

Brazil - US International Experts Meeting on Protected Forest Areas

Final Report

San Juan, Puerto Rico
March 15-19, 1999

Brazil - US International Experts Meeting on Protected Forest Areas

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I. INTRODUCTION

(1) The governments of Brazil and the United States of America sponsored an international experts meeting on protected forest areas in San Juan, Puerto Rico from March 15-19, 1999. Results from the meeting are intended to contribute to the work of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development (UNCSD) Intergovernmental Forum on Forests (IFF) under Category II.d, "Forest conservation and protected areas," by developing a better understanding of issues related to protected forest areas. This will be discussed substantively at the third session of the IFF in Geneva in May 1999 (See Annex 1).

(2) The subject of protected forest areas is compelling because of the many unresolved issues with significant impact on people. While there is agreement among many countries that protecting forest areas is important, there is a need for consistent information regarding: the status of these areas, the policy making and funding mechanisms and field level management tools which foster their protections, or ways to expand their benefits. Thus, the goal of the international experts meeting was to distill the wisdom of experts worldwide into succinct conclusions and practical recommendations. More specifically, the objectives of the meeting included considering and formulating possible options for:

- (3) developing consistent information globally on protected forest areas and their contributions to the sustainable management of all types of forests, taking into account the unique characteristics of each country, including public, private, and community ownership of forests and;
 - existing definitions and classification systems for protected forest areas;
 - the various purposes and benefits of protected forest areas, including ecological, social, and economic;
 - the relationship of protected forest areas to adjacent areas and other protected areas;
- effectively managing protected forest areas to meet designated objectives, including issues of participation and enforcement;
- enhancing economic viability of protected forest areas, including financial mechanisms and means for income generation, and
- developing criteria for establishing protected forest areas.

Participation

(4) The meeting was designed to be informal, open-ended, transparent and participatory, consistent with IFF guidelines, and include participants with diverse institutional affiliation and field experience. The 130 participants represented developing and developed nations, indigenous organizations, environment non-governmental organizations, industry and individual experts from universities and research institutions (See Annex 2).

Working Methods

(5) The co-sponsors established an informal contact group of representatives from countries and international organizations to advise on meeting preparations, including the agenda, and organization of work. In addition to Brazil and the United States, contact group members included Australia, Chile, France, India, Japan, Malaysia, United Kingdom, Zimbabwe and the IUCN and World Bank.

(6) Based on its discussions, the contact group identified the following five key topics as the organizing themes of the meeting:

- a. Classification systems for protected forest areas;
- b. Management effectiveness for protected forest areas
- c. Criteria for establishing protected forest areas;
- d. Economic viability of protected forest areas;
- e. The benefits and mechanisms for protecting forest areas.

(7) The meeting agenda was based on plenary sessions and working group discussions (See Annex 3). The first day was devoted to presentations by keynote speakers, an afternoon panel on the subject, "Benefits of and Mechanisms for Protected Forest Areas," followed by a question and answer period. There were four working groups, only two of which met at any one time to allow for broad participation. A chairperson and rapporteur led each working group. A three-member panel provided background information to inform discussion. On the second day of the meeting, each working group decided to divide into smaller subgroups to facilitate the drafting of conclusions and recommendations.

(8) Plenary sessions were co-chaired by Braulio Diaz (Brazil) and Elizabeth Estill (U.S.). The four working groups were organized as follows:

Classification systems

Chair: Juan Carlos Riascos, Colombia

Rapporteur: Mike Dudley, UK

Economic viability

Chair: Catherine Potter, Australia

Rapporteur: Bernard Chevalier, France

Criteria for establishment

Chair: Effendy Sumardja, Indonesia

Rapporteur: Kishore Rao, India

Management Effectiveness

Chair: Alberto Salas, Costa Rica

Rapporteur: Bernardo Zentilli, Chile

II. OVERVIEW

(9) Recognizing that considerable work on protected forest areas has already been undertaken by countries, organizations and other groups, this meeting sought to build on those experiences as a framework for dialogue on select key topics that could advance a common understanding of the role of protected forest areas in forest conservation and sustainable forest management. The conclusions and recommendations contained in Sections III. and IV. of this report reflect the

collective wisdom and agreement of the participants of the meeting and comprise actions that could be undertaken by relevant bodies and groups to define more clearly the value of protected forest areas to affected parties and their role in sustainable forest management.

(10) During the weeklong discussions in the plenary and working groups, several themes resounded. First is the need for more consistent and comparable data, as well as methods and indicators, on various aspects pertaining to protected forest areas. The lack of comparable data limits information sharing and acquisition of international support for protected forest areas, the purposes for which it is established, and the viability of its existence and effective management, including how best to further recognize and support protected forest areas and share information and experience.

Second, the issues surrounding protected forest areas are not specific to forests. They are equally pertinent to debates in other fora, such as RAMSAR, the Convention on Biological Diversity, CITES, and on other ecosystems. Third, the human component is integral to efforts to conserve forests. Without the involvement of local communities, the benefits and goals of protecting forest areas are much harder to realize.

Mechanisms and Benefits of Protected Forest Areas

(11) The meeting participants agreed that protected forest areas provide a range of benefits: biodiversity conservation, watershed protection, soil and water conservation, flood control, carbon sequestration, maintenance of special cultural and spiritual values and lifestyles of indigenous people and local communities, economic development and diversification, research and recreation. It is difficult, however, to compare the value or benefits of protected forest areas because they are established for different reasons depending on local and/or national objectives. Dr. Jeff Sayer, CIFOR, noted in one of the keynote addresses that comparing the benefits and management effectiveness of protected forest areas is complicated by the variability in definitions and reporting schemes associated with their administration. He pointed out that we have very little knowledge of how to measure the management effectiveness of as well as the impact of a protected forest area on biological diversity and ecological processes.

(12) The meeting participants also agreed that forest protection and conservation is an important aspect of sustainable forest management, which provide a wide variety of benefits to society at the local, national and global levels. The fact that the number of protected forest areas has increased significantly in the last 25 years amplifies the importance of understanding better the purposes and benefits of them as well as the mechanisms for both establishing and effectively managing them. Participants raised the importance of returning benefits of protected forest areas to affected communities and the importance of community support for long term viability of these areas.

Classification and comparison of data on protected forest areas

(13) The meeting recognized that classifying a protected forest area is dependent upon both the purposes for which it is established and the benefits to be achieved. The IUCN's "Protected Area Management Categories," as well as the work of other organizations, provided a framework for discussion on this subject. A common understanding of definitions of protected forest areas and existing classification systems will enhance the ability to manage them effectively and derive

expected benefits. While the IUCN categories comprise a useful system for classifying protected forest areas in general, the diversity of national systems and approaches makes it difficult at this time to compare data on the extent and effectiveness of protected forest area classification systems across countries. Flexibility in the interpretation of existing categories is needed to accurately depict, among other things, land ownership patterns, including community-owned and privately-owned forests. Likewise, there is a need to develop further consistency in the interpretation and use of existing categories of protected forest areas.

For whom and for what are protected forest areas established?

(14) The meeting recognized that to determine what we want from a protected forest area, we have to know why we are protecting it. Keynote speaker, Dr. Tom Lovejoy, World Bank, raised the question, "for whom are we protecting forest areas?" Dr. Jeff McNeely, IUCN, asks "what are we protecting...? Lovejoy emphasized that a protected forest area will not work if it is not integrated into the "local ethos", e.g. that the local community must be supportive of the purpose of the protected forest area. Further, the expected benefits will not be realized if there is no agreement among all affected parties on what is to be valued.

(15) It was also recognized that valuing forest ecosystem goods and services is difficult without a better heartfelt understanding of what is to be valued, both market and non-market resources. Better methods and indicators for valuing non-market benefits of forest ecosystem goods and services are needed. These should be devised using a holistic approach. An approach that separates market vs. non-market values (such as the social, cultural and spiritual values) fails to look at the multi-dimensional character of most protected forest areas. There should also be more focus on the value of the land and its resources rather than on what is being taken out of the forest. This would provide greater incentive to protect forest areas.

(16) There was general agreement that the integration of the "local ethos" or human component in protected forest area management warrants the involvement of local affected stakeholders in implementing and managing protected forest areas. Panelist Kamla Chowdhry, Society for the Promotion of Wastelands Development, India, emphasized that in many countries protected forest areas are established in areas where the spiritual and cultural values of the forests are of eminent importance to the populations living in and around them and that these communities are often isolated from non-resident decision-makers.

Seeking mechanisms for the effective financing and management of protected forest areas

(17) The meeting noted that many protected forest areas are not secure and they are being degraded or destroyed. Therefore, improving the management effectiveness of existing areas is of urgent priority. An important step is to develop the ability to collect accurate information about conditions within the protected area, including data on current status, likely future trends and the social and ecological implications of current management strategies.

(18) The meeting considered that more attention should be given to applying a bottom-up approach to forest protection policy as opposed to the more prevalent top-down approach whereby national and international interests may drive the debate on management of protected forest areas. Managing protected forest areas necessarily involves various parties ranging from

local communities, forest and park professionals, the private sector and the policy-making sector. Partnership is essential to effective management of protected forest areas.

(19) Participants stressed the importance of capacity building for management of protected forest areas, particularly at the field level. Management tools should be available to all involved parties and, where local communities and indigenous groups will contribute to protecting the forest area, co-management plans should be developed prior to the actual establishment of a protected forest area. It was also stressed that opportunities should be available to support private owners' efforts to conserve natural forest ecosystems under their control. There was considerable discussion on the use of "adaptive" management or management approaches that recognize the ever-changing characteristics of a protected forest area. These factors warrant routine review, combined with ongoing research activities, to adapt management to these changes.

(20) The meeting noted that the effectiveness of a protected forest area, in terms of the expected desired benefits for which it was created as well as its positive impact on the people living in or around it, is dependent upon the long-term availability of funding resources. To achieve this, planners should seek diverse sources of income as well as develop a scheme for sustainability of funds over the long-term. Relying on a single source (or a few sources) of funding as well as planning for the short term will impact substantially the viability of the protected forest area over its lifetime. Use of existing and new innovative mechanisms for funding - at all levels - is a key component in sustaining the long-term objectives of protected forest areas. It is also important that resources reach the intended projects and those responsible for their implementation in the field. Finally, it was noted that those benefiting from protected forest areas should contribute to their maintenance.

III. CONCLUSIONS

(21) An overarching theme in the development by the meeting participants of both the conclusions and recommendations is that proposals for action already agreed to in other international fora should be implemented. The work done at this meeting is part of a continuing exercise to clarify and promote protected forest areas as an integral component of sustainable forest management. Initiatives emanating from other fora merit implementation and follow-up work, as appropriate.

(22) The meeting endorsed and drew on the results of the Australian-sponsored meeting on Conservation and Protection of Forest Areas (September 1998, Canberra) and found that report of great benefit. Likewise, participants acknowledged the important contributions of the Costa Rican Workshop on Underlying Causes Deforestation and Forest Degradation (January 1999, Costa Rica), and asked the IFF to consider those recommendations, particularly related to financial flows, private investments and international economic relations for implementation, where appropriate, by countries and the international community.

A. There is a need to promote synergies and eliminate inconsistencies among various international conventions, such as CBD, Kyoto Protocol, FCCC, CCD, and other agreements, as well as to strengthen relationship between FAO and UNEP to help achieve forest protection goals. Within countries, synergies need to be developed between the forestry sector and other

sectors that can impact forests, such as environment, landscape planning, industry, energy, and agriculture. Appropriate policy, institutional and legal frameworks, and supportive political environments should also be available at the national, regional and international levels to consolidate and expand protected forest area systems.

B. Currently the IUCN "Protected Areas Management Categories" is widely used by international organizations and many countries. In order to further develop and promote a shared understanding of protected forest areas there is a need for a better conceptualization of the breadth of the issue and clarification of terms. Flexibility in the interpretation of existing international categories of protected areas is required to accommodate community and privately owned protected forests; and embrace the concept of forest corridors among protected forest areas.

C. There is a need for comparable and consistent data on forest protected areas and their contribution to sustainable forest management; therefore, better coordination is required between current protected area reporting approaches and forest reporting approaches at national and international levels. Reporting systems should be transparent, inclusive, simple, clear, and relevant to national needs within a consistent international framework and avoid duplication of reporting requirements.

D. There is a need to better develop methods and indicators for valuing forest ecosystem goods and services in order to balance the social, cultural, spiritual, intrinsic and non-market values with economic values in a holistic way. A holistic value approach needs to be defined and applied to forest policies and programs.

E. Many protected forest areas are inadequately protected and subject to degradation. Increasing the management effectiveness of protected forest areas is therefore an urgent priority. One important step towards achieving this is collecting accurate information about conditions within protected forest areas and adjacent lands. This should include the current protection status, likely future trends and the social, cultural and ecological implications of current management strategies, such as those identified in national forest programs or other relevant programs.

F. Protected forest areas often lack adequate involvement of the indigenous and local communities in the development of management plans. The planning process should allow meaningful engagement of indigenous and local communities and a participatory management process to develop goals and practices that are culture and gender sensitive.

G. There is an urgent need to enhance capacity building for protected forest area managers and rangers, as well as indigenous and local communities and other partners.

H. The planning, development and management of forest protected areas should take into account existing efforts to develop criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management as well as recognize the need for site-specific measures of management effectiveness.

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

(23) The intersessional participants agreed to send the following recommendations to the Intergovernmental Forum on Forests (IFF) for presentation at IFF3, May 3-14, in Geneva Switzerland. Participants also urged other international bodies and organizations to consider these recommendations as possible areas for action and generally agreed to promote the recommendations in the relevant fora.

A. Public awareness should be enhanced at the national, regional and international levels regarding the importance of protected forest areas, and participation of indigenous and local communities and forest owners in their designation and management should be facilitated through transparent mechanisms based on principles and policies that are culturally and environmentally sensitive. This could include development of co-management plans and building partnerships with indigenous and local communities, private enterprise, governments and non-government organizations.

B. Countries and international donor agencies should provide financial support for consolidating and expanding protected forest area systems, including representation of arid regions and other wooded lands. Protected forest area systems should be representative of the range of ecological functions, evolutionary processes, and successional stages to safeguard biodiversity, water resources, forest regeneration capacity, vital functions and ecological and other services. Therefore, countries should conduct assessments of the representativeness of their existing protected forest areas.

C. Countries, NGOs, academia and communities should adopt a landscape, ecosystem or bioregional approach to protected forest area system planning and the linking of isolated protected forest areas through biological corridors and transboundary co-operation, where appropriate.

D. There needs to be further coordination and consultation at the international level among organizations responsible for data collection systems (including UNEP, IUCN/WCPA, WCMC, FAO, ITTO, FAO/ECE, and other relevant institutions). There should be a coordinated response at the national level, e.g. via a national focal point, informed by a national forum (working group) involving all relevant stakeholders (government, NGOs, private sector, indigenous and local communities, etc). IFF should encourage all affected parties to advance coordination and consultation on these issues, including within the CBD, to link forest protected area initiatives with initiatives to protect other ecosystems, cognizant that CBD COP6 will review forests in 2002, the World Parks Congress will consider protected area issues in 2002 and that COP7 of the CBD will consider protected area issues in 2004.

E. Encourage IUCN/WCPA to collaborate with countries, international organizations, NGO's, IPO's, CBO's and the private sector at national, regional and international levels so as to develop further guidelines for consistency in the interpretation and use of existing categories of protected areas, taking into account the need to embrace concepts of forest corridors; stage of implementation and effectiveness; as well as community and privately managed lands.

F. Countries are encouraged to acknowledge protected forest areas under the stewardship of indigenous and/or local communities. Countries should expand the use of existing mechanisms and incentives so as to support community owned and privately owned protected forest areas, and examine where existing categories can better accommodate and support spiritual and cultural values in their management and promote the integration of traditional knowledge and science-based management. Sacred groves and other natural forest sanctuaries protected through communal and religious institutions should be recognized as protected forest areas under appropriate categories.

G. The forest-related assistance agendas of international institutions, donors, and the private sector should be further coordinated with those of recipient countries and communities to help ensure that priorities are met and protected forest areas are not adversely affected. Simplification of administrative and operational procedures for financial assistance for forest protection would also be advantageous.

H. The Inter-Agency Taskforce on Forests should collaborate with the IUCN /World Commission on Protected Areas and other relevant organizations to develop guidelines and methodologies for non-material and economic valuation of forest goods and services to facilitate the appropriate distribution of costs and benefits of different land use options, particularly as they relate to protected forest areas. This process should be flexible, open to review and developed in collaboration with all relevant parties.

I. Countries, donors, international organizations, and private sector institutions are encouraged to provide financial assistance to facilitate the sustainable development of indigenous and local communities which forego development opportunities to pursue conservation options in and around protected forest areas. They should also provide financial and technical assistance in accordance with the laws of the host country to secure land tenure in support of forest protection through demarcation and/or acquisition of land, recognizing the needs of indigenous and local communities.

J. Countries and the international community should develop and use a variety of existing and innovative financial mechanisms to promote and sustain forest conservation and restoration, including:

- (i) mechanisms to ensure that revenue from protected forest areas, forest-related industries, and ecosystem services flows back to and benefits indigenous and local communities, protected area agencies, local governments, and protected forest areas themselves;
- (ii) the Clean Development Mechanism and Joint Implementation activities of the Kyoto Protocol of the Framework Convention on Climate Change, and
- (iii) specific measures such as conservation trust funds, GEF, debt for nature swaps, supportive taxation regimes, direct charges and financial assistance.

These efforts would be assisted by the development of guidelines based on experiences at national and local levels in generating sustainable finance for protected forest areas.

K. Countries should seek to improve cross-sectoral coordination of policies and programs that affect forest conservation, and address sectoral policies and perverse incentives that adversely impact forest conservation objectives.

L. Countries are encouraged to develop and apply institutional and legal arrangements to promote and provide a framework for the participation of the private sector, NGO's, IPO's and CBO's in the establishment, financing and management of forest protected areas. Such efforts should recognize the conservation contributions of these groups and provide technical guidance to promote the achievement of a variety of protected forest area management goals including biodiversity, enhanced environmental service delivery, and safeguarding of spiritual and cultural values. Protected area systems should build on existing indigenous conservation values, grounded in spiritual, cultural, and economic systems, while integrating local institutions.

M. Countries and international organizations (IUCN/WCPA, CIFOR, WCMC, World Bank WWF Alliance, FAO, UNEP, CBD) should cooperate to develop methodologies for assessing the condition of and management effectiveness in existing protected forest areas and their surrounding landscapes, as well as forest protected areas networks, taking into account the various efforts underway in several countries.

N. Countries and international organizations are urged to further build capacity to collect, organize, utilize, and share information and experience, including indigenous and local knowledge, in order to create and manage protected forest areas.

O. Countries and international organizations are encouraged to implement specific efforts to seek to ensure the continued integrity of the genetic diversity of protected forest areas through assessment, public awareness/participation, and management of threats.

P. Countries, donors, international organizations and the private sector should develop strategies to fight against corruption and poverty so that resources reach the protected forest areas and local communities, and foster their sustainable development.

V. ISSUES FOR FUTURE DISCUSSION

(24) The meeting identified the following issues pertaining to protected forest areas that may be considered for further discussion in an appropriate future forum.

- A. The role of good governance in the establishment and management of protected forest areas.
- B. Development and protection necessarily involve tradeoffs. In pursuing development options that may benefit local people, biological diversity is often affected. Likewise, conserving biological diversity often incurs an opportunity cost in terms of economic development that can benefit local people.
- C. An appropriate sponsor should conduct a workshop on capacity building to develop mechanisms for the sharing of experiences in effective management of protected forest areas.