

TRIP REPORT OF JIM RIEGER, RD/ENR, TDY TO BOLIVIA
Management Review of Noel Kempff Mercado National Park

PROJECT NUMBER AND TITLE: Parks in Peril Program (598-0782, for activities in the park); Environmental Policy and Management project (936-5517, for AAAS Fellows Program); Forestry Resource Management II project (936-5556, for Forestry Support Program); Conservation of Biological Diversity project (936-5554, for associated AAAS Fellow)

PROJECT SITE VISITED: USAID/La Paz, Bolivian Government Offices, Fundacion Amigos de la Naturaleza, and Noel Kempff Mercado National Park

DATES OF VISIT: May 1-12, 1993

PURPOSE OF TRAVEL: To provide an independent and objective review of the administration and management of Noel Kempff Mercado National Park (NKMNP), Bolivia. Also, to meet with USAID/La Paz staff to brief them on relevant RD/ENR activities, and to explore a "Sister Forest" agreement between Ouachita National Forest, of Arkansas and Oklahoma in the United States, and Ambaro National Park in Bolivia.

PERSONS CONTACTED: See Appendix 3 of attached recommendations

BACKGROUND AND DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY: In April 1993, the Government of Bolivia requested, through its National Secretariat for the Environment (SENMA), an outside review of the management of Noel Kempff Mercado National Park (NKMNP). The request, made through the USAID, specified the following (Appendix 1):

- (1) Institutional evaluation of existing park management structure within its local, regional, national and international context.
- (2) Evaluation of the administration and management of the NKMNP including present management practices, personnel, relations with local communities, infrastructure, equipment, and institutional relationships.
- (3) General identification and evaluation of problems associated with the park's management.
- (4) Proposal of recommendations concerning institutional and legal aspects compatible with implementation priorities for the NKMNP.

In particular, the independent review was to consider the efforts that had been undertaken to date through the two entities which have been most involved with the management of the NKMNP. These are the Regional Center for Nature Conservation (CERCONA) and the Friends of Nature Foundation (FAN).

CERCONA is the public entity charged with management and

administration of the NKMNP and the nearby NKM Biological Reserve. CERCONA was established by Supreme Decree No. 22231 of June 23, 1989. It is closely associated with the Santa Cruz Development Corporation (CORDECRUZ), the regional authority vested by the government in La Paz with responsibility for, among other things, the development of natural resources in the Department of Santa Cruz. CERCONA is overseen by a Board of Directors which includes representatives of: CORDECRUZ, the Santa Cruz Mayor's office, the Gabriel Rene Moreno Autonomous University, Forestry Development Corporation (CDF, which, until very recently, was responsible for all parks and wildlife in Bolivia), the Civic Committee of Velasco Province, and FAN.

FAN is a non-profit, non-governmental conservation organization with primary interest in national parks and their implementation. FAN receives funding from the Parks in Peril Program and other sources. It is developing ecotourism facilities in NKMNP, and has recently been given authority to patrol the park and enforce its regulations.

Management of national parks in Bolivia is currently in a state of flux. Changes at the level of the national government are transplanting the authority for park administration from CDF, which is funded largely by profits from timber concessions, to the newly-created National Environmental Secretariat (SENMA), funded by the central government. Also, CERCONA is in a state of flux. The former director has recently resigned amid allegations of misconduct examined by a senate investigation, and he has been replaced by an interim director. Recommendations on park management are regarded as particularly valuable during this time of reformation and reconsideration.

Washington fielded a team of two individuals to conduct the review: Dr. James Rieger (American Association for the Advancement of Science Fellow, R&D/ENR) and Dr. Gary Wetterberg (US Forest Service, International Forestry). The review was funded entirely by the Forestry Support Program (R&D/ENR) and the AAAS, which covered the respective expenses of the team members. The team designed a questionnaire (Appendix 2) based on International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) guidelines for evaluating the effectiveness of national park management (developed as a result of the Third World Congress on National Parks and Protected Areas held in Bali, Indonesia in 1982). It was adapted slightly for the particular circumstances and issues prevailing in the management and administration of NKMNP, and it was employed through interviews with nearly twenty individuals involved with that park (see Appendix 3). The purpose of the questionnaire was to create a standardized format to collect information about the park's management. It also provided both an indication of the state of various relevant parameters important to park management, and a measure of the uniformity among park personnel in their perceptions of the purpose, management, and availability of

resources for the park. The questionnaire stimulated further conversations on general topics related to park management. It was reviewed by Mario Baudoin (SENMA) and Michael Yates (USAID/Bolivia) prior to its use.

The team interviewed most of the members of the CERCONA Board of Directors, actual or potential funders of activities in NKMNP, and other individuals who have been engaged in activities in or concerning the park. In the latter two categories, interviews did not follow the structure of the questionnaire, but were more free-flowing and aimed at evaluating the general national and international climate for activities in NKMNP. The team visited sites in La Paz, in Santa Cruz, and in NKMNP itself to conduct interviews, as well as to examine facilities and equipment. Institutions visited were USAID/Bolivia, PL 480, FONAMA, SENMA, Peace Corps/Bolivia, FAN, CERCONA, CDF, CORDECRUZ, and Universidad Gabriel Rene Moreno. Park sites visited were Los Fierros, Flor de Oro, Boca de Pauserna, the guard station near the Federico Alhfeld Falls, and Mangabalito. This included most sites currently administered by CERCONA and FAN. Nearby park communities visited were La Florida and Pimentiera.

The team's recommendations are attached. They address 1) the role of the central and regional government, 2) NGO involvement, (3) the concept of "one park", 4) training, and 5) cooperation among the managers of NKMNP and international donors, national and international NGOs, and other institutions with relevant expertise (see page 19 of the report). Briefly, the team recommended a restructuring of CERCONA's board of directors to eliminate conflict of interest and to make management of the park more consistent with new national legislation and authority. The report spelled out the relative roles of the government and NGOs in park management, recommending that CERCONA take responsibility for long-term management of the national patrimony represented by the park, including management of resources, and enforcement of park regulations and national laws. It was recommended that NGOs, in general, and FAN in particular, be responsible for nature tourism activities, environmental education, training of park personnel, and fundraising for special projects. Specific recommendations for badly-needed improvements were made, and it was stressed that coordination and collaboration among all parties is necessary to manage the park effectively.