

Brazzaville, Republic of Congo
26 February 2007

Dear Mr. Minister,

I am writing to express my government's concern over the petroleum exploration that is occurring in the Conkouati-Douli National Park. Based on reports from the US-funded WCS site manager and Congolese ministry officials, I personally visited the Coukouati-Douli National Park with the CARPE Director and WCS Country Director in December last year. Unfortunately you were unable to accompany me because of other commitments.

During this visit, I confirmed from personal observation that indeed a large team under contract to the Zetah is actively conducting seismic exploration activities within the park boundaries, apparently without any environmental impact study or mitigation measures at all. Furthermore, I am aware that both the park conservator and WCS have formally submitted reports to your ministry complaining that the exploration is illegal and is causing great environmental harm to the rare fauna and flora of this important national park.

You are aware that the US Government, through USAID/CARPE is providing financial and technical support to the Conkouati-Douli park through WCS as part of the Gamba-Mayumba-Conkouati landscape program of Congo Basin Forest Partnership. Furthermore, CARPE funding is evaluated annually in order to allocate budgetary resources in those landscape areas that are making satisfactory progress. Naturally, the USG is interested in providing support to those areas that are high priorities for biodiversity conservation, but also for those that are national government conservation priorities.

The ongoing petroleum exploration and the negative environmental impacts occurring in the national park as a result raises the question whether the Conkouati-Douli National park is a high priority for conservation in the Republic of Congo and whether US funding of this park is merited.

I would welcome the opportunity to discuss this matter with you at your earliest possible convenience.



Robert Weisberg
Ambassador