

Land-use planning strategy document

Landscape 3, Lopé–Chaillu–Louesse Zone 3010005, Ikoy Corridor ERZ, Gabon

July 2008

1 Introduction

The Ikoy corridor lies between the Lopé and Waka National parks in the north-west of the Lopé-Chaillu landscape. It encompasses over 200,000 ha of mountainous rainforest terrain. The south of the zone is inhabited by Babongo pygmies who maintain a traditional way of life in isolated forest villages. The center of the zone has been uninhabited since precolonial times and supports some of the last remaining unlogged forest outside national parks in Gabon. In the north of the zone, a village has been installed around the station of Otoumbi. The principal activity here is commercial hunting. Surveys conducted by WCS have shown that considerable populations of gorillas, chimpanzees and elephants persist in the zone and the zone rivals the adjacent national parks in conservation value. Studies by MBG and the Gabonese National Herbarium have shown that the forest is highly diverse (even compared to other areas of Gabon) and includes many rare and unusual plant species.

Well-managed forestry could bring significant benefits to the populations in the south of the zone, including much-needed health and education services. However, poorly managed forestry may bring many negative social and ecological impacts including unsustainable commercial hunting, loss of forest resources (NTFPs, fish etc) and increased disease risk. This is therefore a highly strategic zone for land-use planning.

The remoteness of the zone makes working in the area logistically difficult, but over the past years the landscape consortium have mapped village lands, completed surveys of wildlife and human impact, undertaken pioneering botanical research to identify areas of high biodiversity, initiated a programme to build the capacity of local populations to engage in the land-use planning process, and begun developing a partnership with the logging companies active in the area.

The rest of this document presents an outline of the strategy for achieving effective management of the zone, closely following the CARPE/USFS guidelines 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.

- 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)
- RAPAC will facilitate a landscape-level meeting of the forestry company aménagistes, national park Conservateurs, local authorities and local population representatives that will include this zone.

2.3 Roles of non-lead NGOs clearly defined.

The MBG and IPACC 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.

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.

RAPAC will facilitate a meeting including this zone, but will not conduct any specific activities in the field.

3 Information/Data Gathering

3.1 Physical

3.1.1 Boundaries of the zone delineated.

- The logging concessions in the zone have been physically delimited by the companies and shapefiles of the limits exist. The zone currently follows these limits very closely.

3.1.2 Identify topography, water courses, unique physical features

3.1.3 Maps/satellite imagery compiled

- Shapefiles of watercourses, roads, forestry concession limits, 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)
- Leroy Gabon have made available detailed data of Assiettes Annuels de Coupe and planned roads and infrastructure for their concession.
- Bordamur have so far not made available digitised data for their concession.

3.2 Ecological

3.2.1 Key wildlife resources

- A survey of wildlife and human impact across the park was undertaken in 2007/2008 (Maisels et al., 2008). This provides baseline data on encounter rates and wildlife distribution for large mammals. The encounter rate for great apes was far higher than expected.
- A provisional species list for the corridor is available, but remains incomplete, but this is not currently a barrier for management planning.
- Small mammals, reptiles and invertebrates are extremely poorly known. This is not critical information for the current process of land-use planning and we do not foresee conducting any targeted surveys of these taxa as part of the CARPE program.

3.2.2 Wildlife migration corridors

- This zone is a corridor between the Lopé and Waka National Parks. There is undoubtedly movement of wildlife, particularly elephants from the corridor into the two national parks, though these are impossible to map in detail.

3.2.3 Rare and under-represented plant communities

- Historically, this is one of the areas of Gabon where there has been least botanical collecting, in large part because the centre of the corridor has been uninhabited since at least early colonial times and probably longer.
- MBG have conducted three field missions in the corridor (Leal, 2007; Stévant and Leal, 2008a,b) undertaking systematic surveys of plant biodiversity in relation to climatic factors. Several species new to science and new to Gabon have been found. One and perhaps two more missions are planned (in year 3), this will provide sufficient data to evaluate predictive models of the areas of the highest species richness and endemism. MBG will provide a synthesis report highlighting the areas of the zone known or most likely to harbour rare and unusual plant communities.

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 on roads in the south-west of the zone in 2006 (Bouanga, 2006).
- Participatory mapping and ground truthing was completed in villages in the south of the zone in 2007 (Abitsi and Lepemangoye-Mouleka, 2007).
- A study of the socio-economics of commercial hunting in Otoumbi village was undertaken in 2008 (Bouanga, 2008).
- A survey of the Bordamur logging camp and the potential impacts of logging on the villages in the south of the concession was completed in 2008 (Lepemangoye-Mouleka and Starkey, 2008).
- Data from these studies is being compiled for inclusion in the draft management plan and will be presented in the stakeholder meetings with Bordamur to be organized in Q4 2008..

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

- The stakeholder list is being compiled from the studies mentioned above.

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

- The entire zone is allocated for commercial logging in Sustainable Management Concessions (CFAD).
- Commercial hunting occurs in the north of the zone (Bouanga, 2008).
- The south of the zone is used by babongo pygmies and village populations for subsistence use (Lepemangoye-Mouleka and Starkey, 2008; Abitsi and Lepemangoye-Mouleka, 2007).

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

- The corridor falls across two provinces – Ngounié and Moyen Ogooué, meaning that two separate branches of local administration (Ministry of the Interior and Ministry of Forests) must be engaged. This makes working in the zone logistically challenging. At present most meetings have been held either in one province or the other, however at least two planned meetings need to involve actors from both zones. In the case of the local representatives of MINEF (the Provincial Inspectors), this requires seeking approval and support at a higher level in the hierarchy, notably at the level of the Director-General of MINEF.
- The zone is very remote and several members of the administration with responsibility are unfamiliar with the area. In some cases, visits to the field as part of this project have been the first time representatives from these branches of the administration have reached the area.
- The CTG meetings, mandated by the National Parks Agency (ANPN) which has considerable authority, and supported by this project via the sub-contract with RAPAC are a useful forum to overcome some of these barriers to collaboration and will form a key part of the strategy to engage local authorities.

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 south of the zone, especially the babongo villages in the north
 2. the logging company's aménagistes
 3. the population of Otoumbi in the extreme north of the zone.

- The most significant elites from the zone must also be included (probably via their local representatives).
- The majority of the area is uninhabited, so there are few other stakeholders. 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 parts of 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.
- Unsustainable exploitation is currently prevalent in the north of the zone and this is the highest priority area for engagement.
- Most human exploitation in the south 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 or local populations. 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. 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 pre-emptively with the foresters 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 in the south of the zone 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.

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

- 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.
- Whilst the local aménagistes of Leroy Gabon are greatly in favour of sustainable management, the parent company (Isoroy) is undergoing a period of financial difficulties and the concessions may be sold. This means they are reluctant to engage in any serious partnership for sustainable management at present. They have currently suspended activities in the zone, so the most important activity is to lobby Leroy Gabon and the Government in order to ensure that the new owners begin with a vision of sustainable management from the start.

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

- The CTG (Comité Technique de Gestion) and Comité Consultative de Gestion Local will be the key forums for resolving disputes between local populations and logging companies on the one hand and the National Parks on the other.
- OAB-ITTO principles suggest that all companies undertaking sustainable forest management should create a local consultation mechanism to identify and resolve conflicts. We will lobby Bordamur and Leroy to put this into practice and provide technical support as to the composition and functioning of the mechanism.

5 Creation of Strategy for Formal Recognition of Plan

- The plan will be a conceptual document that will be validated by the different actors at a stakeholder meeting.
- Certain aspects of implementation, notably location of series de conservation, village territories and location of infrastructure will be formalised in the logging company's management plans which will be submitted to MINEF for approval.

- Other specific aspects of implementation (for example organisation of anti-poaching, monitoring surveys and partnerships between the villages and the logging companies) will be formalised in one or more MoU's between the different actors involved.

6 Creation of Vision and Objectives for the Zone

- The Government of Gabon's vision for the zone is set out in the Code Forestier and National Parks law, both of which specify the need for sustainable management, support to local communities and limited environmental impacts.
- An initial draft of specific objectives will be defined following a stakeholder meeting to be held in Q4 of 2008.

7 Identify Management Micro-Zones and Associated Objectives and Guidelines

- The studies undertaken by Abitsi and Lepemangoye-Mouleka (2007); Lepemangoye-Mouleka and Starkey (2008); Bouanga (2008) provide basic information on the location of village zones with some suggestions as to associated guidelines. Information in the
- The location of the key logging camps in the zone will define the areas reserved for hunting by employees. WCS has been lobbying government to ensure these areas are outside the national park buffer zones. The location of the camps will be the object of a meeting requested by Leroy and Bordmur with MINEF and local stakeholders (planned for 2008).
- MBG will produce a map of the concession indicate areas of known or probable high biodiversity, this will be combined with the existing data on wildlife distribution and the logging companies' information on timber value as a basis for discussions about the location of the 5% set-aside areas in the concessions.

8 Elaboration of Implementation Plan for the Zone

- A preliminary list of activities that need to be undertaken to achieve the socio-economic and hunting management components of the vision and objectives for the zone is presented in Lepemangoye-Mouleka and Starkey (2008) for the Bordamur concession and Bouanga (2008) for the Leroy Lot 36. These will be presented at the stakeholder meetings to be held in Q4 of 2008 for discussion and ratification prior to inclusion in the plan.
- A draft implementation plan for the séries de conservation will be developed based on the stakeholder meetings in Q4 2008 and refined based on follow-up fieldwork.

9 Creation of Monitoring Plan for the Zone

- A framework for measuring and evaluating progress towards objectives and the execution of different planned activities will be developed following a logical framework approach. The indicators, means of verification and responsibility for execution remain to be specified. This will be undertaken following the stakeholder meetings that will define the vision and objectives for the zone.
- A demonstration of the use of MIST software for monitoring impacts will be conducted with each logging company in late 2008 or early 2009.

References

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