

BOLIVIA TRIP REPORT
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TRIP OBJECTIVES

1. To provide an objective outside management review of Bolivia's Noel Kempff Mercado National Park as requested by Bolivian authorities through USAID/La Paz, and defined in the Terms of Reference.
2. To provide officials of the USAID Mission and U.S. Peace Corps with updated information about the:
 - USAID/R&D/ENR Forest Resources Management Project (FRM II)
 - Conservation of Biodiversity Project (CBD)
 - International Forestry Deputy Area of the USDA Forest Service; and,the various services and programs associated with them.
3. To review a preliminary proposal from USAID/La Paz, the Ouachita National Forest, and several non-governmental organizations to participate in the incipient "Sister Forest Program" of the USDA Forest Service.

1. MANAGEMENT EFFECTIVENESS REVIEW OF NOEL KEMPF MERCADO NATIONAL PARK, BOLIVIA

The primary purpose of the Bolivia assignment was to conduct a management effectiveness evaluation of the Noel Kempff Mercado National Park (NKMNP). This was completed, and a separate document is attached which includes: the Terms of Reference provided by the Government of Bolivia through the USAID Mission, the full text of the evaluation, a list of contacts, and location maps. Copies of that final report were provided on computer diskette (less the TOR and three maps) to Bolivian and USAID authorities during a two hour debriefing held for some 15 key individuals, prior to departure from Santa Cruz.

2. USAID AND U.S. PEACE CORPS LIAISON

Dr. Michael Yates, USAID Natural Resources Officer in La Paz, provided the initial connection between the Bolivian authorities' request for technical assistance, and the USDA Forest Service. The request was passed through the Forestry Support Program (FSP), now a part of the International Forestry Operations Staff. Yates, Jorge Calvo (Environmental Specialist) and William Baucom (Director of the Office of Agriculture and Rural Development), were our key working contacts in USAID/La Paz. USAID has had significant involvement with the NKMNP, through P.L. 480, the Parks in Peril Project, and others. A new "Sustainable Forestry Management Project" is expected to come on line in late 1993, which will likely include activities in areas adjacent to the NKMNP.

Copies of various documents were left with them for circulation with the Mission staff. These were mostly associated with the Forest Resources Management Project (FRM II) and the Conservation of Biodiversity Project (CBD). They included: FSP and DASP brochures, FSP and TFP Annual Reports, International Skills Roster Packets, and a summary description of the portfolio of projects managed by USAID/R&D/ENR. We attended a security briefing given by Joel Liebner (Mission Executive Officer), and participated in the Mission Director's Weekly Staff Meeting. Following our subsequent work in the NKM National Park, Yates flew with Dr. Mario Baudoin (National Environmental Secretariat) to Santa Cruz to participate in our final debriefing.

Dianne Hibino, Acting Peace Corps Director, was our primary contact with that agency. Currently, about 100 PCVs are in Bolivia, 3 of which are working in national parks. The "Environment Development Project", which includes biological inventory work, is being phased out within a year. The Peace Corps "Soil Conservation and Environmental Education Project" will continue. Two PCVs are working in towns adjacent to Ambaro National Park. Will Rex, a forester, is involved with beekeeping in Comarapa. Carlynn Christian is working with native species tree nurseries and environmental education in Samaipata. One PCV, Ali Woods, is stationed at Flor de Oro Camp in NKMNP, working on trail location and construction. Copies of the same IF and R&D briefing documents were left to share with Peace Corps as had been left with USAID.

3. OUACHITA/AMBARO SISTER FORESTS PROPOSAL

Prior to departure from Washington. Jim Burchfield, IFPP Staff requested us to "scope out" the

Sister Forests proposal between the Ouachita National Forest and Ambaro National Park/Chore Forest Reserve, to the extent that time permitted. He was particularly interested in institutional aspects and the "back end selection criteria" discussed below. This is one of some 29 proposals currently before the Sister Forests Steering Committee, with anticipated final selections to be made at a session of the FS Chief and Staff by late July 1993. We were unable to visit the Ambaro National Park (visible from Santa Cruz) or the Chore Reserve, but we did include extensive discussions about the sister forest proposal in our interviews with key individuals. (Bolivians will use the term "bosques hermanos", literally "forests brothers" in reference to the program).

Institutional Aspects

Institutions and their responsibilities associated to natural resource management, at this time in Bolivia, can best be characterized as in a state of flux. The General Forestry Law of 1974, and the Law of Wildlife, National Parks, Hunting and Fishing of 1975 appear to be on the verge of modification. The same holds true for the Center of Forestry Development (CDF) within the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs (MACA). CDF has been responsible for forests, parks and wildlife for many years. However, in 1991, a General Environmental Secretariat was established, attached to the Office of the President of the Republic, and that Secretariat includes a National Directorate for Protected Areas and Wildlife. The 1992 General Environmental Law provided for the National Environmental Secretariat (SENMA) to constitute the National System of Protected Areas (SNAP) to achieve conservation objectives. In mid 1993, the Senate Environmental Commission is in the process of drafting a new Law of Biological Diversity Conservation, which is expected to also deal with the establishment and administration of protected areas.

While these new mandates continue to be sorted out, CDF continues to exercise authority in the field over many park, wildlife and forestry matters. National policy decisions concerning national parks and protected areas are being handled through SENMA. Expectations are that CDF will eventually focus on "production forestry", while SENMA and its Departmental Environmental Secretariats (SEDEMAs) will focus on parks and wildlife reserves. To cover all bases, the appropriate contacts in ALL of the above institutions were contacted and ALL expressed strong interest in moving along the proposed "Sister Forest" concept between the Ouachita and the Ambaro National Park/Chore Forest Reserve. The former likely will be under the purview of SENMA and the latter under CDF. While more complex an arrangement, pairing the Ouachita with both Ambaro and Chore would maximize opportunities for success from an institutional perspective.

Back End Selection Criteria

(1) Relative significance/priority of host government.

The Ambaro National Park is one of nine priority areas selected by the national government as being representative of the country to such a degree that it has been targeted for special funding as part of the National Environmental Fund (FONAMA). This Fund will include about \$35

million from the Swiss, Germans, GEF and other sources. The nine areas will be financed through interest and other investments in the FONAMA. Ambaro also has been a recipient of USAID funds and those under the Enterprise for the Americas Initiative. The Park covers about 1.5 million acres, including elevations from 1000 to 9000 feet. One project proposal from the Nature Friends Foundation (FAN) indicates it has seven Holdridge Life Zones, more than 540 bird species, and some 120 mammal species.

(2) Capability of Forest Service to make positive change.

Marlene Avalos Y., Head of the CDF Wildlife Department in Santa Cruz, indicated that Ambaro National Park priorities at this time are: boundary consolidation, applied research necessary for preparation of the Park Management Plan (especially related to soils and wildlife), and environmental education in communities adjacent to the park. We discussed FS capabilities in these general areas. She also considers ecotourism important, as long as it is consistent with the eventual Park Management Plan. She, and the Park Director, Abel Castillo, were very enthusiastic when they were presented with a copy of the FS brochure "Discover Special Places in the National Forests" and they noted the three special places on the Ouachita: Winding Stair Mountain National Recreation Area, Beech Creek National Scenic and Botanical Area, and Indian Nations National Scenic Area. Forest Service capability to contribute to the park's recreational aspects seems likely also.

(3) Forest Service benefit from knowledge and experience of Bolivians.

Work with the small native species tree nursery in a community adjacent to the park may provide new insights for FS employees. Norm Alley's (Ouachita NF) recent work in Tanzania with multipurpose trees for fodder, may be complemented by planned or ongoing activities in Bolivia. This especially may be true with agroforestry activities anticipated by Heifer International in buffer areas around the park. Nature tourism developments in Ambaro, or other areas within the Santa Cruz Department, may provide useful ideas for promoting the special places on the Ouachita National Forest.

(4) Physical barriers for travel.

The City of Santa Cruz is readily accessible from La Paz in about an hour by commercial jet. Public bus is available to the southern end of the park, according to Walt Henry of ASEO. He also indicated that the Chore Forest Reserve is more difficult to access and is usually approached via Buenavista or Santa Rosa which lie 15-20 kilometers from its boundary. In any case, both of these areas would be considerably more accessible than the Noel Kempff Mercado National Park which some have suggested might be an appropriate "sister forest".

(5) Potential support from other organizations.

A high level of support already is evident from other organizations, even if only moral support at this time. USAID/La Paz transmitted the proposal to the FS, indicating its concurrence. This implies that the proposal is in line with U.S. foreign policy and the USAID Mission's own strategic priorities. NGOs closely involved already include FAN, the Heifer Project

International, and the Partners of the Americas. John Jickling, formerly a contractor with the Forestry Support Program, is developing a portfolio of natural resources management activities for Catholic Relief Services in Bolivia which includes a buffer zone focus in areas such as Amboro. Key governmental agencies, especially SENMA and CDF have indicated support, as has U.S. Peace Corps, which has two PCVs stationed in villages adjacent to the park. Most importantly, all local and regional authorities interviewed were strongly supportive, including Abel Castillo (FAN/CDF), Walt Henry (ASEO), and Maximo Vera (CDF Forest Department Director for Santa Cruz).