

# **FINAL REPORT**

## **Termination of Project Small Donation**

Developing an Integrated Strategy and Project Plan to  
Conserve the Chiquibul/Maya Mountain  
Key Biodiversity Area in Belize



### **Submitted to:**

Conservation International Foundation/Critical Ecosystem  
Partnership Fund

### **By:**

Friends for Conservation and Development

**June 15th, 2006**

## FINAL REPORT ON TERMINATION OF PROJECT SMALL DONATION

### I. DATOS BASICOS

Nombre de la Organización: Friends for Conservation and Development

Título de Proyecto: Developing an Integrated Strategy and Project Plan to Conserve the Chiquibul/Maya Mountain Key Biodiversity Area in Belize.

Socios Involucrados en la Implementación del Proyecto: The Forest Department and the Bladen Management Consortium

Fechas de Implementación del Proyecto: October 1, 2005 - January 31, 2006

Fecha de Informe (Mes/Año): June 2006

### II. COMENTARIOS INICIALES

*Incluya cualquier comentario inicial que pueda ayudar en la revisión de este informe.*

The term of the agreement was extended from the 31<sup>st</sup> of January 2006 to 30 April, 2006 with the authorization of CI/CEPF.

### III. PREGUNTAS NARATIVAS

1. Cuál fue el objetivo inicial de este proyecto?

The objective of the project was primarily to identify specific management needs for both the Chiquibul Forest and Bladen Nature Reserve with the result of preparing for submission to CI/CEPF and the Protected Areas Conservation Trust [PACT] a medium size grant proposal for management of these core conservation areas located in the Chiquibul/Maya Mountain KBA. The project also sought the development of a formal communication protocol between managers of the protected areas located in the Chiquibul/Maya Mountain Key Biodiversity Area in Belize and provide for exchange visits with the key Guatemalan counterparts.

2. Se cambiaron los objetivos del proyecto durante su implementación? De ser así, explicar por que y como.

The objectives were not altered.

3. Su proyecto fue exitoso en términos de haber logrado objetivos planificados?

The three objectives proposed were achieved successfully and has served as a sound foundation for the development of an integrated and comprehensive management program in the CMMKBA.

## Results

### Identifying Specific Management Needs for the CMMKBA

A stakeholder workshop was conducted and together with site visits and focal group meetings a good understanding of the target condition was obtained with the objective of identifying specific and urgent management needs for the Chiquibul/Maya Mountain KBA. The data was triangulated and utilized to develop the proposal to CI/CEPF.

A total of 34 participants were present during the two day workshop (November 4<sup>th</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup> 2005) representing the governmental agencies responsible for protected areas, non-governmental organizations, the private sector and community representatives [See Appendix #1]. The main purpose of the workshop was to produce the key elements for a project proposal and seek ways to build alliances in the setting up of a management structure for the area.

Results obtained from this workshop included the formulation of a preliminary logical framework [See Appendix #2], which served as the basis for the development of the proposal.

Presentations provided by Jacob Marlin of the Bladen Management Consortium, Chris Minty of Las Cuevas Biological Station, Jim Barborak of CI and Francisco Moya of the National Protected Areas Commission described the sort of management structures and alliances currently underway as well as the challenges and opportunities in the various scenarios. Certainly for the Chiquibul National Park a co-management body will be formed and the information shared by the speakers helped to determine the type of structure needed. The descriptions also helped to strengthen the fact that for the KBA it will be necessary to develop an umbrella structure in the future that can be charged at looking at the management and conservation of the general KBA. Stakeholders in the forum were therefore informed about these future steps, though it was clear that such a structure will take time and should, therefore, be seen as an output towards the end of the project life. It is expected that the Project Steering Committee chaired by the Chief Forest Officer will be able to streamline the efforts towards this end.



Participants during the workshop, 4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> Nov. 2005



In session at the second stakeholder workshop

To better understand the target condition two focal group meetings were held around the buffer areas of the Chiquibul National Park. Thanks to the CI/CEPF planning grant two focal group meetings were also held on the villages of Bladen and Trio villages, which are located on the periphery of the Bladen Nature Reserve. The meetings were conducted on the 7<sup>th</sup> of April, 2006. On the Trio meeting there were 30 participants, while on the Bladen village a total of 33 participated on the meetings.

Specifically the questions [See Appendix #3] on the focal group meetings had the intent of:

1. Understanding the role of environmental education in those communities
2. Understand the need for developing alternative sustainable activities
3. Obtain the local support for the conservation of the Bladen Nature Reserve.

### Developing a formal communication between Managers in the CMMKBA

For the first time individual formal discussions were held among key institutions to facilitate a common vision for the CMMKBA. These key players included the Forest Department, the Institute of Archaeology, Belize Audubon Society, Las Cuevas Biological Station, the Belize Foundation for Research and Environmental Education, and Bladen Management Consortium. As a result of this the main agencies have provided the necessary support and approval to embark on an integrated and comprehensive management for the core areas located in the CMMKBA. This is unique for Belize since in the past protected areas have been planned as individual units.

The individual reunions covered several activities. The opportunity was taken to explain the logical framework of the project as well as the overall vision. Thereon site visits, where applicable, were made to areas of prime importance, where threats were known to be taking place.

In the case of the Chiquibul National Park it was evident that borderline incursions from xateros were the main threat to the natural and cultural resources. Las Cuevas had experienced a series of robberies to the point where they had to request from the Belize Defense Force, 24 hour military escorts. Degradation of the xate leaves is high and it is evident that these collectors would also hunt and loot. Along the buffer area of the Chiquibul National Park, lies the Vaca Plateau Forest Reserve. This area has been de-reserved partially and encroachment from local farmers and foreign investors have been speculating inside the forest reserve, where the land is more fertile and nearby the Macal River.

A similar phenomenon was reported by Jacob Marlin, a member of the Bladen Management Consortium. The Maya Mountain North Forest Reserve, which borders the Bladen Nature Reserve is being taken over by farmers from the nearby communities of Trio and Bladen. These villages are mainly comprised of Central American folks who arrived in Belize seeking jobs in the banana plantations.

This sort of field visits to other partners did help to clarify any wrong assumptions about the project as well as build alliances. It also helped to strengthen and justify the need for

a proactive program of management in the core areas of the KBA which has been lacking a consistent program of monitoring and protection since their inception

### Exchange Visits among technicians from Guatemala and Belize

Two exchange visits were conducted between Belizean and Guatemalan technicians. This has prompted the facilitation of a more open dialogue among protected area technicians, exploration of bi-national initiatives for the protection of the KBA and continuation of exchange visits.

The first visit was conducted by members of Friends for Conservation and Development [FCD] on the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> of November, 2005. During this trip the Belizean team visited the CONAP sub-regional office in Poptun, Guatemala and communities located near the borderline.

The second exchange visit was organized on the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> of January 2006, during which time a delegation from CONAP visited Belize. The two day visit was organized and hosted by FCD. During the first day, FCD representatives and the delegation traveled to Belmopan City where reunions were held at the Forest Department Office, Institute of Archaeology and the Protected Areas Conservation Trust. Later on the first day the delegation traveled to Las Cuevas Research Station where we stayed overnight. On the way to Las Cuevas the delegation visited the Mountain Pine Ridge and the Chalillo Dam impoundment. On the second day the delegation made a short hike around Las Cuevas and also had the opportunity to see an active *xatero* camp. Later on the day a trip was conducted to Caracol Archaeological Reserve where the team and FCD had a group meeting. The delegation returned on Saturday at 6:00pm to the Belize Western Border. [See Appendix #4 for a full report of this exchange visit].

The CONAP delegation was comprised of the Technical Director of CONAP, Francisco Moya; the Sub-regional Director of CONAP, Jose Manuel Palacios; Coordinator of the Mesa de Dialogo, Enrique Yurrita, and Basilio Silvestre, community liaison officer of CONAP.

The next visit of Belizean technicians to Peten is scheduled for July, 2006. It is anticipated that the team will include Lt. Colonel Reuel Black of the Belize Defence Force, Ms. Natalie Rosado of TNC, Wilber Sabido, the Chief Forest Officer, Ms. Yvette Alonzo of PACT, a representative of the Darwin Initiative and members of FCD.

### Submission of Medium Grant Proposal

All of the information gathered and analyzed provided a strong foundation for the development of the medium grant proposal to CI/CEPF. Evidently, the proposal design has been dynamic, participatory and enlightening. This was presented to CI/CEPF on the 8<sup>th</sup> of May, 2006, with the title, *A Sustainable Management Program for the Core Conservation Areas of the Chiquibul/Maya Mountains Key Biodiversity Area in Belize, Central America.*

The total fund requested from CI/CEPF is for \$370,000 which primarily would be earmarked for two core conservation areas, namely the Chiquibul National Park and Bladen Nature Reserve, though it would impact other areas in the CMMKBA in dire need of a monitoring program. Letters of support were obtained from the Forest Department, Bladen Management Consortium and from the Protected Areas Conservation Trust [PACT].

It merits also informing that this information likewise was utilized for the development and presentation of a large grant proposal to the Protected Areas Conservation Trust in Belize with the intent of seeking co-financing. This proposal was submitted on the 20<sup>th</sup> of June, 2006 requesting from PACT a grant totaling \$417,481.00. Letters of support for this proposal were obtained from the Forest Department, CEPF, Bladen Management Consortium, The Nature Conservancy and Las Cuevas Biological Station. [See Appendix #5 for Letter received from the lead agency responsible for the protected areas].

4. Su equipo experimentó desilusiones o fracasos en la implementación del proyecto? De ser así, explicar y comentar de como el equipo de dirigió a estas desilusiones y/o fracasos.

No failures reported.

5. Favor de describir cualquier lección aprendida del proyecto, positivo o negativo, que pueda servir a otras organizaciones interesadas en implementar un proyecto similar.

The following are the more significant lessons learned through this project implementation phase:

- Alliances should be built on respect and transparency

Since protected areas have generally worked as single units, there exist certain levels of competition for funds. Working as an alliance, however, means that the team members must be focused on the common goal. To meet this then there must be a strong sense of respect and transparency. Once this lack the project can become cumbersome to implement and rather complex to get the level of ownership desired.

- The Government agency responsible for protected areas should always be consulted

NGO's in most countries may profess that government agencies are too bureaucratic and complicated to achieve results. But it must be realized that regardless of how this machinery operates, there has to be a high regard for the agency since at the end they are the ones who are empowered to look over the national heritage. Management decisions must be consulted with the government agency responsible for the protected areas as it can have serious implications at the national level.

- Building consensus on a KBA means multiple partners and making concessions

Where there are several players, then more than likely not everyone will agree to build a consensus. But the focus on the goal should never be lost. The

Chiquibul/Maya Mountain KBA is a large area and there are several players. Each one may have distinct expectations and needs, but in the end what matters is to understand the direct and indirect effects and benefits. Ultimately concessions may need to be done but never forgetting the focus of the goal. We should not see the trees alone and forget the forest.

- Assumptions should always be clarified and straightened in advance

Miscommunications or lack of effective communication can lead to a series of assumptions among the key players which ultimately can lead to serious problems among the team. Clarifying the goals, objectives and steps of the project is important from the outset. Setting a communication protocol strategy as a mechanism to ensure that proper communication takes place is vital.

- Bi-national cooperation is easier to be achieved at the technical level

Bi-national agreements are rather more complex to undertake at the highest levels of government. Yet, in many cases that is the level where it is pursued. For the CMMKBA, we realized that working at the technical level rather than at the “political level” was more rapid, effective and efficient. Technicians on the ground are more sensitive to the various threats, needs and opportunities and therefore are more committed to obtaining results.

- Keeping focused on the fundamental objectives is critical

Large projects are difficult to explain in short sentences and in a “nutshell”, but that is where the key stands. It is important to understand what is being sought and the proposed outcome. This should not be lost, and the efforts should pursue this goal. There will be times of frustrations and this is the best time when indeed keeping focused will be important. Similarly, all the key players should be in the same wavelength.

#### 6. Favor de describir cualquier actividad de seguimiento relacionado a este proyecto.

- Ongoing exchange program

As a result of this small grant an exchange program was initiated with our counterparts in Guatemala. Primarily the reunions have been held with the Protected Areas National Commission staff of Peten. These visits have promoted confidence building and are ongoing even beyond this small grant. The next exchange visit is scheduled for the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> of July, 2006. Subsequently the Guatemalans will be visiting Belize.

- Co-management discussions with the Forest Department

With the objective of seeking co-management for the Chiquibul National Park, FCD continues discussions with the Forest Department. The Forest Department has committed support on a letter dated June 19<sup>th</sup>, 2005, stating, that “The Forest Department is in support of entering into a co-management program with Friends for Conservation and Development for the Chiquibul National Park, and looks forward to further discussing and finalizing such an arrangement in the near future.” For the

first year, FCD expects to get a provisional co-management agreement, since at this time a stronger policy on protected areas co-management is coming into fruition.

- Seeking other co-financing partners

Understanding that financial sustainability will be the key to a long term protection program in the Chiquibul/Maya Mountains KBA, FCD has reach out to other potential funding partners. Reunions have been held with The Protected Areas Conservation Trust [PACT], The Nature Conservancy, The Government of Belize, the British High Commission office and the UNDG/GEF office. Our preliminary discussions have been extremely positive and we are extending those discussions. Financial commitments for a total of US\$408,000.00 have been received from PACT and TNC, which will aid in co-financing the project.

- Monitoring threats on buffer areas

The KBA consists of many multiple use areas, and through investigation and site assessment we determined that at least two areas were under constant threats, these include the Vaca Plateau Forest Reserve and the Maya Mountain North Forest Reserve. Having better information now about these areas, FCD and its partners have been more vigilant on these areas. The type of monitoring done is supported by the Forest Department and reports are being fed to them. Already in the Vaca Plateau a major tourism operation has been halted, and in the Maya Mountain North F.R, the Bladen Management Consortium is conducting community outreach, and the UNDP/small grant program has expressed an interest in financing small community projects that can alleviate pressures on the Bladen Nature Reserve.

## 7. Proveer cualquier información adicional que usted piensa ayudaría al CEPF entender mejor otros aspectos de su proyecto cumplido.

As a result of the site visits and stakeholder workshops conducted it is evident that for the protected areas that comprise the CMMKBA in the portion of Belize, the greatest challenge occurs from our neighboring country of Guatemala. It cannot be disputed that we don't have internal threats, because we do - but the primary one which is affecting the core areas of the CMMKBA refers to the extraction of the natural and cultural resources by Guatemalan xateros. CI/CEPF as a funding agency and with the interest of safeguarding this KBA has an important role to play in consolidating this area under a more proper management program. In the end we can activate a full fledged environmental protection program in Belize but if this is not met similarly in Guatemala our results will only be partial in the general KBA.

I am convinced that the problems facing our protected areas primarily the Chiquibul lies in the fact that rural Guatemalans bordering the adjacent line live under extreme levels of poverty. Sustainable livelihood programs and environmental education may be two important components to be addressed urgently in the Guatemalan portion of the KBA. These components will aid in strengthening our efforts projected in our proposal submitted to CI/CEPF.



#### IV. FINANCIAMIENTO ADICIONAL

Proveer detalles de donantes adicionales que apoyaron este proyecto y de financiamiento recibido como resultado de la donación de CEPF o el éxito del proyecto.

Donante	Tipo de Financiamiento*	Cantidad	Comentarios
PACT	[A] Co-financing	\$2,500.00	These funds were used primarily for conducting familiarization trips to both core areas in the CMMKBA
PACT	[A] Co-financing	\$4,965.00	These funds were used for a stakeholder workshop, focal group meetings and development of the PACT large grant proposal
PACT	[B] Complimentary financing	\$5,000.00	These funds were provided to the Bladen Nature Reserve for the purchase of a small Ranger quarters

**\*Financiamiento adicional debe reportarse según las siguientes categorías:**

- A** *Co-financiamiento de proyecto (Otros donantes contribuyan directamente a los gastos del proyecto con CEPF).*
- B** *Financiamiento complementario (Otros donantes contribuyan a organizaciones y agencias socias quienes están implementando un proyecto relacionado con este proyecto con CEPF).*
- C** *Apalancamiento de la Organización o Socios (Otros donantes contribuyan a su organización o una organización socia como resultado directo de éxitos de este proyecto con CEPF).*
- D** *Apalancamiento Regional (Otros donantes inviertan grandes cifras en una región debido a la inversión de CEPF o éxitos relacionados a este proyecto con CEPF).*

#### V. COMENTARIOS Y RECOMENDACIONES ADICIONALES

The concept of developing a holistic management program for the KBA comes precisely at a time when the National Protected Area Systems Plan [NPASP] is officially endorsed by the Government of Belize and which similarly recommends the consolidation of the Maya Mountain/Mountain Pine Ridge Massif as one of three agglomerations of regional importance. As a result we feel that CI/CEPF's involvement and support comes on a timely manner to make this policy an active instrument and drive the vision of a comprehensive management program.

The Forest Department in particular is supportive of this initiative, and it is obvious that the NPASP is the guiding document for many institutions including the Protected Areas Conservation Trust, and The Nature Conservancy. The CMMKBA being an important

area, and which will require substantive effort and funds, I would recommend having in Belize a donor's forum. The objective should be to harness many funding players, both national and international, with the primary focus on the CMMKBA – identify its needs and requirements; devise a funding strategy that can help sustain the conservation efforts in the CMMKBA, and help streamline those conservation efforts so that we can have a more effective integrated management program in the CMMKBA for the long term.

## VI. COMPARTIENDO INFORMACIÓN

CEPF tiene como objetivo compartir experiencias, lecciones aprendidas y resultados entre las organizaciones beneficiarias de nuestras donaciones y las comunidades de conservación y donantes más amplias. Una manera de lograr este objetivo es poniendo el texto de los informes finales de terminación de proyecto disponibles desde nuestra página Web: [www.cepf.net](http://www.cepf.net), y incluyendo estos informes en nuestro boletín electrónico y otras comunicaciones. Favor de indicar si usted está de acuerdo compartiendo su informe final del proyecto con otros en las maneras indicadas.

Sí  \_\_\_\_\_

No  \_\_\_\_\_

Si contesta en afirmativo, favor de cumplir también la información que sigue:

**Para obtener más información sobre este proyecto, favor de comunicarse con:**

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