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The Conservation Foundation

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Forestry for Conservation Program/Costa Rica Monthly Report #1 - December 1, 1987

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This report signals the beginning of Osa Forest Conservation and Development program (BOSCOSA) in Costa Rica. BOSCOSA receives funding from the Conservation Foundation/World Wildlife Fund (CF/WWF), USAID (both the Costa Rica mission and AID/Washington), and private donors. Starting in December, BOSCOSA monthly reports will be produced in Costa Rica by Richard Donovan. As of December 1, Richard will be based in San Jose. Up until then he is based in Richmond, Vermont.

The primary purpose of these monthly reports is to describe what activities BOSCOSA has undertaken during each month. The secondary purpose of these reports is to serve as a kind of information exchange wherein readers will be spurred into communicating new ideas or technical information to the project, either through Bob in Washington, D.C. at CF/WWF headquarters or through Richard whose base will be at the Fundacion Neotropica in San Jose. FFC/Costa Rica contributions to this information exchange will be in the form of these monthly reports, periodic technical reports or documents, annual reports, and a listing at the end of each monthly report of new and interesting publications turned up over the past month. Copies of these interesting publications usually can be obtained either through Bob or Richard. However in some cases (either because of length or copyright infringement) we won't have extra copies to give out and readers will have to order the document from a publishing house or the author.

This monthly report will probably be longer than future reports as it will describe design-related project activities and concepts so that readers will have an idea of the overall direction of the project. For those who are familiar with FFC background information, please bear with us. We won't repeat it in the future.

General Background on BOSCOA Objectives

To paraphrase from original design documents, BOSCOA will attempt to work in the buffer zones around critical protected areas in order to relieve development pressure on those areas and at the same time provide a sustainable economic livelihood for residents in the relevant regions. The principal technical focus of the economic development work will be natural forest management and development, though other components of the program may include agroforestry, agricultural production, and conservation education.

The Osa peninsula in southwestern Costa Rica has been chosen as the initial area of focus. This peninsula is dominated by Corcovado National Park, the Golfo Dulce Forest Reserve, and private lands that form a relatively narrow band of land to the south and east of the Golfo Dulce Forest Reserve principally along the coast facing the Golfo Dulce (see Map #1).

It is extremely important to note that forest reserves in Costa Rica are "occupied" areas, with residents living and working the land within forest reserve limits. At least in the case of the Golfo Dulce Forest Reserve, there are some residents who have been there for over 20 years and will soon be receiving title to their land, if they haven't already. There are many others who have arrived there more recently, have little experience in agriculture (i.e. gold miners or recent newcomers from the "city"), and are relatively unstable in terms of land tenure, long-term commitment to living there, or economic status. Many other documents provide at times lurid detail on the situation in the Osa (see references at end of this report, particularly Janzen et. al.). In short it should be said that Osa is similar to many parts of the country because it has tremendous biological diversity, development pressure, and is short on publicly-financed resources to cope with the problems.

However, Osa is also different in that the problems (development pressure on Corcovado National Park, rapidity of land clearing with the forest reserve, and continuing loss of biological diversity) are probably more acute, it is relatively remote (6-7 hours from San Jose by car just to get on the peninsula), and, socioeconomically speaking, it is among the most complex areas in Costa Rica. Thus, contrary to the typically blissful descriptions of Costa Rica, it is not an easy place to work. It does however still have a fair amount of relatively rich primary forest outside Corcovado National Park, a lot of people who have pioneer-like enthusiasm, and representatives from national institutions (i.e. DGF and the Instituto de Desarrollo Agrario, or IDA) who are very active and apparently well thought of by both the local communities and their agencies.

As mentioned above, BOSCOA will initially focus on

implementing a local level, forestry-oriented development program on the Osa peninsula that will develop an economic incentive for maintaining forest cover around Corcovado National Park. Initially our work will focus on communities within the Golfo Dulce Forest Reserve. Based on the "occupied" situation noted above, the term forest reserve means that forestry is to be a predominant activity of the lands designated reserves and it does not mean that residents will be removed as they have been in Corcovado.

Potentially, the Osa subprogram could prove significant because:

- 1) it will be among the first development programs in Costa Rica to take on the oftentimes complex "occupied" forest reserves problem, potentially establishing a project method that can be taken (with never-ending modifications) to other forest reserves in Costa Rica;
- 2) the program will provide experience on working with local communities in using the Tropical Science Center's (TSC) land use classification system which has recently (roughly the last week of September of 1987) been designed by legislative decree as the national land use classification method for Costa Rica;
- 3) it will be among the first development programs to implement and field test the environmental education program development approach specifically articulated in Diane and David Wood's guide for conservation education produced for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and entitled How to Plan a Conservation Education Program; and,
- 4) sustainable natural forest management and development, potentially including local-level forest products processing, will be espoused as the principal technical intervention in project areas.

Buschbacher/Donovan Project Design Field Trips to Costa Rica

RJB started the first (roughly three weeks long) project design field visit to Costa Rica on September 22nd with RZD joining him on the 27th for a couple of weeks. The hope of this visit was to be able to identify potential project communities on the Osa peninsula, begin liaison with relevant Costa Rican institutions, and clarify potential project directions (i.e. technical directions).

Prior to RZD's arrival, RJB spent some time visiting parts of the Osa peninsula that he had not visited in the past, including Puerto Jimenez, the road to Playa Carate just at the southern edge of Corcovado, and the main trail bisecting

Corcovado from La Sirena to Los Patos and then on to the main road between Las Palmas and Puerto Jimenez. Bob had previously spent some time on the Osa during an Organization of Tropical Studies (OTS) short course in the mid-1970's. He also spent a day with Encarnacion Ballenero (alias Chongo) who has hired the Tropical Science Center to put together a forestry management and development plan for a roughly 1600 acre parcel near the southeastern corner of Corcovado National Park.

On the way to meeting with RJB on the Osa peninsula, RZD visited with the Direccion General Forestal (DGF) about a project they are developing on the Osa peninsula through a local trade union in Rancho Quemado, a small village of roughly 80-100 families located about thirty minutes by car almost due west from Rincon.

Once on the Osa, RZD and RJB visited a number of communities, sometimes alone and sometimes with the regional DGF forester, Jaime Gonzales. It appeared to be the peak of the rainy season. The main road from Puerto Jimenez to Rincon has four river crossings without bridges. With a four wheel drive Suzuki jeep, they were able to cross all but one river, the Rio Tigre, all the time. The Rio Tigre was crossed once on the Suzuki's power alone, and once being pulled by a tractor. One attempt, at high water, was aborted after becoming stuck in the river (with water coming over the doors) and being pulled out by a four wheel drive Toyota truck.

Meetings with the Servicio de Parques Nacionales groups making the management plan for Corcovado, DGF and Instituto de Desarrollo Agrario (IDA) were quite fruitful. In fact, all of these organizations recommended the town mentioned above, Rancho Quemado, as an excellent candidate for BOSCOA. Upon visiting the town (about a forty-five minute trip over rough, but passable, road from Rincon) and spending the night there, RJB and RZD

Development of Program Description, Budgets and Design Review

Based on the two short design field trips, RZD, with RJB's assistance and input from Henry Tschinkel (AID's regional forester) developed a proposed program description (including potential activities and staffing) and proposal dollar and local currency (colon) budgets for a three-year period. RZD and RJB also tentatively identified Rancho Quemado as the first project site and representatives of the community as well as DGF have been notified of this selection. The first year of the three-year program already is funded and activities are underway. The program description is now being submitted to USAID/Costa Rica for developing a Memorandum of Understanding between the Fundación Neotrópica, the government of Costa Rica and

USAID/Costa Rica for the use of local currency to cover a portion of project expenditures.

Staffing

Fundación Neotrópica and RZD are now in the midst of recruiting for three field positions to be based on the Osa peninsula:

- 1) social scientist (anthropologist or sociologist)
- 2) forester to specialize in natural forest management
- 3) agronomist or agroforester

It is hoped that this staff will be on board by early January.

Technical Editing of Fundacion Neotropica State of the Environment Document for Costa Rica

Since starting as a Senior Fellow in mid-September, Richard D. has a very small percentage of his time assisting a team at the Fundación Neotrópica (FN) in the production of the first State of the Environment document. His role has been principally that of a technical editor. This document will hopefully be finished by the time that the IUCN meeting takes place in San Jose in February. The FN team is now in the midst of their last edit of the document.

Information Network

The people and/or organizations that are at least initially consider part of the information network and will receive this monthly note include:

Ronnie de Camino and Miguel Cifuentes at CATIE
 Tom Catterson, Paul Dulin and Gus Tillman at Associates in Rural Development, Inc. (ARD)
 Jack Ewel at the University of Florida
 Bob Goodland at World Bank
 Jim Hester at USAID/LAC Bureau
 Molly Kux at USAID/Science & Technology Bureau
 Jeff Leonard and Terry Davies at CF
 Florencia Montagnini at the Organization of Tropical Studies
 Joe Tosi and Raul Solórzano at Tropical Science Center
 Alvaro Umana and Jorge Rodriguez at Costa Rica's Ministry of Natural Resources, Energy and Mines
 Ronald Vargas at Costa Rica's DGF
 Curt Freese, Diane Wood and Dennis Glick at WWF

If any of the above do not want to receive the monthly reports,

please advise either R. Donovan or Bob.

Final Notes

The next monthly report will contain information on interesting references that have been found during the last couple months of research. Any comments on the format or content of this report should be forwarded to either RZD at Fundación Neotrópica in San José or RJB at Conservation Foundation in Washington, D.C.