement of the CBFP that would fund activities in these landscapes; and c) the “partnering” or division of responsibilities between implementing NGOs who will manage specific landscape and landscape segment programs. By contrast, during the initial years of CARPE implementation, they have deferred to USAID leadership for strategic planning. with two notable and important exceptions: a) joint action in the form of a letter signed in 2004 by all of the implementing NGOs and by some donors to urge President Kabilla to maintain a promised DRC moratorium on new forestry concession agreements; b) a proposal to establish a Congo Basin Sustainable Financing mechanism, initiated by WWF, CI, WCS and other donors (UNDP/GEF, MacArthur Foundation), at the region’s first workshop on sustainable financing for conservation in November, 2005. The Implementing NGOs have been unified in support of World Bank policy leadership, as part of forest program conditionality and have supported the COMIFAC “Plan de Convergence” as a mechanism to harmonize (and improve) forest and conservation-related legislation and regulations among governments in the region.

Country level coordination: The CARPE structure envisages a CARPE-funded “Focal Point” as the linchpin to ensure country level coordination and communication among CARPE partners and between CARPE and the host government. As discussed below, the focal point mechanism has not been effective in carrying out these responsibilities. Informal coordination often takes place among the key implementing NGOs operating in a country, the World Bank, other donors and, sometimes, the CARPE SO team, often in relation to issues related to World Bank program conditionality or the need for policy reform. These informal processes often leave out the host government. CARPE has not yet established a mechanism for bringing together the host

government, CARPE partners and the CARPE SO team to plan and review progress in meeting CARPE objectives.

Coordination within landscapes: The CARPE SO team leader has required coordinated annual work plans within each landscape, under the leadership of the “landscape leader.” The ‘lead’ is responsible for ensuring that planned results are achieved by each partner in the landscape²⁹. Several landscape leaders complain that this cannot be accomplished without the lead having control over all CARPE budget resources flowing into the landscape (e.g. bundling all funding through the landscape lead organization). Except for AWF coordination planning in Virunga, landscape leaders have not established a calendar of events that would ensure effective joint planning and the periodic monitoring of program results. In some cases, implementing NGOs continue to operate almost independently within landscapes. Program differences and budget issues are not resolved in the landscape but are delegated to the CARPE SO team leader for resolution.

Broad coordination among all key stakeholders has been well facilitated by most landscape leaders in and around national parks, building on the DRC “Co-co-si” mechanism or, in Gabon, the “Committee Technique de Gestion”. This multi-stakeholder coordination has rarely been expanded to address the full landscape.

Coordination in program monitoring and evaluation: The CARPE SO team has appropriately taken the lead in encouraging a single program-wide PMP. The SO team leader has also strongly encouraged the development of annual State of the Forest reports, using indicators of success that have been agreed upon not only by CARPE partners, but also by other donor organizations and private sector specialists.

Coordination in leveraging resources and public support: The establishment of the CBFP has been extraordinarily successful in leveraging approximately \$150 million in new donor and private sector resources towards meeting conservation objectives in Central Africa. USAID’s matching funds requirement (between 50% and 100% for the four implementing NGOs) has also leveraged significant additional funding. The implementing NGOs are historically competitive in raising private resources and in garnering public support to support their programs. However, the new concept of a Congo Basin Trust Fund and other modes of sustainable financing for conservation in the region is a key opportunity for a joint effort to leverage additional private sector and donor resources.

Conclusions:

- The role of the USAID SO team leader and the CARPE office has been gradually assimilated and accepted by the partners. USAID’s responsibilities have been carried out very actively and effectively. However, the USG/USAID responsibilities regarding liaison with host governments are not clearly defined or effective. They have not been carried out aggressively by existing focal points and have not been carried out by the CARPE SO team in the absence of focal points.
- The roles of the Implementing NGOs are clear with the exception of the degree of landscape leader’s control over unbundled landscape segments. When disputes occur, the methods of problem resolution have not been clearly defined but are evolving with experience. Establishing a clearer structural path to problem resolution would be useful.
- The roles of the federal agencies are not clearly understood by the partners as a whole. The “market approach” to buying their services has failed. Only USFS, NASA/UMD, WRI/GFW and USFWS have a proven track record that is likely to lead to a continuing demand for their presence in CARPE. USFWS has now become an alternative funding source with its own earmarked funding..

²⁹ The level of landscape coordination is recognized by all CARPE parties to be much more limited in transboundary settings, especially where there is a significant geographic barrier such as a river separating landscape segments in different countries.

- The roles of national governments in relation to CARPE are not at all clear to them. Their expectations of involvement have not been met; even when they have accepted that no CARPE funding will be provided directly to them. Indirect support provided via partners has not been well documented or acknowledged by governments. CARPE's annual planning process essentially ignores national governments, although it typically involves locally-based government officials in the landscapes. In contrast, the national government roles in relation to COMIFAC appear clear to both parties.
- CARPE's relationship to COMIFAC is still evolving with the SO team leader and the State Department Regional Environment Officer clearly the point people for coordination .
- Coordination with local leaders and other actors in the landscapes has been most effective when Comite Technique de Gestion or Co-co-si (DRC) have been formally established and where government officials have been substantively involved in planning and monitoring.
- Landscape coordination for Transboundary landscapes must be seen very differently from other landscapes. The magnitude and importance of the agenda for cross border coordination differs in each landscape. Implementing NGOs may not have the organizational resources or political weight to deal with many of these issues effectively on their own.
- Coordination at the national level is carried out informally by the implementing NGOs; and in DRC also with the CARPE SO team leader. The focal point does not appear to be a major player in this coordination except in Cameroon.
- USAID has provided the setting and the agenda for most of the M&E coordination among partners. Coordination in the preparation and submission of matrices and landscape reporting is moving forward reasonably well.
- The State of the Forest report has proven, in its initial iteration, to be an excellent model for encouraging both multi-partner and COMIFAC coordination. There appears to be very limited coordination/transfer of technical approaches and lessons learned among the landscapes.
- Coordination by CARPE partners for: a) strategic planning, b) leveraging resources and public support and c) for policy advocacy is the exception rather than the rule. One major success was the forest concession letter in DRC signed by all major CARPE partners and sent to the President, in support of World Bank conditionality.
- NGO staffing appears to be adequate with the striking exception of CI which is virtually not present in the region. NGO staffing is expatriate-intensive and therefore relatively expensive at this early stage of CARPE implementation. The costs for these expatriates are typically covered by a variety of funding sources and not just CARPE.
- USG staffing (US Embassy and CARPE) is inadequate to deal with both CARPE program management and to provide support for CBFP objectives.

D. CARPE SO team's management of the cooperative agreements

In 2002, USAID chose to use existing Leader with Associate cooperative agreements to solicit RFA applications from the four implementing NGOs that had developed the CBFP proposal. This decision was reportedly made in part, in order to move quickly towards program implementation. However, none of the initial applications were deemed fully acceptable and revised applications were solicited and eventually accepted.. In responding to the RFAs, the implementing NGOs worked together to arrange partnerships (called 'teaming agreements') deciding among themselves which organizations would have "lead" and supportive responsibilities for each of the 11 landscapes and 15 landscape segments. In some cases, applicants also proposed sub-contract relationships with other organizations, such as CARE.

The associate awards³⁰ signed with each of the four implementing NGOs included the same four “substantial involvement” clauses which defined USAID’s role in program oversight:

- Approval of annual implementation/work plans
- Approval of performance monitoring plans
- Approval of key personnel
- Approval of changes of teaming agreements and changes in those key personnel.

Other terms of the associate awards were the submission of quarterly financial reports and semi-annual technical reports. These terms are all quite normal for USAID agreements.

However, one unusual element of these agreements was their structure as “performance based” agreements, similar to USAID’s performance based contracts. Although the grading criteria and the scoring system for assessing performance in each landscape segment were transparent, this structure gives USAID an unusually strong role for a cooperative agreement in determining annual budget levels that are based on program performance. Similarly, USAID’s requirements concerning the details of the annual plans and performance monitoring plans are unusually detailed by the CARPE SO team. Work plans must be described at the activity task level (e.g. “meet with authorities”, “draft policy proposal”). In practice this has allowed the CTO to see and veto even small budget items such as “extend electrification to herbarium” and “purchase two desktops and one laptop”, again an unusual level of involvement for the CTO of a cooperative agreement. The annual report guidance announced by USAID was also quite detailed (15 pages long in its May, 2005 revision). The amount of reporting required of the implementing NGOs normally fills several CD-ROMs each reporting period. According to the CARPE SO team, this is needed in order to provide inputs into six reports to USAID/W or to the US Congress.

This level of involvement has allowed the CTO to be extremely knowledgeable and, some would say, unusually intrusive in the management of the cooperative agreements. The CTO believes that this level of review and dialogue has been needed by the implementing NGOs (“Without this, they would have been lost”) as they gradually learned how to meet USAID planning, monitoring and reporting requirements.³¹ Perhaps contrary to expectations, the landscape leaders are practically unanimous in welcoming and valuing these detailed comments which they say have enabled them to make improvements in subsequent plans and reports.

Despite the heavy level of CTO involvement, the CARPE SO team gets high marks from the implementing NGOs for the speed and quality of their approvals and report comments. Most approvals of key personnel were provided within 1-2 days (sometimes within 2 hours). The major concerns of partners in this reporting process have been: a) seemingly unending revisions of work plans throughout the year (especially a requested revision two weeks before the end of that year’s reporting period); b) changes in what needs to be reported in the PMP; and c) delays in RCO Nairobi approvals of subcontracts and sub grants. One major concern about the structure of the cooperating agreements is their lack of control over landscape management of all CARPE funds, especially unbundled funding that flows to their landscapes. This makes it difficult for them to enforce quality control and to provide incentives for other partners to heed their advice. A second major concern is the short-term nature of the elaborate planning process. They would prefer to

³⁰ Awards made under an existing Leader with Associate Cooperative Agreement are called “associate awards”.

³¹ The CTO’s written comments on reports are often quite detailed, in one case he and his team provided 6 single spaced pages of comments along with 17 pages of annexes to a semi-annual report.

prepare and receive approvals for multi-year plans, even if incremental USAID funding would necessitate modifications in those multi-year plans at a later date.

Conclusions:

- The LWA associate award structure seems to be working well during program implementation, with no major complaints from USAID or its LWA partners.
- The most significant problems in agreement execution relate to: a) long delays in the approvals of sub-contracts and sub-grants during periods of short staffing in RCO/Nairobi; b) absence of RLA support; and c) continuing revisions in work plans and PMP reporting requirements.
- The degree of USAID substantial involvement defined in the cooperative agreements looks normal, but has been exercised in a very aggressive way via detailing of work plan and monitoring requirements. This seems justified by USAID's need to establish an effective program framework for 11 dispersed landscapes and for other cross cutting activities, as well as to ensure quality in the representation of US interests.
- Most partners have accepted or have seen value in USAID's insistence on planning and monitoring at this level of detail.
- The structure of the LWA cooperative agreements encourages a landscape by landscape focus and provides few incentives for implementing NGOs to make hard budgeting choices among landscapes. Budgeting and monitoring by landscape segment has put a very heavy load on the CARPE SO team, with the team involved with annual budget decisions on 11 landscapes and 15 landscape segments, including small areas that would be described elsewhere as mini-projects (funding as low as \$150,000/year). All NGO-issued small grants (as tiny as a few thousand dollars) also require USAID approval.

E. Have the Current Agreement Arrangements and the Landscape Leader Approach been effective?

USAID decided to utilize existing LWA cooperative agreements to request applications for work in each of eleven landscapes and in landscape segments. The LWA mechanism is perfectly legal for this purpose. Indeed it was created, in part, to reduce the need for lengthy procurements and to utilize organizations that had proven their capacity, through pre-competition, to respond to USAID mission requirements. Since all but one³² of the implementing NGOs had worked in the region for decades (often without USAID funds), USAID might have also considered funding the expansion of their programs through grants, rather than cooperative agreements where USAID has more substantial involvement. However, when the USG took the lead in initiating the CBFP as a key element of US foreign policy for the region, it became clear that the USG role must be more significant and a cooperative agreement would be the proper mechanism for funding the landscapes.

The RFAs encouraged "teaming agreements," so that the proper mix of skills would ideally be provided to implement very complex programs over vast geographical areas. Each landscape would have an assigned NGO landscape lead responsible to USAID for managing and coordinating the work plan and budget for all the implementing partners for that landscape. The roles of the landscape leads are detailed in the cooperative agreements.

One of the most controversial elements of the CARPE II program has been breadth of involvement and the dominant role of the four implementing NGOs in receiving and managing program funds. In some cases, the "teaming agreements" included more than one conservation NGO and also other NGOs or small businesses

³² Conservation International had not executed programs in Central Africa prior to the CBFP.

with other skills (community development, enterprise development, governance), but many traditional contractors or grantees see themselves “frozen out” by the present arrangements.

Operational relationships between landscape leads and other “team” organizations have often not been smooth, especially in single-country landscapes³³. Three factors that seem to have affected these operational relationships are: 1) limited capacity by the implementing NGOs to efficiently prepare and complete sub-contracting or sub-granting agreements; 2) the limited management experience of landscape leaders and, in some cases, their limited interest in managing sub-contracts or sub-grants in the face of so many other work priorities in their remote landscape and 3) a preference of implementing NGOs to use the talents and skills they know best - those of their own organization.

Another problem relates more to the structure that USAID decided to use for the landscapes. USAID has not always channeled all landscape funding through the lead organization and has “unbundled” funding.³⁴ This is most common when two implementing NGOs are working in the same landscape. The process avoids the need for USAID to pay double-overheads (NICRA or “indirect costs”) as the lead NGO passes the funds to the second.³⁵ The lack of funding control by landscape leads undercuts their ability to review and approve annual budgets and to manage funding priorities for the total landscape. Landscape leads then complain that they are held accountable for landscape planning and program execution, and are “scored” by the CARPE SO team on overall landscape performance, but do not have the authority to withhold funding from an under performing partner. By contrast, several segment leaders and sub-contractors complain that the landscape lead already has too much authority and is making decisions with little knowledge of what is needed in an adjacent segment.

When conflicts arise, there has been uncertainty about what procedures should be utilized to resolve them within the landscape. In practice, the issue has typically been forwarded to the SO team leader for his adjudication and resolution.

Suggestions from implementing NGOs for resolving these problems include:

- Maintain the present level of authorities, but require planning to be done jointly via annual planning meetings of all landscape partners. Clearly define mediation remedies for disputes (including the use of 3rd neutral parties).
- Pass all CARPE landscape funds through the “lead” organization and enhance the authority of the landscape leader. Require the “lead” organizations to avoid double-overheads by passing on the segment funding to the segment “leads” with no fee or a lower-than-NICRA fee.
- Do not bundle funding for transnational landscapes, especially those separated by a major geographic division (e.g. the Congo River). A few key issues and tasks for transnational cooperation that are within the management control of the Implementing NGOs should be defined in each segment plan.

Conclusions:

- Use of existing LWAs to fund CARPE II landscape activities meets USAID procurement regulations, but has been criticized by other potential partners, who feel “frozen out” from the program.
- The teaming arrangements for landscapes tended to focus resources in the lead organization, did not include multiple organizations with varied skills, and have often not been well executed in many landscapes..

³³ The degree of “lead” oversight and control for a multi-national landscape is viewed by all parties as much less involved.

³⁴ This is done because of bureaucratic issues, for example, to obligate end-of-year funds that were not expected by the program.

³⁵ To date, only CI has provided funds to sub-grantees without charging an overhead fee.

- The landscape leader approach has been generally acceptable with some exceptions. The NGO division of labor within landscapes is usually quite clear and there is little duplication. CARPE-funded activities are normally supplemented by an equally large set of activities managed by the same Implementing NGOs but funded from other sources (including matching funds).
- Most landscape leaders have not felt strong enough authority to veto program suggestions of other Implementing NGOs in the landscape. These issues have typically been passed on to the SO team leader for resolution.

F. Roles and Effectiveness of Focal Points

During CARPE I, the focal points hired in several countries through the Biodiversity Support Program and WWF were the main presence of CARPE in those countries. The job requirements for the focal points called for respected senior conservation specialists or former government officials. At least two strong focal points were hired during Phase I and were effective. They were particularly visible as managers of small grant programs in each country and helped to facilitate the field work of CARPE I partners based in the US.

The job descriptions of the focal points were augmented for Phase II with its new landscape focus,. These persons would now have a much stronger role to play in: a) monitoring landscape activities carried out by implementing NGOs, b) providing a much more active liaison role with central governments; and providing support for “cross cutting” activities.. Initially, the SO team leader planned that focal points would be hired and administratively managed through WWF country offices but would report operationally to the CARPE SO team. Each focal point location would have three employees, a senior officer, a program assistant and a secretary at the cost of \$150,000 per focal point, including travel expenses. One continuing responsibility would be for the CARPE II focal points to manage the small grant program that would be funded through a USDA PASA. Just prior to completing the PASA procurement process, USAID’s legal office judged that the PASA could not be used to transfer small grant funds. Subsequently in 2003 the small grant responsibility was transferred to landscape leaders. Over this two year period of uncertainty regarding the small grant program, the functions of the focal points seemed diminished. Only the Cameroon focal point has provided continuous and effective service during CARPE II. A DRC focal point was hired by WWF for a more prestigious position and a new recruit will take this position in December, 2005 after a 9 month hiatus. The Gabon focal point has been ineffective and was fired by WWF/Gabon with USAID approval in November, 2005. There has been no focal point in the ROC until late 2005, due to significant delays in defining new contractual arrangements that would enable WCS to hire and manage the focal point function there.

The location of the focal points at the headquarters of an implementing NGO and their dependence on that NGO for logistical support has given many CARPE observers the strong impression that the focal points had limited independence. For example, they would probably find it difficult to criticize their home entity as part of their monitoring responsibilities. Other CARPE partners working in the same country sometimes doubted the independence and even the confidentiality of focal point analysis. Their location with implementing NGOs also re-enforced host government perceptions that USAID’s basic objective of CARPE was to support NGO programs, rather than to retain a balance between NGO and host government objectives.

With the transfer of program execution responsibilities to Kinshasa and to the landscapes, there has been uncertainty about the TOR for these focal points. Managing small grants was initially a major responsibility of the focal points and provided excellent access to NGOs and CBOS in the country; however, as explained above, this role never materialized during CARPE II. Needed revisions in the job description were addressed in a spring 2003 workshop when new job descriptions were agreed upon and again in February, 2005, when “managing the CARPE country team” was added to their list of responsibilities.

Conclusions:

- The focal point system has been ineffective in CARPE II due to: a) difficulties with staffing; b) the transfer of small grant fund management to implementing NGOs; and c) uncertainties regarding the roles and responsibilities of Focal Points.
- The job description for the focal points has evolved during CARPE II. The most needed roles appear to be: a) effective liaison and frequent communication with national government officials; b) managing the CARPE “country team” process; c) maintaining liaison with non-landscape NGOs and civil society, ideally with the help of a small grants fund; d) recommending non-landscape CARPE activities; e) coordinating or participating in advocacy activities on high priority conservation policy issues and f) monitoring and reporting on the progress of landscape-level activities including those operated by their “home” NGO.
- CARPE II has very little basis for determining whether focal points with adequate skills can be hired and can indeed carry out these expanded roles. Only one position (Cameroon) has been filled with a qualified officer during a significant period of CARPE II’s life to date.
- Administratively locating focal points with Implementing NGOs has not worked well. It leads to the appearance or reality of conflict of interest and makes it difficult for focal points to achieve independence for their tasks of landscape monitoring, coordination with national governments, and policy advocacy. A similar problem would occur if the focal points managed a CARPE small grant fund within the administrative structures of Implementing NGOs.

IV. Assessment of Strategic Design

The Strategic Objective of CARPE II is to reduce the rate of forest degradation and loss of biodiversity through increased local, national, and regional natural resource management capacity in its nine participating central African countries. This SO is approved for the period from January 2003 to September 2011, but follow-on continuation is anticipated until and possibly beyond 2015.

Essentially, CARPE II has three major design elements:

- Grants to large international conservation NGOs (Implementing NGOs) leveraging their country and regional presence to implement field “landscape” level activities;
- A set of mostly US-based organizations that work across landscapes in common thematic areas, such as multiple-use planning, forest monitoring, policy and governance and uncontrolled hunting;
- A regional program management structure based in USAID Kinshasa, with country-specific focal points as program antennae and modest backstop and coordination functions in Washington.

These elements provide a strong foundation for the program and are keys to much of its success. The ability to work through established NGOs under challenging conditions enabled substantial progress to take place after only three years of implementation. The thematic cross-cutting actors have contributed to the development of analyses, implementation and monitoring tools and to an increased base of information. The management structure has endeavored successfully to create an overall sense of CARPE and to hold implementers to a results focus in executing the design. CARPE II intended to determine workable models and governance regimes and to build local capacity toward eventual sustainability. Capacity building toward sustainability is in its early stages, yet CARPE has contributed to the expansion of protected areas systems in several countries, notably Gabon; it has initiated promising models of resource management and private sector participation; and the program has helped build broad commitment to conservation principles through its cooperative agreements.

The procedures that link and govern the interaction between these design elements, however, were hastily assembled to meet a pressing need to scale up in response to the CBFP commitment. In practice, design weaknesses have hindered smooth functioning, forcing CARPE stakeholders to apply adaptive management solutions in the attempt to minimize their impact on program performance. This section identifies strengths, weaknesses and operational issues grounded in the design, draws conclusions and makes suggestions to mitigate issues in the shorter term, and to optimize the program in the years ahead. The anticipated follow-on to CARPE II, projected for the 2011-2015 period, can be expected to focus much more on issues of institutional strengthening and sustainability.

A. Is CARPE on track to Meet its Long Term Goal -- Strengths and Weaknesses of Design

CARPE's first phase evolved from a coalescence of activities funded under the earlier USAID Small Countries Program. Numerous but isolated conservation pilot activities were pulled together under a single CARPE I umbrella in 1995. This move reflected a growing awareness that the challenges of forest conservation and biodiversity protection were substantial, and, moreover, that they were manifest at transnational and basin-wide levels.

Most of the original partners continue to participate in the current phase and thus have a long history of operating in the region with USAID funding, but with little or no USAID presence. This ability to operate independently and under isolated circumstances formed a building block of both the first and more importantly the second phase of the program's implementation structures. Without this base, it is difficult to envision an effective mechanism under which CARPE II/CBFP funds could have achieved the significant conservation advances of the nature outlined in the preceding sections. That this has taken place in a period of conflict, and emergence from the resulting disorder is a testament to the dedication of CARPE's management team, implementing partners and protected area guards and wardens.

USAID program management shifted to the region for CARPE II with the aim of bringing management closer to the challenges of field level implementation. Chapter Two underscores the general success achieved by this move. The fortuitous confluence of this geographic shift with the US commitment to the CBFP made CARPE the obvious choice as the primary executing agent for the USG's 3-year promise to support the partnership. Using CARPE to support CBFP validated the design assumption that USAID could successfully operate in areas of little or no presence. The reliance on NGO operators with their own autonomous presence was critical but also lowered the profile of USAID, especially to external stakeholders including both national governments and other donors. Additionally, the rapid scale up led to a number of design compromises:

- Too strong of a linking of funds to geographic areas without adequately linking them to existing governance regimes. Specifically, this led several observers to characterizing the landscape grants as "pork" for the conservation movement with minimal CARPE ownership by national governments.
- Insufficient USAID management structure for the scope of the undertaking;
- A design that did not facilitate important cross-cutting, transversal functions such as determining and promoting best practices, monitoring, and policy coordination that were dispersed across a confusing array of USG and NGO organizations whose efforts were very unevenly implemented in scope, scale, and geographic focus;
- Disproportionate support to one of three intermediate results via a strong weighting of funding and emphasis on local, mostly protected area-level implementation and strengthening of local staffs; and

- Isolation of Washington-based partners which tended to be cut off more by the management shift and remain insufficiently integrated with the landscape focus of most of the implementation effort.

The landscape approach offers a complement to the traditional park and PA-based approaches to biodiversity conservation by addressing conservation functions beyond park borders in a manner consistent with social, cultural, and economic development needs. As executed, the models being developed around the essential biodiversity assets in CARPE's landscapes address core threats arising from forest cutting, excessive game and Bushmeat exploitation, mining and, unsustainable local resource management practices, population growth and land pressures.

Participatory development activities outside the protected areas show early promise. Although they are beginning to bear results, essentially, the field program to date has resulted in a consolidation of conservation and particularly protected area management in and around selected core areas within landscapes and a notable strengthening of local park and protected area management staffs. From previous sections, it emerges that LWA mechanism did not naturally produce Cooperative Agreement partnering arrangements that adequately address the full range of natural resource management, regional planning and local administration and policy issues. The design and budget parameters restricted other non-landscape level partners from fully addressing unmet needs and the sub-grantee/contractor and cross-cutting market place functions have been unevenly used and appear to tax NGO management capacities.

CARPE II brings the key pieces and functions to the table, but has not always used them as foreseen in the original design. For example, basin level monitoring remains partially integrated with landscape activities and impacts; the use of specialized organizations to address cross-cutting themes was not widely called upon. Design issues are often associated with a specific program component that affect the efficiency in achieving results.

Assessing strengths and weaknesses of selected specific components further described below helps suggest how they would benefit from modification and realignment.

Landscape Leaders and Landscape partnerships: NGOs have autonomous presence in the region and can operate independently of USG direct presence and support. In many cases, long presence and experience working in landscape enables effective leveraging of prior achievements. In other cases, implementing NGOs are able to transfer lessons and approaches from similar challenges addressed in similar programs in the region and surroundings. The use of established organizations with bilateral agreements in place as landscape leaders, provides a single mechanism to address a range of specific program needs. Landscape leads can develop or build a longer term commitment to an area, thus contributing to making partnerships work better over time. Leaders give USAID a single point for management accountability. A need for overall coordination is recognized and attributed.

Relationships between leads and subs, especially when subs are other LWA eligible NGOs, have been awkward and in a few instances, dysfunctional. Landscapes are so large and expansive that effective communication and coordination is challenging, costly and management intensive; Leadership roles vis a vis other partners are not clear or fully accepted; the LWA mechanism sets up large Implementing NGOs in competition for limited resources, with the resulting division of tasks not fully reflecting the comparative advantages of each. WCS, for example, has been strong in research; CI has relative strengths in conservation finance and more recently, cost efficient management of sub-grants and contracts. The current design (as implemented) allocates resources geographically and attempts to use sub-grants and contracts, as well as partnerships with cross-cutting organizations. NGO partners push for autonomy and do not naturally work

well together; they tend to overshadow local ministry and park officials and can elicit national feelings of loss of sovereignty; They sometimes lack a leadership mandate, especially for large isolated landscapes or where trans-border linkages are difficult and where there is no natural host government counterpart.

Transnational landscape structures: CARPE effectively recognized the need to manage landscape issues across borders and linked design to transnational funding and implementation concerns. Transnational problem identification and coordination are sanctioned by governments which have developed a variety of transnational mechanisms that operate at local cross border and regional/international levels. Some of the problems manifest themselves across borders and require international efforts to resolve. The international nature of protected area complexes and surrounding landscapes attracts funding.

Not all issues are transnational and structures of landscape coordination may be overly cumbersome when there is no need to actively address them. Transnational program coordination is difficult to implement and sustain.

Marketplace/crosscutter function and use of USG Partners: SI, FWS, NPS, NASA, USFS: Involving third party providers allows partners to identify needs and internal shortcoming and draw on a pre-selected group of specialized support institutions' specialized skills. The mechanism also helps bring USG into NGO dominated program design structure, which among other benefits, allows for government to government relations in technical areas.

In practice , they have not been well integrated with other program components. NGO funds are programmed independently thus service providers are not widely used; providers not necessarily most qualified or able to provide consistent support. Some have limited Central Africa experience or capacity to provide continuity in bringing their experience to the effort.

CARPE Management Structure and Focal Points: Active involvement of USAID management provides necessary cohesion. Performance-related feedback to implementing partners holds Implementing NGOs to task and minimizes intra-partnership tensions; USAID management has engendered focus on results; and encourages (within budget limitations) sharing of lessons and information across multiple implementers. Focal Points can represent overall program interests in political and technical meetings and other fora; they extend USAID limited resources especially in non-presence countries. Finally, they are independent of Implementing NGOs.

Over involvement in detail such as activity level verification and small grant approvals and amendments: USAID (staff) is too small for such a large program, i.e. subject to "single point failure" Irregular articulation between Kinshasa and Washington adds to a gap between landscape and non-landscape components. Lack of definition of Washington multi-agency coordination and backstop functions reduces Washington's contribution to overall management, Operational failure of Focal Points is based on division of technical and administrative supervision. As formal employees of one NGO, it limits their ability to objectively oversee the employer organization in the same way as other CARPE "competitors". Focal points can be seen as disruptive or even as "police" by NGO implementers. They are unproven in carrying out some new responsibilities.

Conclusions:

- With appropriate adjustments, CARPE II is and should stay on track to achieve its goals of reducing the rate of forest degradation and protecting biodiversity by 2015.³⁶
- The move from Phase I to Phase II successfully built on limited CARPE I and other NGO programs to leverage the established advantages of the international NGOs. The design specified much of the CARPE funding as NGO set-asides for landscape work, which resulted in challenges of integration internally, across landscapes, between NGO and national level institutions, and between NGO landscapes and non-landscape based partners including USAID management.
- The shift from Washington-based management to a field office enabled USAID to initiate and pursue necessary program management and coordination. Without this design modification, USAID would most certainly not have pulled the diverse pieces of CARPE into a coherent program (see management section). A few program components including those that are geographically remote (from Kinshasa) and some Washington-based CARPE implementing partners are disadvantaged. There is some risk in concentrating resources in Kinshasa (continued stability of Kinshasa as an operating environment).
- Working through established and/or newly committed conservation partners is a sound strategy that leverages partner strengths to achieve SO results (particularly for IR 1). Using Cooperative Agreements with substantial match ensures the validity and synergy intended by this implementation mechanism.
- Most NGO partnerships, working with beneficiary partners, are achieving required management capacity and implementation and reporting tools and skills to consolidate protection of biodiversity assets within (secure) protected areas, but more unevenly and to a lesser extent in surrounding landscapes. If maintained, these cooperative agreements should be well-placed to increase their efforts to strengthen and transfer capacity to local institutions and beneficiaries of the CARPE support.
- The design does not really give NGOs incentives at the landscape level to expand partnerships to address systemic remotely caused threats. Local staffs reported that it was difficult to act outside landscapes and felt the obligation to spend resources within the landscape. This would include those threats related to difficult policy issues such as inconsistent, overlapping or ambiguous ministerial mandates. Also included are threats where interventions could include such topics as education and communication programs for urban, military and extractive industry populations about bushmeat consumption.
- The absence of sufficient working mechanisms to encourage integration means that effective solutions being applied in one area are not systematically transferred to other circumstances where they would be appropriate.

B. Program Context: Limited USAID presence and the Continuing Appropriateness of Design Assumptions

The initial design includes assumptions that:

³⁶ In places ongoing population-environment dynamic may lead locally to increased near-term forest loss before it is stabilized. It is likely, but difficult to document, that such increases would be less than if CARPE were not present. In other locations CARPE is literally stabilizing and even reversing forest loss. Forest cover is being measured; better local management is beginning to take place which may also result in improved habitat quality within forests. Local SOF monitoring for CBFP-COMIFAC reporting should capture change not picked up by remote sensing methods.

- The stability of Central African governments will increase;
- The global timber trade will be increasingly subject to objective monitoring and scrutiny, thus making local enforcement more realistic;
- International agreements regarding payments to forest-rich countries for forest conservation related to the Climate Change Convention will lead to opportunities for capitalizing environmental services;
- Population growth in Central Africa will stabilize before pressures on rural resources make the CARPE SO unattainable.

Additional critical assumptions that are associated with CARPE's longer term goal and to certain design decisions include:

- Violent conflict will be controlled and prevented;
- Governments in the region will become more democratic and transparent; and,
- Corruption will be controlled and reduced. This has not taken place, and it is clearly beyond the manageable interest of CARPE, though in certain instances the program contributes locally to reducing corruption.

In large measure, these design assumptions were valid and remain so. Some have yet to come into play in any immediate way, such as changes in population dynamics or even the potential for monetizing environmental services functions in landscapes. In practice change takes place relatively slowly and unevenly across the region. The key development over the course of CARPE II's implementation has indeed been the increase in stability of governments and, despite remaining conflict areas, the reduction and prevention of violent conflict.

A key assumption is that unsustainable forest exploitation can be regulated through policy, public-private partnerships, monitoring and enforcement and market demand for certified product. Any follow-on needs to examine the demand side, as not all international suppliers to final markets appear to adhere to international standards at this point. GFW and other partners press for this scrutiny and several logging companies move toward certification and more widely, towards legality. Market forces continue to induce illegal, unsustainable logging, despite consumer control in some, mostly European and US, markets and evolving ITTO standards.

Governance and corruption remain intractable issues that hamper the program and imperil the lives of local ecoguards. The governance component was limited in scope but revealing. As discussed the GFW shows promise and partnership with larger operators can pressure local officials to be more accountable. Nonetheless, transparency issues remain problematic, though governance work suggests that these can be addressed at a variety of levels. Since CARPE II got underway, substantive advances in COMIFAC and increased involvement of other donors suggest that improvements in governance, corruption and accountability can be influenced even with a relatively small CARPE investment.

The development context continues to evolve. The persistence of armed conflict is becoming more sporadic and localized. The Congo Basin countries, while still suffering varying degrees of upheaval, have become somewhat more stable over the past three years. Increasingly, development and conservation agencies are moving into both central government and the rural environment. Governments are reestablishing linkages between central ministries and field forest and park service operations. Facilitation of the Congo Basin Forestry Partnership has shifted from the Americans to the French. Substantial sums of other donor money is pouring into the forestry and protected areas programs both at central and at field levels. New or stronger

government institutions are being developed. Enabling legislation and policies are being adopted and to some extent implemented.

The design assumed that NGOs were the only realistic partner to implement conservation in such a troubled and difficult region. Increased peace in the region has favored progress in the planning and management of parks and landscapes. Park staffs have remained in place and the WCS model of scaling back to, or starting with a few low-key research activities, has proven to be quite effective. Conservation NGOs have been able to build up operations as stability increases. In at least one case an NGO has stockpiled building materials in anticipation of fragility being reduced through disarmament efforts of the United Nations. NGO partnerships should remain the primary means of program implementation. The nature of the LS partnerships should reflect changing circumstances, including the possibility that USAID's relative share of funding for individual landscapes will decrease. With various levels of USG involvement, especially in the early stages of CARPE II, the program has proven that it can operate absent strong traditional USAID Mission presence. The partnership mechanism has served to bring in international resources such as ITTO support to the GFW. However, the implicit assumption that this implementation support would translate toward building a constituency in national governments and institutions depended on State Department and other US agencies reinforcing the CARPE presence. This appears to have worked in Gabon where there has been adequate attention. As discussed in the management section, the limited support has atrophied, yet need and justification for stronger presence remain.

CARPE's sharing of the central stage with other actors has changed the role of the Implementing NGOs who now provide services to a wider set of funding partners. Implementing NGOs country coordination appeared to be more prominent. The distinction between what was a NGO country program and what was a CARPE country program under a NGO was not always apparent. National NGO programs had minimal visible ties to USAID but were perceived as "WCS", or "WWF" programs and not CARPE/USAID. This has important implications for the CARPE design. For example, significant portions of the new funding are being channeled through the same NGO implementing partners. While the evaluation team did not carry out a thorough assessment of Implementing NGO absorptive capacity, the expanding sources of landscape level funding sources suggests that a rebalancing of CARPE funds between landscapes and other functions is possible (without reducing progress taking place in the landscapes). Careful rebalancing would not necessarily undercut the landscape level impact of the program.

Conclusions:

- The lack of USAID presence has been insufficiently bolstered, except in Cameroon and to some extent Gabon, by other CARPE/CBFP resources such as a State Department Regional Environment Officer, the focal points and Washington based partners. Where it has received adequate attention, the basic design for working in non-presence countries appears sound.
- With the expansion of CBFP partnership and the COMIFAC effort to harmonize forest conservation approaches, CARPE has proven to be an effective design for advancing the protection of core biodiversity assets across the region. CARPE needs to increase resources to cross-landscape, system-wide, and regional concerns especially as other donor funds become more available at the field level/within landscapes.
- In highly conflicted areas, the CARPE program has proven capable of sustaining a minimal conservation presence and limited program, which enables rapid reestablishment and rollout when conditions improve.

C. Present Program Balance with Strong Reliance on the Landscape Approach

Throughout this assessment, the team has drawn attention to the advantages and limitations of the landscape approach in terms of program performance and management. As a design approach, obvious strengths include identifying high priority conservation targets and supporting adequate habitat conservation needs. Landscapes, as a foundation for program organization, have served to focus and channel program efforts and to respond to the imperative of concentrating implementation effort at the field level. Landscapes also provide an effective mechanism by which conservation programs can be understood to extend beyond formal protected area boundaries. Habitat and key biodiversity assets can be protected through state owned and formally gazetted administrative units such as wildlife reserves and national parks, through community reserves, within forest and mining concessions and elsewhere. CARPE appears successful in elevating this understanding to the region and amongst other CBFP partners.

CARPE's design established landscapes as science-based spatial units into which funding would be channeled; in practice knowledge at the time was incomplete and the approach and links to funds were unnecessarily rigid. Landscape boundaries required flexibility as demonstrated by implementing NGOs during implementation. Important issues such as conservation priorities outside the twelve landscapes, and non-location specific themes such as conservation education and awareness, policy and governance, intersectoral integration, can only be addressed with a more flexible approach to defining intervention areas. New protected areas are being established in the Basin. Critical habitat and species populations are being identified outside and between protected areas. The science underlying the original definition of the landscapes continues to expand. Current landscape boundaries as hard and fast lines on a map are becoming constraining at times and not enabling towards a threats approach to conservation. As discussed in Chapter 1, geographic and funding flexibility are being sought and applied under the current design. NGO staff expressed a desire for greater flexibility but felt home office commitment to landscape funding was narrowly defined and overly limiting.

Designing CARPE around landscapes also introduces ambiguity. The landscape approach to conservation and the challenges to protecting landscapes are relatively recent and experimental. Landscapes are understood by various parties as natural areas, as cultural areas, as ecological units regrouping overlapping ecosystems, as multi-layered mapping units and, vernacularly, as scenic areas. Each of these dimensions found expression under the CARPE umbrella. Interestingly, local counterparts and administrators tended not to translate the word "landscape" since the notion of an "*approche paysage*" struck them as colloquial and insufficiently rigorous. Not only is there no translation but there is no natural counterpart to the CARPE Landscape Leader and landscapes do not correspond to administrative mandates of any single ministry or authority. In some measure, the foreignness of the concept is linked to difficulty of host country governments in understanding CARPE's support. Land use planning in CARPE is directly related to the landscape unit. CARPE landscapes as geographic units do not generally correspond to territorial, local government administrative or line ministry management units. Planning needs and efforts are not yet fully sensitive to this disconnect and to the complexity of administrative, technical, governance and citizen stakeholder interests. In some of the older landscapes Dzangha-Sangha and the Virungas landscape level coordination by national and international institutions has progressed further, but even these tend to be centered on protected areas and more immediate buffer zones.

The design calls for preparing and implementing landscape plans following an integrated land use planning process. This assessment found no consistent understanding of what this would mean and how to achieve it. The focus on mapping and zoning in the convening process moved the landscape partners forward under a common agenda, but the implementation roadmap is far less clear. There is general agreement on the need to

identify and map critical habitat and threatened species, to identify buffer zones, corridors, special use zones, areas of human activity and related threats. Integrating a conservation agenda with customary use, local governance, and territorial administration and competing interests such as agriculture and extractive industries is proceeding, sometimes quite innovatively, but without a “CARPE vision” or clear design blueprint. Since there is no clear local administrative counterpart for the landscape, local authorities become involved but more in support roles to project directed interventions. The issue of overlapping mandates and appropriate levels of involvement is one that CARPE will need to address as part of its follow-on redesign. In neighboring Uganda, where a landscape approach was attempted, it was discovered that protected areas annual planning and budgeting were offset several months from that of the local administrative Districts, where local environmental planning was situated and being mainstreamed. Moreover, protected area and local authorities had no provision for travel and meeting with one another to deal with “landscape level” issues. In another part of the world, WCS conclusions for the Amazon-Andes program that, “the issue of how to succeed at individual landscapes, and how to alter the status quo for the conservation of nature while reconciling critical human needs, remain largely unresolved” seems even more valid in Central Africa where institutions are weaker; however, lessons from that program, from AWF Heartland program, from WRI’s governance work, from IUCN Category V management guidelines and elsewhere should prove useful.

A major issue in CARPE is not so much that the landscape approach is a work in progress but that other program components are proportionally under financed. With its emphasis on implementing within individual landscapes, the current design does not encourage a CARPE-wide approach to cross-cutting issues. Landscape partners tend to be internally focused and do not seek general lessons and solutions. Governance lessons from WRI’s work in Cameroon, the IMAP tool for bushmeat monitoring, and forest service models for multi-use planning are inadequately shared and built upon to improve the enabling environment. Significant landscape specific successes such as land use agreements in the Okapi reserve, cooperation with forest concessions in ROC, and public-private partnership formation tend to remain bound within a given landscape’s specific approach, rather than accepted models for replication across the program.

Roles and coordination of country programs with landscapes have not fully evolved in part because resources for project management, for focal points, for cross-cutting partners, and for NGO funds expenditure outside of landscapes were insufficient or unavailable.

Conclusions:

- “Landscape” has succeeded as a conceptual approach by shifting attention from a nearly exclusive focus on parks (and protected areas), but it has built limited local buy-in. In spatial terms, landscapes are project units and do not correspond to existing administrative planning units. Landscapes include government domains such as parks and forest reserves, as well as administrative areas such as provinces, districts, arrondissements where local environmental governance structures need to be more fully recognized and developed. Widespread sharing of lessons should assist a future design.
- Landscape leaders and partners need to develop appropriate mandates and links with institutions beyond the parks and forest departments, to appropriately support local governance. This can be done by balancing landscape with other elements of a conservation program. The overall landscape land use plan could develop into an umbrella or framework plan for conservation (i.e. a Conservation Action Plan), that would support landscape leaders and teams to serve as a catalyst in mainstreaming conservation actions into a variety of other sectors (e.g. health, education, tourism) and into administrative plans (e.g. District Environmental Plans), leaving direct implementation (and the need for detailed land use management planning and implementation) only to those activities that directly mitigate the most pressing critical threats to biological diversity within the landscape.

- A variety of conservation strategies is being used to address threat-based challenges. Different NGO partners are developing and field-testing a wide range of innovative models. These models push the limits of implementing recent enabling legislation and, with continued refinement, are on track to provide a sound basis for conservation management beyond CARPE's anticipated duration; however, CARPE will need to play an active role in identifying cross-cutting issues that affect the environment for landscape level performance.
- CBFP's success in catalyzing institutional support, coupled with continued CARPE work should lead to solidly established reserves, communities actively involved in policing themselves, zoning in place and conservation related laws being applied locally; and wildlife, timber, and fisheries increasingly managed under local institutions. However, program balance does not yet adequately address broader issues of program financial and institutional sustainability.

D. Adequacy of approach for building local conservation capacity

Several key design issues have limited the capacity of CARPE II to efficiently begin to address capacity building needs in the program area.

Problems with the small grant mechanism: A core mechanism for building local capacity is the small grants mechanism: As discussed, the impact of small grants has been limited.. The design concept of small grants shows promise as illustrated by CARPE I, the few CARPE II small grants, internal grants by CARPE partner match funds and some current foundation, private sector, and USFWS grants. The current round of CARPE grants can reasonably be expected to have a similar, commensurate impact. The inability to broadly implement the grants program was a design problem; the current shift of the grant making function to landscape leads is an imperfect compromise. Despite effort to provide umbrella guidance (such a through the small grants manual), criteria for selection and eligibility vary from country to country. To some extent the lacunae due to a virtually non-existent CARPE grant program has been partially offset by the presence of other grant-making organizations and the use of matching funds. USFWS notably has strong ties in the region and is able to support its grant-making with careful consideration for capacity-building. Since funds are not earmarked for the CARPE/CBPF regions, Implementing NGOs will need to proactively seek this growing source of funds. The CARPE I evaluation recommended that stronger ties be developed between local NGO and the implementing NGOs and that grant-making be used at least initially to achieve these linkages. There was some evidence that CARPE was attempting to carry through on this recommendation. WWF was supporting a small local NGO in Gabon's Gamba Complex that was building conservation commitment from the youth up, but this group was not yet receiving CARPE II grant funds. AWF reports promising potential to strengthen local capacity resulting from its use of small grants in the Maringa Lopori Wamba landscape. As the grant management function is placed in the hands of the NGO country programs, it appears to be losing its USAID origin and identify. For example, no efforts to promote USAID branding policy to differentiate these small grants from others were observed.

Need to broaden capacity building beyond the landscapes: Some critical resources and threats lie outside core PAs and their immediate environs, and frequently outside landscapes. Landscape leaders and partners lack mandates to intervene directly and have petitioned to adjust boundaries. In at least five landscapes the NGO leads and partners have either modified existing landscape boundaries or used non-CARPE funds to involve populations or address threats outside the formal landscape boundaries. CARPE's implementing partners have generally interpreted the capacity building mandate as applying to the sub-landscape level. Most of the local NGOs being strengthened are very small in scale, frequently consisting of or revolving around a single individual or they are more Community Based Organizations. While these local actors are essential and valuable to the program and program objectives, larger scale organizations will need to be

identified and strengthened more systematically if capacity building and sustainability are to achieve the geographic coverage required by the program. Implementing NGOs sometimes state that larger NGOs mostly do not exist and therefore invest in developing national and regional human resource capacities within their own organizations. Notable efforts to go beyond internal strengthening do exist. The DFGFI program in the Tayna area of Eastern Congo is assisting the creation and establishment of a second or federation level of local organizations, UGADEC that addresses local themes at the level of landscape governance. CEFDHAC committees also suggest that CARPE can build capacity under the design.

Also, Natural resource and environmental management are not often being linked to active governance programs in the countries. For example, Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) activities are being considered for the Ituri landscape. Implementing NGOs are beginning to recognize that capacity building grants need to address non-landscape level activities. WWF in Gabon for example is soliciting at least one national level organization to receive funding under the current grants program. However, CARPE's design and implementation directs grants primarily to IR 1 and not to the policy and monitoring areas covered under IRs 2 and 3.

Limited funding for the cross-cutters: The core design mechanism intended to address capacity at this larger scale took the form of thematic cross-cutting implementing partners. A group of mostly USG organizations including USFS, USFWS, USNPS, Smithsonian Institution, and NASA was complemented by World Resources Institute, University of Maryland, IUCN and CIFOR to create a "marketplace" of cross-cutting support functions. These were to complement the NGO capacities within landscapes and to cover issues of a more general nature such as forest monitoring, policy and governance and research. Additionally, the CA mechanism was designed for CARPE to benefit from capacities that the implementing NGO country and international expertise could bring in to complement CARPE funded landscape teams. Preceding sections have described how this arrangement proved to be difficult to make work in practice.

As regional themes defined through COMIFAC's Plan de Convergence gain attention and prominence, implementing NGOs and others have responded by increasing the commitment to national and international efforts in such thematic areas as conservation education and ecological monitoring. The State of the Forest effort is an example of this integration. Some of the so-called crosscutters have also responded. NASA/UMD has placed a fulltime person in the field, USFWS and WRI combined forces to develop a bushmeat monitoring tool. The GFW has improved landscape performance in areas that it has been able to cover. In ROC, WCS has linked its separate landscape programs to create more of a national program. While apparently quite successful, the strategy represents an evolution in the landscape-based strategy of CARPE.

Although the design attempted to provide for these functions, these growing national and regional efforts seem to be taking place despite the current design not because of it. CARPE funding through WRI, IUCN, CEFDHAC, CIFOR and other cross-cutters has simply been inadequate to expect these functions to have been fulfilled.

Conclusions:

- The mix of NGOs and federal agency service providers has not effectively addressed the capacity building objective. NGOs have strengthened park management and surveillance capacity, but impact on CBOs and local NGOs has been much less effective and pervasive. Federal agency capacity-building efforts have been too sporadic (lacking continued follow-up) and limited in scope to have made broad program impact. The Forest Service appears to having some program impact, but this is more on NGO's capacity for multi-use zoning and planning than on key national partners such as Water and Forest Departments or National Park Services

- The small grants program appears to be the victim of inadequate design and, as a result, has to date, with a scant few exceptions, failed to build local capacity, despite its promise and potential. It should be resituated in a new design as indicated in other sections of this document.
- A grant-making function that is directly and visibly tied to USAID and CARPE presence is needed both to raise local capacity and to ensure that the broader understanding of USAID's program wide agenda.

Summary Conclusions

- The evolving context of greater donor support and stronger national and regional programs implies that CARPE can also address issues appropriately at these levels.
- CARPE can better target interventions both within landscapes and at higher levels.
- The landscape boundaries are technically in need of update and a more dynamic approach as knowledge of the basin's ecology expands.
- Landscape leads are sometimes unable to create harmony among implementing partners within a landscape. Even if they were able to do so, landscapes are not nor should they become administrative units for formal land use and territorial planning which include various park and protected area administrations, concessions, local government units, indigenous territories and more recently community reserves.
- The small grants program is a key tool for supporting capacity building for sustainability. To make it work as such a specialized capacity building function needs to be created to allocate funds across the program.
- Financial sustainability cannot be expected at this time but Implementing NGOs clearly need to be operating with institutional development plans that include a continuing reduction in the need for their presence.

V. Recommendations for the Optimization of CARPE

CARPE and the CBFP are audacious concepts. The very idea of mounting a program to conserve and develop 36% of the area of the huge Congo Basin is itself astounding. The program is also extraordinary in terms of: a) the number of counties included (9), the number of landscapes (11), the relative novelty of the basic program concept (working in landscapes), the remoteness of most of the program landscapes, the recent history of conflict in the region, and very limited capacity of both host governments and the region's human resource base. Given these conditions, the program concept could have been assessed by outsiders as a recipe for disaster.

Despite these constraints, this assessment has concluded that after only three short years, CARPE has been surprisingly successful in moving towards achievement of long-term program objectives. The USAID CTO has done an exceptional job of turning a vague concept into a program with clear objectives and the means of monitoring progress towards those objectives. Through the dedication and hard work of CARPE partners, it appears that CARPE is on track to achieve its intermediate results.

Nevertheless, the program is bedeviled by some significant problems that need resolution. This chapter sets forward six major programmatic recommendations and then provides recommendations for resolution of the most significant CARPE II issues that flow from the analyses in the three previous chapters. In some cases several program options are presented in order to encourage further discussion and more in-depth analysis by USAID and the partners, especially because the assessment team did not have time to review in depth all of the elements of this complex program. It is anticipated that these recommendations will prove useful to the team that will soon assist the CARPE CTO team in designing the next phase of the CARPE II program. Finally, no specific procurement recommendations will be included here, due to USAID regulations.

Programmatic Recommendations

- Improve program balance by focusing more attention and resources to IRs 2 and 3 and program management. With the experience of the past three years, funding can be allocated much more efficiently than the artificial proportional limitations established when CARPE II was initiated.
- Strive to link landscape programs more closely to existing governance structures and increase host country participation in program decision making. The weakness of host government and even local citizen support for the landscape programs is CARPE II's Achilles heel that needs to be addressed.
- Diversify the skill base of CARPE partners working in landscapes to ensure that livelihood needs, as well as conservation threats, are addressed in a way that builds a local constituency for conservation. The teaming agreements for the landscapes need to provide a greater diversity of talents during the remainder of CARPE II.
- Gradually focus less attention on Protected Areas in landscapes and place growing attention on addressing threats and opportunities in forest concessions and with communities. Placing priority attention on PAs was an appropriate strategy for the initial phase of CARPE II, but cannot remain the center of attention in the next phase if CARPE's landscape goals are to be attained.
- Reinvigorate the USG financial commitment to CBFP and back that commitment with increased staff attention to basin-wide and national policy issues. The USG should continue to provide leadership for this program by announcing a continued USG commitment to CBFP of at least \$15 million/year (ideally more) through 2015. Just as importantly, the State Department and USAID can build on the initial success of the CBFP with some modest increases in staffing and active involvement in key policy issues.
- Increase emphasis on country-level and basin-wide coordination (country teams, prioritization of non-landscape activities), while at the same time reducing the isolation of landscape programs and improving opportunities for inter-landscape learning from successful models. A new CARPE support contract is recommended to support this effort.

Tighten program focus

- Tighten the focus CARPE activities on those programmatic or spatial landscape activities that will most directly reduce identified threats. The completion of biodiversity and socio-economic analyses coupled with several years of on-the-ground experience should enable landscape partners to identify the key threats and focus their work plans on addressing those threats.
- Know when to declare victory and move on. Establish a common set of program components, best practice guidelines and standard measures of success for work in PAs, forest concessions, CBNRM and bushmeat. (E.g. use the World Bank/WWF toolkit to measure success in National Parks).
- Leverage recent CBFP partner contributions to selectively and efficiently limit unnecessary use of USAID funds. Many donor programs have started since CARPE II was designed. The design team should recalibrate the program now to rely on new CBFP partners to provide leadership for program areas that do not fit the comparative advantages of USAID and implementing NGOs (national policy, strengthening of national park services), while complementing these efforts from the landscape perspective (e.g. policy execution and feedback).
- Designate federal agency involvement in the follow-on design to areas where they have a proven comparative advantage for work in the region (USFS for multiple use planning, NASA/UMD for remote sensing technology).

Improve landscape performance

CARPE should continue to use and promote a landscape approach, but it should place less emphasis on the concept of “landscapes” as territorial units. Boundaries should be flexible to accommodate the wisdom of on the ground implementation. New design should reflect adjustments to date, and landscape boundaries should be marked in dashed, not solid, lines on future maps. Implementing NGOs should have the flexibility to allocated funds outside of landscape boundaries, in ways that support the core conservation objectives of the landscape approach. Implementing NGOs should attempt to integrate landscape planning with existing formal territorial and cadastral plans and other regional and administrative plans.

Continue working through implementing NGOs as the primary means to anchor the CARPE program, but adjust grant mechanisms to encourage more synergistic consortia that better integrate a range of the relative strengths of a wider range of partners. Implementing NGOs will need to construct teams or co-funding arrangements (e.g. WWF with GTZ) with increased capacity in management, forestry, improving livelihoods, local governance and, sometimes, to help attenuate security or stability issues.

Allocation of landscape funds:

Option a: All landscape funding should be funneled through the landscape leader. To eliminate double overheads, implementing NGOs would need to accept that these funds would be subcontracted or sub-granted to other Implementing NGOs with no or low overhead charges. Exceptions would be made on a case-by-case basis, primarily when Trans-boundary landscapes do not lend themselves to meaningful joint planning and when threats can be isolated and addressed without unnecessary administrative and management overhead.

Option b: Maintain the present system of unbundled funding for segment leads, but increase the formal authority of landscape leads to approve/disapprove annual plans and budgets.

USAID and the NGO Landscape lead organizations should develop a clearly defined Scope of Work (SOW) for the LS leadership role, detailing responsibilities to orchestrate management plan preparation, review progress, and coordinate reporting. Future RFAs or other solicitations should require applicants to develop a clear SOW for every major partner organization, and should require applicants to demonstrate that the proposed partners have the specific capability and experience to carry out their intended role and responsibilities. Ideally, landscape leads would have good management skills, or should receive increased management support from their organization’s regional staff for sub-contract management, and resolving conflicts with partners.

Prioritize and make better use of Cross-Cutting program components

Four major cross-cutting issues that have the most potential to contribute to the strategic objective and program results and are within the comparative advantage of CARPE partners are: a) Capacity Building, b) Policy and governance c) Bushmeat, and d) Remote Sensing Technology for natural resource monitoring. Lead partners should be clearly identified for each of these issues in the next phase of CARPE procurement. The cross-cutting leads would be primarily responsible for recommending and sometimes executing CARPE-funded activities outside of landscapes, providing guidance but not funding within landscapes, and coordinating CARPE reporting. In each case, a CARPE II agenda (e.g. policy agenda, capacity building agenda) should be developed and clearly communicated to all CARPE partners. Recommendations for each of these four cross-cutting components follow:

Capacity Building: Establish a CARPE capacity building agenda with priorities that complement those of other CBFP donors. Capacity building activities within landscapes should continue to be prioritized and funded as part of landscape planning exercises. The focus of this capacity building should probably

include continued strengthening and expansion of PA leadership and senior staff, reinforcement of decentralized administration of natural resources, environmental education and building local constituencies for improved natural resource management, and building local NGO capacity (in CBOs and 2nd level organizations such as UGADEC). Capacity building activities outside of landscapes should be prioritized and funded via the new CARPE central support contract and/or via other partners. The focus of this capacity building should probably include: strengthening civil society institutions, policy, NRM, timber certification and controlling illegal logging; remote sensing and GIS technology. Finally, CARPE can perform a valuable service by fostering basin-wide networks of protected area managers (such as RAPAC), CBNRM leaders and conservation advocacy groups.

Policy: The USG should be a key actor in influencing conservation-related policy issues in the Congo Basin working primarily via the US Embassies, the CARPE CTO and the focal points. USG influence will be most effective when coordinated with CARPE partners. Also, individual CARPE partners should continue to influence policy issues through their institutional structures. The CARPE country teams and the SO team leader should coordinate the development of a policy agenda for the remaining years of CARPE II with assistance, as needed, from the CARPE support contractor.

CARPE's primary roles related to policy should be based on its comparative advantages and primary focus on achieving results in landscapes:

1. Establishing models for how policies can be executed in the field (community reserves, tourism sites, concession agreements, alternatives to bushmeat, green mining, artisan logging, local hunting rights, etc.).
2. Supporting the execution of policies in the landscapes, including enforcement of laws, and prosecution of illegal activities;
3. Providing feedback to national institutions and donors on how well policies are being implemented and the effectiveness of these policies.
4. Encouraging transparency and effective local governance in/around landscapes, perhaps by using landscapes as "good governance zones."

Bushmeat: While there is a need for a systematic approach to compiling the data on the growing bushmeat problem and using it to push for stronger enforcement of existing laws, CARPE should apply more resources to using the information about bushmeat hunting and trade to develop interventions to reduce or control the threat to wildlife. Bushmeat strategies should be integrated with other programs and economic development sectors such as poverty reduction, livelihoods, mining, and health. Income generating or enterprise development projects that provide alternatives to bushmeat for local livelihoods should be promoted. In conflict and fragile areas, CARPE should link bushmeat traffic with transparency, conflict resolution, anti-corruption and other transitional or peace related interventions supported by ESF funds or other sources.

NRM/Remote Sensing: Applied use of remote sensing data and GIS tools should be more widely put into practice by CARPE partners for zoning and land use planning. Training in the use of remote sensing data and GIS is a high priority for capacity building efforts. CARPE should explore mechanisms to support other donors' investments at the national and regional level to increase broad NRM capacity and leadership. CARPE can link measurement of forest degradation to policy advocacy by making data available through GFW and other shared datasets, and by developing interactive forestry atlases in other countries.

Increase impact of the small grants program: CARPE should continue to support a small grant program in each country focused on strengthening the institutional capacity of NGOs and CBOs at both the national and landscape levels and on supporting IR2 and IR3 objectives. The grants could be funded either by USAID or by using matching funds, if other sources of funds can be utilized more efficiently than USAID funds. If USAID funds are used, the approval process should be streamlined and clarified, so that implementing organizations can easily follow USAID guidance, and the CARPE CTO need not review and authorize each grant.

Improved program management

Reduce and better distribute the program's management burden. The CARPE management burden is unusually heavy and the CARPE SO team's capacity is limited and too dependent on one person.

- Bolster the USAID/CARPE staff in Kinshasa. The CARPE headquarter staff is too thin. The CTO should formulate a new staffing plan for the remainder of CARPE II which establishes additional full time positions and ensures that HQ staff are not dependent on interns or other temporary employees. The arbitrary cap placed on management expenses was unrealistic and should be eliminated.
- Strive to reduce the number of management decisions that must be made by the CARPE SO team: e.g. approval of small grants, reduction in the number of landscape segments.
- Place more management responsibility on the implementing NGOs. Consider allowing implementing NGOs increased flexibility to move CARPE funds between landscapes in a country based on available funding levels and program priorities within the country.
- Establish a CARPE support contract (new mechanism) that will increase capacity to manage the focal point and small grant programs, coordinate CARPE country-team planning, provide venues for country and regional exchange of lessons learned and successful models, coordinate and help implement non-landscape capacity building and policy activities, and perhaps assist the CARPE SO team in program reporting.
- Make the Focal Points more effective elements of the USAID management team: CARPE management should fully review a set of focal point options regarding: a) definition of essential tasks during the remainder of CARPE II; b) the most appropriate administrative "home" for focal points; c) in which countries focal points are truly needed; and d) the staffing and overall cost of the focal point program. The assessment team believes that full time focal points may only be needed in DRC, Gabon, and ROC; that a non-NGO administrative home needs to be found; that the present focal point structure of 3 people in each focal point office may be excessive, and that the priority tasks for focal points are those mentioned in chapter 2.
- Develop a broader communication strategy, with a more systematic approach to communication, information dissemination, outreach, and public media messages to targeted audiences. This strategy could be implemented within the CBFP framework, possibly through the proposed CARPE support contract. It is especially important that CARPE partners communicate a consistent message about conservation priorities and approaches to government partners and regional organizations. Develop means to share models across the program and to create best practices guidelines in a user friendly format.

Program funding and USG support

Reinvigorate the USG commitment and level of support to CBFP and CARPE objectives. Support to CBFP and CARPE is harmonious with broader USG and European goals of democratization and development in the region. Announce a continued USG commitment to CBFP through 2015 with annual funding levels at least as high as during the previous four years (\$15 million/year). CARPE is an extraordinarily broad and ambitious program that could absorb much more than the funding presently available for it. A minimum of

\$15 million/year will be needed through 2011, if CARPE is to have an opportunity to meet its Phase II objectives.

If funding declines, the criteria for prioritizing landscape activities should include:

- Success in achieving program objectives
- Relative degree of vulnerability and irreplaceability of biodiversity
- Modest pipeline
- Declining need due to program maturity
- Assumed funding from other sources

Increase USG staff and program support for the region:

- Establish a new OES position for central Africa (only).
- Revitalize and broaden support for CBFP/CARPE, by creating a new Washington-based coordination body that includes all CARPE partners and reaches out to other potential partners
- Establish a more visible USG/USAID identification (branding) that will normally be used for CARPE-funded activities and commodities.

Develop a more precise approach to balancing conservation and development activities in landscapes

Possible options:

- Require landscape leaders in the RFA response to a) analyze development needs in their landscape; b) identify development partners; and c) indicate a level of funding and a development approach needed to address the most critical needs and alleviate threats to long-term conservation. A floor of 5 or 10% funding for development might be required by USAID.
- Announce the establishment of a second “development window” in the CBFP. Encourage donors to provide and implementing NGOs to search for development funding (matching funds or co-financing agreements with donors) to complement conservation funding in landscapes. This approach leaves development to the development specialists, and follows the approach of WWF’s partnering with GTZ in Cameroon and CAR and USAID/Kinshasa’s funding for Lac Thumba.
- USAID/DRC and USAID/Rwanda, as well as the CARPE CTO should explore opportunities to access central and regionally-funded USAID programs (e.g. the Population-Health-Environment initiative; Office of Conflict Mitigation resources, FFP resources, Office of Energy resources) to supplement mission bilaterally-funded development activities in CARPE landscapes.
- Work closely with the Washington CARPE team to identify and help channel other resources to the CARPE (and CBFP) effort. For example, USFWS has resources independent of those deriving from former CARPE monies that could be tapped by Congo Basin conservation entities.

Improve CARPE relationships with national governments, many of whom do not appreciate CARPE and could limit its future success

- Prior to the end of the current phase, CARPE should organize seminars in each country to present program accomplishments to national government partners and other stakeholders. This should also be an opportunity to get their input and buy-in on the next phase priorities, work plans, and strategies to combat the major threats in each landscape.
- For the remainder of CARPE II a) establish a clearly defined role for local government officials in annual activity planning in landscapes and b) establish a clearly defined role for national government officials in approving an annual set of CARPE activities within each country. Annual activity planning in landscapes, led by the landscape leader and his/her government counterpart, might culminate in a national “Comite Executif” meeting where a) all activity plans for landscapes would be ratified or modified as needed, b) some non-landscape activities would be added to the proposed

CARPE program and c) the annual CARPE program would be ratified by national-level government officials and partners alike, prior to submission to the CARPE SO team for approval. The CARPE focal point would attend planning meetings in each landscape and would organize and manage the Comite Executif sessions, probably in April/May of each year.

- Make communication and coordination with national governments the primary task of re-invigorated Focal Points.
- Clarify to all partners the kinds of direct and indirect assistance that CARPE can legally provide to national government entities. Provide a written summary of this CARPE assistance at least annually to key government officials.
- Urge implementing NGOs and other partners to document their CARPE-related assistance to all government entities (including assistance financed by matching funds) and to provide this documentation to governments at least annually.

Recognize and plan for a long term need to achieve program sustainability

- Identify local NGOs, CBOs and CSOs in each landscape and require new procurements to explicitly include capacity development in submissions. This implies an exit or scale down strategy for large international NGO activities and a clear definition of their long-term roles in the region.
- Build capacity of second level local organizations (federations and associations) and larger local NGOs that will be able to perform roles that the current NGO partners presently execute directly.
- Continue to encourage landscape partners to identify diversified funding sources for their programs and for related landscape needs..
- Foster efforts to develop sustainable funding strategies, tools and institutions to complement limited revenues from local sources and to offset reliance on donor funding.