Proposal Title: *Proposed Forest Monitoring Network in Central Africa*

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Abstract

A recent study by the World Resources Institute found that most of the world's remaining large blocks of ecologically-intact forest ("frontier forests"), are immanently threatened by logging, mining and energy development projects. In many parts of the world, including the Congo Basin, large multinational corporations are playing a key role in the opening up of frontier forests.

The exact magnitude and potential impact of these threats is unknown because global forest monitoring is limited to tracking changes in land cover (conversion of wooded areas to cropland, pasture and urban area). Little information is available on the activities and environmental track records of the multinationals bidding on much of the world's remaining frontier estate. With limited information, government agencies charged with managing this estate are unable to see the collective impact of the individual development projects they approve (or to make wise decisions about who they allow to develop their forests). NGOs and advocacy groups who might play an oversight role---assuring that frontiers are being managed in the public interest--- are similarly hampered. Lacking hard data on the status of frontiers and on the companies seeking access to frontier resources, these groups are frequently dismissed as alarmist where they oppose development.

The objectives of the work are to: a) provide advocacy groups with information that they can use to mobilize voters against irresponsible large-scale, development projects within frontier forests; b) provide decision-makers with data on potential threats to frontier areas to enable them to make more informed decisions about how these areas should be managed; and c) provide NGOs and advocacy groups with a host of information tools which they might use to collect better data on the status, value and use of their forest resources, and become more effective in packaging and disseminating data to influence their audiences.