

Land-use planning strategy document

Landscape 3, Lopé–Chaillu–Louesse Zone 3010002, Waka National Park, Gabon

July 2008

1 Introduction

Waka National Park was created in 2002. It covers 1,070 km², in the center of which is the Ikobé rift valley, about 100km long with the ridges on either side reaching 1,000 m. The combination of high variance in altitude and high rainfall mean that Waka contains one of the most diverse areas of rainforest in Gabon. The park is also in one of the most remote and least populated parts of the country. Only the northern periphery of the park is inhabited; about 1,000 people of the tsogho Bantu group and Babongo pygmy group live in 14 villages. The degree of isolation means that the economy is primarily based on subsistence and there is currently little commercial trade. Traditional healing is a significant contributor to the local economy and people travel far from Libreville to consult local nganga's. The park is surrounded by logging concessions, some currently active, some shortly to become active. This expansion of logging activity will greatly facilitate access to the area and is likely to provoke considerable social and ecological change, which may have a considerable impact on the park.

The WCS-led consortium has been active in the field in Waka since late 2003. With CARPE's support the team has, among other activities, completed physical delimitation of the park, conducted comprehensive participatory mapping surveys in adjacent villages, completed the first ever surveys of wildlife distribution and human impact and initiated an village outreach program. This document presents a brief outline of the strategy for developing and implementing the management plan for the zone, closely following the CARPE/USFS template provided.

2 Identify and Define Roles of Planning Team

2.1 Roles and responsibilities pertaining to planning process of lead NGO staff clearly defined.

- WCS Country Director (Joe Walston) is responsible for overall strategic direction and liaison with CARPE.
- WCS Landscape lead (Malcolm Starkey) co-ordinates field activities and manages the sub-contracts with MBG and IPACC.
- WCS' Assistant Director for External Relations (Romain Calaque) is charged with liaison with the Gabonese National Parks Agency (ANPN), particularly the Cellule d'Amenagement, and managing the sub-contract with RAPAC.
- The WCS Project Manager for the Waka zone (Franck Lepemangoye) is charged with implementing all field activities relating to the land-use planning process in the zone and working with the National Park Conservateur and local representatives of the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Forests.

2.2 Additional staff hired as needed, and/or any tasks contracted to partner organizations.

- Facilitation of the formal stakeholder meetings for land-use plan development and validation has been sub-contracted to the Réseau des Aires Protégées de l'Afrique Centrale (RAPAC).
- Support for community capacity building with the Babongo populations on the park periphery has been sub-contracted to the Indigenous People's of Africa Consultative Committee (IPACC).
- Comparative surveys of botanical diversity and forest habitat type necessary for micro-zoning have been sub-contracted to Missouri Botanical Garden (MBG)

2.3 Roles of non-lead NGOs clearly defined.

The three non-lead NGOs have specific and clear missions for this zone:

IPACC – support the capacity of the marginalized Babongo population to engage in land-use planning process, and ensure that the management plan contains adequate provisions for obtaining free, prior and informed consent for any activities that may impact local populations.

RAPAC – facilitate formal public consultation meets necessary for the development and validation of the management plan (3 meetings envisaged for this zone, likely combined with meetings for the Ikobey CBNRM and West Waka ERZ zones).

MBG – conduct baseline botanical surveys to describe patterns of species richness and endemism in the park and its buffer zone to inform the micro-zoning plan.

3 Information/Data Gathering

3.1 Physical

3.1.1 Boundaries of the zone delineated.

- Waka National Park was physically delimited based on the Decree creating the park in 2004/5 by WCS with CARPE support. Some minor modifications to the texts defining the limits are proposed where the decree description does not correspond to the physical reality on the ground (presumably since the decree was based on maps of varying accuracy).

3.1.2 Identify topography, water courses, unique physical features

3.1.3 Maps/satellite imagery compiled

- Shapefiles of watercourses, roads, park boundaries and data from wildlife/human impact surveys have been compiled.
- A 90m resolution raster elevation map is available.
- The area is extremely cloudy and there are few recent satellite images sufficiently clear to be useable.

3.1.4 Boundaries of existing legal extractive concessions mapped and their status noted.

- Maps of concessions attributed as of 2007 are available (see www.finances.gouv.ga)
- The status of the EGG concession north-west of the park remains unclear - the official map indicates that it has been assimilated into the adjacent IFL concession, but local sources indicate that it is 'retour au domain' and so abandoned. This will be clarified with DIARF.

3.2 Ecological

3.2.1 Key wildlife resources

- A survey of wildlife and human impact across the park was undertaken in 2005/2006 (Abitsi, 2006). This provides baseline data on encounter rates and wildlife distribution for large mammals. The encounter rate for great apes was far higher than expected.
- The species list for the park remains incomplete, but this is not currently a barrier for management planning.
- Small mammals, reptiles and invertebrates are extremely poorly known. Whilst inventorying these species will be important for the long-term future of the park

(since high biodiversity is the *raison d'être* of the park), this is not critical information for the current process of land-use planning and we do not foresee conducting any targeted surveys as part of the CARPE program.

3.2.2 Wildlife migration corridors

- At just over 1,000sqkm, Waka is too small to reliably conserve large mammals like elephants and great apes on its own - elephants clearly migrate into and out of the park. The corridor between Lopé and Waka National Parks and the western buffer zone of Waka remain area of high wildlife density and the management plan needs to consider how to preserve the contiguity of habitat between the park and these zones. Surveys have been conducted in the Lopé-Waka corridor and should be undertaken in the western buffer zone.
- The ridges either side of the Ikobé river have major elephant paths on their summits and local hunters indicate that there is a seasonal movement of elephants into and out of the park using them. Indeed, they have in the past used these narrow ridges as chokepoints to hunt elephants. This remains to be studied, but at the least the points where these ridges cross the Sindara-Ikobey road should be priority points for park protection activities.

3.2.3 Rare and under-represented plant communities

- Surveys by MBG and by the Smithsonian institution have started to provide an outline of the key aspects of the biodiversity of this park, including discovery of new species and identification of a unique 'palm forest' habitat type not known from anywhere else. MBG will provide a review of this information for inclusion in the management plan.
- Little is known botanically about the southern portion of the park, and climatic and altitude data suggest that this may be the area the most interesting botanically. One field mission is foreseen to evaluate the biodiversity of this area.

3.2.4 Other floral and faunal resources that are of key importance to the zone and its population

- The invasive fire ant *Wasmannia auropunctata* is present in the Ikobé valley in the park, and around many of the surrounding villages. It has a painful bite and infested areas are avoided by people (though it is also used by people to protect crops, especially sugar-cane, from insect pests). It also has a significant impact on biodiversity – forest infested with *Wasmannia* contains far fewer insect species and in some cases lower densities of large mammals than forest without (SEGC, unpublished data). A preliminary map of its distribution has been compiled.
- The presence of *Wasmannia* needs to be taken into account in the zoning plan as it may impact location of infrastructure and roads, as well as the biodiversity or

tourist value of different parts of the park. Since *Wasmannia* is believed to spread most rapidly along waterways, its distribution needs to be considered in watershed planning. It may be necessary to undertake further surveys to better define its distribution and rate of spread.

3.3 Socio-economic context

3.3.1 Identify villages, foot paths, transport routes, key economic centers within and around the landscape, agricultural activities, hunting/fishing areas, areas of subsistence level timber extraction.

- Participatory mapping and ground truthing was completed in villages adjacent to the northern boundary of the park in 2006 (Bouanga, 2006).
- Participatory mapping and ground truthing was completed in villages east of the park in 2007 (Abitsi and Lepemangoye-Mouleka, 2007).
- Data from these two studies is being compiled prior to inclusion in the draft management plan and will be presented in the stakeholder meetings to be organized in 2008/9 for validation by the local population.

3.3.2 Identify all stakeholders of the zone (including populations outside the zone).

- A stakeholder analysis was undertaken by Bouanga (2006) for the north of the park and Abitsi and Lepemangoye-Mouleka (2007) for the east of the park. The results are being compiled for integration into the draft management plan. The main groups of non-government and non-conservation ngo are the local communities (divided broadly into the mitsogho Bantu group and the semi-nomadic Babongo pygmies) and the four main logging companies operating around the park. There are very few other private sector operations in the zone other than logging.
- There are a number of highly influential elites who are based outside the zone (including a current junior environment minister).

3.3.3 Identify those resources and regions of the zone utilized for subsistence purposes vs. larger commercial trade.

- A small part of the north-east of the park is used by local populations (in fact a few families) for subsistence use (hunting, collecting NTFPs like bush mango, collecting honey, fishing).
- The north-east of the park was commercially logged (illegally) until the end of 2003, but there is currently no commercial trade from within the park, though logging is active on its periphery.

3.4 Government management authority presence on landscape and capacity to play role in planning process.

- Following the retirement of the first Conservateur there is not currently a Conservateur for Waka National Park, nor any other government park staff. We expect a new Conservateur to be named in Q4 of 2008. As an interim measure, the ANPN has made available members of its Cellule d'Amenagement to represent the government. This is on a punctual basis and workplanning has to take account of that.
- The Ministry of the Interior is represented by a Sous-Prefet of the District d'Ikobey, and the Prefet of Fougamou. Their implication is essential, particularly for all questions relating to the park buffer zone, and both have demonstrated considerable willingness to support the land-use planning process. The Sous-Prefet does not currently have a vehicle and due to lack of communications is currently based in Fougamou, 100 km from the park. To ensure his ability to participate, it will be necessary to ensure that transport is available for the organization of the various public consultation meetings.

4 Creation of a Public Participation Strategy

4.1 Identify those stakeholders that must be included in process; Interested and affected publics.

- The primary local stakeholders to include in the process are:
 1. the local population to the north of the park, especially those villages closest to the park which use part of the park for their subsistence.
 2. the logging companies adjacent to the park.
- The most significant elites from the zone must also be included (probably via their local representatives).
- At this point there are few other stakeholders actively involved in the park (potential tour operators for example), however over the course of the planning process other stakeholders are likely to arise or be identified. This strategy will therefore be revised as necessary.

4.2 Prioritize which stakeholders should be engaged earliest; based on current activities that pose existing threat to key resources.

- The areas of logging activities and village lands overlap to a large extent (all village zones are within a logging concession, but not all logging concessions contain villages) and it will be ineffective to work with one but not the other. This requires a combined strategy to engage with both the local population and the private sector stakeholders.

- Most human exploitation of the area is currently subsistence-oriented (aside from a small amount of ivory poaching) and does not represent a major immediate threat to the integrity of the forest ecosystems of Waka. The activities of logging companies have the potential to impact the zone most significantly in the near future, through facilitating commercial hunting, social upheaval and impacts on aquatic ecosystems. The four companies involved that need to be engaged (in order of priority) are:
 1. Bordamur (Rimbunhan Hijau)
 2. IFL (and subcontractors MPB)
 3. EGG
 4. CFA (or rather the Chinese company that has bought the concession)
- Whilst human impacts are currently low, this could change rapidly, with the opening of new logging roads and a considerable influx of logging company workers into this currently sparsely populated zone. It is important to engage now with the local population with the intention of putting into place mechanisms for sustainable management before these new pressures arrive.

4.3 Describe how to engage with different groups

4.3.1 Different ethnic groups may require different methods of involvement in planning processes.

- The Babongo pygmies who live to the north of the park are a group whose interests have frequently been marginalized. Their mobility, the isolation of their camps and the low level of literacy mean it is difficult for them to engage with external actors and the state apparatus, and make it too easy for other groups to ignore their needs and rights. Whilst there are three recognized Babongo village chiefs, they have no formal representation as a group. To this end, IPACC, a lobbying and advocacy group with a history of experience in similar situations have been engaged to:
 1. provide technical support and mentoring to assist the Babongo in developing a system of representation via one or more associations (ie local NGOs),
 2. to increase their capacity to engage pre-emptively with external actors and
 3. to investigate ways in which Babongo can become involved with the development of the national parks, including development of a system of accreditation for traditional trackers.
- Among the mitsogho (Bantu) population the overall capacity to engage with the land-use planning process is markedly higher, due to a higher level of integration into the wider Gabonese economy. However:
 1. For certain issues, such as community logging, there is a lack of technical information (for example how to estimate the volume of wood in a tree, prices for different woods, rules on minimum diameter etc) that mitigates against

- sound management and can permit exploitation by unscrupulous outsiders. Traditional/official leaders and community representatives may not be the individuals the best placed to engage in these activities.
2. Certain groups in the community may have lower capacity to engage either due to lower levels of literacy/awareness or the pressures of other demands on their time. This is particularly the case for groups like adult women, the most intensive hunters (who tend to spend much time in the forest) and traditional healers.
 3. Any community representation is a highly political activity in Gabon and it is important to be aware that representatives' interests may not always be aligned with those of the people they (purport to) represent. It is therefore important maintain channels of communication parallel to the formal system of representation.
- We propose to overcome these difficulties by as well as organizing formal consultation meetings to:
 1. Support the creation of community associations with natural resource management objectives. In other sites, such associations have proven effective at providing a forum for dynamic members of the community who are otherwise marginalized via traditional or official power structures to have a voice. Once created, support ting their capacity to engage in the technical aspects of sustainable management will be an important component. This will be achieved by a combination of regular village visits by the outreach team and specific training sessions with specialist trainers.
 2. Develop and maintain relations with local communities via an outreach and environmental education program. The team visit the villages each week and conduct one or more environmental education classes in the schools. In an area where there is a severe lack of capacity and resources in the education system, this provides a tangible benefit to the villages. The outreach team 'animateurs' stay overnight in the villages in which they work and this permits informal information exchange, in both directions. The team comprises a man and a woman, who both speak tsogho. This program was initiated in late 2005, and will continue during the land-use planning process, providing an important mechanism for maintaining information exchange. In an area with such a small population (about 1,000 people) this strategy essentially means that one-on-one discussions can be held with practically every individual inhabitant.
 - Supporting the creation and functioning of the Local Management Committee (Comité consultative de gestion locale) provided for the the national parks law, and ensuring that it includes representatives of all major stakeholder groups, is an important mechanism to ensure long-lasting engagement between the park and the local populations even after the end of the project; lobbying to ensure this occurs will therefore be a high priority.

- Stakeholders external to the zone (such as potential tour operators) are best engaged via meetings of the Technical Management Committee (CTG) or ad-hoc meetings.

4.3.2 Identify willingness of various extractive concession holders to engage in landscape planning process.

- Change of ownership and unclear lines of responsibility have hampered engagement with two major forestry actors (EGG and IFL) to the west of the zone. In the case of IFL, the parent company (IFL, which is French-owned) has engaged the company MPB (of Malaysian origin) as subcontractors to manage their concession. The division of responsibility between the two parties (IFL have no staff in the field) is unclear and allows both to duck their responsibilities. Holding meeting where both parties (IFL and MPB) and the local authorities (ANPN, MINEF, Min Interior) are present is necessary to clarify lines of responsibility and ensure buy-in to the agreement.
- The Malaysian company Rimbunhan Hijau (the largest logging company in the world) is extremely hierarchical. The field staff are often well-trained technicians but they have virtually no decision-making power. While it is important to engage with the local staff, no serious progress will be made unless the senior management of the company (based in Libreville and Malaysia) are engaged. This requires a considerable amount of lobbying at the logging company headquarters.

4.3.3 Create a process for conflict/dispute resolution between interests/stakeholders.

- The Comité Consultative de Gestion Local for the National Park (foreseen in the parks law of 2007 and scheduled to be create in 2009) will be the main forum for conflict and dispute resolution at a local level. Serious disputes would go first to the Executive Secretary of the National Parks Agency, and if not resolved at that level, to the office of the Minister of National Parks and in extremis, to the Cabinet.

5 Creation of Strategy for Formal Recognition of Plan

- National Parks are mandated by Gabonese law to have a management plan. The National Parks law signed in 2007 stipulates a three-year period to develop the management plan (so by end 2010). At this point it will be submitted to the Cabinet (Conseil de Ministres) prior to signature by the National Parks Agency at which point it comes into force.
- Prior to submission of the plan a wide stakeholder consultation process is required. We envisage three formal public meetings in the Waka area to validate the vision and objectives of the park and the implementation plan. These will include at

a minimum representatives of local communities, local government and economic operators active in the surrounding area. Prior and between these meetings, WCS and IPACC will conduct informal village meetings and discussions to allow stakeholders who are unable to attend the formal meetings or who are for whatever reason unable or unwilling to express themselves in a public forum. All these meetings come under the purview of ANPN. The formal public meetings will be facilitated by RAPAC as per the terms of the subcontract. WCS, MBG and IPACC will provide technical input.

- Once a final draft validated by local stakeholders is complete, the management plans will be presented at ANPN's public annual planning workshop for further review.

6 Creation of Vision and Objectives for the Zone

- A preliminary vision and objectives for the park were identified during a workshop in 2005 and updated in 2006 and have been incorporated in the Plan Cadre de Gestion of the National Parks Agency. These are presented in the accompanying draft management plan. Until the management plan is officially validated, these remain 'working objectives'.

7 Identify Management Micro-Zones and Associated Objectives and Guidelines

- A draft micro-zoning plan was produced based on GoG national vision for eco-tourism, and the specific possibilities of this park. It was based on incomplete data, and needs substantial refining. The identification of micro-zones will initially be addressed during meetings of the Comité Technique de Gestion and on-going technical support to the Conservateur (when one is appointed). Proposals will be validated during the formal public consultation meetings.
- A particular issue for zoning is that about 15sqkm of the north-eastern corner of the park is used by several families from adjacent villages. A fair solution needs to be found, either permitting customary use of the zone in the park (as a traditional use zone for example), declassifying this part of the park (probably simplest) or finding a fair negotiated settlement. Participatory mapping and surveillance patrols have identified the villages and families involved, whilst wildlife and botanical data is available to provide a comparative assessment of the biodiversity value of this area (high compared to the rest of Gabon, but low relative to the rest of Waka). We will continue to use this information to lobby for an effective settlement to this issue.

8 Elaboration of Implementation Plan for the Zone

- A preliminary list of activities that need to be undertaken to achieve the vision and objectives for the zone was developed in concertation with the National Parks Agency (formerly CNPN) and is presented in the accompanying draft management plan.
- A more detailed list of tasks required to complete each activity has been developed as part of a full work breakdown structure; these will be incorporated into a later revision of the management plan.
- Effectively executing the implementation plan requires implementing a number of livelihoods projects (for example refining and marketing of moabi oil, sustainable honey farming), to provide a meaningful alternative to unsustainable exploitation of bushmeat or other resources. However, this zone is extremely remote and the current level of funding (USAID + Match) is not sufficient to imitate these activities. We are actively seeking alternative sources of funding.
- The implementation plan has not yet been validated by non-park stakeholders. This will be undertaken during the consultation meetings described in section 4 and section 5 above.
- It is important to note here that the activities specified in the draft management plan are those that the GoG, and its partners have deemed necessary to achieve the park objectives. While some of these activities are clearly aligned with the objectives of CARPE (support for community associations, developing zoning plans etc), many others fall outside of the scope of the CARPE program (eg road-building, construction of major park infrastructure). For the sake of completeness, these activities are included in the draft management plan accompanying this document, but this does not imply any engagement on the part of the CARPE Landscape Consortium to undertake or support these activities.

9 Creation of Monitoring Plan for the Zone

- A framework for measuring and evaluating progress towards objectives and the execution of different planned activities is presented in the draft management plan accompanying this document. The indicators, means of verification and responsibility for execution remain to be specified. This will be undertaken during the meetings of the Comité Technique de Gestion, with the ANPN Cellule d’Amenagement and during on-going technical support to the park Conservateur (when a new Conservateur is officially appointed).

References

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